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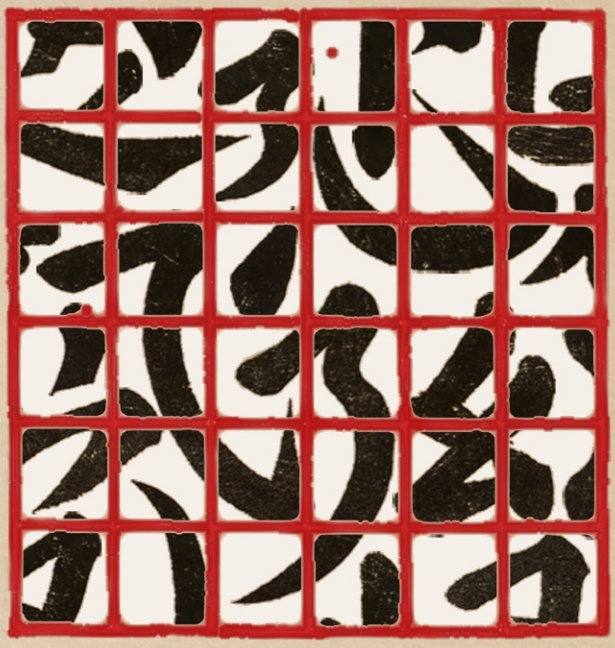


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Memorable Arts

The Mnemonics of Painting and Calligraphy in Late Imperial China



Monica Klasing Chen



Memorable Arts:

The Mnemonics of Painting and Calligraphy in Late Imperial China

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Monica Klasing Chen
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Introduction

> Repeating mnemonic rhymes is like ruminating. A cow chews on its grass several times before digesting it. That is exactly how painters handle the contents of a rhymed formula. You learn it by heart, and as time goes by, you keep revisiting the formula in your mind. As you make progress in your painting, its full meaning and use are slowly grasped.

This statement by the Shanghai painter Li Zhongxin 李忠信 (b. 1945), who immigrated to Brazil in 1988 and later taught me Chinese painting, describes the function of mnemonics in applied arts not as a static reference, but as codified knowledge that the painter actively engages in the mind to slowly unravel its content. His comment was based on experience, reflecting his own education in Shanghai, where his training to become an artist had also involved the use of transmitted mnemonics. The slightly unsavory but comical image of a cow regurgitating grass and chewing it over and over again, meant to stand for the mental processes of the practitioner, became etched into my memory. In fact, this metaphor of "rumination" in many ways captures the findings of this study of Chinese mnemonics.

The practice of memorisation in general played a crucial role for scholars in China, who had to pass the imperial service examinations in order to obtain an official post and gain the status associated with it. The desire to literally retain important passages from the scriptural canons was related to the nature of the examinations, which demanded from the examinees the ability to recognise and explicate phrases from canonical works. While the literature addresses memorization practices related to the examinations, such practices have not been discussed in the broader context of Chinese society and culture. A good memory was also valued in the field of crafts, where memory aids focused on explicating technical skills and procedures came to cover a range of content different from that considered important by scholars. Memorization was a central concern of practitioners for the transmission of practical knowledge and was thoroughly explored to help students in the process of learning new skills.

The present study takes a diachronic approach to investigate the role of memory in the transmission of practical knowledge in China, with a focus on the fields of calligraphy and painting. Literati painting was granted a status comparable to that of calligraphy during the Song dynasty (960-1279), when

the scholarly elite came to regard both as high forms of art.[1] Thus, unlike other forms of craft, which continued to be perceived as minor occupations, theories and manuals specializing in these two arts proliferated and were widely disseminated. Chinese painters and calligraphers recorded in writing the mnemonic techniques that aided them in the learning and teaching of their craft. The relative abundance of sources dedicated to the transmission of practical processes within these two fields invites an investigation of the different practices of memory across time and the social contexts in which they were enacted. This abundance also permits a comparative analysis of the functions of mnemonics across several sources and between the two fields.

This analysis focuses on memory aids in textual and visual formats, such as rhymed formulas (*jue* 訣) and charts, recorded in manuals and theories from the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. This period is particularly interesting because of the flourishing of private printing during the Ming and the continuous expansion of literacy during the Qing, which yielded publications from socially diverse groups that provide a broader view of education and individual training of skills. While not all treatises and practical manuals included mnemonic content, many works of the period featured such formulas. The present study takes case studies as its point of departure to discuss the specific circumstances under which memory aids circulated and how they developed over time, providing insight into the social dynamics of knowledge transmission. The question at its core is: how do memory aids reflect the society that produced them? It thus tackles *what* was considered worth remembering or better forgotten and *how* mnemonics were rendered effective over time.

Theoretical Framework

Existing theories on mnemonic techniques have been developed almost exclusively from studies of classical European and Christian sources. Frances Yates' pioneering effort analyzed treatises on mnemonics from ancient Greece to the Renaissance period, exploring techniques such as "memory palaces."[2] Rossi added historical depth to the analysis of mnemonic systems, describing in detail how intellectual trends transformed the use and understanding of such systems.[3] In their study of monastic rhetoric, Mary Carruthers and Jan

[1] Bush. 1971. *The Chinese Literati on Painting*, chapter 1. Paintings produced by craftsmen,
[2] Yates. 1966. *The Art of Memory*.
[3] Rossi and Clucas. 2006. *Logic and the Art of Memory.*

Ziolkowski further developed Yates' approach and defended the creative character of memory-based knowledge, showing how even after the dissemination of printing in Europe, an outstanding memory and the ability to recollect passages from books continued to be associated with originality.[4] Scholars have also recognized the central importance of images as mnemonic aids. Lina Bolzoni devoted herself to the study of images of memory in sixteenth-century Italy, while Gerhard Strasser and Susanne Rischpler have given substantial attention to the study of mnemonic illustrations, focusing on Bible illustrations and emblems in medieval Europe.[5] Also worth mentioning is Anna Maria Busse Berger's study tackling the specific practices of European medieval chant and composition of polyphonic music.[6] It stands out from the majority of studies for connecting the craft of memory to the practices of another art form. Yet, the mnemonic practices proposed in Europe were not intended for a broad audience and rarely became widespread, distinguishing them from the Chinese memorization practices.

Researchers in the field of sinology have begun to study Chinese sources through a similar lens. The mnemonic qualities of children's primers have long been a focus of Chinese scholars, pioneered by Zhang Zhigong's 張志公 efforts.[7] Among Western scholars, Michael Lackner, Marta Hanson and Andrea Bréard stand out for their studies on the Chinese use of images as memory aids for remembering texts and procedures. Lackner translated Matteo Ricci's (1552-1610) *Western Art of Memory*, which attempted to introduce western visualization techniques to Chinese audiences and remains a rare exception of a text in Chinese that tackles the issue of memory directly. The treatise was, however, not as well received in sixteenth-century China as the Italian Jesuit might have hoped. Chinese scholars rejected the treatise politely, remarking that "though the precepts are the true rules of memory, one has to have a remarkably fine memory to make any use of them."[8]

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[4] Carruthers and Ziolkowski. 2002. *The Medieval Craft of Memory*, 3. Carruthers has also published two monographs on practices of the "art of memory," including the use of images. Carruthers. 1990. *The Book of Memory*. Carruthers. 1998. *The Craft of Thought*.

[5] Bolzoni and Parzen. 2001. *The Gallery of Memory*.

[6] Busse Berger. 2005. *Medieval Music and the Art of Memory*.

[7] His work on pedagogical materials was published twice with minor alterations. Zhang. 1991. *Zhang Zhigong wenji 4*; and Zhang. 1992. *Chuantong yuwen jiaoyu jiaocai lun*.

[8] Spence. 2012. *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*, 4. Spence, who takes a narrative approach to discuss Matteo Ricci's life in China, has also contributed immensely to the study of this treatise. He discusses its polite rejection by scholars. Lackner and Ricci. 1986. *Das vergessene Gedächtnis.* Lackner also comments on the treatise and its rejection by the Chinese in Lackner. 1996. "Jesuit Memoria, Chinese Xinfa," 206-7. Hosne has also addressed

Nonetheless, images played an important role in the transmission of the Christian Gospel in China.[9] Lackner also investigated the use of graphics (*tu* 圖) as aids for understanding and remembering the content of the classics during the Song dynasty (960-1279). However, as Lackner himself pointed out, the content of such graphics refers to classical texts and is unintelligible for anyone without previous knowledge of these texts.[10] Another approach is presented in Hanson's study on mnemonics in the field of medicine during the Tang (618-906) and Ming dynasties. Her focus lies on hand- or palm-mnemonics (*zhang jue* 掌訣) used by physicians to recall procedures of medical diagnosis.[11] Bréard's study of rhymed mnemonics in the field of mathematics includes the analysis of several graphs for calculation and divination from the Song to the Ming.[12] In addition to these three scholars, who have combined visual and textual mnemonics in their studies, Christopher Nugent has laid the groundwork for specialized research on mnemonic techniques for poetic composition during the Tang and addresses its oral qualities.[13]

What these scholars have not engaged, however, is a second line of inquiry into memory practices that has developed in parallel to the study of the "arts of memory" and their formal qualities. The study of collective or social memory has gained tremendous momentum in recent years. What began with Maurice Halbwachs' seminal work *On Collective Memory* was developed by scholars such as Jan Assmann and Pierre Nora into complex theoretical frameworks for the analysis of memories sustained by members of

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reliance on images that should "stand for" other things as one of the reasons for the unenthusiastic reception of the treatise. Hosne. 2018. "Matteo Ricci's Occidental Method of Memory (Xiguo Jifa)."

[9] Qu discusses the use of imagery that conflates narrative events into one image and provides numbers to associate text passages with details in the illustrations. Visual support and sequencing surely aided followers in remembering the key episodes in the gospel. See Qu. 2012. "Konfuzianische Convenevolezza in chinesischen christlichen Illustrationen."

[10] Lackner. 2000. "Was Millionen Wörter nicht sagen können," 214. Lackner makes similar arguments in a later article: Lackner. 2007. "Diagrams as an Architecture by Means of Words."

[11] Hanson. 2008. "Hand Mnemonics in Classical Chinese Medicine." Hanson has published several articles on the importance of hand mnemonics in medical practice, and she also addresses hand seals in Buddhist practice in Hanson. 2017. "The Mysterious Names on the Hands and Fingers." Homola has also addressed palm mnemonics in divination practices. 2015. "Ce que la main sait du destin." Hayek studied the use of hand mnemonics in divination in Japan, but he traces the content of the manuals back to China. 2018. "Correlating Time Within One's Hand," 538-555.

[12] Bréard. 2019. *Nine Chapters on Mathematical Modernity*, chapter 6.

[13] Nugent. 2010. *Manifest in Words.*

groups, memories imposed on groups by institutions and the instrumentalization of the past. Assmann examines the role of writing in ancient cultures and the effects of trauma on societies, while Nora scrutinizes the role of the historian and the use of "sites of memory" in constructing meaningful narratives of the past in France, addressing social and political questions.[14]

Nora's concept of "sites of memory" may be indebted to the mnemotechniques developed by rhetoricians from the Renaissance, who associated complex ideas with imaginary places in order to remember them. However, beyond the use of visual references or places to recollect ideas, the two theoretical frameworks developed for the study of memory rarely overlap in research. In fact, Hutton suggests that the line of inquiry that addresses mnemonic techniques, as adopted by Yates and Rossi, has been limited to the study of tasks that were rooted in the tradition of rhetoric and oral performance. With the appearance of the printed book and the dissemination of images, this system that organized knowledge according to protocols of orality decayed. Thus, only the reliance on images to convey knowledge is said to have been sustained and incorporated into theories for the study of cultural memory.[15] Similar views on a theoretical chasm between the study of mnemonics and cultural memory have also been presented in more recent scholarship. Jeffrey Olick and Joyce Robbins suggest that memorization techniques are relevant to the history of memory, yet consider such forms of remembering to be less relevant today.[16] Even Carruthers describes cultural memory and the cultivation of memory as different "territories" that address very different matters and only share "a few general principles of how humans best store and recollect (through location and narrative chiefly)."[17] This theoretical gap is narrower in the field of Chinese studies, in which scholars such as Kenneth Brashier have explored early forms of commemorative remembrance and discussed mnemonic practices and the formal qualities of codified knowledge about the past.[18]

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[14] Halbwachs and Coser. 1992. *On Collective Memory*. Assmann, 2013. *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*. Nora. 1989. "Between Memory and History." Burke also addresses the role of the historian and discusses the key forms through which memory is transmitted in a society. Burke. 1997. *Varieties of Cultural History*, 43-59.

[15] Hutton. 1993. *History as an Art of Memory*, 10-12.

[16] Olick and Robbins. 1998. "Social Memory Studies," 113.

[17] Carruthers. 2014. "Moving Back in Memory Studies," 279.

[18] Brashier. 2014. *Public Memory in Early China*. Campany also addresses commemorative practices for the retention of past events. Campany. 2009. *Making Transcendents.*

The present study hopes to bridge this gap between the theories of cultural memory and memory aids by offering a perspective from the field of crafts, in which collective memory was not only constructed, but also taken as the premise for pedagogical materials. It thus addresses changes in intellectual trends rather than the remembrances and re-enactments of the past. Utilizing concrete historical examples from late imperial China, it argues not merely for the interconnectedness of the two frameworks, but for their interdependence in the transmission of practical knowledge. The cases analyzed in the present study provide clear evidence that intellectual effort and creativity proved necessary not only to grasp practices of painting and calligraphy, but also to transmit this knowledge. The authors discussed here elaborated mnemonics by taking social demands and common knowledge into account, and it is through their creative pedagogical efforts that both collective and individual memory came together.

This analysis is based on my conviction that practical knowledge, like any other form of knowledge, can, to a great extent, be codified and transmitted. [19] This transmission, however, relies not only on the comprehension and retention of theories, but on the bodily internalization of standards. Such "incorporated practices," which are a form of memory, are acquired through training, repetition and introspection.[20] The materials used in this study are mainly printed books and how-to manuals. Their content was consciously adapted to best allow students to acquire skills without the presence of a teacher to instruct them on practical matters. The mode of presentation was consciously designed, so that the student would be able to make progress even without oral feedback or demonstration. It is the prescriptive quality of such works and their creative pedagogical approaches that distinguish them from the materials that have been studied by historians of memory to date. Whereas the European art of memory tells students *how* to remember information, regardless of the actual content, Chinese

[19] Valleriani discusses the codification processes of practical knowledge, pointing out that what was recorded in manuals and treatises had undergone a selection and been adapted to a structure of knowledge by the authors. 2017. "The Epistemology of Practical Knowledge."

[20] I will make use of the term as described by Connerton, who discusses the difference between "inscribed" and "incorporated" practices in his chapter on "Bodily Practices" (2009. *How Societies Remembe*r, 72-104) Connerton's rendering of incorporated practices relies on the analysis of the transmission of motor skills and behavioral standards among members of groups, including their reception by reading audiences. The variety of examples he provides allows for a broader understanding of the transmission of practices beyond the restrictive notions of bodily control presented in Foucault's study on "docile bodies." 2019. *Surveiller et punir*, 159-199.

mnemonics provide easy-to-memorize formulas on specific subjects. As these formulas employ common knowledge to convey specific practices to the reader, they engage collective memory to facilitate individual memorization. Broader frameworks of knowledge shared by society or specific groups shaped Chinese memory aids.

While education and training are underrepresented subjects in scholarly debates on Chinese art history, historians of Chinese art and printing culture have recently begun investigating how-to manuals. For example, J.P. Park's and Kobayashi Hiromitsu's 小林宏光 overarching surveys of painting manuals make invaluable contributions to understanding Ming trends in printing and consumption of cultural commodities.[21] Park connects the popularity of manuals to the growing agency and purchasing power of Ming dynasty urban classes, who craved knowledge of polite pastimes such as painting and calligraphy, as these could help them garner social status.[22] He addresses the reception of such books by the scholarly elite and analyzes the images contained in such manuals. Kobayashi situates the production of manuals within the development of illustrated books and woodblock illustrations, discussing not only the content of manuals, but also the participation of artists in the production of woodblock illustrations in general, tying the creation of such books to broader social contexts.[23] Despite their noteworthy contributions, however, Kobayashi and Park do not address the role memory played in the codification and transmission of practical knowledge.

Another lacuna is that most studies barely address the format in which knowledge was presented and how it was adapted over time. Most existing research describes the content of manuals as static and contrasts the mnemonic function of the formulas with the ideal of originality that dominated the rhetoric of the late Ming elite.[24] The cases presented here indicate, however, that mnemonic formulas were constantly altered and that both their reception and their social function varied over time. Authors were not only introducing new elements in transmitted formats; they were also

[21] Another work that provides a handy list of manuals from the Ming and Qing is Zhou. 2011. *Wenmai yu jiangxin*. Zhou also draws parallels between manual illustrations and imagery on end products, such as on ceramics and architectural decorations.
[22] Park. 2012. *Art by the Book,* 213-216.
[23] Kobayashi. 2017. *Chūgoku hanga shiron*. See in particular part 4 of his work, on the history of painting manuals. Section 3 is devoted to painters as participants in the production of woodblock illustrations.
[24] Park. 2012. *Art by the Book,* 190-212.

selective in their choices of what to preserve, often deliberately omitting some elements and purposely allowing qualities that used to be important to be forgotten. With the social and intellectual shifts that occurred from the Ming to the late Qing dynasty, it became common for authors and publishers to adapt transmitted knowledge to their own agendas. I argue that even the scholarly elite came to perceive memory aids and formulas not only as carriers of practical knowledge, but also as symbols of identity. By the end of the Qing, the social role of mnemonic aids had become as indispensable to craftsmen as their function to transmit practical standards.

Jan Assmann's approach to cultural memory provides a useful framework to understand ritualized actions as carriers of memory, yet his suggestion that the learning of action or skill occurs solely through acts of imitation effectively reduces the human ability to learn and incorporate meaningful practices to a merely formal and external process.[25] Assmann's description of embodied memory as diffuse communicative memory is not helpful to study the transmission of embodied knowledge and skills.[26] Both Maurice Halbwachs and Paul Connerton provide more appropriate frameworks to analyze embodied memory in the context of crafts and skills.

The concept of "collective memory" as developed by Halbwachs offers a means for analyzing the social role of memory as a determining factor in the construction of individual identity. His discussion of memory in the context of the family illustrates how practices were transmitted and treasured by several generations of families, which is helpful to understand the social relevance of memory during the Qing dynasty. Unlike Assmann, who uses the term "mimetic memory" (*mimetisches Gedächtnis*) to delimit the scope of action within "cultural memory," Halbwachs' broader use of the concept of "collective memory" does not categorize action and embodied skills as a distinct category of memory transmission.[27] Connerton also underscores that since embodied memory is never detached from other processes of remembering, a distinction between the two forms should only be drawn for heuristic purposes. [28] He provides a useful framework for analyzing internalization as a means for the transmission of memory within societies,

[25] Assmann claims that it is in "cultural memory" that this "mimesis" takes place. 2013. *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*. 20. Olick and Robbins describe Assmann's "mimetic memory" as "the transmission of practical knowledge from the past," but this is not how Assmann describes it. Olick and Robbins. 1998. "Social Memory Studies," 111.
[26] Assmann. 2008. "Communicative and Cultural Memory," 117.
[27] Halbwachs and Coser. 1992. *On Collective Memory*, 54-83.
[28] Connerton. 2009. *How Societies Remembe*r, 79.

especially of bodily practices. Connerton's understanding of skills as embodied memory—as something that can be remembered by the hands and muscles and not only the mind—offers a key to understanding how Chinese mnemonics facilitated the transmission of artistic practices.

Halbwachs' concept of "collective memory" also helps to explain the pedagogical approaches of several authors of mnemonic formulas discussed here, who rely on knowledge shared by society to introduce new concepts and information. Unlike mnemonic techniques developed in Europe, which trained individuals to construct and compose their own personal images for the retrieval and use of memories, authors in imperial China took what was already close at hand to help their students in the process of memorization and embodiment. As knowledge became decentered and detached from a specific teacher, the references authors used to construct analogies had to be widely acknowledged in society if they were to fulfill their pedagogical function. Instead of relying on images as simple placeholders for ideas, these authors appropriated intellectual constructs, schemata and cosmological views already embedded in society to facilitate the learning process of their intended readers. Analyzing the analogies that structured Chinese mnemonics makes it possible to draw conclusions about the social background of both producers and audience of the sources discussed in the present study.

Methodology and Concepts

This study is structured around case studies that rely on textual and visual materials from a variety of sources, such as privately printed treatises and encyclopedias, imperially sanctioned publications, manuscripts, paintings with inscriptions, and rubbings. A close reading of these sources, with a special focus on their paratexts, shows the relationship between memory and artistic knowledge in different social contexts. The analysis of the formal qualities of these mnemonic aids, such as the interaction of text and image, reveals ways that knowledge was codified and shaped. Both textual and visual analyses are combined in this study to present a holistic view of the publications. Beyond the sources in which mnemonics are featured, biographical materials, gazetteers and published notes (*biji* 筆記) are used to shed light on the background of those who were centrally involved in their production and dissemination.

The limitation of sources to print and manuscript materials cannot be circumvented in a historical study that seeks to analyze mnemonics within the

social context of a period. Although the oral transmission of mnemonics must also have taken place in parallel and some rhymes might still be in use to this day, the meaningful context in which they were created can hardly be inferred from them alone. Thus, the focus here is not on historical developments and cognitive changes introduced by the shift from oral to written cultures, as it is in Goody's study.[29] The oral component of Chinese mnemonics is understood mainly as a means to achieve the goal of memorization and internalization of knowledge. Vocalizing came as a step that succeeded reading or hearing someone else recite the mnemonic text. While oral transmission can explain some discrepancies between renderings of the same mnemonic rhyme in different editions, editors and authors often consciously adapted texts that had been passed down according to their own agendas. Changes in transmitted texts, whether subtle or drastic, were often conscious and closely related to the presentation of the content. The study of changes introduced to mnemonics by the printed format benefits from the theories proposed by Walter Ong. Ong has shown that intellectual processes connected to writing and print also shaped the perception and performance of orality.[30] This study shows that it is much more fruitful to conceptualize the oral component of mnemonics in Chinese treatises as permeated by cognitive habits connected to reading and, furthermore, as the product of print culture, rather than simply a vestige of oral culture.

As mentioned above, analogies used in mnemonics and treatises are taken as a means to understand broader intellectual trends. The study of analogies undertaken here is inspired by Draaisma's study of the various analogies used in Europe and the United States over time to describe the mental process of recollection.[31] Although the Chinese did not develop such diverse characterizations of individual remembrance and their study would be less revealing than Draaisma's, his approach to analogies provides access to the intellectual and social contexts of different periods. The role of analogies in Chinese mnemonics goes beyond a discussion of the physiological process of remembering. While most Chinese memorization processes relied on repetition and recitation, and authors took vocalization into account, broader connections meant to aid the student in recollecting and understanding practices were constructed through analogies.

[29] Goody. 1987. *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral*.
[30] Ong. 1977. *Interfaces of the Word*, 90.
[31] Draaisma and Vincent. 2000. *Metaphors of Memory.*

The connection between mnemonics and practical knowledge lies at the core of this study. "Practice" is used here in its broadest sense—as the engagement with abstract or material objects by means of a method, training or planning that yields concrete or intangible results. This definition thus includes human performances, such as teaching or music. These activities are understood as practices because they require the externalization of training, habits or conscious processes of the mind in their bodily execution. The practices studied here are rooted in the fields of calligraphy and painting, and they generate both tangible and intangible results. Rather than producing "works of art," they aim to develop skills and the internalization of the standards explicated in the mnemonics through the production of tangible sketches and drafts. Thus, not only the drafts, but also the trained body is regarded as a result of these practices.

It is important to establish a broad understanding of what constitutes "practice" in this study because most definitions of practice in current scholarship would exclude cognitive and memory practices. Pamela O. Long refers to practices as procedures and actions that involve hands-on processes to create a final product, while Pamela Smith highlights the interaction with concrete materials as a key feature of practice in her studies. Smith discusses the centrality of practice in processes of abstraction from form to principles.[32] Dagmar Schäfer has applied a broad concept of "technology" to address differences in practices according to cultural context, yet the focus continues to be on "technical processes, work and artifacts, and how they were controlled and organized."[33] Such conceptualizations have been invaluable to the study of local appropriations of practical knowledge as well as institutions and political bodies involved in practices and production. Yet, frameworks for studying practices that have a material output do not adress certain aspects of practices that have no tacit outcome.

Mary Carruthers acknowledges the importance of the "craft of thought" in her study of medieval monastic mnemonics in Europe. She employs the

[32] Long refers to practice in the context of crafts, in which craftsmen and artisans apply their skills to create a product. Long. 2011. *Artisan/Practitioners and the Rise of the New Sciences*, 4. Smith discusses practice as a moment of interaction with concrete matter, an "inductive processes in which a set of experiences is generalized to form a more widely applicable rule." Smith. 2016. "The Codification of Vernacular Theories of Metallic Generation in sixteenth-century European Mining and Metalworking," 371. Smith's successful "Making and Knowing Project" has shown how important it is to experiment with materials when studying historical manuals and recipes. See also Smith, Meyers and Cook. 2014. "Introduction: Making and Knowing," 8-9.

[33] Schäfer. 2012b. "Introduction," 4.

term “craft” to describe activities that can have intangible results. A mental craft must also be “learned, and indeed can only be learned, by the painstaking practical imitation and complete familiarization of exemplary masters’ techniques and experiences. Most of this knowledge cannot even be set down in words; it must be learned by practicing, over and over again.”[34] According to Carruthers, the “craft of composition” relies on tools, such as “creative thinking,” that can only be created by the apprentice through “disciplined cognitive activity.” Carruthers emphasizes mental focus and repetition as a key quality of practice in monastic education, claiming that “it is ‘practice’ both in the sense of being ‘preparation’ for a perfect craft mastery [...], and in a sense of ‘working in a particular way’.”[35]

In the context of Chinese mnemonics, practice also touches upon these two basic ideas. First, the content is practical and allows one to prepare for a specific task and craft, and second, the method for reaching the desired result is also prescribed. Carruthers’ concept of practice successfully combines both “how-to” instructions and the process of learning and developing intangible “tools.” Similar to Carruthers’ findings, repetition is central to the understanding of practice in Chinese mnemonics. The texts discussed in this study indicate that practice often began even before the brush was set to paper. While the content of mnemonics is craft-oriented and related to a specific occupation, the student is often reminded to let the content of a rhyme or song “ripen” (*shu* 熟) in the mind.[36] Several texts presented in this study emphasize the importance of familiarizing oneself with a rhyme before engaging the materials, while at other times, repeatedly copying something will also lead to a state of mental “ripeness.” Practice involved not only a skillful and trained hand, but also a skillful and trained mind. Understanding the implications of mnemonic formats and the pedagogical functions of texts is central to discussing practices that produce intangible results. Only through a study of different mnemonic aids can we uncover the “tools” and habits crafted in the practitioner’s mind.

[34] Carruthers. 1998. *The Craft of Thought,* 1-2.
[35] Carruthers. 1998. *The Craft of Thought*, 2-5.
[36] While discussions of practice in itself were featured in scholarly debates, especially of neo-Confucian scholars of the Ming dynasty who often used terms such as “experiencing” (*tiren* 體認) and “practicing” (*shijian* 實踐), practitioners and authors of manuals did not address practice as an abstract concept in their mnemonic compositions. Neo-Confucian views of practical affairs are briefly addressed in chapter 5. Neo-Confucian notions of practice in China and Japan are addressed in De Bary and Bloom. 1979. *Principle and Practicality*.

The chapters of this dissertation focus on the specificities of the case studies. Each offers a description of the historical context and presents different social dynamics in the transmission of knowledge, two aspects that must be explored individually and in detail. The comparative analysis presented in the conclusion illuminates the broader theoretical significance of the cases covered throughout the study. Although the theories and methods described here inform the analysis of the specific cases, I have refrained from discussing them at length in the individual chapters.

As fascinating as a comparative study would be, it is beyond the capacity of a single scholar with expertise in one field to conduct a thorough comparison between European and Chinese mnemonics. This would undoubtedly yield interesting findings, yet such an undertaking should best be initiated as a collaborative project involving scholars of both fields. While the present study is indebted to scholars of European mnemotechniques for their approaches and critical questions, it can only highlight the particular insights that are relevant for the study of Chinese mnemonics in relation to the transmission of practical knowledge.

Chapter Structure

The study is divided into three parts. **Part I**, consisting of **Chapter 1**, provides an overview of memorization techniques and strategies used in imperial China in a variety of fields. Unlike the European *Ars Mnemonica*, no overarching theory on memorization was ever formulated in imperial China. Instead, memorization strategies and practices were freely adapted in different fields of knowledge. Those who employed and transmitted them were not only members of the elite. Although memory practices were often adapted, each field sustained its own tradition and relied more heavily on certain methods. For this reason, the different approaches employed in different fields are discussed, in contexts ranging from imperial examinations to medicine and popular mathematics. This section also explores the perceived social value of memorization. Scholars referred to it as a skill and as a goal, but at the same time also pointed out the negative aspects of rote memorization.

Parts II and III are each composed of three chapters on the fields of calligraphy and painting, respectively. The two parallel parts show how the concern with memory was a pervasive element in the creation of didactic materials and in the codification of artistic knowledge. The case studies

analyzed in each part illuminate the variety of roles memory played in the lives of the authors and in the educational materials they created, where it takes a variety of shapes. These differences are manifested in the way practical knowledge is conceptualized, the approaches taken to transmit this knowledge and the authors' efforts to shape their own identity before a broader public. The six cases complement each other, addressing different aspects of memory and changes over time.

Part II, "**The Calligrapher's Memory**," covers three case studies that discuss innovation and tradition in pedagogical materials for calligraphy aimed at individuals who had already achieved basic literacy. The first case study, **Chapter 2**, focuses on the development of the "eight methods of the character *yong*" (*yongzi bafa* 永字八法) during the Ming dynasty. It describes how an independent scholar and professional painter introduced graphic segmentations and popular references to produce accessible pedagogical material. It also discusses how writing was deconstructed into blocks of knowledge. This case's most striking feature, however, was not the popularity of the several manuals the author created, but the fact that his identity was quickly forgotten by society. Thus, this case addresses the increasing value practical knowledge was gaining during the Ming—at the cost of reduced regard for the identity of authors. The second case study, **Chapter 3**, considers a rhymed song-formula for learning cursive script that concerns itself with esthetic qualities of characters. The diachronic changes in mnemonic formulas, both in terms of content and materiality, are addressed here. Yet, it is the circulation and reception of this specific song, the *Hundred-Rhyme Song Formula For Cursive Script* (*Caojue baiyun ge* 草訣百韻歌) that reveals the shifts occurring in the field of calligraphy during the late Ming dynasty. This case shows that in all tiers of society, reference works and formal standards came to challenge the value of model works by masters of the past. The third case study, **Chapter 4**, covers privately published calligraphy treatises of the Qing dynasty. More specifically, it analyses the use of the grid as a tool to memorize the visual compositions of characters. The authors of the work addressed here lean heavily on lineages, both familial and scholarly, to promote the value of their contributions. While the practical content overlaps with their personal identities, it also becomes clear that the habits they inherited from earlier generations are continuously featured in their theories, even though their intellectual stance had changed dramatically.

Part III, The Painter's Memory, covers parallels to these issues in painting manuals and treatises through three case studies. The first case

study, **Chapter 5**, discusses how editors of practical manuals and popular encyclopedias of the late sixteenth century made efforts to simplify the language of elite instructional texts and at the same time sought to make craftsmen's painting knowledge accessible to elites. This case highlights how knowledge that did not originate from the elites began to circulate broadly in print as elite interest in practical knowledge grew. Concerning the development of mnemonic strategies, it discusses how painting knowledge was codified, streamlined and presented as part of a cohesive mnemonic system. **Chapter 6**, the second case study, discusses portraiture manuals published during the Qing, in which the authors develop innovative methods to teach portraiture techniques. In contrast to manuals from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which highlighted the sequencing of painting steps, Qing authors relied on the student's existing knowledge to communicate new painting practices and procedures. Their theories and approaches to portraiture, despite aiming for similar outputs, take different approaches to the composition process and conceptualization of the face due to the different knowledge bases used to codify portraiture techniques. The last case study, **Chapter 7**, discusses how painting knowledge was historicized after the Taiping War (1850-1864), a civil war that left most of the cultural centers in the Jiangnan region in ruins. It focuses on one painter whose traumatic experience during the war and new audience of foreign students in Shanghai inspired him to write a rhymed painting treatise to create a monument to a lost tradition. This case can be tied to numerous other initiatives of commemoration that took place during this period. What sets it apart from the previous two cases is the historicizing role memory takes on in the composition of the treatise.

In the **conclusion**, I discuss parallel issues and intellectual trends evident in these six cases, including the valorization of practical knowledge during the Ming dynasty and the increasing social value attributed to mnemonics during the Qing. The broader contribution that the study of pedagogical materials can make to the field of memory studies is illustrated through the concepts of "anchoring" and "weaving," discussed in connection to the creation of mnemonics; "institutions," as represented by educational texts; and the value of "ruminating," which is highlighted as a process for internalizing practices and developing skills through memorization and repetition.

PART I
Remembering in Imperial China

Chapter 1

Locating Memory

The recollection of memories is often triggered by objects or images we encounter in the world that surrounds us. The memories, however, remain unique and accessible only to the individual. One might thus wonder, where are these memories stored? In Western culture, memory has long been associated with the brain. As Draaisma describes, the understanding that memories were stored in the brain cavities, or ventricles, as proposed by the Greco-Roman physician Galen (d. 210), "remained unchallenged for over fifteen hundred years."[37] Later, as western theories about memory developed, the brain continued to be the seat of memory. The central role conferred on the brain in the process of remembering, however, should not be taken as self-evident.

In imperial China, up to the sixteenth century, the seat of memory was unanimously believed to be the heart. Common terms to discuss memory revolved around the ideas of "recording" (*ji* 記 and *zai* 載), "storing" (*cang* 藏) or "collecting" (*ji* 集) things within the heart (*yu xin* 於心) or within the breast (*xiong* 胸). Another character that refers to the acts of "recollecting" and "remembering" (*yi* 憶), also has the identifying component (*bushou* 部首) for heart 忄. The heart, often translated as "heart-mind" due to its connection to both intellectual and emotional faculties, was the repository of imaginary records.[38] Accordingly, the breast was sometimes referred to as a container, such as a "bamboo basket,"[39] and the act of memorizing was described as recording something "in the dark" (*an* 暗) or "in silence" (*mo* 默). Thus, like in the West, there was a parallel between memory and writing.[40] Both cultures held that memories could be stored within an organ and retrieved when searched for by the individual.

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[37] Draaisma. 2000. *Metaphors of Memory*, 26. Carruthers has also discussed graphic depictions of the brain and the "place" of memory. Carruthers. 2008. "Mechanisms for the Transmission of Culture: The Role of "Place" in the Arts of Memory."

[38] Since the location of memory in the body is not central to the accounts discussed in this study, the seat of memory is referred to as "mind" whenever the character for heart-mind (*xin* 心) is used.

[39] One example is translated in the third section of this chapter. For another example refer to Lu's article on the transition from "recitation" to "lecturing" during the Qing dynasty. 2018. "Cong 'jisong' dao 'jiangshou'?," 108.

[40] Draaisma discusses the early notion of memory as a wax tablet. 2000. *Metaphors of Memory*, 24-25.

There are no extant Chinese sources from before the sixteenth century that explain the workings of memory or the process of remembering. A debate about the physiology of remembering was only initiated when the idea of the heart as the storage site for memories was challenged after the introduction of Western knowledge. Jesuits visiting China, such as Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), began to discuss the location of the soul in the human body, also touching upon the conception of memory as being stored in the brain.[41] This issue became the topic of heated debates among Chinese scholars and Jesuits. Li Shizhen 李時珍 (1518-1593) was one of the first physicians to discuss the brain as the governing center of the body.[42] His arguments were taken up by later scholars, such as the physician Wang Qingren 王清任 (1768-1831), who claimed that the brain was the seat of memory. He undertook the task of revising "mistakes" contained in ancient Chinese medical texts, also basing himself of Western sources, and specifically addressed the location of memory. Wang's account is the first known Chinese record to address the production of memories based on sensorial input. In his arguments in favor of the brain as the repository for memories, he describes the physiological process of remembering as the result of the flow of *qi* 氣 from within the organs to the brain.

> Qi, exiting and entering, passes through the heart. Thus, the heart is the pathway of the exiting and entering of qi. How could it engender the spirit mechanism and store memory? [The] spirit mechanism and memory are in the brain. [...]
>
> The two ears connect to the brain and the sounds which they hear merge into the brain. [...] The two eyes are engendered by brain juice, and the two eyes are tied like a thread and grow from the brain. Things which are seen merge into the brain. [...] The nose connects to the brain. The fragrance and fetor [the nose smells] merges into the brain.[43]

[41] The complex debate about the functions of the heart and the brain is addressed in Chu. 2016. "Fangcun zhi jian." Zhu focuses on the influence of Jesuits on the debate, and describes how the traditional views of the heart as controlling center of the body were merged with Western conceptions of the brain as storage for memory. Matteo Ricci discusses memory as stored in the brain in his treatise on mnemonic technique, the *Western Art of Memory* (*Xiguo Jifa* 西國記法). See Lackner. 1986. *Das Vergessene Gedächtnis*, 20-21. Ricci's treatise was not well received and did not circulate broadly.

[42] Chu. 2016. "*Fangcun zhi jian*," 147. For further comment on this debate in the field of medicine, see Wang, Chung, Oving, and Becker. 2007.

[43] Wang et al. 2007. *Yi lin gai cuo: Correcting the errors in the forest of medicine*, 46.

His explanation of this process, he argues, is supported by the observable development of children, who build up their brain as they grow, and thus acquire skills and the ability to remember:

> Arriving at the age of three or four, the brain marrow of children is gradually filled, the fontanel has grown complete, the ears are able to hear, the eyes have spirit and liveliness, the nose is able to detect fragrance and fetor, and language is spoken in complete sentences. Therefore, in children who do not have memory, the brain marrow is not yet full. In the aged who do not have memory, the brain marrow is gradually emptying.[44]

Wang thus explains that brain marrow is built up through the production of essence juice from the intake of food and drink. When the marrow is deficient, such as in the very young and the elderly, it leads to the inability to remember. Yet, despite the far-reaching influence of foreign knowledge, Wang remained an exception and the majority of people, who were not involved in medical or religious debates, still viewed the heart as the seat of memory.[45] The "heart" and the "breast" continued to shape verbal expressions related to memorization even during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). Discussions involving memory from the imperial period show continuity in the focus on the effects and processes for strengthening memory. It was the social value of remembering and the content of what should be remembered that pervaded Chinese accounts from the 3rd to the 19th century. This chapter will address the commonalities these accounts shared, while changes in perception of specific mnemonic aids are addressed in the following chapters.

[44] Wang et al. 2007. *Yi lin gai cuo: Correcting the errors in the forest of medicine*, 47.

[45] Even scholars who engaged in medical debates, such as Yu Zhengxie (1775-1840), argued that the Chinese body was too different from the Western body, and their Western knowledge of anatomy could thus not be trusted. Wang et al. 2007. *Yi lin gai cuo: Correcting the errors in the forest of medicine*, IX. Dikötter lists some of the physical discrepancies Yu listed after studying Western anatomical treatises. 2015. *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 28.

The Importance of Remembering

Although no treatises on techniques for memorization have been transmitted from imperial times,[46] anecdotes and descriptions of memorization methods allow us to draw a picture of the role memory played in society and education. The memory of an individual—a person's ability to remember things—was not only perceived as useful for that person to retain and retrieve information; it was also socially relevant. In biographical accounts, the character and accomplishments of exemplary individuals were often associated with a good memory, while having a bad memory was described as a cause for embarrassment. Thus, training the ability to remember became a social concern.

Four biographical accounts of individuals who followed different career paths provide a glimpse into how important the ability to remember was in the Chinese empire across time and classes. Regardless of the existence and availability of printed books, memorizing information and canonical works was portrayed as an essential step in the education of all four men. Repeated recitation of texts was not only essential in acquiring literacy, but also provided them the tools to develop additional skills, such as essay composition and calligraphy. These individuals, a general of the Cao state of Wei 魏 (220-265), an Executive of the Secretariat of the northern Qi 北齊 (550-577), a teacher of the Tang dynasty 唐 (618-907), and an Investigating Censor of the Ming dynasty 明 (1368-1644), were all praised for their ability to memorize and to recall, and future generations remembered them for these skills which helped them to become great men.

In the *Records of the Three Kingdoms*, Zhong Hui 鍾會 (225-264) is described as an ambitious general of the state of Wei. His biography provides evidence that his good memory and education were key factors in his successful career. The detailed description of Zhong's educational process highlights how quickly he made progress. It was common for older family members to instruct children at home by having them recite texts back to their instructor. Oral transmission was the most common method for teaching children up to the Ming dynasty, while the written character was mostly disregarded at the initial stages of reading training. In the biography we read how his mother tutored him during his childhood. She was a woman

[46] No text containing a description of an art of memory has been handed down to the present day, and no mention of a treatise for memorization is made in bibliographies or catalogues.

of prudent and stern character, who understood how to educate and teach. Although her son Hui was still a little child, she was attentive to advise and instruct him. When he was four *sui,*[47] she taught him the *Classic of Filial Piety*; at age seven, he recited the *Analects* by heart; at the age of eight, he recited the *Book of Songs*; at the age of ten, he recited the *Venerable Documents*; at the age of eleven, he recited the *Book of Changes*; at the age of twelve, he recited the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the *Zuo Commentary* and the *Discourses of the States*; at the age of thirteen, he recited the *Rites of Zhou* and the *Record of Rites*; at the age of fourteen, he recited his father's *Record on the Classic of Changes*; at the age of fifteen, he was sent to the imperial academy to look into the different teachings in the remarkable works from all four directions. His mother then said to him: 'When that which one learns seems base, one becomes weary; when someone is weary, his mind becomes idle. I am afraid your mind has become idle. Thus, it would be deceiving to continue teaching you. From now on, you are to study on your own'.

夫人性矜嚴，明於教訓，會雖童稚，勤見規誨。年四歲授《孝經》，七歲誦《論語》，八歲誦《詩》，十歲誦《尚書》，十一誦《易》，十二誦《春秋》、《左氏傳》、《國語》，十三誦《周禮》、《禮記》，十四誦成侯《易記》，十五使入太學問四方奇文異訓。謂會曰：「學猥則倦，倦則意怠；吾懼汝之意怠，故以漸訓汝，今可以獨學矣。」[48]

According to the anecdote, Zhong was exceptionally gifted.[49] Zhong received his basic instruction from his mother by means of oral transmission. He learned the classics and historical records by heart and thus became 'ripe' for higher schooling.[50] He stood out at the age of four and his aptitude for memorization was directly connected to his development into an adult of

[47] According to Chinese counting, children are one *sui* 歲 at birth, meaning that Zhong was 3 years old in Western understanding.

[48] Chen. [1194?] *Sanguo zhi* 28, 29b.

[49] Nugent provides more examples of extraordinary memories, including women, from Han to the Tang dynasty. 2010. *Manifest in Words*, 76 -88. Bai discusses recitation in school and as part of primers, from the Song to the Qing. *Shaping the Ideal Child*. Yu discusses the process of reciting as part of a pedagogical process in imperial China. Yu. 2004. "Learning to Read in Late Imperial China."

[50] Yu. 2004. "Learning to Read in Late Imperial China," 11. Ko addresses the issue of basic education by mothers who sought to fit into Confucian standards. Learning was indispensable for "moral renewal." 1994. *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 165.

great talent who served at the Imperial Library.[51] In essence, the foundation for his career as an accomplished general was laid in his formative years.

The idea that elementary education, which relied heavily on memorization, was tied to a man's accomplishments is also illustrated in the next biography. In the *Records of the Sui*, we read that Li Delin 李德林 (died ca. 591), who held the post of Executive of the Secretariat during the northern Qi (550-577),

> was very clever as a child. Counting a few years of age, he recited Zuo Si's 左思 "Rhapsody of the Capital of Shu,"[52] taking only a little over ten days to go through it effortlessly. Gao Long saw this and was full of awe. Informing an official, he said: "Being like this at his age, he will certainly become a great talent under heaven." The scholars of the capital of Ye all came to take a look. For the rest of the month, during daytime, chariots and horses would not stop coming by. At the age of fifteen, he recited the five classics and anthologies of ancient and current texts, daily going over more than thousand characters. Soon he was broadly knowledgeable in all the ancient classics; and of the classics on divination, there was none he was not acquainted with. He excelled at composing essays, expressing the essential with unimpeded reasoning.
>
> 幼聰敏，年數歲，誦左思《蜀都賦》，十餘日便度。高隆之見而嗟嘆，遍告朝士，云：「若假其年，必為天下偉器。」鄴京人士多就宅觀之，月餘，日中車馬不絕。年十五，誦五經及古今文集，日數千言。俄而該博墳典，陰陽緯候無不通涉。善屬文，辭核而理暢。[53]

Li later became an official and advisor to the throne. He drafted a dynastic history of the state of Qi, indeed becoming "a great talent," as Gao Long predicted in the story. Whether such anecdotes can be taken as a faithful description of the childhood of either man is uncertain. However, the connection between Li's good memory and Gao's prediction of his success is telling. The boy's talent for memorizing was unusual enough to attract a number of curious scholars, and the fact that he was such an intensive reader,

[51] Chen. [1194?] *Sanguo zhi* 28, 28b.
[52] This is one of the "Rhapsodies of the Three Capitals", that were later included in the *Wen Xuan* (*Selections of Refined Literature*). The text is approximately 2000 characters long.
[53] Li. 1936. *Taiping yulan*, 443, *renshi* 84, *zhiren zhong*, 10a-b.

most likely retaining the written content verbatim in his mind, also provided him with the material and models to become a good essayist.

In a similar fashion, in the epitaph written for Yin Shouzhen 尹守貞 (d. 688), who worked as a teacher during the Tang dynasty and was an enthusiast of ancient learning, we read that

> at the age of seven, he recited the [glossary] *Erya*, being able to understand the meaning of the glosses for the characters in the classics, and also know the names of plants and animals. At fifteen, he recited the three classics on rites [*Rites of Zhou, Record of Rites* and *Ceremonies and Rites*], gained clarity about the ways of the ruler and his followers and the father and his sons, and established the order of the offerings for celebrations and funerary affairs. At twenty, he recited the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and the *Venerable Documents*, capturing the essence of the methods of the five elements and the nine divisions, and of judging the moral integrity of the praise and blame [in the *Annals*] and of the forming of alliances. At the age of twenty-five, he recited the *Book of Odes* and the *Book of Changes* and was able to discern and rectify the origin of the elegantiae and eulogiae, exhausting the utmost of the transformations and incessant creation. He was also able to recite the old histories and the books of the hundred schools, mastering the standards of literary composition and of writing grass and clerical script.
>
> 七歲誦《爾雅》，能通書契訓詁之義，識草木鳥獸之名。十五誦三禮，能明君臣父子之道，定郊廟吉凶之制。二十誦《春秋》、《尚書》，能精五行九疇之數，斷褒貶會盟之節。二十五誦《詩》及《易》，能辯正雅頌之始，極變化生生之至。又能誦古史百家之書，善文章草隸之則。[54]

Just as for general Zhong and the historian Li, it is in Yin's childhood that memorization played the most significant role in his development. However, going beyond childhood, he made use of the same recitation practice as a grown man. The epitaph reveals that he was not only learning the content by heart through repetitive recitation, but that this practice helped him gain thorough knowledge of the content of the texts even at a young age. Having these texts in his memory allowed him to comprehend the

[54] Excerpt from epitaph for Yin Shouzhen. Sun. 1993. *Sui Tang Wudai jiaoyu lunzhu xuan*, 215.

things and practices around him—from rituals to calligraphy – and draw connections among them.

Memory is still given a significant role in the description of an individual's achievements in a biography of a Ming official named Zhang Ji 張集, who lived during the sixteenth century. Except for the information provided in his very short biography published in a local monograph, not much about him is known:

> Zhang Ji succeeded in the provincial level examinations in 1552 and held the post of Investigating Censor on the Fujian route. He had extensive factual knowledge and a remarkable memory (*boxue qiangji* 博學強記). He was skilled in composing poetry, and was good at writing calligraphy. Concerning medicine, the preparation of remedies and the principles of music and pitch, in all of these fields he reached excellence.
>
> 張集，嘉靖壬子舉人，官至福建道監察御史。博學強記，工詩文，善書，醫藥，音律，悉臻妙境。[55]

The term used to describe Zhang, *boxue qiangji* 博學強記, a variant for *bowen qiangji* 博聞強記, was already commonly used during the Han dynasty, and can be found in numerous biographies from the Song to the Qing. In a biography as short as Zhang's, which lacks detail and provides no insight into his character, it becomes clear that the praise of memory had become a set phrase. Yet, the formulaic quality of the biography indicates that memory was generally accepted as a skill that deserved acknowledgment and inspired social respect. Memory had become an undisputable social good.

While these four examples of men with a good memory connected the ability to recite and memorize to creative endeavors and political achievements, having a bad memory also had its social significance. An anecdote told by Lu You 陸游 (1125-1209) in his *Notes from the Hut of Learning when Old* (*Laoxue yan biji* 老學庵筆記) relates how two men, Prince Su 肅王 and Shen Yuanyong 沈元用, are lodged in a temple and have nothing to do during their leisure time. Upon finding a Tang stele with an inscription of over three thousand characters, Shen begins to recite these repeatedly in order to memorize them. Meanwhile, Su strolls about, paying him no heed. Upon returning to the lodging, Shen, with an "arrogant hope to display his

[55] Lü. 1764. *Jiezhou quanzhi*, juan 9, 4b.

intelligence," begins to write down the inscription but fails to remember fourteen characters, leaving blanks. Upon this, Su looks at it, and without a trace of arrogance, fills all the gaps one by one and corrects four or five characters Shen had remembered incorrectly. Dumbfounded, Shen acknowledges his inferiority.[56] Su's superior memory thus serves as a humbling reminder to an arrogant scholar.

The anecdote of Zhang Sanlang 張三郎, who enjoyed playing the flute, provides an example of how memory was also crucial in practical matters. Zhang, however, was not as lucky as Shen, and was openly mocked for not having a good memory. One day during the year of 1312, Zhang was outside on a bridge playing the flute when an old man came over and taught him how to improve the tune he was playing, showing him how to place his fingers on the flute. Zhang was pleased by the changes and asked the old man to teach him a new tune, upon which the old man took the flute to himself and played a song that Zhang believed to "surpass vulgarity." After inquiring about the lyrics to the song, Zhang further asked who the composer was. The old man told him it was a song by the lady Liu Miaorong 劉妙容.[57] Zhang further asked who had recorded the fingering score to it, upon which the old man answered that Miaorong had transmitted the song to him herself. Zhang then asked the old man to show him the order of the fingers once again. However, hearing this, the old man just laughed and got up saying: "Son, with this ordinary mind of yours that so easily forgets, how will I be able to teach you!?" (子凡心易忘，我岂能教爾耶). He left and was nowhere to be found. Later, although Zhang tried to play the tune, searching for the right keys, he could not reproduce the elegant harmony.[58]

The two stories, of flute-player Zhang and of the arrogant scholar Shen, highlight the embarrassing positions in which the characters find themselves due to their lack of memory. Shen is taught a moral lesson, being forced to acknowledge that his attitude does not correspond to his actual knowledge, while Zhang, although not as conceited as Shen, is turned down as a student due to his unimpressive memory. Thus, in contrast to the four examples described above, for whom a good memory during childhood opened the path for a promising future and the performance of outstanding deeds, these two

[56] Lu. 1782. *Laoxue yan biji*, juan 5, 4b. In a Qing version of this anecdote in the *Chenyuan Zhiyu* 宸垣識餘, the two scholars are explicitly said to have been sent from the southern Song to serve the Jin.
[57] Daughter of Liu Huiming 劉惠明, dates unknown.
[58] Gao. 1817. *Pingjiang jishi*, 6a-b.

cases of failure illustrate how an individual's memory could taint his moral and social image, leading to his being cast aside for his lack of potential.

These biographies and anecdotes illustrate the social value of having a good memory, highlighting its importance in an individual's development and social life. It also becomes clear, however, that these men, who were naturally endowed with excellent memories, were exceptions. Many knew that memory had to be trained with proper methods. One man, Tang Biao 唐彪, who lived during the late Qing dynasty, gives a personal account that shows how having a child with a bad memory was a serious matter for parents.

Tang's son began schooling at an age of six *sui,* but was not able to recite texts from memory. Unhappy about this, Tang hired three different teachers within the following three years, but no changes could be perceived. In the fourth year, as the problem persisted, he gave up on finding a new teacher. Luckily, he happened to encounter a teacher that finally delivered him from this situation. This teacher succeeded in making his son recite texts from memory by paying close attention to each character and its meaning. This was a great relief for Tang, who proceeded to record the teacher's technique in order to help others.[59]

Tang was not alone in recording and transmitting techniques for memorization. The social concern with memory, which was crucial for acquiring literacy and for developing skills, provided the context for the development of numerous methods that aimed to support students in learning and in strengthening their innate ability to remember. Many knew that memory had to be trained with proper methods, and the way these methods functioned depended on what the student was supposed to remember.

Remembering Text

In imperial Chinese society, most accounts of memorization skills and techniques refer to the acquisition of literacy and to the verbatim memorization of texts. For most of Chinese history, literacy was a central concern of civil servants and their families, while other groups, such as merchants and physicians, often mastered only the characters that were required in their trade. With the establishment of the open civil service

[59] Tang included his personal story in his treatise for teaching children. Tang. [1699] 1977. *Fushi shanyoufa*, 18. This method for teaching children to read is mentioned in Yu. 2012. "Character Recognition."

examinations during the Song dynasty (960-1279), all students preparing for the examinations were expected to memorize canonical texts and model essays.[60] Thus, beyond its crucial role in the acquisition of literacy, training one's memory became an indirect means to garner social status, since it helped the student pass the examinations. In response to this need, the educated elite developed a variety of techniques for memorizing texts. Memory training was an essential formative process for aspiring scholars, and some even argued that memorizing texts was the only way to make daily progress in their studies.[61]

The training of memory began at a young age, and families used character miscellanea (*zazi* 雜字), primers and poems to instruct their young children.[62] The prominence of memorization and recitation of texts during childhood can be verified in primers and treatises composed for teaching children as early as the Tang.[63] In the preface to Li Han's 李韓 (dates unknown) *Children's Primer* (*Meng qiu* 蒙求), for example, his contemporary Li Hua 李華 (715-766) praises it for being easy to recite (*yi yu fengsong* 易於諷誦), and explains that the text's format facilitates memorization. The lines all have four characters, and each set of four lines shares the same rhyme.[64] In a similar vein, works that were popular for teaching children during the Tang, such as the *Thousand Character Essay* (*Qianziwen* 千字文) or the *Trimetrical Classic* (*Sanzi jing* 三字經), had phrases with a fixed number of characters and

[60] Elman. 2000. *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, 261-270. Before the Northern Song, candidates had to be either recommended or have kinship relations to partake in the examinations. For a description of the changes that occurred in the practices for recruiting officials, see Elman. 2000. *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, Chapter 1.

[61] According to Chen Shan, for example, "studying relies solely on memorizing. Only this way can one make progress daily". 1630. *Menshi xinhua*, juan 4, 2a.

[62] Character miscellanea are addressed in Wu. 2007. *Ming Qing yilai minjian shenghuo zhishi de jian'gou yu chuandi*.

[63] Song scholars such as Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) already emphasized the importance of training memory. They believed the tender years to be most fruitful for the development of visual, auditory and gestural memory. Gernet. 2003. "L'éducation des premières années," 38-19. Character books that were intended for scribes and adults also circulated earlier, during the Han dynasty. One of such books, the *Jijiu pian* 急就篇, is addressed in chapter 3.

[64] These are based on the sequence of the *fan qie* 反切 system. The ending characters of each of the first four lines are *tong* 通, *xiong* 熊, *dong* 東 and *zhong* 忠. In some cases, as with the third set, rhyming with *he* 河, the current sound of the characters does not allow us to fully render the rhyme, but looking into dictionaries listing the *fan qie* composition of the character, one can gain a notion of the sound the character used to have: *he* 河, *ge* 歌, *duo* 多 (formally with an ending sound like in *he* 何) and *e* 訛.

rhymes.[65] As Xiong Cifu describes in his preface to *Teaching Children with Tang Poetry* (*Tangshi yangmeng* 唐詩養蒙), written during the Qing, the ancients based the education of children on songs and poems because these enter the mind easily, and children can thus learn effortlessly.[66] For this reason, Ming scholars, such as Lü Desheng 呂得勝 (fl. 1550), specifically reformulated Confucian ideals in colloquial language and set them to tunes. They believed that texts children could sing were more effective for teaching.[67]

After children were able to recite texts from memory, learning to write characters was the next step in a child's education, followed by learning to interpret characters in sentences, and finally learning how to write essays.[68] Unlike languages that use an alphabet to record the sounds of words, Chinese demanded two distinct learning steps to bridge the gap between the written and spoken language. The repetitive format and the use of rhymes made it easier to memorize the sounds of the characters and later recognize them in a text.[69] Memorization was the most suitable method not only for relating the sounds of familiar texts to written characters, but also for learning how to write, since it allowed the learner to collect model phrases and internalize compositional features for future use. Some of the most common primers for small children, such as the *Thousand Character Essay*, presented the content in grammatically coherent blocks to help the child internalize sentence constructions for writing.[70]

It was a common belief that parents should take advantage of their child's youth and encourage the memorization of as many texts and songs as

[65] Zhang Zhigong discusses the earliest versions of the texts and additional sources that used these texts as base. 1992. *Chuantong yuwen jiaoyu jiaocai lun,* 13-30. Zhang Nali and Nugent compare versions of the *Thousand Character Essay* and annotations that accompanied the base text. Zhang. 2001, 2002. "Dunhuang ben 'Liuzi qianziwen' chutan xiyi." Nugent. 2018. "Structured Gaps."

[66] Another example is the *Liweng duiyun* 笠翁對韻, by the Ming scholar Li Yu 李漁, in which poetic terms are presented in antithetical pairs and explained in a rhyming format.

[67] Xiong. 1990. "Tangshi yangmeng xu," 126. For Qing developments, see Bai. 2005. *Shaping the Ideal Child*, 168-169. On Lü Desheng's son, Lü Kun, and his pedagogical approaches, see Handlin. 1983. *Action in Late Ming Thought*.

[68] A division of the learning process into three phases is defended in Elman. 2000. *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China,* 262.

[69] The continued reliance on recitation in contemporary China due to the gap between sound and visual representation of characters is addressed in Ye. 2007. "'Memorisation,' Learning and Cultural Cognition."

[70] Zhang Zhigong. 1992. *Chuantong yuwen jiaoyu jiaocai lun*, 78.

possible in the child's tender years. Lu Shiyi 陸世儀 (1611-1672) advises his reader that

> Every person has memory and understanding. At the age of fifteen or younger, one is not yet influenced by the desire for material things, and the intellect is not yet blooming, thus, one relies more on memory and less on understanding. From the age of fifteen onwards, the intellect has unfolded and the interest for things begins to influence one, thus, one relies more on understanding, and less on memory. That is why when people are studying, it is always appropriate, if they are under fifteen, to let them read in order to memorize. One should not only read the four books and the five classics, but also [books concerning] astronomy, geography, history and mathematics. For every one of these [fields] there are singing formulas that must all be memorized. If the [student] is a little older than that, not only will he not be willing to recite texts [by heart], moreover, he will not be capable of reciting. Nowadays, people in private village schools instructing children all teach their students to read out lines from poems, but that really is pointless.
>
> 凡人有記性，有悟性。自十五歲以前，物欲未染，知識未開，則多記性，少悟性。自十五歲後，知識既開，物欲漸染，則多悟性，少記性。故人凡所當讀書，皆當自十五以前，使之熟讀。不但四書五經卽如天文地理史學算學之類，皆有歌訣，皆須熟讀。若年稍長不惟不肯誦讀，且不能誦讀矣。今人村塾中開蒙多教子弟念詩句真是無謂。[71]

Lu was not the only educator to lay emphasis on two different phases of life and on the "appropriate" type of knowledge that should be conveyed to a child. As mentioned in the section above, recitation accompanied the teacher Yin in his studies for a long time. In the *Family Counsels of Mr. Yan* (*Yanshi jiaxun* 顏氏家訓), Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531-595) supports the idea that grown men, regardless of their age, could learn by reciting. Yan's instructions served as a reference for elite families who educated their children at home for several centuries. In his chapter titled "Motivating Study" he writes:

> When people are young, their minds are focused and sharp; once they are grown up, their thinking is scattered and distracted. Thus,

[71] Lu. 1868. *Sibianlu jiyao*, juan 1, 2a-b.

> one must teach them early, and not miss this opportunity. When I was seven, I recited the "Rhapsody on the Numinous Light Palace of the Lu [State]" and up to this day, having only repeated it once every ten years, I still have not forgotten it. From the age of twenty, after putting aside for only one month the classics and writings I had recited previously, it would all be gone. Although there may be disappointments in life, and one may experience such losses in adult life, one can still engage in study at an advanced age, and one should not give up on oneself.
>
> 人生小幼，精神專利，長成已後，思慮散逸，固須早教，勿失機也。吾七歲時，誦《靈光殿賦》，至於今日，十年一理，猶不遺忘；二十之外，所誦經書，一月廢置，便至荒蕪矣。然人有坎壈，失於盛年，猶當晚學，不可自棄。[72]

He continues by quoting the *Analects* and gives a few examples of men who started reciting classics at an advanced age, concluding:

> All these men became great scholars. They were all confused during their youth but later found clarity. Nowadays, people get married and capped [a ritual of transition to adulthood] without having studied, upon which they say that it is already too late [to start], continuing on the same road of ignorance; this is just foolish. To study when one is young is like having the brightness of the sun. To study when one is old is like holding a candle to walk in the darkness. This is still better than closing one's eyes and seeing nothing.
>
> 皆終成大儒，此並早迷而晚寤也。世人婚冠未學，便稱遲暮，因循面牆，亦為愚耳。幼而學者，如日出之光，老而學者，如秉燭夜行，猶賢乎瞑目而無見者也。[73]

Although he acknowledges that children have it easier with memorization, it was also common for adults to rely on chanting from memory as a means to learn something new. Most of the men in Yan's examples started to recite books, such as the *Analects,* the *Classic of Filial Piety* and the *Annals*, at the age of forty or older. This is an indication that these men were illiterate and learning to recognize characters based on these classics. A similar anecdote is told about Duan Wei 段維, a man of the Tang,

[72] Yan. 1919. *Yanshi jiaxun*, juan shang, 17b.
[73] Yan. 1919. *Yanshi jiaxun*, juan shang, 17b-18a.

who could not read or write at the age of forty. As people were unsure whether he would really be able to learn it at his age, they first tested his memory, having him recite contemporary poems. On the next day, Duan could still recite every one of them, which led him to be taken in as a student and be taught the *Classic of Filial Piety*.[74]

Age did not matter when the goal was to learn characters, and there was no other way to do this but by memorizing them.[75] Reciting texts in a loud voice was the most common technique used both for children and adults. Mister Lü of Xingyang[76] believed that when teaching children how to read, "every character has to be clearly pronounced separately and every sentence's last character should be read with emphasis. By emphasizing it in reading, one can firmly remember it."[77]

Two accounts by Westerners who had first-hand experience of China, Justus Doolittle (1824-1880)[78] and Arthur Smith (1845-1932), show that even at the end of the Qing, children were still being taught to read in this manner. According to Smith,

> When the little pupil at the age of perhaps seven or eight takes his seat in the school for the first time, neither the sound nor the meaning of a single character is known to him. The teacher reads over the line, and the lad repeats the sounds, constantly corrected until he can pronounce them properly. He thus learns to associate a particular sound with a certain shape. A line or two is assigned to each scholar, and after the pronunciation of the characters has been ascertained, his "study" consists in bellowing the words in as high a key as possible. Every Chinese regards this shouting as an indispensable part of the child's education. If he is not shouting how can the teacher be sure that

[74] Nugent. 2010. *Manifest in Words*, 118-119.

[75] Yu points out that up to the Ming, the most common way to learn to read was memorizing the sound of texts by rote, which would later be combined with the written source so the student could associate the already known sounds to the written character. She also argues that Ming scholars developed a method based on character recognition, in which the shape and composition of the individual character were presented and explained to the students before engaging full texts. Nevertheless, both methods still rely on memorization. Yu. 2012. "Character Recognition."

[76] Probably Lü Xizhe 呂希哲 (1036-1114).

[77] Wu. 1817. *Nenggai zhai manlu*, juan 12, 2a.

[78] Doolittle's account of children learning to read is interesting for his description of the term "backing the book", or *bei shu* 背書, a term used to describe the act of memorizing, during which the pupil had to turn around with his back to the book and recite the content to his teacher, who could hold the volume in his hands to check if no characters were missing or wrong. Doolittle. 1865. *The Social Life of the Chinese I*, 377-378.

he is studying? and as studying and shouting are the same thing, when he is shouting there is nothing more to be desired.[79]

However, adults could also be very enthusiastic about reciting texts in a loud voice. Wu Yubi 吳與弼 (1391-1469), for example, recounts in a letter to his friend how his acquaintance Wu Derang 吳德讓 harmed his "vital energy" by being overenthusiastic in his studies and raising his voice too high while reading. He writes to his friend that Derang eventually became sick due to this study practice, and no longer had the courage to study out loud.[80] These examples illustrate how hearing and repeating the sound of the characters was important for memorizing. If the texts were written in rhyme, as was the case with many primers for children, the learner was given cues on how the text continued, making memorization easier.

Cues based on rhymes helped the mind link the lines of a text together. However, as most of the texts that had to be learned did not possess such features, methods based on similar principles could be used for memorizing texts in prose, as described by a certain Xing Maoxun 邢懋循 (dates unknown). Xing's teacher relied on the linking of text passages, as well as on repetition and the establishment of a routine to instruct him as a boy. His experience is retold by later scholars:

> When [Xing's] teacher taught him to read, he used the method of "consecutive numbering". On the first day, one would recite [the content] of a [sheet of] paper, and on the following day, again one would recite [the content of] a paper as well as that of the one recited on the first day. On the third day, [recite a sheet] again, and also that of the first day and of the following day. In this way, one would slowly add on, until one reached the eleventh day, on which one would exclude [the contents] recited on the first day. [Thus,] if one successively recites ten numbered [pages] every day, after reciting one complete round, one will have recited [each sheet of paper] ten times. So, even if a person is mediocre, there will not be one that does not master [the passages] .
>
> 其師教之讀書，用連號法，初日誦一紙，次日又誦一紙，竝初日所誦誦之，三日又竝初日次日所誦誦之，如是漸增，引至十一

[79] Smith. 1899. *Village Life in China*, 80.
[80] Gao. 1990. Mingdai jiaoyu lunzhu xuan, 94-95.

日，乃除去初日所誦，每日皆連誦十號，誦至一週，遂成十週。人卽中下，亦無不爛熟矣。[81]

Thus, Xing's teacher was aware of the efficacy of repetition and chanting for memorization, but he incorporated these two methods into a ten-day routine. He divided the text to be learned into short passages that were then associated with a day. The student saw a specific slip of paper with its text for ten days in a row, but each slip of paper was placed in a specific order among the other slips. Thus, by creating a visual and temporal order for these units of text, they became associated with the neighboring slips, giving the mind the necessary cues to remember them. Movable materials for memorization, such as paper cards with characters or strokes carved out of bamboo to compose characters were often employed to aid the student.[82]

The visual and mobile aspect of the written characters on paper also helped Ye Yishen, who developed his own method for memorization:

> In *Grass Hut's Idle Chat* it is written: Ye Yisheng from Licheng once described the *method for strengthening memory*: "Being of a very dull nature, every time when reading a book, upon encountering [a passage] that brought joy or pleased my mind, I would immediately take note of it. Once the note had been taken, I would recite it over ten times. I would stick [the notes] onto the walls [of my home] and every day there were necessarily more than ten sections [of text]; when less, it would be six or seven. Closing my book and strolling about, I would then look at the notes stuck to the walls. Usually doing this three to five times a day, I surely got intimately familiarized [with them], and not a single character was forgotten. When the wall was about to become covered with pasted [notes], I would take [down] the pasted records from the first day and stow them in a bamboo basket. Only when I had read the notes once more would I fill up the spot [it had occupied]. I was continuously taking down and filling up, and over the years, not a single day went by without [this practice]. [Thus,] in the course of a year, I would grasp [in my memory] about three thousand sections, and with the passing of the years, the bamboo basket in my breast was gradually

[81] Wang. 1899. *Jiaotongzi fa*, 6a. Also in Zhang. [1853?]. *Hao'an xianhua*, 38b-39a.

[82] Yu describes how children should learn individual characters aided by the maids, who should show them a few of the cards on a daily basis, training the children to recognize the characters in both regular and seal script. The seal script should elucidate the origin and graphic composition of the character. 2012. "Character Recognition," 5-10. For the carved bamboo strokes, see Bauer. 1990. *Das Antlitz Chinas*, 516.

richly [filled]. Every time I met someone who strove to be broadly learned but only slightly obtained an impression and stopped at that, [I knew that] some time having passed, he would be left with an empty breast. Thus, it is better to do as I, retrieving the essential and truly seizing it.

《蒿菴閒話》曰歷城葉奕繩嘗言強記之法：「某性甚鈍，每讀一書，遇意所喜好，卽劄錄之。錄訖，乃朗誦十餘遍。粘之壁間，每日必十餘段，少亦六七段，掩卷閒步，卽就壁間觀所粘錄，日三五次以為常，務期精熟，一字不遺。粘壁粘卽滿，乃取第一日所粘著收笥中，俟再讀有所錄，補粘其處，隨收隨補，歲無曠日。一年之內，約得三千段，數年之後，腹笥漸富。每見務為泛覽者，略得影響而止；稍經時日，便成枵腹，不如予之約取而實得也。」[83]

Ye engaged daily in this memorization routine, covering the walls of his studio with the passages he considered to hold the essence of the texts. The walls thus became the support for a collage, in which each snippet of text occupied a specific spot. He could literally stroll through the texts, knowing where to encounter each passage in the space of his studio, which could have helped him when trying to recall them.[84] Thus, both Ye and Xing not only recited the texts, but also looked at the paper slips repeatedly. They relied on methods that emphasized the use of shorter passages of text and that ordered them spatially among other passages.

At this point, Ye was probably at an advanced age and neither preparing for an examination nor studying the classics. He recorded passages that pleased him or brought him joy, defending his method by claiming that he could thus glean a reliable harvest of information and gain broad knowledge without the need to memorize an entire text word by word. In a similar manner, Chen Shan 陳善 (fl. 1149) recommends devoting one's attention to excerpts as it requires less material to be memorized. He recounts how Chen Jinzhi 陳晉之[85] only read 120 characters every day, but that there was no book he did not finish. Although his daily readings did not amount to much, what he read during one year was more than adequate.

[83] Wang. 1899. *Jiaotongzi fa*, 5b-6a.

[84] Associating the things to be remembered to specific places was an important resource in European Arts of Memory. Although Ye's method cannot be compared to the complex use of imaginary loci in the European theories on rhetoric, his collage surely gave him visual stimulus that would help him to memorize the passages.

[85] Probably Chen Yang 陳暘, *jinshi* of 1094.

Chen Shan criticized his contemporaries for reciting thousands of characters every day. At first, this gave them a sense of accomplishment, but Chen maintained that all they had read was quickly forgotten. By the end of the year, if they had not even mastered 120 characters, how little had they learned in a day? He concludes by confessing that as a young lad, he was also obsessed with reading as much as possible, regardless of how well he retained the contents. The consequences of this practice still made themselves felt, and Chen perceived his breast as empty and void, disappointed to have learned about Chen Jinzhi's method only in old age.[86]

Zhao Shenzhen 趙慎畛 (1762–1826) describes what he regarded as the three vital methods for studying difficult material in his notes. He writes that in addition to the method for visually strengthening memory and the method of consecutive numbering described in the accounts of Ye and Xing, the method with which he was taught how to memorize the classics should also be known by every young scholar. He describes his learning experience as follows:

> When reading the classics, one must have a notebook to record things. This method was first used by Xu Luzhai of the Yuan, and I know that my ancestor as well as master Zhang Renzhai both used it. Every day one should get up during the fifth watch. From where one starts reading to where one stops, one must always record clearly the points that are made in each phrase. Reviewing this on another day, one must base oneself on the notes to think silently [about the passages to which they refer]. If [a passage has been] forgotten, one should return to the original passage and make a note of it, and with time one will be able to familiarize oneself with it.
>
> 看經要有手記簿，此法始於元許魯齋，余存吾前輩及張忍齋師皆踵之。每日分五起，從某處讀起，至某處止，即記明某句有幾說。他日重溫，即照所記默想。或遺忘，重翻原書記之，久久自能熟習矣。[87]

According to Zhao's method for remembering the classics, writing was indispensable. One summarized the original text in writing, which later served as starting point for the recollection of the exact passages. A similar opinion is

[86] Chen. 1630. *Menshi xinhua*, juan 4, 2a.
[87] Zhao. 2001. *Yuchao zazhi*, juan xia, 184.

expressed by Li Guangdi 李光地 (1642-1718), who believes that "going over a book with one's eyes or reading it out loud are both not as efficient as copying it, because when one moves the hand [while copying], the mind must necessarily comply. Even if you recite it twenty times, that does not require as much effort as copying excerpts one single time."[88]

Even the Song scholar Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) strove to grasp the 'essence' of passages in writing to memorize a text *in toto*, as the following anecdote recounts:

> The Chief Minister of the Court of the Imperial Granaries Zhu Zaishang had been teaching in Huanggang[89] for a while. When Dongpo [Su Shi] was exiled to live in the area, he did not know the Chief of Granaries yet. [One day,] one of Dongpo's guests recited one of Zhu's poems that read: "Idle hours at one's post, not a thing to do; a butterfly flying up the steps." Astonished, Dongpo said: "Whose work is this?!" The guest answered it was Zhu's. Dongpo extolled it over and over, claiming it had deeply grasped a flair of subtle elegance. After some time, Zhu went to meet Dongpo in person and thereupon they became intimate friends. After this, Zhu repeatedly received invitations to Dongpo's house. On one occasion, when he came to visit, according to etiquette, the guest had already been announced, but Dongpo stalled and would not come out. [Zhu was caught up in a dilemma:] If he stayed, he would [probably] have to wait until he was completely exhausted, but he could not leave, because he already had himself announced. The situation lasted quite a while, until Dongpo finally came out, explaining how embarrassed he was for keeping his guest waiting so long, adding: "I just finished my daily lesson, I got lost in inquiries…" They sat down, and when they had finished discussing other matters, Zhu asked him: "What are these daily lessons you just mentioned?" Dongpo replied: "Copying the *Book of the Han.*" Zhu said: "With your talent, you open a book and browse through, so that every fiber of your body does not forget [the content], why copy [the books] by hand?" Dongpo said: "That is not so. When I read the *Book of the Han*, I copy by hand three times. This is what I just finished doing. At first, I copied three characters for a specific event as a [summarizing] title.[90] The second time, I copied two characters. Today, I copied a single character". Zhu got up and

[88] Li. 1782. *Rongcun ji,* juan 21, 21a-22a.
[89] Located in present-day Hubei.
[90] Probably written down on the margin of the book, otherwise his guest would not have been able to choose a "title" from the book for Su to recite a passage.

asked yet another question: “This book that you have copied, would you be willing to give me a lesson?” Thereupon, Dongpo called an old servant to fetch one of the volumes on his desk. Zhu looked at it, but he could not understand what Dongpo meant. Dongpo said: “Sir, pick a one-character title to test me”. Zhu did as requested. As soon as he heard [the character], Dongpo immediately recited over a hundred words, not a single character was missing. For all the characters picked, it was the same. Zhu fell back into his seat, sighing for quite a while, saying: “Master, you truly are an extraordinary talent in exile!” On another day, Zhu told his son Xinzhong about it and said: “If Dongpo, being this outstanding, does this, with a character of an average person, how can one not study diligently?!” Thus, Xinzhong tried to instruct his son Lu with this method. This was told by Shuyang.

朱司農載上嘗分教黃岡，時東坡謫居黃，未識司農。公客有誦公之詩云：「官閑無一事，蝴蝶飛上階。」東坡愕然曰：「何人所作？」客以公對。東坡稱賞再三，以為深得幽雅之趣。異日，公往見，遂為知己 。自此，時獲登門 。偶一日謁至，典謁已通名，而東坡移時不出。欲留則伺候頗倦，欲去則業已達姓名。如是者久之，東坡始出，愧謝久候之意，且云：「適了些日課，失於探知。」坐定，他話畢，公請曰：「適來先生所謂日課者何？」對雲：「抄《漢書》。」公曰：「以先生天才，開卷一覽，可終身不忘，何用手抄耶？」東坡曰：「不然，某讀《漢書》，至此凡三經手抄矣。初則一段事抄三字為題，次則兩字，今則一字。」公離席復請曰：「不知先生所抄之書，肯幸教否？」東坡乃命老兵就書几上取一冊至，公視之，皆不解其義。東坡云：「足下試舉題一字。」公如其言，東坡應聲輒誦數百言，無一字差缺，凡數挑皆然。公降嘆良久，曰：「先生真謫仙才也。」他日，以語其子新仲曰：「東坡尚如此，中人之性，豈可不勤讀書耶！」新仲嘗以是誨其子輅。叔暘云。[91]

Su summarized the content of the book with single characters that he most likely marked on the top of the page in his own exemplar of the *Hanshu*. No mention of recitation or chanting is made, but repetition plays a role in his practice of continuous copying and condensing of information. Even though his method relies on a more intellectual manipulation of the content, in contrast to rote memorization, and on the embodiment of the text through repeated copying, the aim of this enterprise is still to reproduce the text faithfully, “without missing a single character.”

[91] Chen. 1782. *Qijiu xuwen, 1, 1a-b.*

The method's efficacy is proven by his guest, who tests Su's memory upon request. Zhu is so convinced that he tells his son about it, who then teaches his own son according to this method. Thus, the practice of transmitting memorization techniques orally is described in the anecdote about Su Shi as well as in Zhao Shenzhen's account, discussed above. Zhao claimed to know for certain that the method by which he had been instructed had its origin with the Yuan master Xu Luzhai and that his own ancestor and his master Zhang Renzhai had also used it. Zhao thus describes a line of transmission of a tried and tested method. While this transmission narrative might have been used to add value to the methods being discussed, the competitive environment of the civil service examinations must have led scholars to keep such 'essential formulas' (*yao jue* 要訣) and learning methods secret, sharing them only with family, friends and students. Had Chen Gu 陳鵠 (fl. 1279) not recorded the story about Su Shi, the transmission of the technique among friends and family members would be hard to trace.

Commercial publishers also noticed the value of memory aids and memorization techniques, publishing works to help students prepare for the examinations. These also made use of condensed phrases or summarizing headings to make the content easy to memorize. One work that took the essential points of an essay to create a header in the format of a short sentence is Chen Fuliang's 陳傅良 (d. 1203) *Master Yongjia's 'To the Point in All Cases'* (*Yongjia xiansheng bamian feng* 永嘉先生八面鋒).[92] This collection of essays had syncretic titles with eight characters that summarized the key concepts discussed in the essay. These titles helped students recall the reasoning of the essay by memorizing only the headings. Students could thus recall the content, which concerned governance and history, by going through the titles; as a result they could access ample material in their minds to write essays.[93]

[92] For an example and translation of a heading and the administrative fields its principle could be applied in, see De Weerdt. 2007. *Competition over Content*, 132-133.

[93] Another method for learning how to write essays is described by Xiao Maoxun. He explains that his teacher used "[a method for] expounding upon various directions of a topic, [for which one would] write [these topics] on slips, collect them in a bamboo canister and every day after eating, pick out ten slips. [One had to] explicate the general thoughts [related to the topics] and make [arguments] with a systematic order, so that when the time of writing essays came, one would not have to struggle and would have energy to spare." Wang. 1899. *Jiaotongzi fa*, 6a. Thus, he memorized the topics and the general ideas related to them in order to learn how to explicate these logically.

Another publication that summarized historical knowledge required in the examinations was the *Handy Geographical Maps Throughout the Ages* (*Lidai dili zhizhang tu* 歷代地理指掌圖).[94] The volume provided maps that helped students visualize their textual content, which described, for example, the successions of emperors, the different parts of Chinese territories and foreign threats. The conflation of temporal layers in the maps and the instructions that accompanied them, which required the student to 'mark' basic topographic and administrative features on the mapped territory, helped students grasp important historical changes. Graphs could thus be used to aid the memorization of text and content, functioning as abstract summaries of the theories discussed in the texts. They could help the reader "memorize given facts or interpretations" and serve as visual aid for correlating concepts and ideas.[95]

While all the anecdotes and techniques discussed so far focused on the use of vision and hearing, one account recorded by Zheng Wenbao 鄭文寶 of the Song is a rare example that illustrates how memory of content did not necessarily have to rely on eyes or ears.

> Zhong Mo was by nature very clever, always memorizing passages for use in discussions. He often sent memorials with his theories to the throne and stood out during his time. (...) In a month during the height of the summer, he traveled from Zhou to Qin. Every time he saw an old stele on the side of the road, he had to stop his horse to read it, silently memorizing everything. Sometimes he would stop by a post house and order a scribe to transcribe it, thus not traveling more than a few *li* every day. On one occasion, he saw the flat front of a monumental stele, which was of massive proportions, and the inscribed message could not have counted less than a thousand characters. It lay abandoned in the middle of a vast moat, half of it was submerged in accumulated rain water, and by no means could one read the inscription. With a joyous expression the wise man loosened his clothes and swam to the middle of the moat. Using his hands, he stroked and measured, silently memorizing the writing, later recording it

[94] De Weerdt, who describes the volume as a study aid for aspiring officials, has studied this collection of maps extensively. De Weerdt. 2011. "The Cultural Logics of Map Reading." The maps are adapted to a rectangle shape and seem to represent the major waterways in such a way that they correspond to the major lines on the palm of the right hand. This indicates that students might have used their hands to visualize the content of the maps.

[95] Lackner. 2007. "Diagrams as an Architecture by Means of Words: The *Yanji tu*," 343-344. Also refer to Lackner. 2000. "Was Millionen Wörter nicht sagen können."

with ink on paper. Another day, when his company was returning, he passed through the same road. It had not rained for quite a few days, thus the water source that led to the submersion of the stele was no longer there. Thereupon, he spread out the contents of a bamboo basket to get his old notebook. Standing in the moat, he compared it, and there was not a single character missing or wrong.

鐘謨性聰敏，多記問，奏疏理論，穎脫時輩。(...) 盛夏之月，自周徂秦。每見道旁古碑，必駐馬歷覽，皆默識，或止郵亭，命筆繕寫。一日之行不過數里而已。又見一圭首豐碑，制度甚廣，約其詞旨不下數千餘字，臥諸荒塹之中，半為水潦所淹，無由披讀。謨欣然解衣，游泳塹中，以手捫揣，默記其文，志諸紙墨。他日徵還，重經是路，天久不雨，無復沈碑之泉，乃發笥得舊錄本，就塹較之，無一字差誤。[96]

As Zhong could not write anything down or even see the stele under water, he had to translate what he felt with his hands into characters in his mind, which allowed him to reconstruct the text and memorize it. Undergoing a physical or tactile experience in order to reconstruct meaning was unusual for those who focused their efforts on the verbatim memorization of texts and on the development of literacy. When it came to instructing and transmitting practical skills, however, teachers and students relied not only on text, but also on the internalization of knowledge by means of repetition and, like Zhong Mo or Su Shi, touch and bodily remembering. Practitioners, who were often illiterate and who had no aspirations to memorize canonical texts, relied heavily on the memorization of steps and procedures to access and transmit information essential to their occupations. In order to memorize actions, strategies that relied more on embodiment had to be developed.

Remembering Actions

Several approaches to memorization in the acquisition of literacy, preparation for the civil service examinations and study of historical sources that helped scholars and officials were also in use beyond the world of the educated elite. Religious practices combined the memorization of text with the embodiment of instructions for action. Although memory itself was seldom addressed in scriptures and canonical works, texts meant to be recited

[96] Zheng. 1922. *Nantang jinshi*, 2a.

and chanted repeatedly by the practitioner abound in both Buddhist and Daoist traditions.

Sanskrit terms used in the Indian Buddhist tradition to describe a process of continued attention or contemplation, such as *dhāraṇī*, are often rendered as "memory" in the West. Early Buddhist texts describe the process of recollection as relying on so-called "seeds" (*bija*) that transmit tendencies as if they were a "perfume" that continues to exist passively and can become active in a person when triggered by external conditions. This conception also made its way into China.[97] *Dhāraṇī* is a term that describes both the process of holding something in the mind and short textual formulas. Such formulas were concise passages or single letters that stood for an entire text or teaching. In the Chinese context, *dhāraṇī* were often Chinese transcriptions of Sanskrit sounds. Because sounds were believed to be sacred and carry magical powers, the proper pronunciation of Buddhist terms was essential even in China, where mastery of Sanskrit was rare. Thus, syllabaries for Sanskrit were among the texts that monks recited and used in meditation. Sanskrit syllabaries were even embedded within Chinese verses for meditation. The practitioner was supposed to vocalize the sounds and contemplate the meanings associated with each of the syllables, thus simultaneously engaging mouth, thought and body.[98] The visualization of text passages or *dhāraṇī*, sometimes combined with hand seals (*mudrā*), aided practitioners in their efforts to concentrate and internalize the teachings.[99] Buddhist scriptures, including their translations in Chinese, also made use of passages in verse (gathas) that rephrased the content of the previous block of text. Summaries of content that facilitate the rhythmic chanting of the teachings can be found, for example, in the Lotus Sutra.[100] Chan 禪 practitioners of the 9th and 10th centuries even composed manuals in which they compiled songs and rhymed

[97] Griffiths. 1992. "Memory in Classical Indian Yogācāra," 118-120.

[98] Picard's study on Pu'an's Incantation provides a detailed analysis of how a syllabary was embedded in a Chinese incantation and used for meditation. 2012. *L'Incantation du Patriarche Pu'an*, 27-45.

[99] Lackner addresses a graph composed of writing in the shape of a pagoda and similar efforts by Song scholars. 1992. "Argumentation par diagrammes," 133. Similar patterned texts that depicted poems or riddles instead of complex teachings became very popular during the Ming dynasty. See Franke. 1987. "Chinese Patterned Texts." On the use of hand mnemonics in the Buddhist context, see Hanson. 2017. "The Mysterious Names on the Hands and Fingers."

[100] The teachings are expounded in prose and repeated in verses afterwards, woven into the narrative. There are several translations of the Lotus Sutra available, such as Burton Watson's.

text from other Buddhist sources according to their own needs.[101] Thus, when it comes to format, Buddhist practices advanced strategies for memorization similar to those employed by studious scholars, such as summaries, rhymes and repetition, but within the practical and ritual context, memorization and recitation of text was only one of the steps of meditation.

Daoist practice shared many features with Buddhist meditation, especially when it came to the use of spells and embodiment through repetition of vows. For example, early Daoist scriptures appropriated Buddhist vows, which associated mundane actions with teachings, such as the act of ascending a multi-storied pavilion and the idea that "all beings shall ascend to the dharma-hall." Within Daoist practice, the trigger of the storied building was kept, while the teaching associated with it was altered to "all shall penetratingly contemplate the ten directions and that nothing shall be concealed from them."[102] Thus, in both contexts the practitioner memorized the vows and was reminded of them throughout the day.

A syncretic tendency among Daoists to include and absorb Buddhist concepts and practices was already well under way by the end of the 4th century.[103] This does not mean, however, that Daoist practitioners did not have their own practices that relied on memory. Aside from the recitation of texts, Daoist practitioners often also relayed instructions in the form of rhymes or graphs for a variety of purposes, such as alchemical recipes, gymnastics or divination.[104] Rhymes had been central to the transmission of medical knowledge since the former Han dynasty (202 BC-9 AD), and were also used in texts that were later incorporated into the Daoist canon.[105] The frequent use of verse in canonical texts has made the study of rhyme patterns central to dating early Daoist texts.[106] Besides the rhymed format, instructions were often provided as recipes or steps, guiding the practitioner through a

[101] Sørensen. 1989. "Observations on the Characteristics of the Chinese Chan manuscripts from Dunhuang," 131-134.
[102] Bokenkamp. 1983. "The Ling-Pao Scriptures," 470.
[103] Bokenkamp. 1983. "The Ling-Pao Scriptures," 461.
[104] Verellen discusses the various uses of graphs in Daoist texts. 2006. "The Dynamic Design," 160-163.
[105] A representative medical text with substantial portions in verse that is believed to have been composed in large part during the Han dynasty is *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine* (*Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經). On the composition and origin of the text, see Tessenow and Unschuld. 2011. *Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen*, 1, 11-12. It is suggested that the Tang scholar Wang Bing, who had a strong Daoist background, may have altered parts of the text. 2011. *Huang Di Nei Jing Su Wen*, 1, 29 n8.
[106] Ho. 2007. *Explorations in Daoism*, 19-24.

process that had to be memorized and enacted. Even private practices intended for couples in the bedchamber were described in steps that guided the couple through a series of visualizations and movements.[107]

Religious practices shared many formal similarities with manuals for other practical activities and crafts. When it came to the instruction and transmission of skills, practitioners relied not only on text, but also on the internalization of practical knowledge by means of repetition, touch and bodily remembering. Rhymes and sequencing played a central role in the transmission of practical knowledge. Although many practice-oriented formulas have surely been lost because craftsmen had little motivation to disseminate them and the elite considered them too commonplace to be recorded, there are still many that have survived in encyclopedias and collections of notes. Innumerable 'formulas' for memorization circulated in imperial China for a variety of practical fields, such as mathematics, astrology, mechanics and even for law.[108] Oral formulas for daily use, such as songs for calendric calculations, which were useful regardless of an individual's profession, were widely used and also disseminated in writing. One such "ancient song" (*gu ge* 古歌) addressed the need to determine the name of the month according to the cycle of the "earthly branches" (*dizhi* 地支).[109] The Song which helped determine the "earthly branch" of the first month according to the year, is recorded in the *Comprehensive Compilation on the Three Fates* (*Sanming tonghui* 三命通會) edited by Wan Minying 萬民英 (ca. 1521-1603):

For *Jia* and *Ji* years, first comes *Bing*,
In years of *Yi* or *Geng*, *Wu* will be heading.
Bing or *Xin* years continue after *Geng*,
For *Ding* and *Ren*, Ren you will be following.

[107] Kalinowski translates steps contained in a Six Dynasties (220–589) work that relies on the visualization of the "nine-palaces." 1985. "Le Dispositif des Neuf Palais," 785-794.
[108] See Needham, Ho and Lu. 1980. *Science and Civilisation in China* 5, 253; 261. Bréard has addressed the use of rhymes in mathematical treatises and in daily-use encyclopedias. 2014. "On the Transmission of Mathematical Knowledge in Versified Form in China"; 2010. "Knowledge and Practice of Mathematics in Late-Ming Daily-life Encyclopedias." Liu Tianzhang, who has studied the use of songs in popular encyclopedias, provides an example of a song that describes common crimes and serves to admonish common people. Liu. 2006. *Mingdai tongsu leishu yanjiu*, 144.
[109] The Chinese calendar was based on a cycle of sixty years. Each year was named according to the combination of one of the ten "heavenly stems" and one of the twelve "earthly branches." These same combinations were also used to determine the name of the months in a cyclical fashion, repeated every five years.

And when one has *Wu* or *Gui*, where does one start?
Upon *Jia* and *Yin*. These are most fitting.

甲己之年丙作首，乙庚之歲戊為頭。
丙辛之歲尋庚上，丁壬壬位順行流。
更有戊癸何处起，甲寅之上好追求。[110]

The song, which also appears in a Song dynasty notebook,[111] gives a list of the "heavenly stems" (*tiangan* 天干) for the years, indicating the branch one would use to start counting the first month, according to the lunar calendar. Every second line ends in a rhyme and its content is clear and straightforward. Another example of a didactic song that helped people to remember how to calculate the calendar is the "Song for Teaching the Essential Method of [Counting] Time and the Calendar." This song, with paired rhymes for every second verse, emphasizes general qualities of the calendar, such as the cyclic repetition every nine years, and the calendar's divisions in 12 months and 24 solar terms, while also emphasizing the importance of the leap month:

When teaching the method of [counting] time and the calendar, you must know,
the lunar calendar is counted with nine years.
Whether a long or a short month is counted from the first day of the month,
Pay attention to the first day's heavenly stem and earthly branch.
Long months count 5 heavenly stems and 9 branches,
Short months match 4 branches to 8 stems.
If a month is long, you have 30 days, without exception,
If a month is short, it is clearly divided into only 29 days.
The solar terms of the year are just as in the calendar from nine years ago,
All the 24 divisions really do repeat this way.
Counting 3 heavenly stems you will count 7 earthly branches,
This is to be firmly remembered in one's mind, and it must be done clearly.

[110] Wan. 1782. *Sanming tonghui,* juan 2, 57.
[111] The song is the same, but it is mentioned in combination with the changes of the cycle of the five elements (*wu xing* 五行). It is not attributed to a specific author, and interwoven into the text as if it were something every reader should be able to identify. Hong. 1934. *Rongzhai suibi*, juan 10, 6b.

Establish the 24 solar terms when counting a year,
So when the time of each eight major solar term arrives,[112] you won't have to think it over.
If you use this method to count the second half of the months,
You will be aware of all the obscure points regarding the counting of the lunar calendar.
The leap month does not have the second half,
It is not necessary to go to great lengths planning this [to know].
The people who are fully acquainted with this art of the immortals,
They are no longer fools, but men.

授時曆法君要知，但以九年舊曆推。
月大月小起初一，看其初一天地支。
大月天干五支九，小月天四地八耦。
月大三十日無差，月小分明只廿九。
節氣只恁九年曆，二十四氣真端的。
天干三數地支七，熟記心中須歷歷。
定時二十四年取，逢時遇八君無慮。
若依此法個中推，方省陰陽玄奧處。
閏月本來中氣無，何勞物外更它圖。
世人諳得神仙術，不是愚氓是丈夫。[113]

The rhyme shows that complex and intricate information, such as calculations that require several steps, could also be transmitted through formulas with ease because the content was presented in segments of a specific length that could be easily connected in the mind due to the rhymes.[114]

In the field of carpentry, one rhyme that presents several steps to achieve the desired proportions for a perfectly round column has been transmitted. The rhyme, titled "Oral Formula of Eight Trigrams," relies only on relative proportions and ignores specific measurements, allowing its content to be adapted to any size of wood:

At eight sides, a proportion of four to six,
Between the double lines two-tenths are contained.

[112] The eight solar terms mark beginnings and central points of the four seasons.
[113] Tao. [n.d]. *Chuogeng lu*, juan 5, 4a-b.
[114] Carruthers describes the segmentation of "units" and the importance of an order that can easily be reconstructed as basic qualities that ease memorization. 1990. *The Book of Memory*, 7.

[The next line] is at three times six from the double lines,
And the remainder is divided into three.[115]

The rhyme, according to Ruitenbeek's reading, provides consecutive steps of division to achieve a sixteen-sided polygon that can be planed off and will result in a round column.[116] The rhyme thus lists, in a condensed format, very specific practical procedures, and once it was memorized, it could aid the craftsman on site.[117]

In the transmission of practical knowledge, Chinese practitioners not only explored the textual formats that facilitated memorization, such as rhymes, but often also relied on visual triggers to help the student to remember processes and actions. Important matters and procedures were recalled by means of visual or tactile input. One account that provides an example of a very simple visual reference concerns the Tang dynasty chancellor Zhang Yue 張說 (667-730). According to one anecdote, during the Kaiyuan 開元 era (713-741),

> someone presented him a pearl. It was of a dark violet color and possessed a shimmer. It was called "Pearl of remembering matters." If something were to slip one's mind, one should hold this pearl in the hand and play with it. Soon the mind would awaken and the spirit would become aware. All matters—be they great or small—would be restored in one's understanding, and none would be forgotten. Yue kept the pearl a secret and treasured it.
>
> 有人惠說一珠，紺色，有光。名曰「記事珠」。或有闕忘之事，則以手持弄此珠，便覺心神開悟，事無巨細，渙然明曉，一無所忘。說祕而寶也。[118]

The anecdote refers to an object that prompted him to remember an important matter or task. This process of recollection relied on the visual or

[115] Ruitenbeek. 1996. *Carpentry and Building in Late Imperial China,* 65.
[116] Ruitenbeek. 1996. *Carpentry and Building in Late Imperial China*, 67.
[117] Contemporary rhymes for carpentry used in the region of Yunnan have been collected in Bin and Yan. 2011. "Research on Mnemonic Rhymes for Building Dali Bai Traditional Houses." The authors underscore the importance of local pronunciation.
[118] Wang. [16th c.] *Kaiyuan Tianbao yishi*, juan shang, 3b.

tactile qualities of the pearl. It resembles a ribbon tied around the finger, which also functions as a visual trigger to recall.[119]

Graphs and charts were especially important to relay information that could not be easily described in writing, such as the positions of pieces in a game of Chinese chess (*weiqi* 圍棋). The centrality of remembering consecutive moves is highlighted in the early anecdote about Wang Can 王粲 (died c. 217):[120]

> Wang Can was watching people playing chess. When the board was overturned, Wang set the board up again, but the players did not believe [that is was the setting of the game before the board had been turned over], so they covered his set-up board with a cloth, and used another board to set it up themselves. Using their board to compare it to Can's setting, [they saw that] not a single piece [on Wang's board] was placed wrong.
>
> 王粲觀人圍棋，局壞，粲復為之，棋者不信，以袍蓋局，使更以他局為之，用相比校，不誤一道。[121]

Wang seems to have memorized the entire series of moves that preceded the accident and was thus able to reconstruct the setting with ease. Specific moves and scenarios for playing chess also became the focus of later manuals for the game.

Manuals published during the Ming dynasty relied on pictures to represent each move, which is much easier to understand than a game's setting described in prose. What is remarkable about the individual representations in the manuals was that each move received a name by which it could be recalled [Fig. 1.1]. The nomenclature relied on the peculiarities of the moves and the pieces involved, providing verbal summaries or shortcuts to help players recollect actions. Similar descriptions of movements were also present in manuals for playing the Chinese zither (*qin* 琴). Hand gestures and

[119] This practice is discussed in a treatise by John Wills, reproduced and annotated in Engel, Loughnane and Williams. 2016. *The Memory Arts in Renaissance England*, 77.
[120] This anecdote is mentioned in most studies that discuss the issue of memory in China, first cited in Spence. 1984. *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci,* 157.
[121] Chen. [1194?] *Sanguo zhi*, Wei zhi, juan 29, 2b-3a.

postures connected to specific finger techniques were described through colorful imagery, such as "a wild goose carrying a reed stalk in its bill."[122]

When it came to transmitting knowledge, pairing images with rhyming formulas made the content of books accessible to the illiterate, allowing useful information for daily and professional life to be disseminated quickly and easily.[123] One foreign account attests to the reliance on imagery and visual aids to transmit valuable lessons. In his *Abhandlung über die Geburtshülfe - Aus dem Chinesischen*, the German physician Heinrich von Martius (1781-1831), describes how Chinese midwives were instructed orally in order to memorize the crucial procedures of their trade. Von Martius remarks how there was no canonical work for the training of midwives but that several treatises circulated simultaneously around 1810.[124] He describes the process of knowledge acquisition as follows:

> The teachings in such books on midwifery are usually formulated in the form of catechisms, which means, as questions and answers, and to ease understanding, these were accompanied by rather coarse illustrations. I have had the opportunity to see Chinese treatises in this manner for several doctrines. It is most likely that the midwives are not able to read these educational books on their own; instead, they probably retain the content in their memory after having it read to them repeatedly, referring to the accompanying illustrations in their practice. I have also been assured that Chinese midwives are trained for their craft by doctors that specialize in matters of childbirth by making use of movable anatomical figures.[125]

Von Martius points to the issue of illiteracy, which even during the late Qing prevented commoners from accessing textual knowledge. This obstacle, however, could be overcome by having literate individuals read the content of the treatises out loud for the audience to memorize. The use of illustrations in such works, as well as the employment of visual models, was meant to help

[122] Van Gulik. 1940. "The Lore of the Chinese Lute. An Essay in Ch'in Ideology," 128. Van Gulik conducted a thorough study on zither (or lute) manuals, devoting his fifth chapter to the analysis of the symbolism of hand postures.

[123] In a paper presented at Leiden University in 2019 on "Songs of Jingdezhen Ceramics and Porcelain Production" Huang Yijun 黃義軍 discussed the creation of rhymes that describe the production steps of porcelain production and the later addition of images to accompany these.

[124] The work was published in 1820, but, as commented in the preface, it was based on his previous work from 1810 that was lost.

[125] Von Martius. 1820. *Abhandlung über die Geburtshülfe,* 28-29.

the illiterate in recalling the instructions. The format in which knowledge was codified, be it as questions and answers, rhymed formulas or songs, was thus decisive for a student to remember the information transmitted by demonstration.

Medical works often provided doctors with mnemonic singing formulas and "palm formulas" (*zhang jue* 掌訣) to memorize procedures. The "palm formula" was often printed in the manuals and introduced to the reader in the first pages. It was accompanied by a graph of a hand that, once memorized, helped a physician to make a diagnosis. Both tools aided doctors in identifying diseases and determining the treatment for a patient.[126]

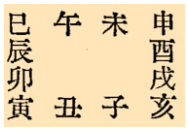
Mnemonic techniques that took the hand as a support to follow a specific sequence were not uncommon in other fields. The *Finger and Palm Formula Chart for Rhymes (Qieyun zhizhang tu* 切韻指掌圖), attributed to Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-1086), is a rhyme table based on the *fanqie* system 反切 that aided people in determining the pronunciation and rhyme of a character. It made use of a similar hand chart to place the thirty-six model initials used to find characters in the table.[127] According to the type of sound (such as dental or lingual), the model initials would be projected onto the hand as if in a column, almost an exact transference of the paper chart of the thirty-six initials onto the palm of the hand [Fig. 1.2]. Once one had memorized the position of these model characters, it was relatively easy to go through the table and locate the desired character.

Detailed descriptions in prose of the basic hand mnemonic, however, were rare. In most manuals that relied on this system to discuss different topics, these instructions were omitted, most likely because it was regarded as common knowledge. A passage from the novel *Flowers in the Mirror* (*Jinghua yuan* 鏡花緣), published by Li Ruzhen 李汝珍 around 1818, provides a rare detailed account on how to proceed. The author introduces the basic concept for counting things on the hands, for which the practitioner has to place the twelve earthly branches along the sections of the fingers, so that they will form a square. One begins with the mound below the little finger and moves upwards to the tip, moving across the tip of the ring, middle and index fingers, and moving back down along the sections of the index finger. The square is then closed by moving leftward over the mounds of the palm below the fingers. This basic sequence served as the foundation for several activities,

[126] Hanson. 2008. "Hand Mnemonics in Classical Chinese Medicine."

[127] 36 characters that were selected to represent the 36 possible initial sounds of all characters. See Sima. 1986. *Songben qieyun zhizhang tu.*

such as calculating the date by determining the heavenly stems and earthly branches, or performing astrological divination.[128] In Li Ruzhen's novel, Fragrance Returns (*Zaifang* 再芳),[129] one of the young girls who will be participating in the imperial examinations for women asks her friend what the "Earth board" is. This was the basic setting for astrological divination according to the *Da liuren* 大六壬 practice, similar to the palm mnemonics just discussed. Her friend writes out the following characters in a square in order to explain it to her, adding that she must memorize this well:



The passage is followed by an indented commentary from the narrator, which is directed at the reader:

> For this "Earth board" model, one can take the left hand or the right hand. If one takes the left hand, when starting with the fourth section of the ring finger for *zi* 子; the fourth section of the middle finger stands for *chou* 丑; the fourth section of the index finger stands for *yin* 寅, its third section *mao* 卯, the second *chen* 辰, and the first *si* 巳; the first section of the middle finger stands for *wu* 午; the first section of the ring finger for *wei* 未; the first section of the little finger stands for *shen* 申, the second for *you* 酉, the third for *xu* 戌, and the fourth for *hai* 亥. If one takes the right hand, when starting with the fourth section of the middle finger standing for *zi* 子; the fourth section of the ring finger stands for *chou* 丑; the fourth section of the little finger for *yin* 寅, the third for *mao* 卯. One continues along the order described before, finishing with the index finger's fourth section for *hai* 亥. This pattern must be imitated with much attention, and the position in the square on which each of the twelve time divisions is located must each be thoroughly remembered. Only then should the "Heaven board" be explained. If one is not yet fully familiarized with the "Earth board" and one begins to discuss the "Heaven board," the tendency will inevitably be that both will be jumbled together and be indiscernible, only bringing

[128] There were also other forms of divination that relied on mnemonics. Bréard addresses mathematical calculation with rhymes for making prognoses. 2019. *Nine Chapters on Mathematical Modernity*, chapter 6.

[129] The English name has been taken from the existing translation of *Flowers in the Mirror* by Lin Tai-yi, published 1965, so her identification is made easier.

disorder to peoples' minds. The "Earth board" will not move for thousands of years, while the "Heaven board" revolves according to time. If one immediately adds the wheel that revolves according to time on top of the wheel that will not move for thousands of years, unless one has memorized them clearly, how can one discern them?!

So, if you take the five fingers of your right hand and place them on top of the five fingers of my right hand, you may ask me which of your own fingers is on top of my thumb, and I have to say, it is the little finger; On top of the index finger, it is your ring finger; The ten fingers on the top and bottom, once gone over in one's breast until one is familiarized with them, should allow one to comprehend them even without looking. If the girl wishes to understand the "Heaven board," she must only memorize it well and she will be able to truly gasp it.

此地盤式，有從左手起的，有以右手起的。以左手而論：於無名指第四節起子時；中指第四節丑；食指第四節寅，第三節卯，第二節辰，第一節巳；中指第一節午；無名指第一節未；禁指第一節申，第二節酉，第三節戌，第四節亥。以右手而論：於中指第四節起子時；名指第四節丑；禁指第四節寅，第三節卯。照前順排，至食指第四節為亥時。此式必須細心摹擬，須將地盤十二時所列方位個個記得爛熟，然後再講天盤。若地盤未熟，即講天盤，勢必上下不分，徒亂人意。蓋地盤千載不移，天盤隨時流轉，今以隨時流轉之盤，加於千載不移盤上，若不記清，何能上下分得明白？即如你以右手五指，合於我之右手五指之上，你右問我大指之上，是汝何指，我必說是禁指；食指之上，是你無名指。蓋上下十指，是胸中滾熟的，所以不看亦能了然。姊姊要明天地盤，只須記熟，就能領會了。[130]

As the narrator explains, the "Earth board" arranges the earthly branches on the hand and dictates an order to be followed, which is the base for *Da liuren* divination.[131] In the novel, the description of the method continues with the "Heaven board", which circulates according to the date,

[130] Li. 1955. *Jinghua yuan*, 557-558.

[131] The use of hand divination based on the *Liuren* system is described in the Ming novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義), in which general Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 makes use of the method to make a prognosis of matters concerning the war. However, no evidence of such practices during the period of the Three Kingdoms has been found. Although there are earlier descriptions on the use of *Liuren* in times of war, from ca. 795, no indication of the use of the hand is made in these. On the complexities of the *Liuren* method, see Yoke. 2003. *Chinese mathematical Astrology,* 135-136. Chapter five addresses the *liu ren* method.

and later describes how to compute the "Four prognostications" (*si ke* 四課), the first step in the divination process. The importance of memorizing the basic setting of the "Earth board" on the hand is emphasized in the novel, since it is the starting point for more complex movements that appear later and rely on the internalization of the initial schemata.

Similar graphs of hands can also be found in the field of music, where they were used to memorize different pitches of the musical scale. The sequence defining the order of these pitches, also numbering twelve, made use of the same starting point and direction as described in Li Ruzhen's novel. This practice was also described in a French volume dedicated to the study of Chinese music. The chart reproduced in *Mémoire sur la musique des Chinois,* published in Paris in 1779, is most likely based on Zhu Zaiyu's 朱載堉 (1536-1610) *Essential Principles of the Pitch Pipes* (*Lülü jingyi* 律呂精義) [Figs. 1.3 and 1.4]. The French description accompanying the chart of the "harmonic hand" reveals that the Chinese were accustomed to computing matters on their palms by following a circular order along the sections of the fingers, something they already "learned during their childhood."[132]

Hand mnemonics became very widespread during the Ming, and were also transmitted to Japan during the period.[133] The image of a hand with earthly branches defining the specific points on the fingers was published in many daily-use encyclopedias as a basic chart to be used in a number of fields presented in the compilations, including, for example, mathematics. Anyone familiar with the standard positions of the earthly branches could solve mathematical problems, such as converting measures, with ease.

An exercise for making such a "conversion chart" on the hand, also called "Palm Formula for Determining Positions and Multiplying" (*zhangzhong dingwei yincheng jue* 掌中定位因乘訣), is presented below:

> Suppose there is a field of 312 acres (*mu* 畝), and one can obtain 2 measures (*sheng* 升) of grain for each *mu*. To calculate this, one will start on the position of *yin* 寅, for 100 *mu*, thus having 10 *mu* on *mao* 卯 and obtaining 1 *mu* on the position of *chen* 辰. On this position, *mu* can be converted to *sheng*, and one can then return to *mao* to obtain the amount of *dou* 斗, and on *yin*, obtain *shi* 石.

[132] Amiot. 1779. *Mémoire sur la musique des Chinois*, 123.
[133] See Hayek. 2018. "Correlating time within one's hand."

假如有田三百一十二畝，每畝科粮二升。乘畢莫動先從寅上起百畝，以卯得十畝，以辰得一畝。就以畝変升，復回卯上得斗，以寅為石。[134]

This exercise, which is based on measures that progress by going up a decimal place (10 *sheng* 升= 1 *dou* 斗, 10 *dou* 斗＝ 1 *shi* 石), takes the palm with the positions determined by the earthly branches as a model for multiplying or dividing, as illustrated in [Fig. 1.5]. The person was thus quickly able to tell, also in larger measures, how much he could expect to harvest from his fields.

Using the hand to move up and down measures was surely useful for someone who had business to conduct at the market, such as selling grain. Thus, the method was also referred to as having "gold in the sleeve" (*xiuli jin* 袖裏金), a precious calculating tool that could be hidden within the sleeves of one's robe and used discretely.[135] By relying on such mnemonic methods, one could do without paper or writing and quickly reach the desired goal.

Regardless of whether scholars memorized text or practitioners and merchants memorized sequences and procedures by enacting them, having things "stored within one's breast" or, as Su Shi claimed, imprinted on "every fiber of the body," allowed them to adapt their knowledge to new situations. Memory was just as central for composing essays as it was for conducting calendric calculations or delivering a baby.

Conclusion

The examples provided in this chapter show that the verbal, visual and tactile memorization techniques developed in China often took existing textual sources as a starting point or relied on graphic representations to reach broader audiences. The storage of "chunks" [136] of information and steps, such as chess movements, calculation procedures, or parts of rhyming compositions in the long-term memory was usually achieved by means of repetition. Information was summarized in rhymed formulas to facilitate memorization and often disseminated in print for literate audiences or

[134] *Xinke quanbu shimin beilan bianyong wenlin huijin wanshu yuanhai*. 1610. Juan 29, 4b-5a. The numbers provided for the exercise vary in other encyclopedias of the period.
[135] *Xinke quanbu shimin beilan bianyong wenlin huijin wanshu yuanhai*. 1610. Juan 29, 4b.
[136] Busse Berger provides an example for 'chunking' of information by chess players. 2005. *Medieval Music and the Art of Memory*, 199.

transmitted orally to illiterate audiences. Thus, the "art of memory" in China does not correspond to the European tradition of creating highly personal "palaces" or "theatres" within the trained mind of the individual, or to the later undertakings to organize knowledge that developed from the medieval "art."[137] Memory in China was regarded as a natural skill or quality, and memorization practices were repetitive in nature and relied on previously written compositions. Yet, this does not mean historians should underestimate their use or their impact in imperial Chinese society. These cultural differences serve to highlight the connection of mnemonic techniques to the unique functions of knowledge in each tradition. Unlike the well-studied "art of memory," which was primarily practiced by small monastic communities and later marketed as a "secret" technique to members of the aristocracy in Europe, mnemonic formulas and rhymes pervaded all fields of knowledge in China.[138] It is important to note, however, that each field adapted the techniques to its specific needs. Chinese memory aids are thus unmistakably interwoven with the content they sought to promote.

Practitioners and educated individuals strove to develop the external features of texts and graphs in order to ease memorization. Printed books and visual representations allowed new ways of committing knowledge to memory to be explored. What remains to be addressed is how mnemonics circulated—whether memory aids were meant to circulate within a small group, such as the family or a workshop, or to become broadly accessible through print—and how their circulation led to alterations in content. As will be discussed in the following chapters, what makes the Chinese endeavor to remember unique is the prescriptive nature of the mnemonics and the creative process involved in their creation and constant refashioning. Thus, although similar mnemonic techniques were employed for various practical activities, the specificities of Chinese memory are located within each individual field and tied to creative individuals.

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[137] Rossi discusses several schemata of renaissance scholars with "encyclopedic" aspirations to order and categorize all knowledge. Rossi. 2000. *Logic and the Art of Memory*. Yates also addresses the new role of the "art of memory" in the last chapter of her work. 1966. *The Art of Memory*.

[138] Studies that address the issue of memory in practical fields, such as the monograph by Busse Berger on mnemonic practices in the field of music, or the short study by Carpo on the substitution of memory for charts in the field of architecture, make an invaluable contribution to the understanding of memory practices in society. Busse Berger. 2005. *Medieval Music and the Art of Memory*. Carpo. 2009. "Architecture: The Rise of Technical Design and the Fall of Technical Memory in the Renaissance."

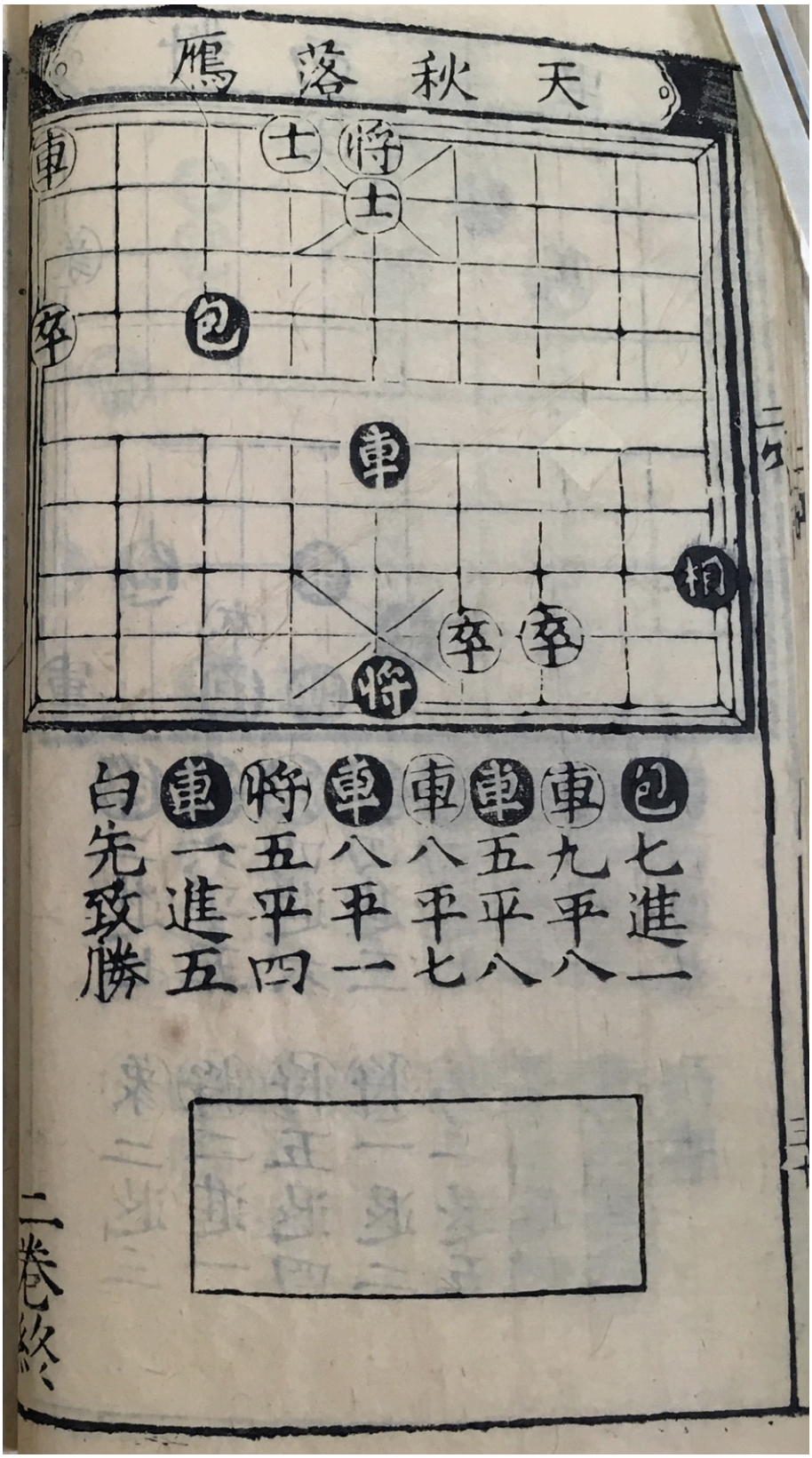


Fig. 1.1 The “Goose soaring down from an autumnal sky” move in Ming dynasty chess manual. Source: *Xinke shoutan miju sipu zhenjue* 新刻手譚秘局四譜真訣. 1609. Juan 2, 30b. Photo by author.



Fig. 1.2 Palm mnemonics in the *Finger and Palm Formula Chart for Rhymes* (*Qieyun zhizhang tu* 切韻指掌圖). Source: Sima. 1986. *Songben qieyun zhizhang tu*, 22.

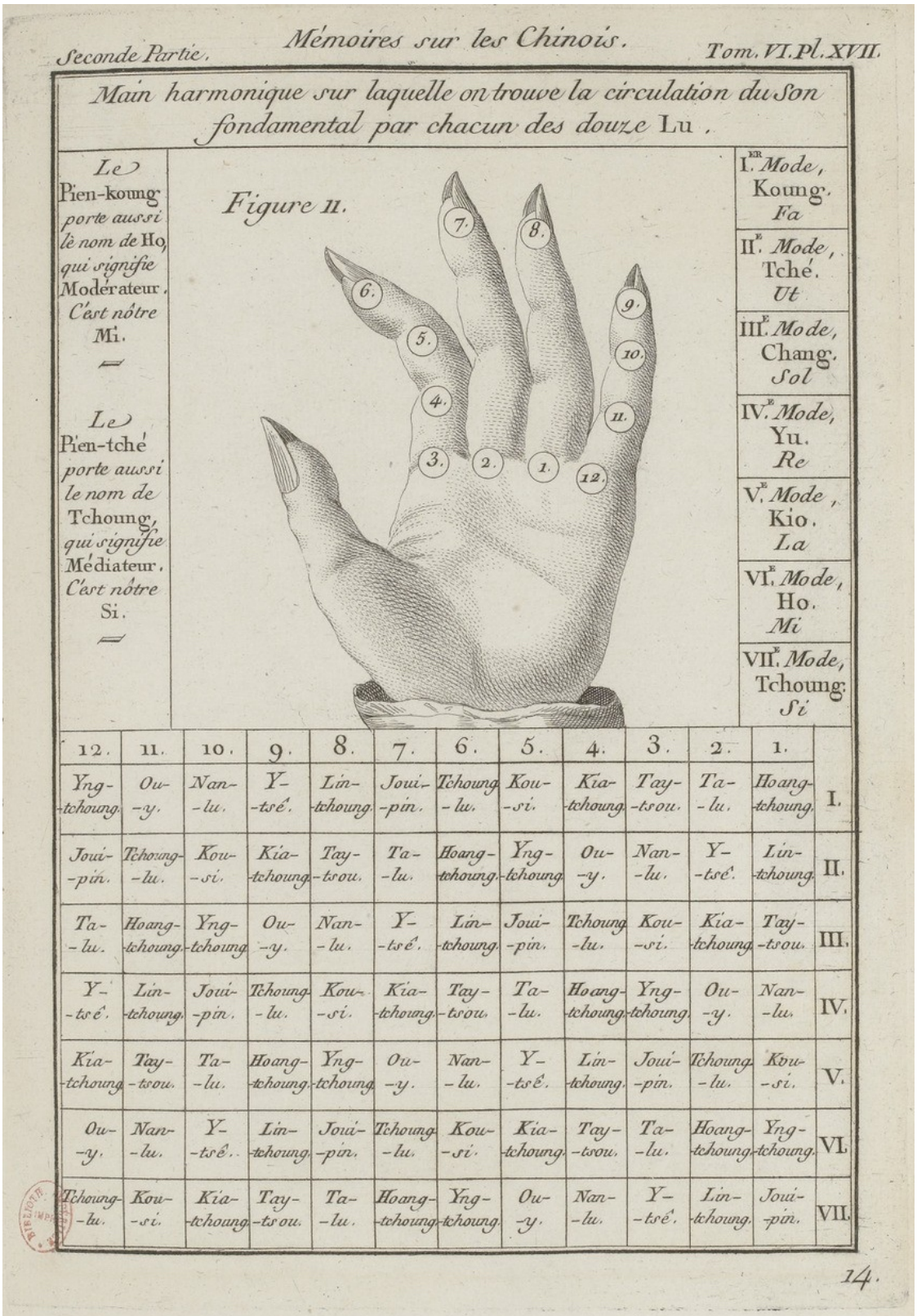


Fig. 1.3 The "harmonic hand": Reproduction of Chinese palm mnemonics chart for musical scale in *Mémoire sur la musique des Chinois.* Source: Amiot. 1779. *Mémoire sur la musique des Chinois*, appendix, 14, plate XVII. Image source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Fig. 1.4 Palm mnemonics for musical scale in the *Essential Principles of the Pitch Pipes* (*Lülü jingyi* 律呂精義). Souce: Zhu. [between 1573-1620]. Lülü jingyi, waipian, juan 5, 37a. Image source: Harvard College Library, Harvard-Yenching Library.

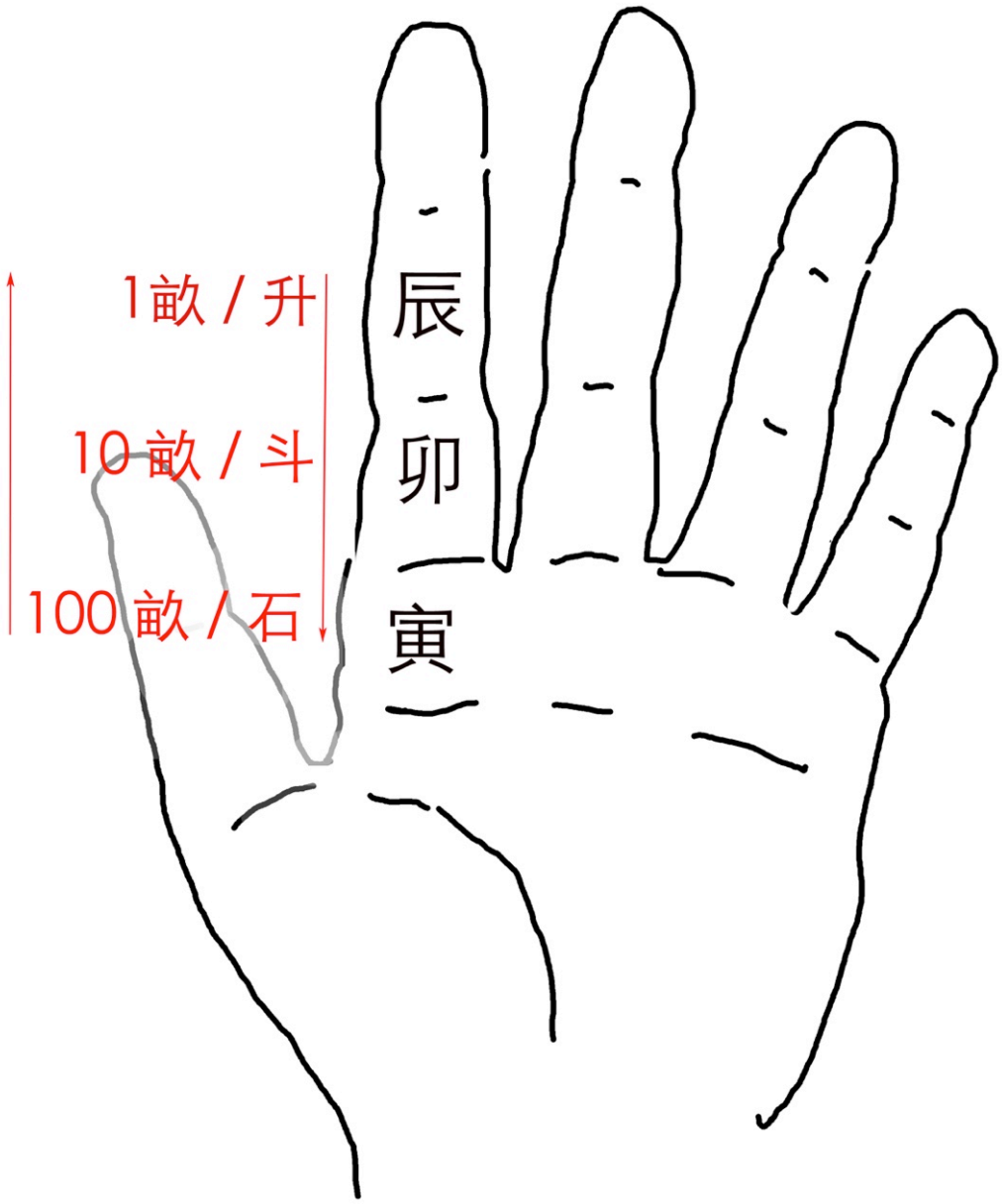


Fig. 1.5 Palm with earthly branches as reference for multiplication and division. Equivalence of units according to decimal place. Graph by author.

PART II

The Calligrapher's Memory

Chapter 2

Forgetting to Remember

As ideals and intellectual trends within a society change, what was once considered important can cease to be valued and eventually forgotten.[139] Both a shift in attention toward new and more exciting issues and reinterpretation of what has been transmitted from the past necessarily include acts of forgetting.

During the mid Ming dynasty, a shift in pedagogical practices was underway—one which was marked by an act of forgetting. The representation of calligraphic strokes in pedagogical texts was adapted through a selective processing of methods from the past. At the same time, the way in which practical knowledge was presented reflected a changing perception of authorship and teaching. In contrast to authors from earlier periods, mid-Ming practitioners put less emphasis on shaping texts to affirm their identity, believing the practical knowledge codified in the text to be socially relevant on its own.

This process of selection and the devaluation of the author's identity increased the accessibility of textual pedagogies. A man named Gao Song 高松 (fl. 1549-1554) and his widely disseminated instructions for calligraphy in regular script played a key role in this shift. Gao adapted the use of analogies in practice-oriented texts for calligraphy in order to develop a more detailed system that relied on well-known references for the uninitiated audience. Despite the popularity of his work, however, Gao Song's most memorable feature was, as pointed out by Qing dynasty (1644-1911) scholars, to have been forgotten. This act of forgetting was closely tied to the standard techniques that he offered in his work. In fact, the erasure of his personal trace from the content of his manual advanced the transmission of practical knowledge.

Gao Song was a native of Wen'an county (in current-day Hebei province) and lived during the Jiajing 嘉靖 (1522-1566) and probably early Wanli 萬曆 (1572-1620) periods of the Ming dynasty. Gao Song, whose style (*zi* 字) was "escaped to the mountains" (*dunshan* 遯山), took part in the civil service examinations, but never passed. Eventually he purchased the low-

[139] Halbwachs discusses general dynamics of forgetting in societies. 1992. *On Collective Memory*, 172-173.

ranking post of "Usher of the Court of State Ceremonial" (rank 9b) sometime in the Jiajing reign, without ever serving in it.[140] He most likely made a living from teaching and selling his works of calligraphy and painting, as well as from the publications of his practical manuals, several of which have survived to this day.

He supposedly rivaled the famous scholar-painters Shen Zhou 沈周 (1472-1509) and Wen Zhengming 文徵明 (1470-1559) in painting and calligraphy skills, so that even Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555–1636) visited him to request paintings.[141] The earliest known record mentioning him is a short and formulaic entry in the Ming publication *Essentials of the History of Painting* (*Huashi huiyao* 畫史會要), with a postface dated 1631. The text describes him as proficient in painting chrysanthemums, pines, orchids, plum, bamboo and landscapes in the style of Mi Fu 米芾 (1051-1107), and declares him a master of cursive, regular, seal and clerical script. The only personal information this early biography provides is that Gao found no joy in the bureaucratic life and thus happily maintained a humble lifestyle.

In contrast to this brief and dry description, Qing scholars praised Gao as a great talent of the middle of the 16th century, who had, unfortunately, been forgotten by most. What we know about Gao Song comes mainly from the short biographies that were included in local gazetteers of the Qing dynasty. In a gazetteer compiled in 1703, the writer of an exceptionally long biography of Gao laments that Gao's accomplishments had been erased within the span of half a century, and his paintings, valued in the past, had been destroyed when the dynasty fell. One of the anecdotes records how Jing Fu 井焯 (d. 1644), who ended his life together with his wife and sister when the Ming dynasty fell, attempted to recover paintings by Gao Song in the early 17th century, after being asked about any extant works by Gao in his native village in Wen'an.

> I remember how Jing "Lanxi"[142] stayed in the capital during the years of 1636 and 1637; renowned officials such as Zhou Fengxian (*jinshi* of 1628) welcomed Jing and all asked: "In your village, there is a master Gao Daoshan [Song] who is famous for his painting manuals. How many

[140] During the Ming, it became possible for commoners to purchase low degrees and office posts through an official institution. The practice is well documented for the Qing, but not the Ming. For a study of a Qing case, see Zhang. 2013. "Legacy of Success."
[141] Cui. 1673. *Wen'an xianzhi*, juan 3, 12a-13b.
[142] Jing Fu was known as "Lanxi" for having served as an official in Lanxi county.

of his paintings are still extant?" Upon which Jiang replied, ashamed: "I don't know." Zhou laughed: "Daoshan's name is known throughout the land, yet he is not known in his own hometown?" When Lanxi returned home, he began to inquire about Gao's descendants, asking his close acquaintances to purchase surviving paintings. However, Gao's descendants were all farmers, weak and thin, who had no clue about what painting was. One merely said: "There are some papers stacked in some shelves. They have been there for a long time, they might well be paintings." Jing immediately wanted to get his hands on them for inspection, and thus traded the pile of paper for several pecks of rice. When he received the case, he opened it to take a look, finding it contained [among smaller works,] dozens of large paintings. Jing took them to the capital to have them mounted. He presented them to a number of people, who all admired and praised them greatly. The most beautiful among them he selected for his own private collection.
Yet, not long after that, with the fall of the dynasty in 1644, just like the pair of magical swords,[143] they all vanished. Was this like when the painter Zhang Sengyou (active 490-540) dotted the eyes of the dragon, only for it to fly away? How come the marvels created by heaven are not allowed to remain in this world for long?

猶憶井蘭溪於崇禎丙子、丁丑間過都。縉紳名流如周巢軒諸君迎問：「貴邑有高遯山先生者名登畫譜，其遺跡尙幾何？」井謝：「不知。」周笑曰：「遯山名徹海內，而迺不足比閭耶？」蘭溪歸始訪其後裔，令所親轉購之，後人單弱農野，不知丹青爲何物，但云：「家有累紙積庋閣間，歷年已久，未審是否？」亟檢取，遂以數斛米易之，發函啓視，片幀尺幅尙可十數種，井持至長安裝潢之。分餉諸人，大相稱賞，又擇精美者珍爲家藏。未幾，甲申之變，隨與豐城之劒，而偕逝矣。豈僧繇之龍點睛飛去，天生神物不令久留世上耶？[144]

The anecdote was recorded by Ji Jiong 紀炅 (1625-1708), also a native of Wen'an and best known for his contribution to the field of poetry. Ji begins with the statement "I remember how...", as if recollecting events from a long gone past. He seems to have known little about Gao Song himself, and in order to acquire the information needed to write the biography, he relied on

[143] Refers to a Jin dynasty (265–420) legend about the Longquan 龍泉 and Tai'e 太阿 swords that vanished.
[144] Yang. 1708. *Wen'an xianzhi*, juan 7, 32b-33a.

oral accounts and on the manuals Gao had published during his lifetime.[145] He laments the loss of memories of the wonderful artist from Wen'an, comparing it to the loss of the two mythical swords that vanished from the world of men by their own will. This form of praise was commonly used to describe persons of great talent whose achievements were yet to be acknowledged. In the biography, Ji also claims that the single bamboo painting by Gao he had seen was of exquisite quality. He asserts that Gao's talent remained unparalleled during the intervening centuries. The perceived value of Gao's works is reinforced by the second reference to Zhang Sengyou, whose wall painting of a dragon was allegedly so life-like that it gained a life of its own and ascended to heavens as soon as the pupils of its eyes were filled in. The loss of Gao's legacy with the fall of the dynasty was preceded by the short-lived recovery of his works of art, similar to Zhang's dragon that vanished after completion.

Unlike his artworks or the memory of the man himself, Gao's legacy was not lost, as the content of his manuals was continuously reproduced during the two centuries that followed his death. The instructions taken from his manuals became famous largely because of how they helped the student cultivate memory. Ironically, however, even though many later compilations included the content of his manuals wholesale, they made no reference to Gao.

Gao's painting manuals describe practical steps for painting bamboo, chrysanthemums and birds, while a reprint of his pedagogical work on calligraphy has also survived. The content of his painting manuals, discussed in Chapter 5, was widely disseminated though daily-use encyclopedias and copied by later compilers of how-to manuals, such as in Zhou Lüjing's 周履靖 (fl. 1578-1597) *Extensive Documents from the Secluded Residence* (*Yimen guangdu* 夷門廣牘). Indeed, the content of his manuals constituted a core part of such encyclopedias into the late Qing. The same can be said of Gao's manual for calligraphy practice, titled *Origins of Brush Methods* (*Bifa yuanliu* 筆法源流), which was originally published in 1554. It was partially reproduced in several encyclopedias, such as the 1614 *Complete Book of the Combined*

[145] Despite the temporal distance, Ji praises Gao Song profusely. It was common to praise fellow scholars who came from the same region. Ji Jiong, who refused to serve the foreign Qing government and to take the special examinations of 1679 (*boxue hongci* 博學鴻詞), might also have identified with Gao's decision to abstain from serving the state. Ming loyalists often identified with historical figures that decided to find other means to make a living. Ji claims he has corrected the character used in Gao Song's name based on his research from 嵩 to 松. However, it might also be possible that Gao's name was written with different homophone characters even during his time.

Ten Thousand Treasures of the Five Carts (*Wuche hebing wanbao quanshu* 五車合併萬寶全書), and reprinted in several Ming compilations on calligraphy; it was also reproduced as a single volume in 1727 [Figs. 2.1-2.3].[146]

What rendered Gao's manuals so unique and appropriate for wide dissemination was the way he presented knowledge. All of his manuals make extensive use of mnemonic formulas to describe the clearly devised practical steps to the "beginner." His manuals instruct the reader to develop practical skills by going through defined stages of learning, aided by mnemonic rhymes. The rhymes facilitate the memorization of the new typologies of strokes he presents, as well as the steps for constructing characters. Gao Song perceived knowledge as something that could be built up step by step, and he made sure his manuals were structured accordingly. Thus, it is Gao's innovative understanding of knowledge that distinguishes his manuals from earlier sources that addressed practical matters.

Gao's manual on calligraphy shows that he took additive and cumulative learning as a premise, dealing with bits of knowledge as if they were building blocks to construct a house. The more blocks are added on top of a base, the higher the walls can become. In his *Origin and Development of Brush Methods,* Gao devotes the most effort to the presentation of his typology of strokes, which is based on the eight strokes necessary to write the character *yong* 永, commonly referred to as "eight methods of the character Yong" (*Yongzi bafa* 永字八法). Unlike earlier typologies, however, Gao's relies on terms related to animals and plants to describe not only the shape of strokes in calligraphy, but also to present a coherent system for composing each character. His approach presented an accessible framework and the tools necessary for the early-modern student to learn calligraphy. In order to understand how Gao Song envisioned the process of learning and how he introduced innovations based on earlier discourses on calligraphic practice, it is necessary to trace the origins of the concepts that define the framework of his *Origin and Development of Brush Methods*.

[146] The strokes and character compositions from Gao's manual are usually reproduced in the lower segment of the encyclopedias, forming a substantial part of the calligraphy section (*Shufa men* 書法門). Sakai et al. 2001. *Gosha Banpō Zensho,* 268-277. The 1727 edition is taken as the main reference because it reproduces the original preface. See Gao. 2004. *Bifa yuanliu*, 479-482. Ming editions, including one that was published only fourteen years after the original, in 1568, under the title *Chongke neige michuan zifu* 重刻內閣秘傳字府 replace the original preface with comments by the editors.

The framework Gao chose for presenting his innovative approach was based on the connection of calligraphy to cosmic order, which was inherent to the discourse on the creation of calligraphy. His typology of strokes relied on the selective appropriation of the transmitted tradition. Yet his use of analogies differs from earlier texts in ways that made his approach particularly suited to early-modern students of calligraphy.

Early accounts on the mythical origins of script describe graphs and composite characters as the creation of Cangjie 倉頡, who observed natural phenomena and animal patterns by looking up to the skies and down to earth. He investigated the appearance of constellations and of imprinted patterns left by dragons, serpents, animals and birds to create script.[147] These initial graphs underwent changes after they came into the hands of humans, who created different types of script. One of the earliest sources that discusses calligraphy, the *Momentum of the Four Types of Script* (*Siti shushi* 四體書勢) compiled by Wei Heng 衛恆 (d. 291), describes how even after going through several processes of change and simplification, different types of script retained their connection to natural patterns.[148] According to Wei Heng, the perceived momentum of natural processes captured in characters was maintained even as script developed into clerical (*li shu* 隸書) and cursive script (*cao shu* 草書).

In this early text, graphic effects are described by means of colorful analogies to natural patterns. One section, which quotes Cui Yuan's 崔瑗 (78-143) "On the Momentum of Cursive Script" (*Caoshu shi* 草書勢), describes how cursive script resembled "a startled bird about to fly; a crafty beast that is suddenly surprised and about to dash off" (獸跂鳥跱，志在飛移；狡兔暴駭，將奔未馳), or how the "dots (of a character) could be attached in a slanted position, like a cicada clinging to a branch" (旁點邪附，似螳螂而抱枝).[149] Cui

[147] Most early sources describe Cangjie as creator of script (such as the *Siti shushi* of the Jin, and the later *Bisui lun* and *Shupin hou*) but some attribute this achievement to the Yellow Emperor (passages of the *Shu duan* of the Tang, which only survives as a reconstructed record, refer to both the Yellow Emperor and his historiographer Cangjie as creators.) See Escande. 2003. *Traités chinois de peinture et de calligraphie*, 1*,* 113, and Escande. 2010. *Traités chinois de peinture et de calligraphie,* 2*,* 44; 143; 210; 223-224.

[148] On Wei Heng's life and other writings, see Goodman. 2010. *Xun Xu and the Politics of Precision in Third-Century AD China,* 314-316. A full translation of the treatise is available in French in Escande. 2003. *Traités chinois de peinture et de calligraphie,* 1, 113-139.

[149] *Mosou.* 1888. 51b.

Yuan's descriptions for seal script are equally vivid, with compositions so dense that they resemble "coiling and twisting snakes or insects."[150] Around the same time as Wei Heng, Suo Jing's 索靖 (239-303) "On the Appearance of Cursive Script" (*Caoshu zhuang* 草書狀) employed comparable language to discuss calligraphy. According to Suo, cursive script could be

> like a stallion straining in fury against the bridle,
> or the billowing sea foaming up in breakers, [...]
> like black bears crouching across mountain peaks,
> or swallows chasing one another along the water.[151]

Similar analogies that describe movement and tension in script dominated calligraphy texts in the following decades. Interestingly, however, these descriptions were not directed at specific strokes or characters. The analogies instead pointed to the interconnectedness of script and cosmic patterns. In fact, such descriptions of objects and their parts as sentient beings or natural patterns also found parallels in other practical fields, such as weaving, most likely due to the belief that heaven or universal principles engendered movement in beings. [152]

The belief that movement was engendered by the cosmos could explain why early texts on calligraphy contained no explicit instructions on writing. Within compositions, the writer was to derive momentum and dynamism from natural processes. Theorists did not present abstract rules and procedures to reach esthetic goals. Instead they used analogies to indicate the general approach to writing.[153] This use of analogies was later appropriated to describe individual calligraphers' styles and to provide specific instructions.

By the sixth century, it had become common to describe the styles of individual calligraphers with nature analogies. Examples can be found in Yuan Ang's 袁昂 (461-540) "Appraisal of Ancient and Contemporary Calligraphers" (*Gujin shuping* 古今書評). He describes the calligraphy of Xiao Ziyun as being

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[150] Chen. [13th c.?] *Shuyuan jinghua*, juan 3, 6b-7a.

[151] Translation by Cong. 2008. "An Overview of Ancient Calligraphic Theories," 417.

[152] Zürn. 2020. "The Han *Imaginaire* of Writing as Weaving," 383. The Rhapsody of Women Eavers offers several examples, including "heavenly bodies", "a flowing stream," "steeds" or "rabbits." Kuhn. "Silk Weaving in Ancient China," 99-101.

[153] For a parallel argument describing the use of the particular to make general statements in early mathematics, see Chemla. 2009. "On Mathematical Problems as Historically Determined Artifacts."

"like spring flowers in the imperial park: gaze far and near, no place fails to bloom" (如上林春花，遠近瞻望，無處不發). Zhong You's calligraphy, he writes, is "full of impulse and secret beauty, like a wild goose in flight playing above the ocean; a dancing crane playfully roaming the heavens" (意氣密麗，若飛鴻戲海，舞鶴遊天). Xiao Sihua's calligraphy "is of ink strides and connected silk. The momentum of his characters is of outstanding strength, like a dragon leaping over the heavenly gate; a tiger crouching on the phoenix tower" (走墨連綿，字勢屈強，若龍跳淵門，虎臥鳳闕).[154]

The powerful images evoked in Yuan's descriptions, however, were not used to describe only the work of Xiao Sihua. Such descriptions became pervasive, so that one analogy was used for different calligraphers, regardless of the type of script they used. The same analogy of the leaping dragon and the crouching tiger is repeated in later sources to describe the writing of Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303-361), first as a statement attributed to Emperor Wu of the Liang 梁武帝 (r. 502-549), and later also to Tang dynasty critics, including Emperor Taizong 唐太宗 (r. 626-649).[155] A remarkably similar analogy can be gleaned from an inscription on stone in a eulogy to yet another calligrapher, the monk Seng'an Daoyi. On a cliff façade, datable to around 580, his calligraphy is described as being "like a dragon coiling in the mist, like a phoenix soaring through clouds."[156] The frequent use and recycling of analogies to describe calligraphy by different people shows how praise of calligraphic achievements came to rely on tropes that spread widely and became formulaic.

Systematic comparisons between specific strokes and natural imagery became common during the Tang dynasty, and the significance of analogies to cosmic and natural patterns increased. In his "On Calligraphy Models" (*Fashu lun* 法書論), Cai Xizong 蔡希綜 (fl. 742-756) claims that

> in constructing a character, the form must not be conceived *in vacuo* but should, instead, be representative of some material thing, such as bird flock formations, insect holes in wood, mountains or trees, or clouds or mist. Each calligraphic shape, one way or another, should be thus

[154] Chen. [13th c.?] *Shuyuan jinghua*, juan 5, 3b-4b.

[155] The quote is attributed to the Tang emperor in the manuscript "Pelliot chinois 3871" in the collection of the Bibliothéque National de France. Attributed to the emperor Wu of Liang in the *Shuyuan jinghua*, see above. Tang collections of tales would later use the expression to describe Wang himself instead of his calligraphy. See Liu and Mather. 1976. *Shih shuo hsin-yu*, 338.

[156] Harrist. 2008. *The Landscape of Words,* 195-196; 335n136.

derived.[157]

Cai promotes a simplified process of observing nature. Instead of having to infer complex patterns and striving to imitate creation itself, as his slightly younger contemporary Li Yangbing advocated, he tells the reader to simply observe the shapes of things and emulate them when delineating a stroke or composing a character.[158] For Cai, writing was no longer perceived as a natural pattern, but became an imitation of the shape of observable objects instead. This provided a clearer and more concrete way to approach calligraphy: observing shapes required less intellectual involvement on the part of the learner and could be translated into practical instructions. Increased circulation of practice-oriented texts attests to the popularity of this simplified approach among many aspiring calligraphers during the Tang.

Texts that provided instructions for practicing calligraphy based on shapes had already begun to appear during the 7th century, slightly before Cai described his vision-based process. As can be gleaned from the many versions and the composite—or patchwork-like—quality of the texts, these ideas were not the products of individuals, but were shared by many and constructed over time. In his *Treatise on Calligraphy* (*Shupu* 書譜), dated 687, Sun Guoting 孫過庭 (fl. 648-687) comments on two of these texts, both attributed to none other than Wang Xizhi, who by this time had been canonized as the master of calligraphy. Although the content of the texts he refers to most likely does not correspond to the extant text with the same title, scholars believe these to be early manuscript iterations of the transmitted versions.[159]

On the "Battle Formations of the Brush", also rendered as "Tactics of the Brush," (*Bizhen tu* 筆陣圖) Sun notes:

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[157] Qian. 1998. *Limited Views: Essays on Ideas and Letters*, 93.

[158] Li Yangbing, the 8th century scholar and calligrapher, believed he had recovered the sages' writing standards by observing the movements and patterns of nature himself. He described his process in writing, in which observing the shape of objects was just one of the steps to grasp the principles of writing. Scholars of the period believed that restoring seal script was an important means to understand the past because the ancient characters were like the blueprints of creation set down by the sages. The political background for such undertakings and a translation of Li's process are lucidly explained in Wagner. 1997. "Art as an Instrument for Political Legitimation during the Tang," 171-173. See also McNair. 1995. "Public Values in Calligraphy and Orthography in the Tang Dynasty."

[159] There is disagreement about the correspondence of the text mentioned by Sun and the transmitted text with that title. Barnhart dismisses the connection. 1964. "Wei Fu-jen's Pi Chen T'u and the Early Texts on Calligraphy." Tang and Zhang provide convincing arguments to discuss the historical development of the text. Tang. 2000. "Bizhentu fuhua jieduan ji qi neirong." Zhang 2009. *Zhang Tiangong xian Tang shuxue kaobian wenji*, 122-128.

> For some time there has existed a work called *Tactics of the Brush*, with a total of seven lines. It contains three pictures of hands, illustrating different positions of holding the brush. The drawings are distorted, the dots and lines unclear and wrong. It circulates all over the country, south and north... Although its authenticity has not been established, it can be used as an elementary tool for instructing the young. [...] Critical writings on calligraphy by various authors are mostly frivolous and insubstantial; without exception, they are concerned merely with the outer form and go astray in regard to the inner principle. I make no use of them in this treatise.[160]

Sun's statement shows that this text had already begun to circulate widely during his time, and it is clear that he regarded texts that are "concerned merely with the outer form" and do not grasp the "inner principle" as inferior.[161] But at the same time, he acknowledges that such texts could be useful, especially as pedagogical tools. His next comment is on the text titled "Treatise on Brush Technique" (*Bishi lun* 筆勢論):

> For generations there has been handed down a *Treatise on Brush Technique* in ten chapters, supposedly by Wang Xizhi, addressed to his son Wang Xianzhi. The diction is vulgar and the reasoning flimsy, the meaning perverse and the wording stupid. A careful examination of its content and style shows it definitely not to be by Wang Xizhi. Wang Xizhi's position in life was important and his talent lofty; his personality was pure and his verbal style refined. His fame has not been extinguished, and his calligraphy is still extant. To compose every piece of writing, to explain every subject, he always made a thorough study [first], drawing on ancient sources even when he was in a hurry. When a father gives instructions to his precious son and heir in order that his conduct be harmonious and his morality correct, how could style and content possibly be as decadent as they are in this treatise? [...] The work has neither the quality of exhortation nor the authority of a classic. We must reject it![162]

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[160] Chang et. al. 1995. *Two Chinese Treatises on Calligraphy*, 7-8.

[161] Barnhart argues that the appearance of texts that had a "how-to" approach to calligraphy began to proliferate in the late sixth or early seventh century. Barnhart. 1964. "Wei Fu-jen's Pi Chen T'u and the Early Texts on Calligraphy," 19.

[162] Chang et. al. 1995. *Two Chinese Treatises on Calligraphy*, 9

Sun's critical comment indicates that the scholarly elite, following Confucian ideals, rejected such texts for their utter lack of moral or social value. They could not aid scholars in their search for the origin of ancient script and to the ancient way of the sages embodied in it. However, the wide dissemination and popularity of the text is confirmed, not only by Sun's opening comment that it had been circulating "for generations," but also by the existence of an early manuscript recovered from the library cave in Dunhuang 敦煌. The undated fragment of the manuscript corresponds to Sun's description of a text with "ten chapters," instead of the twelve chapters of later printed editions, and is thus regarded by modern scholars as an earlier version of the text.[163]

Both texts criticized by Sun Guoting focused on practical instructions, providing information on how to hold the brush and how to produce specific strokes. Sun comments that the "Battle Formations of the Brush" contained illustrations of hands holding the brush, as well as descriptions of seven different kinds of stroke.[164] Four early versions of the text survive today. Unfortunately none of the editions reproduces illustrations of hands, but each presents seven standard strokes for calligraphy, with some variations in the text.[165] These are contained in: the *Quintessence of the Garden of Calligraphy* (*Shuyuan jinghua* 書苑菁華), preserved as an early Southern Song edition; the *Swamp of Ink* (or *Assemblage of Calligraphy*, *Mosou* 墨藪), which was originally published sometime after 841 but only survives in Ming editions; the *Essential Records on Calligraphy Exemplars* (*Fashu yaolu* 法書要錄), compiled sometime around 847, but extant as Ming editions; and the *Collection from the Pond of Ink* (*Mochi bian* 墨池編), published in 1066 and extant as a Ming

[163] The final sections of the versions are similar, indicating that the tenth chapter of the fragment is the last. Compare Pelliot chinois 4936 in the collection of the Bibliothéque National de France and the longer printed versions in the *Mosou* 墨藪 and *Mochi bian* 墨池编. These include additional content, including a colophon (*hou* 後), which is considered to be later additions.

[164] Unfortunately, no Tang examples of illustrations of hand postures for holding the brush have survived. During the Ming and Qing such illustrations abounded and were included in Ming encyclopedias and in Qing manuals attributed to Wang Xizhi that specialize in hand postures.

[165] Tang compares the sets of different versions contained in the *Fashu yaolu* and the *Mochi bian*. 2000. "Bizhentu fuhua jieduan ji qi neirong," 77-78. Zhang provides a chart correlating the different titles according to content similarity. 2009. *Zhang Tiangong xian Tang shuxue kaobian wenji*, 124.

edition from 1568.[166]

Barnhart provides a translation for these seven principles, as recorded in the *Essential Records on Calligraphy Exemplars*:

> Like a cloud formation stretching a thousand li; indistinct, but not without form.
> Like a stone falling from a high peak, bouncing and crashing, about to shatter.
> The tusk of an elephant or rhinoceros (thrust into and) broken by the ground.
> Fired from a three thousand pound crossbow.
> A withered vine, ten thousand years old.
> Crashing waves or rolling thunder.
> The sinews and joints of a mighty bow.[167]

Although is not clear whether the analogies describe the shape of the stroke or the movement of the brush, the text shows that referring to nature in order to address specific strokes was regarded as effective. The fourth and the seventh lines, however, rely on analogies to weapons, which most likely became popular during the Tang dynasty. The figure commonly credited with using battle analogies to describe calligraphy was the Tang emperor Taizong, who allegedly claimed that he learned the principles of calligraphy by observing men engaged in battle during his youth.[168]

The second text Sun Guoting criticized, the "Treatise on Brush Technique," as well as the colophon to the "Battle Formations of the Brush," also included analogies to battle.[169] With the dissemination of anecdotes promoting analogies to combat and weapons, they also began to appear in

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[166] Barnhart (1964. "Wei Fu-jen's Pi Chen T'u and the Early Texts on Calligraphy."), Laurentis (2014. Origin, Authorship, and Interpretation of Yong Zi Bafa.") and Tang (2000. "Bizhentu fuhua jieduan ji qi neirong) discuss extant editions of these works in their studies. The title under which the "Battle Formations" can be found in the *Mochi bian* is "Discussions on Calligraphy" (*Shu lun* 書論), while the text included under the heading "Battle Formations" is usually titled "Colophon."

[167] Barnhart. 1964. "Wei Fu-jen's Pi Chen T'u and the Early Texts on Calligraphy," 16.

[168] This connection is drawn by Tang. 2000. "Bizhentu fuhua jieduan ji qi neirong," 76-77. He believes this to be another indicator that these texts appeared during the Tang, when the anecdote of Taizong had become popular. See *Mo Sou*. 55a-b, and Li. 1936. *Taiping yulan*, 301, 3b-4a.

[169] The section of the "Treatise on Brush Technique" that included the battle analogies varies according to the edition. In the *Mo Suo*, it is listed as the ninth, 1888. 29a. In the *Shuyuan jinghua* it is the first. Chen. [13th c.?]. *Shuyuan jinghua,* 1, 10a.

appraisals of calligraphy. Ouyang Xun's 歐陽詢 (557-641) calligraphy was described as being "intimidating like lances and halberds from weapon stocks."[170] One text recorded during the Song dynasty describes how a "Tang critic" claimed that Wang Xizhi's calligraphy was "like a brave warrior unsheathing his sword to dam the waters and stem their flow." The appraisal continues with a set of familiar analogies:

> A dot he placed at the top is like a rock falling down from a high precipice. A horizontal stroke he made is like a cloud sweeping across a thousand miles. A slanting *na*-stroke he dashed is like the roar of wind and thunder. A vertical stroke he wrote is like a ten-thousand-year-old withered vine.[171]

The scholarly elite, however, continued to express distrust of texts that made use of analogies. As concerns with individual expression and virtue had crystalized at the center of calligraphic practice, which became associated with self-cultivation, scholars became weary of descriptions that relied on convoluted analogies. A statement by the Northern Song scholar Mi Fu captures their objection to the lack of specificity when discussing calligraphy:

> As we look to the past and to how the sages discussed calligraphy, we find that they made use of evasive and far-fetched words, making odd and overelaborate analogies, like "a dragon leaping over the heavenly gate, a tiger crouching on the phoenix tower." What kind of talk is this?
> This use of language that strives to be overelaborated is completely removed from the proper methods and does a disservice to those who study [calligraphy]. Thus, in my own discussions, making things intelligible to people is my priority, and I thus avoid such abstruse wording.
>
> 歷觀前賢論書，徵引迂遠，比況奇巧，如「龍跳天門，虎臥鳳闕」，是何等語？或遺辭求工，去法逾遠，無益學者。故吾所論要在入人，不為溢辭。[172]

[170] Wang. 1999. "The Taming of the Shrew," 149.
[171] Translation in Wang. 1999. "The Taming of the Shrew," 144. Original passage in Chen. [13th c.?]. *Shuyuan jinghua*, 5, 5a.
[172] Mi. 1501. *Haiyue mingyan*, 1a.

Such interjections that discarded this type of analogy as convoluted and excessive were far from unusual among the Song elite. As the practical texts attributed to Wang Xizhi had been circulating as manuscripts for a long period of time, many readers had had the opportunity to access and amend the transmitted texts according to their needs. By the time they were reproduced in printed collectanea during the Song, what had begun with the descriptions of seven strokes had developed into the well-known "eight methods of the character *yong*." The focus of the discussions on calligraphy thus began to shift away from abstract descriptions of shape and movement that seemed to lack in objectivity and meaning. Scholars began to describe strokes and gestures more consciously, providing readers practical guidelines instead.

The first version of the "eight methods" was most likely formulated during the late Tang or early Song. The earliest extant version of the "eight methods," as well as textual references to it, can be dated to the 11th century. This version of the text continues to attribute the mixed and convoluted bits of collated content to key figures in calligraphy, such as Li Yangbing of the Tang and Wang Xizhi of the Jin.[173] In the *Quintessence of the Garden of Calligraphy,* the "eight methods" were accompanied by an anecdote about Wang Xizhi, who was said to have practiced solely this single character *yong* 永 (eternal) for fifteen years, and only then started writing sentences.[174] Although the Song public might have perceived this account as spurious, it indicates there was a sustained belief that repetitive practice of specific strokes could be used as a basis for learning calligraphy.

The choice of the character *yong* for describing the eight methods was most likely related to Wang Xizhi's most famous work, the "Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Gathering" (*Lanting xu* 蘭亭序), which begins with this character and was a standard model for copying.[175] The standardization of the strokes as a set of eight that could be combined into a single character surely helped the student to visualize how the strokes should look. Tying them to a specific character narrowed down the possible variations for each stroke and provided a sequence.[176] Each stroke was also given a name: *Ce* 側 (lit. slanted), *Le* 勒 (lit. bridle), *Nu* 弩 (lit. bow), *Yue* 趯 (lit. to jump), *Ce* 策 (lit.

[173] Laurentis cites passages that describe the reception and comments on the "eight methods". 2014. Origin, Authorship, and Interpretation of Yong Zi Bafa," 116-118.
[174] The anecdote seems to first appear in Chen. [13th c.?]. *Shuyuan jinghua*, juan 2, 6b.
[175] Ledderose. 2000. *Ten Thousand Things*, 11.
[176] The *Shuyuan jinghua* depicts the construction of the character with each added stroke. Chen. [13th c.?]. *Shuyuan jinghua*, juan 2, 6a-b.

whip), *Lüe* 掠 (lit. to plunder), *Zhuo* 啄 (lit. to peck) and *Zhe* 磔 (lit. to tear apart). The names were often paired with concrete terms, such as "dot" for *Ce* (側), or "vertical stroke" for *Nu*.[177] These strokes did not correspond directly to the seven strokes described earlier, with five similar strokes and two (*ce* and *zhuo*) that used different brushwork, and one (*yue*) that described a hook ending and replaced two of the strokes in the set of seven that ended in inward and outward hooks. The descriptions that accompanied the strokes were also quite different from the previous set of seven, as they avoided analogies and instead sought to expand and specify the content by describing the strokes in more concrete terms.

The organic growth of texts about the "eight methods" continued well into the Song and Yuan, when several versions circulated simultaneously. As the texts circulated, explicit practical instructions became more frequent and detailed, most likely due to the spread of the standards of the scholarly elite. The instructions were usually composed as short notes on the appearance or movement required to create the strokes, sometimes accompanied by an image of the character. For example, one formula states: "the *Nu* stroke, if exceedingly straight, will lose in strength" (弩過直而力敗), and "for the *Zhe* stroke, move quickly in a slanted position in order to spread open [the hairs of the brush]" (磔趯趙以開撑). Short descriptions were often followed by a lengthy paragraph on each type of stroke, which further explained the method for wielding the brush and provided an oral formula. In some versions, such as in the *Quintessence of the Garden of Calligraphy,* the formula was followed by a question and answer section on each specific stroke and its brushwork.[178]

Although the descriptions of the strokes became more elaborate, both sets of seven and eight strokes still served as general reference and did not cover the vast variety of strokes that are actually used in writing. The formerly popular descriptions based on analogies to nature and battle only survived as residual references in the names of individual strokes, which still retained notions of weapons in motion or animal movement, and in some passages where the previous references were picked up. The use of a syncretic image of the character *yong* also distinguished the "eight methods" from the seven strokes that were sometimes depicted in print, but always regarded as individual units.

The image of the character *yong* is not present in the earliest extant

[177] Chen. [13th c.?]. *Shuyuan jinghua*, juan 2, 6b-7a.
[178] Both variations of the instructions recorded together in Chen. [13th c.?]. *Shuyuan jinghua*, 2, 7a-11a.

editions from the Song, but became common during the Ming dynasty. The earliest known illustration can be dated to the early Ming. It is featured in the first edition of the *Essentials of the History of Calligraphy* (*Shushi huiyao* 書史會要), dated 1376. The illustration itself also underwent changes over time.[179] The 1376 edition shows that the strokes were put next to each other. This hints at the configuration of the character, but the strokes were not yet assembled into a unit as they are in later editions. The earlier composition is an abstract graph that emphasizes the distinct strokes, while the later ones depict a standard character as a unit. Thus, the suggestion that the character serves as a memory aid for the set of eight variable strokes is more explicit in the early graph, as the strokes depicted would generate an unbalanced character *yong* if put together.[180]

The visual disjunction of strokes became widespread during the Song dynasty, with variations of stroke groupings according to script being discussed in compilations like the *Collection from the Pond of Ink* (*Mochi bian* 墨池編).[181] During the Yuan dynasty, these general combinations were then translated into a more concrete typology, focusing on regular script. The calligrapher and monk Xue'an (雪庵), also known by his lay name Li Puguang 李溥光 (fl. 1299-1317)[182] did so, for example, expounding on the "eight methods" in his *Xue'an's Essentials for Characters* (*Xue'an ziyao* 雪庵字要, preface d. 1308)[183] and proposing 32 stroke variants from the eight generic categories of strokes.

The Ming painter and calligrapher Gao Song adopted a similar approach to strokes, presenting a useful typology of seventy-two variants in his *Origin and Development of Brush Methods*.[184] Unlike his predecessors, though, Gao

[179] This edition, unlike other books that were composed earlier, is not a late reprint.

[180] Tao. 1376. *Shushi huiyao*, juan 9, 2b. The illustration in the first edition is different from the image depicted in the *Siku quanshu* edition. The National Palace Museum in Taipei holds a copy of the 1376 edition. Laurentis has suggested that the earliest illustration was printed in the *Mochi bian*, from 1568, but that is not the case. See Laurentis. 2014. "Origin, Authorship, and Interpretation of Yong Zi Bafa," 123.

[181] Zhu. 1782. *Mochi bian*, 3a-9a. The *Shuyuan jinghua* also suggests 24 kinds of stroke or groupings. Chen. [13th c.?]. *Shuyuan jinghua*, juan 2, *hanlin milun*, 2a-6a.

[182] Su Xianshuang argues Li was born around 1237 and died before 1327. 2014. "Yuan shujia Li Puguang ji qi sufa, lun kaoshu," 50.

[183] Unfortunately, the earliest version of the manual is the *Sibu congkan* print from 1920, which is described as reproducing a now lost Ming manuscript. Li. 1920. *Xue'an ziyao,* postface, 1. The content of the manual is also attributed to Li and reproduced in Feng. [1750?] *Shufa zhengchuan*.

[184] There are some overlaps between the types of strokes presented in Li's manual and Gao's. While most stroke names in the former are present in the latter, their shape and

Song took the "eight methods" to develop a coherent pedagogical approach to writing, embedding it in an encompassing system for character composition. Gao describes the strokes as building blocks that are put together into characters and uses complete characters and composition instructions to enlighten the student. He returns to the use of analogies to nature and war to introduce the broad range of strokes needed for writing. Yet his use of the analogies differed from that of earlier texts, as he transformed them into principles that guided the composition of characters. Gao presented the information in a structured and cumulative manner, adapting the instructions for the practice of calligraphy to printed media. This enabled him to reach a broad audience of aspiring calligraphers who had no access to private teachers, including autodidacts. This approach ensured the lasting popularity and utility of Gao's contribution, even as he himself faded into obscurity.

The *Origin and Development of Brush Methods*

Gao opens the *Origin and Development of Brush Methods* with a lengthy preface. He describes the origin of script according to the traditional accounts described above: after the creation and use of knotted ropes and the eight trigrams, the Yellow Emperor ordered Cang Jie to create writing by observing natural patterns. This ancient script, he writes, went through a set of stages and developed into the six types of script. He incorporates the content of anecdotes that had been passed down through the ages into his narrative, including one that attributes the recording of the "eight methods" to the Han official Cai Yong 蔡邕 (ca. 133-192), who was said to have received the oral precepts of calligraphy from a divine visitor (*shenren* 神人). These precepts were presented to him as twelve formulas, of which the fifth was the "eight methods of the character *yong*." This was then transmitted to Cui Yuan, Zhong Yu 鐘繇 (ca. 151-230), Madame Wei 衛夫人 (ca. 272-349) and, finally, to Wang Xizhi. Wang's devotion to practicing this single character for fifteen years is also woven into this narrative of transmission. Gao, full of awe and

categories do not always correspond. Considering that Li was a native of Datong 大同, close to Gao Song's hometown in the North, it is not unlikely that Gao either saw a copy of Li's manual or received oral instructions on Li's typology from a local teacher. The circulation of Li's book, at least in manuscript format, is confirmed by several early Ming sources, including the bibliographical catalogue of Chao Li (*Baowentang shumu* 寶文堂書目), a contemporary of Gao Song. Yet, Li is not mentioned in Gao's work.

amazement, writes that Wang "was thus able to master all characters!" (以其能通一切字也！). He laments, however, that the oral precepts provided by the divinity slowly degraded as they were transmitted over time, eventually becoming obscured. This sad fact becomes Gao's cue to discuss his own approach to the "eight methods," claiming that he took what had been transmitted and "ignorantly transformed it into seventy-two [stroke] methods" (愚變七十二法).

What follows is his brief but telling description of his creative process behind the seventy-two strokes:

> One by one I made corrections and improvements to obtain the shapes;
> one by one I arranged the shapes to create characters;
> one by one I connected the characters to create songs.
>
> 一一檃栝成形，一一拾形成字，一一聯字成歌。[185]

Gao makes clear that in the creation of his books, he engaged in a process that entailed cumulative steps. Bit by bit, he built on what had been handed down since antiquity. Gao consciously designed the content of his manual with accessibility in mind. His own process of creation is reflected in the systematic order in which information is presented in the manual. Yet, Gao concludes his preface in an apologetic tone, presenting his view of knowledge construction and transmission:

> How foolish it is "to take a bamboo straw to measure the sky and a ladle to measure the ocean," to be "an insect in a jar, a frog at the bottom of the well;" but how can one hope to stride over the boundaries of this world? One can comprehend other categories by following the correspondences between them; it is that simple! My greatest hope at the moment is to aid those who share my aspirations, and I offer this as a means not only to avoid the loss of the ancients' truly great achievements, but also to satisfy the desires within my foolish heart.
> Written in 1554, during the full moon of the first month, by Gao Song.

[185] Gao. 2004 [1727]. *Bifa yuanliu*, 2a.

愧愚！「管窺、蠡勺，難測海天之量」、「甕蟪、井蛙」，奚度穹壤之疆矧？乃相從觸類而已矣。萬希姑以增益意與同志者，共茲不惟不泯古人允臧之善，抑且了愚心中所欲也。嘉靖甲寅歲春望正月。高松書。[186]

Gao acknowledges that there are boundaries that limit one's study, yet claims that through inference, one can learn things that are not directly accessible through mere observation. By the Ming dynasty, claims about the interconnectedness of the different areas of life, or "categories" of matter, had become common in the high strata of society through both Neo-Confucian and Daoist teachings, not to mention the popular belief in the interconnectedness of all beings with the cosmos.[187] Gao, who had trained for the imperial examination yet lived as a recluse, must have been exposed to both Neo-Confucian and Daoist ideals. His view that by learning one thing, one will eventually grasp greater meanings by drawing new connections in the mind is thus not surprising. Yet, Gao employs this rhetoric to discuss the usefulness of practical skills, often disregarded by scholars. He indicates that, as trivial as it may seem, what he is presenting in his manual—knowledge of a practical nature—will eventually lead to greater realizations.

The manual itself is structured according to the ideals presented in the preface. It is conceived as an aid to the student of calligraphy, and suggests the progression of knowledge in its structure. It begins with the eight basic methods, which Gao calls "ancestors" (*zu* 祖), and in the next pages expands them into sets, ranging from four to seventeen variants for each stroke. Gao claims that the total of seventy-two strokes—which also include composite strokes—cover the entire range required for writing common characters.[188] Every variant is given a catchy name referencing the shape of the strokes, mostly describing shapes that can be found in nature (animals and vegetation), objects used in combat and occasionally household objects. For example, for the first stroke, which has fourteen variants, the first four are

[186] Gao. 2004 [1727]. *Bifa yuanliu*, 2b.

[187] Gao uses the phrase *xiangcong shulei* 相從觸類. One example of a similar passage (*xianglei xiangcong* 相類相從) used in the Daoist context is recorded in the Song encyclopedia *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤. Zhang. 1934. *Yunji qiqian*, juan 66, cong 6, 6. The architectonic grasp of things by Zhu Xi is addressed in Berthrong. 2010. "Zhu Xi's Cosmology," 156. Forms of popular divination, such as physiognomy, also relied on the belief of a correlation of men and cosmos.

[188] Gao. 2004 [1727]. *Bifa yuanliu*, 4b. Gao repeats this claim at the end of the composition section. 2004 [1727]. *Bifa yuanliu*, 19b. He describes the eight methods as ancestors in his description of the basic strokes. 2004 [1727]. *Bifa yuanliu*, 1b-2a.

called “curious rock,” “dragon claw,” “almond” and “plum pit” (*guai shi* 怪石, *long zhua* 龍爪, *xing ren* 杏仁, *mei he* 梅核). For the seventh stroke, with only four variants, he chooses the names “bird’s beak,” “frolicking butterflies,” “wooden man” and “coiling dragon” (*niao zhuo* 鳥啄, *xi die* 戲蝶, *mu ren* 木人, pan long 蟠龍). Each stroke is accompanied by a textual explanation laid out to follow the curvature of the stroke’s contour in the illustrations, indicating which movements of the brush are required to create the stroke.

Gao conceived of these exhaustive variants as building blocks. In a rhyme opening the next section, “Diagrams of the Use of the Seventy-two Strokes to Create Characters,” he states that the student should “take these brush methods to compose the characters” (筆法移來結構字), which would, if properly arranged according to the inner frame of each character, result in proper compositions.[189] His diagrams are introduced in the same order as the strokes. He thus begins with the “curious rock,” continues with the “dragon claw,” then the “almond,” and so on, presenting each stroke variant in use within a character. Each character is flanked by rhymes describing its composition. In these rhymes, which vary in length, Gao makes ample use of the vocabulary introduced in the first section of the manual. For the “almond-stroke,” a leftward falling stroke, he provides this description for composing the character *yue* 樂 (music):

> Take “white” (*bai* 白) as master, with “coiling dragons” (幺) as assistants on each flank;
> Centered below “white” comes a hook, with two dots as supporters of rank.
>
> 以白為主，左右蟠龍。
> 正白一勾，輔弼二點。[190]
> [Fig. 2.4]

Although the “almond-stroke,” which is represented by the two dots at the bottom of the character, is featured in the heading, the rhyme also includes the “coiling dragon” stroke to describe the composition. This shows the advantage of giving the different types of strokes and compositions short denominations, since long descriptions of the stroke would hamper the

[189] Gao. 2004 [1727]. *Bifa yuanliu*, 8b.
[190] Gao. 2004 [1727]. *Bifa yuanliu*, 9a.

creation of mnemonic rhymes.[191] Some of Gao's descriptions also emphasize the even distribution of the strokes. For the "falling needle" stroke, a variant of the third stroke from the "eight methods" contained in the character *guai* 乖 (crafty), he writes:

> Insert "thousand" (*qian* 千) into "north" (*bei* 北);
> Equally wide the blanks must be!
> Horizontally, one counts five strokes;
> Vertically, one sees only three.
>
> 北字插上千，空眼一般寬。
> 橫數真顯四，豎數只見三。[192]

Based on the graphical qualities of the character *guai*, Gao breaks it down into other characters that can serve as mnemonic components. His descriptions not only rely on the visual segmentation of characters into sub-parts and sections, but are playful at times. The character *gui* 龜 (turtle), for example, serves as a model for the "dragon-tail-stroke," a variant of the fourth stroke of the "eight methods." In this particular rhyme, the meaning of the character is also brought into play:

> The "turtle's head" and tail make ten times a trace;
> blanks and hollows truly form its scaly carapace.
>
> 龜頭龜尾共十畫，
> 空白空眼真鱗甲。[193]
> [Fig. 2.5]

The rhyme focuses on the layout and distance between the strokes, but makes reference to the meaning of the character both in its use of other turtle-related strokes and in the playful reference to the final carapace pattern that is achieved when the strokes are evenly distributed.

These three examples of rhymes show how Gao made use of the vocabulary he coined to name strokes in his rhymes for composition. Not only did he connect the variations to visual references in nature to aid the student

[191] The next chapter also addresses the use of components in the *Hundred-Rhyme Song Formulas for Cursive Script.*
[192] Gao. 2004 [1727]. *Bifa yuanliu*, 10b.
[193] Gao. 2004 [1727]. *Bifa yuanliu*, 11a.

in the learning process, but he took this vocabulary as the base of the rhymes. As described in the preface, his own creative process involved taking individual elements to develop characters and rhymes. This also became his pedagogical strategy to convey the teachings in his manual. Gao takes cumulative learning as a premise by first introducing interchangeable building blocks and then suggesting how they should be assembled to form the desired "house" with rhymes.

The concept of "building" characters with "parts" is present in one of the six composition modes he describes towards the end of the manual, after a lengthy rhyme that lists characters according to his seventy-two stroke types and a reproduction of theories transmitted from antiquity. Gao calls this mode "building a house." Here, Gao describes the elements of characters in architectural terms, each being set up one after the next. The example he uses is the character *ji* 齎, meaning "to give, hand over". His components, listed on the left, are described according to their structural importance for the "building":

亠	點為房脊	the dot is the ridge of the roof
丫	為中柱	is the central column
刀	為左插梁	is the left secondary beam
仄	為右插梁	is the right secondary beam
丿	為左柱	is the left column
丨	為右柱	is the right column
二	為横梁	is the lintel
目	為正中門戶	is the central door
八	為門傍門枕	is the bearing stones on the sides of the door[194]

In the manual, the explanation of this composition principle is followed by a question from an imaginary interlocutor who wonders: "Not speaking in terms of dots and strokes and instead using 'beams, columns and door' to discuss composition, how can that be?" (不言點畫勾撇名目，而言梁柱門戶者，何也？). Which is followed by Gao's reply: "The reason is that the

[194] It is interesting to note that the order provided here corresponds to the standard order for writing the character today. Gao was certainly not the first to discuss the order of strokes for writing. The "eight methods" were already provided an order and earlier manuals of the Yuan, such as the *Hanlin yaojue* 翰林要訣, also provided the writing steps for several other characters.

ancient carpenter's[195] principle for building houses and that for writing characters is the same" (比及古魯造宇與寫字理一然也) [Fig. 2.6].[196] He makes a similar statement about another composition principle, which he calls "weaving a fabric." Just as in the "building a house" principle, the principle behind women's weaving practices is the same as the principle of writing characters—they are thus interchangeable. One pays attention to the gaps between the strokes and makes sure these are evenly distributed, which is just like paying attention that the silk threads are even when weaving fabric. Gao takes the character for "embroider" (*xiu* 繡) as an example and segments it into strokes and components, yet cautions the student that "one does not speak of them as strokes, but only of warp and weft" (不言筆法，只言經緯).[197]

While Gao's rhymes for composing individual characters and his typology of strokes make reference to natural patterns, his general principles for character composition take this connection further by establishing a connection to cosmic order. His approach of inferring knowledge from other practices, such as building and weaving, and employing it to explain calligraphy is based on his claim that these fields are all related and share the same "principle" (*li* 理). The understanding that crafts shared a common principle or Way (*dao* 道) was common in Daoist and neo-Confucian sources, which Gao was surely familiar with. When Gao equates the composition of characters with the creative processes of other crafts, he goes beyond the social contexts in which these crafts normally took place. For example, weaving was a craft predominantly associated with women and female virtue, but this cultural distinction is disregarded in order to describe a unifying

[195] Reference to Lu Ban 魯班, a carpenter who lived during the 5th century BCE. He later became known as the patron saint of carpenters. The "Cassic of Lu Ban" (*Lu Ban jing* 魯班經), a carpentry manual that claimed to transmit ancient standards of carpentry, including information on how to build houses, circulated during the sixteenth-century. On the history and editions of the manual, see Ruitenbeek. 1996. *Carpentry and Building in Late Imperial China*, chapter 2.

[196] Gao. 2004 [1727]. *Bifa yuanliu*, 32a. It is interesting to note the parallel between his approach to "building" characters on paper with the European tradition of building memory palaces. Although both rely on a constructive principle in architectural terms to aid memorization, it is unlikely that these traditions are related, as discussed in Chapter 1.

[197] Gao. 2004 [1727]. *Bifa yuanliu*, 32b. A connection between the practice of writing texts, cosmic order and the Dao was likely established as early as the Han dynasty. This early connection, however, refers to the composition of text, equating textual passages to threads that must be woven together, not to the composition of individual characters. Zürn. 2020. "The Han *Imaginaire* of Writing as Weaving," 374.

principle.[198] His calligraphy manual thus familiarizes the student with several levels of understanding, providing both a micro perspective through his description of strokes and a macro perspective that embeds the practice of calligraphy within a cosmological order.

Gao's constructive approach to knowledge is also present in his other extant works, including his painting manuals for birds, chrysanthemums and bamboo (discussed in chapter 5). In all of them he follows similar principles: One begins by learning the parts of a bird or flower and then memorizes the rhymes to put a "unit" together, only to create full compositions in the end. The mnemonic rhymes he provides in all his manuals describe practical steps that are to be followed in a sequence. Besides prescriptive instructions, Gao presents a set of "things to avoid," describing common mistakes that the beginner should also remember in order to not commit them. These too are captured within a typology that relies on analogies to nature, in both fields of calligraphy and painting. [199] Yet, these prescriptive instructions or admonishments are not meant to limit the student's creativity. In fact, the pedagogical methods Gao developed in his manuals granted the student a freedom that calligraphers of the period had been yearning for: a cohesive system that gave them the opportunity to learn something practical without requiring numerous models or a master.[200]

Valued Knowledge, Forgotten Author

Gao's manuals catered to the social need for a new pedagogical method based on written and visual standards that could be disseminated through print rather than personal interaction. He made the conscious choice to depart from traditional lineages of calligraphic styles and to adopt systematic and clear descriptions of steps and components. His approach to

[198] A similar attitude of overriding gender roles associated to crafts is presented by Zürn in his study of the *Huainanzi* 淮南子. Zürn. 2020. "The Han *Imaginaire* of Writing as Weaving," 371.

[199] The list of mistakes in his calligraphy treatise was most likely appropriated from earlier sources, yet the descriptions added to the strokes are most likely original, as they include terms from Gao's own typology of strokes. His painting manuals also include discussions of common mistakes.

[200] The scholar Lü Kun 呂坤 (1536-1618), probably a generation younger than Gao Song, and Lü's father both believed that the format in which knowledge was relayed affected the teacher-student relationship. The availability of didactic songs would minimize the importance of this relationship, as children could memorize songs and disseminate them on their own. Lü saw this as a positive turn. Handlin. 1983. *Action in Late Ming Thought*, 149.

practical knowledge, as something that can be visually deconstructed and partitioned into specific actions and procedures, enabled the student to grasp basic concepts through emulation. Gao believed that through inference, the student was able to go beyond the models he was given. The student did not only master the characters before him, but also grasped the principles behind them.

The segmented visual elements and partitioned movements were to be internalized through memorization. The role of the analogies was thus to help the student retain the specific building blocks Gao was presenting by referring to their shape, while the mnemonic formulas aided the student in remembering the suggested steps and principles of composition. Compared to the earlier analogies discussed above, which took a holistic approach and referred to movement to describe to the momentum and tension within a character, Gao's analogies target a systematic typology of very specific modules. Thus, although he makes reference to the cosmic connection of the principles behind all practices and things, including writing and script, the modules themselves are singled out as units. These units rely on the common assumption of cosmic relations solely to obtain their names; in every other way they are conceived as a pedagogical tool—as a closed system. The conscious choice to embed his system in a traditional framework that was widely known made the typology easy to remember. At the same time, Gao's system aimed at specificity, thus successfully combining the desire for clarity and the ancient framework for discussing script.

Such a closed pedagogical system was necessary to codify and transmit practical knowledge in print. The systematization of "what to do" and "what not to do" helped obviate the need for oral instruction from a teacher. Gao, who had experience as a teacher, must have developed his standards by interacting with actual students.[201] The versified form of these standards, especially those that involve steps and the interaction of the modules, ensure that the students are be able to recall them during practice. The verses were infused with what he predicted would be challenging for a beginner. By

[201] One account by Gao included in a Ming encyclopedia that follows one of his texts on painting was requested by a student (*menren* 門人) by the name of Chuai Jing 揣經. Unfortunately, no information about this pupil could be found. This entry is included in the painting section (*huapu men* 畫譜門) of an edition titled *Qie jujia biyong wanshi jubaonang zhshu jinyu ji* 鍥居家必用萬事聚寶囊諸書金玉集, juan 12, 9b. It is included in an encyclopedia that compiles volumes from several editions with different titles. The National Diet Library in Tokyo catalogued the encyclopedia under the title *Longtou yilan xuehai buqiuren* 龍頭一覽學海不求人 and as compiled by Zhu Dingchen 朱鼎臣, [n.d.].

vocalizing or repeating the verses in silence, the student could internalize the principles that would guide his practice and shape his habits. The meticulous planning and structured presentation of the content thus minimized the need for feedback from a teacher. By following Gao's program and becoming conversant with the typology and rhymes through repetition and practice, the student was able to infer the greater principle behind calligraphy. Formats that facilitated memorization, such as the rhymed texts and the division of steps and units, were crucial for the student to habituate himself to the lesson and the standards so he could perceive mistakes on his own and improve his work.

Gao's seventy-two strokes, unlike the sets of strokes discussed earlier, were the product of his individual efforts. Not only the way he presented the content of his manuals, but also the way he presented himself defined his coherent work. The absence of the author's identity from a text was unusual for scholars, yet in all of his works, Gao maintains distance from the content. The prefaces in his manuals provide little information about him and do not emphasize his personal involvement with either painting or calligraphy. Nor do the instructions he provides reference his persona or other named individuals. While he praises the achievements of the ancients, he believes that their oral precepts had not been transmitted in a way that could still guide the students of his time. Every preface contains an apologetic note that acknowledges that the content of his manuals will probably be regarded as "base" by other scholars, yet this does not stop him from publishing them. Instead of focusing on his merits as an author, Gao targets the development of the readers' skill. He presents knowledge as an entity that can stand on its own and does not depend on the character of an individual author.

According to Gao, the practical and "base" content he presented in his manuals had to be acquired first, while concerns with individual expression should come after the development of skill. In a postface discussing the painting of birds, which was requested by one of his students, Gao writes:

> First the talent in one's breast must be broadened to describe the marvels of the character. Why do I insist on this matter?
> Surely they will marvelously converge and it will resemble nature itself.
> It is only for this end that I discuss beaks, claws and feathers—it is the reason why I pull out my ignorant brush and capture these immense vulgarities.

啟胸中之才，寫本然之妙，奚有蹈於斯哉？定然妙合天成而已矣。因謂嘴爪毛羽之端，故伸出愚之筆，鹵拒俗惡也。[202]

This statement, which shows that Gao took a defensive stance to present the pragmatic content of his manuals, firmly vouches for the acquisition of practical skills through training. Gao suggests that practical training eventually becomes habit, and from that point on, limitations to individual expression cease to exist. In the same passage he explains that the issue he is addressing is not intellectual in nature; a person's limited technical skill is often what hampers development. In order to enable the student to engage in such artistic endeavors, his writings were dedicated to providing a firm practical foundation.

Gao Song's manuals were most likely a product of his economic situation and one should not ignore the financial benefits his manuals may well have brought him. Nonetheless, his commitment to presenting the content in a manner that catered to the needs of an early-modern society with fluid social boundaries is emblematic of the period. By presenting standards, segmenting and systematizing knowledge and detaching himself from the content, he was countering the traditional method of teaching calligraphy, which relied on the copying of models. However, this was no longer regarded as a sustainable didactic method. Observing rare works of calligraphy and practicing with a renowned master was beyond the means of most people. Copying model calligraphy in the style of a specific writer was not necessary for those who only wanted their writing to be functional; and even those who aspired to more could only learn so much from such a method. While members of the scholarly elite still portrayed calligraphy as an intellectual activity that was dissociated from other forms of crafts, Gao provided a solid basis for any student—whether they would use calligraphy for daily tasks or to further develop their individual style.

Gao's endeavor to re-conceptualize the pedagogical approach to calligraphy was very successful. The content of his *Origin and Development of Brush Methods* was reproduced in numerous compilations on calligraphy soon after its first publication. The *Central Drafting Office's Secretly Transmitted Character Treasury* (*Neige michuan zifu* 內閣秘傳字府) was one of the first

[202] Zhu. [n.d.] *Qie jujia biyong wanshi jubaonang zhshu jinyu ji*, juan 12, 9b. He quotes a passage from Li Kan's *Zhu pu* 竹譜, in which the Song painter Wen Tong is praised as the only painter who was able to comprehend the heavenly principles of the bamboo and apply them in his painting. The context in which he uses the expression is different here.

compilations to reproduce Gao's manual in full. The earliest extant edition, with a preface dated 1568 and a postface dated 1573, fully acknowledges Gao's pedagogical contribution. The preface praises the quality of the guidelines and of the calligraphy. According to the writer of the preface, Chen Tong 陳桐 (fl. 1568),

> they are well formulated and of superior beauty; words cannot describe their marvels. If one practices them long enough, in due time there will be rewards. Thus, thinking it would be beneficial if they were shared with the people. [Huang Huaixi, the editor,] and his likeminded younger brother Yue thought of earnestly collating and printing them so they would be handed down forever. Shortly thereafter he asked me: "This is the *Central Drafting Office's Secretly Transmitted Character Treasury*. It contains the true norms of calligraphy! I want to make it widespread and share it with the world."
>
> 精到佳麗，妙不容言！習之既久，充然若有獲焉。遂有善與人同之念，與弟鉞商確校梓以永厥傳。既而請言於余曰：此《內閣書府秘傳》，字學之準繩乎！吾蔣推廣與世共之。[203]

The practical uses of Gao's work are also addressed in the postface, written for a second edition of the compilation. Here, the pedagogical role his work was perceived to play is explicitly addressed. Liu Heng 劉亨 (fl. 1573) describes the dire situation for calligraphers of the sixteenth century:

> Editions of model calligraphy for regular script abound. Even if they retain the form [of the characters], none of them address compositional variations and structure [...].[204] [As a result,] beginners suffer from this. Moreover, over the past several years, continuous and repeated recarvings have led to the form of the script becoming faulty and corrupted. This troubled me deeply. I have long harbored the intention to obtain a formula for calligraphy, and to promote the methods of the veritable tradition in order to make it easier for beginners.

[203] Liu and Gao. 1568. *Chongke neige michuan zifu,* preface, 1b. Parts of the text from this edition were corrupted. Missing characters were taken from the 1894 Japanese edition from the National Diet Library, in which the preface is reproduced in full.
[204] The original page is torn and two characters are missing from the text here.

刊楷字法帖甚多。雖有體格但無布變結構 (...) 於學者病焉。况俱行年既久屢以翻刻躰格差殊。余切感焉。意常慕惟得一書訣布真傳之法以便初學耶！[205]

His account goes on to describe his reaction when he encountered the volume:

I read it and thought it was lovely and that it was worthy of passing on. Looking at master Gao Song's method for the compositional variations of the seventy-two models, I saw the superiority in the form of the characters, the skill in the variations and the balance in the structure—it is like a good craftsman with proper standards and correct guidelines—what would he not be able to achieve?

His large characters are useful for writing rhyming couplets [to be hung next to the door]; his medium-sized characters are handy for instructing children; his small characters are suitable for writing letters and documents. These three methods are like a skilled chariot driver holding the reins and maintaining control to stay on course within the tracks. Everywhere one finds rewards in it. For this reason, I beseeched [Huang, the editor,] to print it again and to make it widely available in all four directions. The gentleman and those who are knowledgeable may judge it themselves.

余閱之可愛，可傳。觀其宗高松布變七十二列之法，體式之高，變化之巧，結構之勻，猶之良工端準繩而正規矩，何事不成？夫其大字利聯對，中字便蒙學，小字益文翰。此三法猶之巧御執轡束以循軌轍。在在有獲。余因懇求重梓以廣其傳。四方君子、識者自辨。[206]

Liu's account describes how society can benefit from a work that provides trustworthy calligraphy standards that can replace the corrupted models. Repeatedly copying model calligraphy by ancient masters from rubbings and following instructions by a master, who was often a close family member, had been the prevailing method to learn calligraphy. Yet, as Liu points out, rubbings could provide neither a general reference to composition nor a broad understanding of the principle behind calligraphy. Gao's instructions did.

[205] Liu and Gao. 1568. *Chongke neige michuan zifu,* postface, unpaginated.
[206] Liu and Gao. 1568. *Chongke neige michuan zifu,* postface, unpaginated.

Liu also praises the content of Gao's manual by connecting it to concrete uses of writing, from the production of popular couplets to teaching and everyday use. Liu believes Gao's manual provides the proper standards for all these activities, indicating that it would benefit not only children learning to write, but also experienced readers. This unpretentious take on pedagogical materials stands in stark contrast to the elite discourses that calligraphy should be spontaneous and expressive to mirror the writer's moral character. By consciously dissociating himself from the content of his manual, Gao was most likely intentionally detaching himself from the standards he hoped would stimulate a more general education.

Gao's understanding of practical skills as sharing a single principle is also embraced by Liu. His claim that Gao's calligraphy standards are equal to a craftsman's guidelines or a chariot conductor's skill implies that Gao has gained knowledge of the principle through his practice and encapsulated it. Understanding the principle and drawing on it when responding to various concrete situations had long been a concern in Chinese elite discourse.[207] The standards and principles offered by the manual are praised as responding to needs of society, which could no longer rely solely on antiquated models.

Along with Gao's instructions, the *Secretly Transmitted Character Treasury* included practical instructions on how to create a "fabric-bed" (*bengchuang* 絣床) that could be used by students to practice writing, underscoring the practical orientation of the compilation.[208] It was most likely the practice-oriented approach of Gao's instructions that led to the publication of several reprints of his material. The second edition of the *Secretly Transmitted Character Treasury* was not the last, and many copies were printed over the subsequent centuries, including in Japan. Daily-use encyclopedias of the Wanli period also reproduced sections of Gao's manual,

[207] Responding to situations in accordance to the Way was expressed as a goal of governance in various early texts. See, for example, Zürn. 2020. "The Han *Imaginaire* of Writing as Weaving," 371-372. Song scholars also supported similar views, but placed more emphasis on the role of the heart-mind in grasping the principles. During the Ming dynasty, scholars such as Wang Yangming argued the principle was inherent to the heart-mind, which resonated with the principle of things outside. See, for example, Ivanhoe. 2010. "Lu Xiangshan's Ethical Philosophy," 253; Tien. 2010. "Metaphysics and the Basis of Morality," 302-303.

[208] "One should take pinewood sticks and make a frame, stretching a piece of silk over it. One proceeds to dye the silk with ink until it is blackened and dry, upon which the student can use plain water to practice writing on the blackened silk. As the water dries, it can be reused without wasting paper." Liu and Gao. 1568. *Chongke neige michuan zifu,* last page, unpaginated.

greatly extending its dissemination.[209] Yet, as positive as the reception of Gao's approach to knowledge segmentation and codification was, later editions rarely mentioned Gao Song as the creator of their content. His name was stripped from the headings inside the publications and he was no longer mentioned in prefaces. In fact, by the Qing dynasty, it was no longer known who had authored the "seventy-two variations." By the eighteenth century, the connection to Gao had been erased, and the imperial compilation *Collection of Graphs and Writings of Ancient and Modern Times* (*Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成) tentatively attributed a rubbing of the variations to the calligrapher Jiang Ligang 姜立綱 (fl. 1444-1499).[210]

The man Gao Song was quickly forgotten. Even scholars from his county had no recollection of his life or deeds. His contribution to the broad dissemination of knowledge can be described as an early iteration of a trend that became even more pronounced during the Wanli period. Not only his manual on calligraphy, but also his works on birds, chrysanthemums and bamboo constituted core texts of the daily-use encyclopedias, which began to be printed during the late sixteenth century but continued to be reproduced into the late nineteenth century. The segmentation of strokes he had devised became common knowledge and was further adapted by others. In 1749, for example, one pious son recounts how his mother carved the basic calligraphic strokes out of bamboo so he could practice the composition of characters even before he was able to hold the brush.[211]

Gao Song did little to associate his person and character with the content of his manuals. His focus lay on promoting knowledge, which was indeed remembered for several generations. His principle-based instructions and rhymes remained standards for painting and calligraphy for more than three hundred years, proving that his conception of knowledge was something that could stand on its own. In fact, Gao's efforts foreshadowed the trend of disseminating factual knowledge in plain and rhymed language to broader audiences among erudite followers of Wang Yangming's teachings during the late Ming dynasty.[212]

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[209] Chapter 5 of this study is dedicated to the discussion of Ming encyclopedias.

[210] Chen. 1726. *Gujin tushu jicheng*, lixue, zixue, juan 86, ce 649, 60.

[211] Bauer. 1990. *Das Antlitz Chinas*, 516.

[212] Scholars came to value the transmission of content and of Confucian practices over their choice of words. For example, Lü Kun composed songs that relayed aspects of filial duty and ancestral worship to members of his family. Lü believed that he could mend society by spreading education and took a fact-centered approach to teaching. Handlin. 1983. *Action in Late Ming Thought*, 146-147; 204.

Conclusion

Gao Song authored several practical manuals that made painting and calligraphy knowledge available and accessible through printed media. He withdrew himself from the content of the manual to focus on the presentation of his composition system, which provided the student a micro and macro view of calligraphy. His withdrawal led to him being forgotten twice: first during the late Ming, when the content of his works was reproduced by commercial printers without his name attached to them, and once again during the mid Qing, following the efforts of his fellow countryman Ji Jiong to reconstruct Gao's biography and recover his paintings. However, the innovative and accessible content from his manual took on a life of its own.

Under Gao's brush, the pedagogy of calligraphy underwent a process of systematization and encoding in order to better convey information to student readers. This codification process was marked by the creation of typologies, which frequently referred to objects as well as elements from fauna and flora. The function of such animal and plant references, however, differed greatly from early analogies. His *Origin and Development of Brush Methods* moved from the general description of tension and momentum to a specific system focusing on the pedagogical potential of the analogies. Gao embraced the connection of calligraphic strokes to cosmic patterns to anchor the new typology in a traditional system of knowledge. He went beyond previous attempts to present typologies of strokes by introducing analogies that described guiding principles for composition and created a coherent system. Together with the popular anecdotes he used to introduce the topic, he rendered the practice and content accessible to a broad audience, overhauling elitist conventions. Thus, his adaptation and interpretation of the past addressed the concerns and demands of the period. The valorization of practical pursuits and the search for a common principle behind distinct matters, as proposed by Neo-Confucian thinkers, inspired professionals like Gao Song to reformulate pedagogical approaches to their fields.

The introduction of knowledge units and modules for calligraphy was rooted in Ming society's need for more accessible sources of knowledge, as explained by the editors who reproduced Gao's work. His rhymes, steps and compositional units that referred to natural elements all helped the student to memorize new information and internalize the compositional principles for calligraphy. Formulating knowledge in these schematic and visual terms was necessary to transmit practical instructions through printed media. This

development cannot be dissociated from the social and intellectual context of the Ming dynasty, during which the demand for printed books surged. In his seminal work, Ledderose takes ‘modules’ as the base for his conceptual approach to Chinese writing and material culture. His study provides an interesting framework and compelling arguments but does not address the historical development of the notion of “module” and how segmentation was the result of intellectual efforts of individuals. Both stroke typologies and analogies that fulfill a pedagogical function were the creation of invested teachers such as Gao.



Fig. 2.1 Left: Reproduction of Gao Song's instructions on character composition in the lower layer of the encyclopedia *Complete Book of the Combined Ten Thousand Treasures of the Five Carts* (*Wuche hebing wanbao quanshu* 五車合併萬寶全書) from 1614. Source: Sakai et al. 2001. *Gosha Banpō Zensho,* 277.
Right: Reproduction of Gao Song's seventy-two strokes in the 1597 encyclopedia *Plucked Brocade from the Five Carts* (*Wuche bajin* 五車拔錦). Source: Sakai et al. 1999. *Gosha bakkin*, 463.



Fig. 2.2 First page of Gao Song's calligraphy manual reproduced in the Ming compilation *Central Drafting Office's Secretly Transmitted Character Treasury* (*Neige michuan zifu* 內閣秘傳字府). Source: Liu and Gao. 1568. *Chongke neige michuan zifu*, 19a. Image source: Library of Congress.

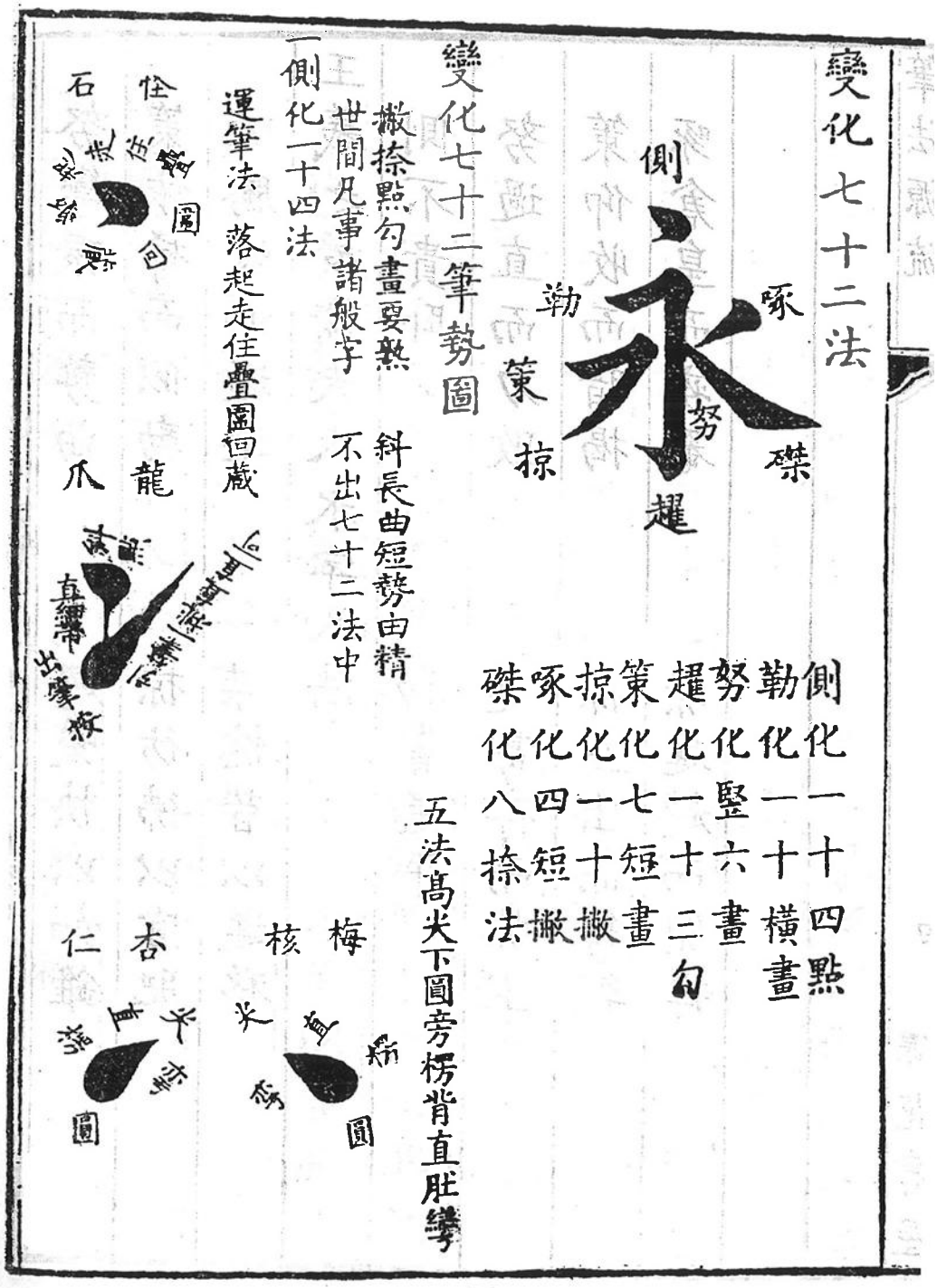


Fig. 2.3 Introduction to Gao Song's seventy-two strokes in the 1727 reproduction of the *Origins of Brush Methods* (*Bifa yuanliu* 筆法源流). Source: Gao. 2004. *Bifa yuanliu*. Reproduced in *Guojiatushuguan cang guji yishu leibian*, vol. 14, edited by Xu Shu, 496.



Fig. 2.4 Character *yue* 樂 from Gao Song's calligraphy manual reproduced in the Ming compilation *Central Drafting Office's Secretly Transmitted Character Treasury* (*Neige michuan zifu* 內閣秘傳字府). A user of the book copied one of the lines of the rhyme. Source: Liu and Gao. 1568. *Chongke neige michuan zifu*, 32a. Image source: Library of Congress.



Fig. 2.5 Character *gui* 龜 from Gao Song's calligraphy manual reproduced in the Ming compilation *Central Drafting Office's Secretly Transmitted Character Treasury* (*Neige michuan zifu* 內閣秘傳字府). Source: Liu and Gao. 1568. *Chongke neige michuan zifu*, 50b. Image source: Library of Congress.



Fig. 2.6 Gao Song's "building a house" method for character composition. Source: Liu and Gao. 1568. *Chongke neige michuan zifu*, 68a. Image source: Library of Congress.

Chapter 3

From Anonymity to Imperial Standard: The Hundred-Rhyme Song Formula for Cursive Script

Near the end of the sixteenth century, the fast-paced publishing activities of the commercial printing market allowed texts to be appropriated, altered and reprinted by eager editors and educated individuals aspiring to make a name for themselves. Attribution of texts to famous scholars or personalities often functioned as advertisements to increase sales,[213] which meant that the names of the actual creators of texts could be suppressed or forgotten. Yet, as discussed in the previous chapter, as the attention given to practical instructions increased, even authorless texts came to be valued. The text discussed in this chapter is a case in point. It is best known by the title that it received during the Ming dynasty, *Hundred-Rhyme Song Formula for Cursive Script* (*Caojue baiyun ge* 草訣百韻歌). Its anonymous origin did not prevent the scholarly elite and several members of imperial families from promoting its dissemination. The *Hundred-Rhyme Song Formula for Cursive Script* embodies the slow transition from master's model calligraphy to abstract standards. Its reception shows how an anonymous text came to be put on the same level as canonical works when learning how to write in a specific style.

Calligraphy is a self-referential art in which the transmission of styles relies on the copying of existing models.[214] During the middle period, Chinese calligraphers copied manuscripts and rubbings of model calligraphy by a master that excelled in a specific style. Scholars valued cursive script because it displayed both the calligrapher's dexterity with the brush and allowed him to express his innermost feelings and mood by regulating speed and thickness of his strokes according to the content of the inscription. Under a teacher's guidance, the works of renowned and virtuous men of the past were selected for the student to emulate, making sure that the student was inspired by their words and that he did not acquire the writing habits of unrespectable men.

By the Tang dynasty, the practice of copying a standard text that compiled characters from various texts and reproduced the calligraphy of a famous individual became common. This innovation allowed for a more systematic approach to the acquisition of a certain style. One such standard

[213] Ōki. 2004. *Minmatsu Kōnan no shuppan bunka*, 52.
[214] Ledderose. 1979. *Mi Fu and the Classical Tradition of Chinese Calligraphy*, 33.

text was the *Thousand Character Essay* (*Qianziwen* 千字文), introduced in the first chapter as being commonly used to teach children how to read. Due to its function as a primer, the *Essay* was well known and usually memorized by students. This allowed the text to function as a base for calligraphers to acquire the stylistic features of a script and master the visual qualities of a style. Because the *Essay* had already been memorized, deciphering the text, even when written in the challenging cursive script, was not difficult.

The copying of model calligraphy affirmed the authority of the master and promoted the belief that a man's character and moral qualities were connected to his calligraphy.[215] While model calligraphy often conveyed the author's own ideas, such as in reproductions of personal letters, using the *Thousand Character Essay* to model the visual qualities of strokes and characters provided students little reference to the author's character. The mnemonic quality of the rhymed *Essay,* however, lent it to being appropriated as pedagogical material for learning different styles. The *Hundred-Rhyme Song* was composed to serve as a standard mnemonic text that should not only convey the esthetic qualities of cursive script, but also explicitly address issues concerning the practice of writing. What distinguished it from previous models was that it became increasingly disassociated from any ancient calligraphy master, coming to serve as a standard instead. Over time, the reception of the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* shifted and its content was adjusted, becoming increasingly particular and specific in providing guidelines for cursive writing.

The elaboration of a standard that relied less on ancient models came during a period when the use of cursive script was becoming more widespread and the outreach of printed texts broadening. During the Ming dynasty, urban audiences came to value not having to rely on others for instructions and instead using reference works to acquire a skill and to select preferred models. The text's selective content and systematic discussion of compositional features and visual elements of characters met this audience's demand, while also fitting into contemporary scholarly discourses. It provided an alternative canon that presented standards instead of promoting the models from antiquity that had been corrupted though repeated copying.

[215] The belief in a connection between a man's character and calligraphy is wonderfully described in McNair. 1998. *The Upright Brush*, chapter 1.

The *Thousand Character Essay* as Reference for Style

As the aura around Wang Xizhi's 王羲之 (303–361) calligraphy grew during the Tang dynasty with imperial efforts to disseminate his style, the number of apocryphal texts that were ascribed to him also increased. Tang authors knew the *Essay* as a standard text for instructing students in Wang's writing style. As Chartier has pointed out, however, texts can be repurposed by a community to serve new pedagogical functions, and once new practices are in place, it is hard for those who are accustomed to them to disassociate the texts from their new function.[216] Chemla has also shown in numerous articles how early mathematical texts have long been misinterpreted to fulfill practical functions that most likely do not correspond to how they were actually used. In other words, even though a text might have served a certain practical function during the Tang dynasty, it might have had a quite different function before. The changes in reception of the *Thousand Character Essay* thus serve as an example to understand how *The Hundred-Rhyme Song Formula for Cursive Script* introduced a new pedagogical approach to writing in a specific script.

Bottéro's argument on the *Quick Reference of Characters* (*Jijiu pian* 急就篇), a Han dynasty text that contains lists of characters and phrases in rhymed format, provides an instructive example of how the function of texts could change over time.[217] The *Quick Reference,* often taken as a primer for children, was most likely not conceived with this function in mind, Botteró suggests. Rather, it served as a reference work for officials. Botteró's argument is based on qualities inherent to the text, such as the lack of basic characters such as *tian* 天, *xia* 下, *er* 而 or *zao* 早, and the degree of specialization that would be required to use many of the characters that are included, such as those concerning technical matters, medical conditions or law regulations. Memorizing standard characters for such terms would only be necessary for officials fulfilling specific bureaucratic functions. The unusual organization of the characters into thematic categories, instead of the well-known three realms (*sancai* 三才, i.e. Heaven, Earth and Man), could also

[216] Chartier. 2014. "The Teaching Context and Reading from the 16th to the 19th Centuries," 19-40.

[217] Other Han dynasty fragments indicate that the practice of oral repetition and recitation when teaching scribes was already in place during the Han. Wang. 2014. *Writing and the Ancient State*, 284.

indicate that it was meant to be used by specialists who had to memorize standard forms of characters when fulfilling their bureaucratic functions.[218]

The *Thousand Character Essay* also underwent a process of repurposing. Most likely composed during the sixth century as a didactic text for princes at the Liang court, by the Tang dynasty, it was widely used to teach children how to read. It is rightfully described as the most influential literacy primer in imperial China. The *Essay* compiles one thousand unique characters into rhymed and easy-to-memorize passages that summarize existing narratives. In that respect, the *Essay* is similar to the *Master of the Golden Tower* (*Jinlouzi* 金樓子), a text also composed during the first half of the sixth century.[219] It was common practice to "reduce the substance of history to a collection of easily manipulated tokens," which were left as carriers of the story's moral for those who already knew the stories.[220] The *Essay* thus compiled moral lessons and anecdotal knowledge, which made it popular as a didactic text among elite families.[221]

The *Essay* relies heavily on the Confucian classics, summarizing major historical events and stories about virtuous men, and presents this information in a progressive fashion tied to the notion of cosmic order.[222] The

[218] Bottéro. 2003. "Les 'manuels de caractères' à l'époque des Han Occidentaux," 117. Bottéro also provides another example relating to the *Cangjie pian* 倉頡篇, which was most likely conceived as a political medium to disseminate the normalized script imposed by the Qin empire, without initially carrying a pedagogical function. 2003. "Les 'manuels de caractères' à l'époque des Han Occidentaux," 111-112; 119.

[219] In this collection, which resembles a literary anthology, the final section within the category of "collecting the strange" (*zhiguai* 志怪) presents a set of stories from classical and popular anecdotes condensed into short phrases, mostly composed of 4 characters, of which most can be traced back to records with lengthier and more elaborate versions of the narratives. These might have been added to the end of the section that includes lengthier prose to remind the reader of similar, widely known stories that fit into the category of the 'strange.'

[220] Schaberg. 1999. "Song and the Historical Imagination in Early China." 317.

[221] Wu also discusses a category of primers of "miscellaneous characters" (*zazi* 雜字) that developed in the tradition of the earlier works presenting strings of characters and terms, also often in rhymes. These enjoyed less regard among the educated elites and were frequently used in the countryside, while the Essay was generally preferred by elites. Wu. 2007. *Ming Qing yilai minjian shenghuo zhishi de jian'gou yu chuandi*, 128-131. Distinctions among pedagogical materials also emerged earlier. One Tang author who commented on the *Quick Reference of Characters*, which was broadly used as a primer up to the Tang, claimed that it was vulgar (*bi li* 鄙俚) and commonly used to instruct children in poor villages (*qiong xiang you xue* 窮鄉幼學). Yan. 1934. *Jijiu pian,* 1b.

[222] Zhang (2001-2002. "Dunhuang ben 'Liuzi qianziwen' chutan xiyi") and Nugent (2018. "Structured Gaps.") have compared medieval annotated versions of the *Essay* which attest to the use of commentaries explicating the stories behind the condensed phrases.

Essay thus aided the teacher, who was likely able to narrate the full stories to the student, in teaching both moral values and historical events, while the rhymed format ensured that students would remember the summaries.[223] The primary pedagogical function of the text allowed it to be widely disseminated and remembered. This deep familiarity with the text among members of the literate elite opened up the possibility of using the sequence of characters that constituted the *Thousand Character Essay* for a different purpose.

During the Tang dynasty, manuscripts of the *Essay* circulated as calligraphic models for a variety of scripts. Manuscripts of the *Essay* in regular, cursive, and even seal script were discovered in the library cave at Dunhuang, a cultural node on the Silk Road. Some manuscripts frequently present columns with repeated characters, an indication that the text was used for practicing calligraphic styles even far away from the capital [Figs. 3.1 and 3.2].[224]

After being transformed from a primer to a calligraphy model, the *Essay* became closely associated with a specific style, namely that of Wang Xizhi. Pre-Tang accounts on the *Thousand Character Essay* contain no explicit statements of Wang's calligraphy being used for the initial composition of the text; neither do the numerous Dunhuang manuscripts that reproduce it. Yet, from the perspective of a late Tang scholar such as Li Chuo 李綽 (fl. 880-889), the association of the *Essay* with Wang's individual style was a given. Li authored the *Tales Told by the Imperial Secretary* (*Shangshu gushi* 尚書故實), in which he provided an account of how the creation of the *Thousand Character Essay* was closely tied to Wang Xizhi's handwriting.[225]

A short passage in the *Tales Told by the Imperial Secretary* introduces the anecdote, claiming that among his contemporaries "no one knows" (*ren jie bu xiao* 人皆不曉) that Zhou Xingsi 周興嗣 (d. 521) had created the *Thousand Character Essay* by using Wang Xizhi's calligraphy. According to the anecdote, Emperor Wu of the Liang 梁武帝 (r. 502-549) ordered Zhou to

[223] Wang. 2014. *Writing and the Ancient State*, 294-295.

[224] Manuscripts that provide seal script models include Pelliot Chinois 4702 and Pelliot Chinois 3658 in the collection of the Bibliothéque National de France. For an example in cursive script, see Pelliot Chinois 3561. Nugent also addresses the different scripts used for the text. 2018. "Structured Gaps: The *Qianziwen* and its Paratexts as Mnemotechnics," 163. For a distinction between the activities of painters and scribes at Dunhuang, see Fraser. 2004. *Performing the Visual*, 193.

[225] According to Yan, the *Shangshu gushi* 尚書故實 most likely served as the base text for later compilations from the Song dynasty, such as the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, in which the anecdote is reproduced. Yan. 2009. *Tang Wudai biji kaolun*, 81.

compose the text by making use of a thousand different characters in Wang's calligraphy. Rubbings of Wang's calligraphy containing the thousand characters were cut into pieces so each individual character became a single and movable unit; Zhou then arranged the characters into a coherent rhyming text. He accomplished this, it is said, in a single evening, after which all of his hair turned white.[226]

Besides the straightforward narrative, the anecdote provides the emperor's motivation behind the composition of the text, namely that the he hoped to use the *Essay* to instruct the princes in writing (*shu* 書).[227] This corresponds to what we know about his esthetic preferences. The emperor's fondness for Wang Xizhi's calligraphy is amply recorded, and his interest in obtaining original works by Wang resulted in an epistolary exchange with the Daoist master Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536), arguably one of the earliest connoisseurs of calligraphy in China.[228] Thus, the association of Emperor Wu with a text that promotes Wang Xizhi's calligraphy is not unnatural. However, the lack of evidence that such calligraphic rubbings were produced during the period,[229] as well as the late date of the anecdote—more than 300 years after Emperor Wu's death—provides ample reason to question the veracity of its content.

In fact, it is more likely that the *Thousand Character Essay* acquired a new function that came to emphasize the transmission of an individual's calligraphic style instead of aiding students in learning how to read and write in general. By the Tang, the function of the text as a calligraphic model was unambiguous, and it might have been difficult to imagine this being different in the past. The association was so ingrained in society that this function could no longer be dissociated from the text. With the canonization of Wang's writing style, a shortcut to help the student learn its specificities was necessary, and the *Thousand Character Essay* served this purpose because it

[226] The anecdote continues to describe how Wang Xishi's descendant, the Buddhist monk Zhi Yong 智永 (fl. late 6th c.), proceeded to copy the work eight hundred times in the style of Wang and distributed the copies among the people, further connecting Wang's lineage with the text.

[227] Li. [1606?] *Shangshu gushi*, 24b-25a.

[228] Ledderose. 1984. "Some Taoist Elements in the Calligraphy of the Six Dynasties," 272. Nakata has conducted an extensive study and translated the letters into Japanese. 1974. *O Gishi*.

[229] While early records attest to the production of rubbings of Confucian or religious canonical texts, personal letters and other texts valued for their calligraphy seem to have been disseminated as rubbings only during the late Sui and Tang. Starr. 2008. *Black Tigers*, 22.

was already so well-known among members of the educated elite. The new function and format of the *Essay* must have impacted the creation of new pedagogical materials, such as the anonymous *Hundred-Rhyme Song Formula for Cursive Script.* The *Song* was created as a pedagogical material for practicing cursive script. Yet, its function also changed over the course of its reception history. Instead of highlighting the value of calligraphic styles, increasing emphasis was placed on formal standards and conventions for writing – a move that catered to new demands from broader audiences during the Yuan and Ming dynasties.

Ubiquitous Rhymes

The earliest extant version of the *Hundred-Rhyme Song Formula for Cursive Script* is recorded in a reedited version of the encyclopedia *Vast Record from the Forest of Affairs* (*Shilin guangji* 事林廣記). The latter was originally compiled by Chen Yuanjing 陳元靚, who most likely lived during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The earliest edition compiled information that was relevant for students preparing for the civil service examinations. However, the content of the existing editions does not entirely correspond to its first edition, which can be inferred from the additions that must have been made during the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368). During the Yuan, the chances for Chinese scholars to obtain a post by taking examinations were drastically reduced, and the content of encyclopedias began to change. These include, for example, updated calendrical data and didactic content for learning ’Phags-pa script, introduced by the Mongol ruling house. Two early editions of the compilation, which can be dated to 1330-3 and 1340,[230] record the full text of the *Hundred-Rhyme Song,* as well as a preface and a short note at the end. Yet, there is no evidence that the rhyme or its paratexts were later additions to the compilation.

The text, which has the short title *Hundred-Rhyme Song* (*Baiyun ge* 百韻歌) written in cursive at the beginning, is composed of paired sentences of five characters each, with every second sentence ending in a rhyme. The

[230] For a survey of editions, see Wang. 2106. “’Shilin guangji’ banben kaolüe.” A comparative list of early editions and an extant manuscript that complements these can also be found in Miya. 2008. “Eizan Bunko shozō no ‘Shilin guangji’ shahon ni tsuite,” 456. For a reproduction of a *zhishun* 至順 period edition, see Chen and Hu. 1963. *Shilin guangji*. The edition in the collection of Beijing University, from the second *zhiyuan* 至元 period, has also been reproduced. The differences between these two early editions are discussed in an introductory note. Chen. 1998. *Shilin Guangji*, 1-4.

purpose of the song is to assist the student in composing characters in cursive script. Its opening sentences state:

> Mastering cursive script is the greatest challenge,
> for below the brush battle dragons and snakes.
> Its slight variations demand a keen perception,
> yet in structure and vigor one cannot afford mistakes.
>
> 草聖最為難，龍蛇競筆端。
> 毫釐雖欲辨，體勢更須完。[231]

Following this general statement, the rhyme introduces the appearance of common components of characters in cursive script, such as 言, 阝 or 門, along with the composition methods of individual characters by fragmenting them into visual components that correspond to other written characters. For example, the cursive form of the character *sang* 顙 (forehead) is dissected into the visual components 戈, 牛 and 去 [Fig. 3.3]. These components, which are meaningful characters in themselves and can thus be sung when reciting the rhyme, are used as reference for their visual appearance only, functioning as a mnemonic schema for visual composition. The bulk of the text, however, emphasizes the distinction between characters that bear close similarity in cursive script. Sets of two to four characters are embedded in the rhyme along with warnings, telling the reader not to confuse certain characters, or simply reminding the reader how much some characters look alike. The rhyme concludes with an admonishment:

> One must become accustomed to viewing the traces of Wang Xizhi and Xianzhi 王獻之 (344–386),
> and thus avoid muddling the ink pond [i.e. deviating from the standard].
>
> 習觀羲獻跡，免使墨池混。[232]

[231] Chen and Hu. 1963. *Shilin Guangji*, xu ji, wenyi lei, juan 5, 1b.
[232] Chen and Hu. 1963. *Shilin Guangji*, xu ji, wenyi lei, juan 5, 7a. The expression "ink pond" is commonly used to describe calligraphy in general. It is derived from an anecdote in which the calligrapher of the Eastern Han, Zhang Zhi 張芝, one of the early masters of cursive script, is practicing calligraphy next to a pond, dipping his brush in the water so many times that it turned black.

A short note in cursive follows the rhyme:

> To the left is the *Formula for Cursive Script*. The old version was full of mistakes. Today I have changed and corrected it. There should be no harm in studying and perusing it.
>
> 右《草聖訣》。舊本多訛，今改而正之，庶不誤設學之觀覽。[233]

In total, this version of the text discusses the cursive forms of 296 characters, while the text itself has 760 characters. In a tabular fashion, the characters that are the focus of each rhyme are written in cursive script above the text of the song, which is written in regular script below. The sentences of the text are neatly separated and arranged in parallel columns on the page, in two layers, while dots next to the text demarcate the characters being distinguished in each set.

The *Hundred-Rhyme Song* is included in the section titled "Formula-Method for Cursive Script" (*Caoshu juefa* 草書訣法), and a short note before the text claims that the cursive calligraphy is an assemblage of characters written by Wang Xizhi, resembling the description of the *Thousand Character Essay* as a text that compiles characters in Wang's personal writing style. The preface to the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* is undated but suggests that the text must have circulated in print during the early eleventh century. It is the personal account of a scholar, identified as Caizhenzi 采真子, who describes his experience with the text [Fig. 3.4]. The first time he encountered a version of the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* was during his youth. It was included in a printed copy of the *Thousand Character Essay* in the calligraphy of a certain Xie Diewang 跕跌望,[234] who was active around the year 1032 and often wrote texts for steles in the style of Wang Xizhi.[235] The author of the preface believes that the text was an abridged version that only discussed about 100 characters in cursive, but people enjoyed reciting it in order to memorize the content. He recounts that he first felt dispirited by the fact that the text had not been transmitted in full, but then, while occupying an official post in

[233] Chen and Hu. 1963. *Shilin Guangji*, xu ji, wenyi lei, juan 5, 7a.

[234] Both Xie and Xiedie are possibly the family name of the calligrapher. No biography or text that clarified this issue could be found.

[235] His work as calligrapher in the style of Wang is recorded on two steles erected in 1032. See Hu. 1901. *Shanyou shike congbian*, juan 12, 53b-54b; 57a-58a. Zhang Duoqiang suggests the calligrapher must have been active sometime between 1022-1067. Zhang. 2011. "Caojuebaiyunge xiaokao."

Yuzhang[236] during the Huangyou reign 皇祐 (1049–1053), he obtained complete copies of the *Hundred-Rhyme Song.* He describes the text he acquired, which contained 120 rhymes and discussed 410 characters, extolling its many useful qualities. However, after contemplating the text and conducting a thorough investigation of calligraphy models, he found numerous mistakes that required correcting. He reports that after cutting 3 unsubstantial passages, removing 19 repeated characters, deleting 35 passages that repeated side components (*pian pang* 偏旁) of characters, eliminating 36 characters that were too easy or did not resemble other characters, correcting mistakes in 8 characters, rectifying 37 gaps and omissions, and finally, adding text at the beginning and end of the rhyme, his version of the text comprised 100 rhymes. Thus, the final passage that makes reference to the models by Wang Xizhi and his son were most likely Caizhenzi's additions. He concludes the preface by stating that although his text is not perfect, his version is substantially superior to the previous vulgar text, and that it certainly meets the needs of students of calligraphy. The note that follows the text repeats the claim that the text can be useful, modestly claiming that there "should be no harm" in using it for study. Despite his efforts to improve the text, Caizhenzi still felt the need to defend the rhyme because it discussed merely practical matters and provided no lessons for moral cultivation or historical references to incite deeper reflection. This indicates that Caizhenzi was aware of the expectations the elite had of calligraphy texts. His comment is an attempt to assure the reader that even a practical text could be useful and did not interfere with self-cultivation or was detrimental to using calligraphy to express one's feelings.

Caizhenzi was most likely the style of the Northern Song scholar Wu Keji 吳可幾, who earned his "advanced scholar" (*jinshi* 進士) degree in 1036.[237] Wu must have had a keen interest in pedagogical texts, as he himself authored a rhymed text titled *Compilation of a Thousand Surnames* (*Qianxingbian* 千姓編),[238] which gathered surnames into phrases of four characters. One Southern Song scholar, Chen Zhensun 陳振孫 (1179-1262), included the *Compilation of a Thousand Surnames* in his bibliographical catalogue, the *Commented Bibliographical Record of the Zhizhai Studio* (*Zhizhai shulu jieti* 直齋書錄解題). He describes its resemblance to the

[236] Present-day Nanchang 南昌 in Jiangxi 江西 province.
[237] In early Ming gazetteers, the date for his degree is recorded as 景祐二年 (1306); Qing sources provide the date 景祐元年 (1304). The latter must be a copying mistake.
[238] Liu. 1914. *Wuxing zhi*, juan 17, 11a.

Thousand Character Essay in composition, and playfully remarks how even the three characters of the title (*qian*, *xing* and *bian*) were in fact surnames. Most importantly, however, he adds that a note at the end of the volume states "recorded by Caizhenzi in the year 1063."[239] Thus, although no text titled *Compilation of a Thousand Surnames* has been extant since the Ming dynasty, it is very likely that Wu, who was still active as an official in 1069 and is credited with authorship of this work, adopted the style Caizhenzi.

The time period referred to in the preface of the *Hundred-Rhyme Song*—the middle of the eleventh century—further supports the notion that Wu Keji wrote the preface and authored the extant version of the *Song* included in the encyclopedia.[240] Though the text was recited by people and circulated in print already during the writer's youth, the increased dissemination of the mnemonic aid for learning cursive during the mid eleventh century was surely connected to the heightened status of the script. Although cursive script was not required for the civil service examinations, it was nonetheless a means of artistic expression that had gained popularity among the elite and was also promoted by imperial rulers. The Song Emperor Taizong 宋太宗 (r. 976–997), for instance, exhorted his third son, who was to become the next ruler, to study cursive script. Taizong himself was said to have mastered all forms of script, and to have excelled at cursive, focusing on its study from the Chunhua reign 淳化 (990–994) onwards.[241] His preference for cursive script is documented in his interactions with officials, who were often requested to submit works in cursive to the emperor. Furthermore, his admiration for the cursive calligraphy of Li Jujian 李居簡 (dates unknown) was so great that the emperor granted Li the title Grand Master Admonisher of the Heir Apparent and gave him a post at the Imperial Academy of Calligraphy (*yushu yuan* 御書院).[242] The dissemination of rubbings of Taizong's *Model Calligraphy of the Chunhua Reign* (*Chunhua fatie* 淳化法帖), which included

[239] Chen. [18th c.] *Zhizhai shulu jieti,* juan *8, 3b.*

[240] The extant versions of the text have only 76 rhymes in total, not the 100 rhymes mentioned in the preface. Ma Guoquan, who published a commentary to this version of the *Hundred-Rhyme Song*, believes the author only used this number as an approximate reference. See Ma. 1981. *Yuanke caojue baiyunge jianzhu*, 3-4. However, it is hard to believe that the author would go to the trouble of giving specific numbers for the earlier version of the text he had - as well as list all the changes he made with such accuracy - only to provide a very general figure for his own version. It is much more likely that the compilers of the encyclopedia or publishers of earlier versions of the text abbreviated it.

[241] Liu. 1956. *Chaoshu tonglun*, 135.

[242] Zhu. 1782. *Mochi bian,* juan 3, 119.

several works of Wang Xizhi and his son in cursive, further cemented that the status of cursive script.

Taizong's successors did not share his fondness for cursive writing. More than a century passed until the Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 1127–1162) followed in his footsteps and published the first reference book for cursive script. Functioning like a visual dictionary, the *Cursive Script Treasure of Rhymes of the Ministry of Rites* (*Caoshu libu yunbao* 草書禮部韻寶) arranged entries according to rhyme groups and used characters written in the emperor's own hand.[243] Despite the acknowledgment of its aesthetic qualities by Song emperors, cursive script did not regain political significance as a validation tool until the late Ming dynasty.[244] During the early to mid Ming, however, the *Hundred Rhyme Song* attained unprecedented popularity and outreach, although its status only rose slowly.

Shortly before the Ming dynasty, scholars had already begun to comment on the *Song,* often praising its usefulness beyond the association with Wang's personal style. Yu Ji 虞集 (1272-1348), a scholar from a prominent family of officials, compares the rhyme to other works that dealt with cursive script in his "Reaction to Mr. Wang's Cursive Rhyme" (*Shu Wangshi caoyun hou* 書王氏草韻後). He argues that in the past, authors attempted to create books to benefit scholars by making the content easy to look up. Arranging characters according to rhyme, for example, was very convenient. The *Song* surpassed these reference works, however, because it arranged characters by grasping their appearance and demeanor. He argues that the forms and manner of cursive script are varied, and thus it is

> comparable to people, who possess mouth, nose, ears and eyes in the same configuration, yet their character is not alike; like people who, wearing a robe, hat, belt and shoes of the same making, have a demeanor that is completely different; like when there is a great audience at the court, and a hundred officials are present. There are

[243] The earliest extant edition, a Yuan copy dated 1288, is in the collection of the National Central Library in Taipei. A note added to this edition informs the reader that the book will aid all noble gentlemen in finding all the unusual or marvelous (*qi* 奇) characters on their own, without having to call on any renowned scholar for instruction. Jian'an 建安, where this edition was printed, had already developed into one of the main commercial printing centers by the Yuan dynasty. Such notes must have been added by printers to cater to the clients' demand for reference works for independent study. For Jian'an as printing center, see Chia. 2013. "*Mashaben*: Commercial Publishing in Jianyang from the Song to the Ming."

[244] This phenomenon is described in the next section.

those of equal rank who wait in the same rows, yet when each presents himself, their appearances are diverse.

It is on the basis of these differences that someone good at physiognomy makes distinctions, and it is also based on this that the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* is arranged. Thus, the calligraphy by Wang is not even necessary!

譬諸人之口、鼻、耳、目之形，雖同而神氣不一。衣冠帶履之具同制，而容止則殊。朝廷有大朝會，百官咸在，品秩同等，班序同列，而人則雜然前陳矣。善相人者，乃能於是乎有所擇焉。此輯《草書韻》之例也。然則王氏之書其可少乎![245]

Yu Ji praises the *Song* for using the visual qualities of the characters in cursive as a reference for arranging characters and defends that Wang Xizhi's calligraphy was not necessary for the text to sustain itself. In the rhyme, characters that look alike are placed together, instead of being arranged according to rhyme or components. Yu also points out that it is not necessary to have the rhyme written out in the calligraphy of a famous master for it to be an effective tool. This claim is most likely connected to the phenomenon that the creation of the text came to be attributed to Wang Xizhi instead of it being described as a compilation by a later scholar of characters written by Wang or in Wang's style. Claims of Wang having authored of the text, however, were unacceptable to scholars, who still considered the works base, despite acknowledging its uses. The pervasiveness of the text and its common attribution to Wang Xizhi even became the butt of a joke during the early sixteenth century. An anecdote recorded by the Ming scholar Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488-1559) points to how the scholarly elite perceived the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* as an ordinary composition:

The *Hundred-Rhyme Song for Cursive Writing* is a text that was compiled by someone during the Song dynasty and meant as a guide for beginners. It is falsely attributed to [Wang] Xizhi. Recently a mediocre official had it carved in stone, and some high-standing gentleman wrote a preface for it, believing that the attribution was accurate. There was one man who came from the capital to Yunnan, and with this work in his hands asked me: "Is this *Cursive Rhyme* by Xizhi?" To which I playfully replied: "In all of script, there is no higher achievement than the marvelous *Hundred-Rhyme Song for Cursive Writing* written by Xizhi

[245] Yu. 1929. *Daoyuan xuegulu*, juan 10, 2b-3a.

himself. It is comparable to the unsurpassable achievement of Du Fu in the field of poetry, and Du Fu wrote the *Great Compendium of Poetry.* The classics all originate from Confucius, and Confucius wrote the *Flexible Formula of the Four Books.* If one were to obtain these two books along with this present volume, one would have the three supreme [achievements]! The man was stunned and retorted: "There is no *Flexible Formula of the Four Books* by Confucius!" To which I said: "If there is no *Flexible Formula of the Four Books* by Confucius, how can there be a *Hundred-Rhyme Song for Cursive Writing* by Xizhi?!" Only then did the man begin to catch on.

It is true that fake things are quick to appear on the market, while authentic things are rarely for sale. As the saying goes: "If it weren't for this generation [of fools], this generation [of tricksters] would starve to death."

《草書百韻歌》乃宋人編成以示初學者。託名于羲之。近有庸中書取以刻石，而鉅公序之，信「以為然」。有自京師來滇，持以問余曰：「此羲之草韻也。」余戲之曰：「字莫高於羲之自作《草書百韻歌》，奇矣，又如詩莫高於杜子美，子美有《詩學大成》，經書出於孔子，孔子有《四書講套》，若求得二書，與此為三絕矣。其人愕然曰：「孔子豈有《四書活套》乎」？余曰：「孔子既無《四書活套》，羲之豈有《草書百韻》乎！」其人始悟。信乎偽物易售，信貨難市也。諺云：若無此輩，餓殺此輩。[246]

The learned elite of the first half of the sixteenth century did not accept the connection of the text to the Jin-dynasty master, nor did they regard the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* as a masterpiece. By then the *Song* had already become available to broader audiences. It was a text to be used by beginners, one that could provide some general rules for composition. It was not the writing of a moral paragon, and, despite its utility, it could be categorized as the lowest type of text to be used in the study of calligraphy.[247]

Among the several sources that reproduced the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* were numerous editions of the encyclopedia *Vast Record from the Forest of Affairs,* published during the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. These all included an identical version of the text, but many employed a different

[246] Yang. 1782. *Danqian zonglu*, juan 15, 10a-10b.

[247] Xu. 1995. *Xushi yimou size*, 29b. In his instructions, dated 1549, Xu categorizes the text as lowly pedagogical material, yet praises it as a model that can be used as reference for structure.

layout, compressing the Song to reduce the number of pages it occupied from 13 to 7, a more cost-effective range.[248] In addition to encyclopedias, manuals that specialized in cursive script also reproduced a version of the text, such as the *Collected Methods for Cursive Script* (*Caoshu jifa* 草書集法), first printed in 1490 by Hu Tingyu 胡廷玉 (dates unknown) and reprinted in 1531 [Fig. 3.5].[249] In the *Collected Methods*, however, the text of the *Song* differs substantially from the earlier version. Instead of 152 sentences (76 rhymes), it comprises only 44 (22 rhymes), and, remarkably, only 8 lines in the beginning are identical to the earlier text, while 33 lines focus on entirely different characters and 3 lines approach characters of similar composition from a different angle. The general introductory lines quoted above, as well as the rhyming remark that concludes the text, which according to the preface were later additions, are not included in the *Collected Methods*. Thus, it is possible that the abridged or partial version that the contemporaries of Wu Keji had recited joyfully was still circulating in manuscript or printed form during the fifteenth century. An even more comprehensive version of the text from *Collected Methods* with 160 sentences (80 rhymes) can be found in a daily-use encyclopedia of 1597.[250] During the early seventeenth century, several versions of the printed *Song*, in longer and shorter forms,[251] circulated simultaneously in different levels of society, also reaching the less educated public through popular and cheap encyclopedias.[252]

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[248] The latest known edition of the *Shilin guangji*, dated 1541, is recorded in Du Xinfu, 1983. *Mingdai banke zonglu*, vol. 6, juan 5:38b. The compressed layout can be seen, for example, in the 1492 edition catalogued under the title *Qunshu leiyao shilin guangji* 群書類要事林広記 in the Yonezawa City Library. Chen. 1492. *Qunshu leiyao shilin guangji*, 30b-33b.

[249] The only known edition is held in the van Gulik collection of the Leiden University Library. The first preface is dated 1490, while a second preface at the beginning of the second volume provides the date 1531 for the second printing of the book. The rhyme is recorded in Hu. 1531. *Caoshu jifa*, juan xia, 39a-42b.

[250] Sakai et al. 1999. *Gosha bakkin*, 499-520.

[251] The longest known version is recorded in the encyclopedia *Xinke tianxia simin bianlan santai wanyong zhengzong* 新刻天下四民便覽三台萬用正宗, printed in 1599. The rhyme is a "revised" (*chongding* 重訂) version with 258 sentences (129 rhymes). Reproduced in Yu et al. 2000. *Sandai Ban'yō Seisō*, 441-462. The shortest one, only 40 sentences (20 rhymes), is recorded in another encyclopedia from the Wanli reign. Ai. [17th c.] *Xinke Ai xiansheng tianluge huibian caijing bianlan wanbao quanshu*, juan 12, 1a-3b.

[252] The *Shilin guangji* is usually not considered a popular encyclopedia as it targeted the needs of elite households. Specialized manuals commissioned by individuals, such as the *Caoshu jifa*, were most likely also disseminated among members of the elite. Several daily-use encyclopedias published during the Wanli reign 萬曆 (1572-1620) contain the rhyme, but in many different versions. It is not possible to identify a progression of different

One noteworthy publication, titled simply *Cursive Formula in Hundred Rhymes* (*Caojue baiyun* 草訣百韻), circulated during the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries and was dedicated solely to reproducing the *Song*.[253] The mere existence of such a publication showed that the perception of the text had changed radically during the late sixteenth century. Instead of recording only the focus characters in each sentence, the entire rhyme was written out in cursive and regular script side by side. This change in format, from a table to running text in two parallel scripts, made the text resemble rubbings of model calligraphy.[254] The volume's focus on a single text was also at odds with how the text was presented in manuals that specialized in cursive script or encyclopedias. Far from according the text such prominence, earlier publications embedded the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* within the category of literature and arts (*wenyi* 文藝) among various practical instructions on calligraphy.

The *Cursive Formula in Hundred Rhymes* (*Caojue baiyun* 草訣百韻), printed in Huizhou 徽州, contains a postface in cursive script that further raises the status of the rhyme:

> When writing cursive, one must adhere to the hundred rhymes. Like all-encompassing regulations, nothing [that manifests itself concretely] could be outside of it.[255] My friend Kuiyu has an outstanding natural talent. He passes on the teachings of Confucius and Mencius and his calligraphy is on a par with that of the two Wangs and the grand scribes of the past. That is extremely rare. This book contains the true traces of his brush. Thus, I had it printed in order to present it to the world and allow connoisseurs to gain an impression [of his work].
>
> 草書必本于百韻。猶範圍之制，器不可外也。予兄夔玉以軼倫之姿，垂孔孟之學，其書與二王久太史齊名。不可多得。茲本其真跡也。付梓以公世鑒者嘗知所彌云。[256]

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versions. Encyclopedias were rarely dated and later editions often copied the version from previous publications, ignoring contemporary developments.

[253] Wu, Chen and Zhang date the edition to the end of the Wanli reign. 2015. "Ming Qing shiqi Shexian bendi sijia keshu kao," 149.

[254] Some versions reproduced in encyclopedias also emulated the appearance of rubbings by providing white text on black. For an example, see Yu et al. 2000. *Sandai Ban'yō Seisō*, 441-462.

[255] *Fanwei* 範圍, something that encompasses everything, as well as *qi* 器, things in concrete or material form, are most likely used here together as reference to the *Book of Changes*.

[256] *Caojue baiyun* 草訣百韻. [n.d.]. 12a.

The author of the postface, Wang Ting 汪珽 (before 1585-after 1644), was a promising scholar who was recommended to the Imperial School (*guozijian* 國子監) in 1585, but became a recluse when the rebel Li Zicheng 李自成 (1606-1645) took over Beijing in 1644. Wang Ting, who was loyal to the imperial clan and retreated after the fall of the dynasty, is said to have live to age 89, and most likely continued to devote himself to scholarship after the dynasty fell. There is no record that he ever held a high office, but he published at least two books during his lifetime, which suggests that he must have had patrons to support him. The calligrapher Kuiyu 夔玉, praised in the postface, might have been one of them.

Referred to by a pseudonym, Kuiyu was most likely a distant member of the imperial clan, which had grown exponentially since the beginning of the Ming dynasty and reached an astounding number of over 80,000 members by 1604.[257] By the Wanli reign, the status of descendants of the imperial clan changed as restrictions imposed on them loosened and they were allowed to sit imperial examinations. Such measures, which aimed to relieve financial strain on the state by cutting loose distant descendants and allowing them to earn their own living, rendered them less visible in society.[258] Members of the imperial family had long been engaged in publishing activities, often reproducing books that had been previously issued by imperial command. Yet, even after members of the royal clan had blended into the scholarly elite, publishing standards to honor them were upheld, such as avoiding their first names and beginning a new line—like a hanging indent that highlights the passage—in running text whenever a member of the imperial family was mentioned.[259] These practices are evident in the postface, suggesting that the calligrapher was part of the imperial clan, though the pseudonym mentioned in the text is not enough to identify him.

The text of the *Cursive Formula in Hundred Rhymes* differs from all the earlier versions of the rhyme. Although it has a total of 166 sentences (83 rhymes), the increase is not due to additions alone. The text often conflates into a single sentence pairs of characters that were discussed in two distinct sentences in earlier versions, and also omits several characters discussed in previous versions. These apparent gaps, however, do not prevent Wang Ting from claiming that the rhyme contains all the necessary references to master

[257] Chen. 1993. *Hongwu huangdi dazhuan*, 645.
[258] Kerlouégan. 2011. "Printing for Prestige?," 44.
[259] Kerlouégan. 2011. "Printing for Prestige?," 58.

the rules of cursive script. He views the rhyme as a prescriptive standard from which one should not deviate. Not only is this presentation of the text much more straightforward than that of the Song scholar Wu Keji, it also discards any connection to Wang Xizhi. There is no claim that the rhyme is composed of characters written by the Jin-dynasty master, nor does the text of the rhyme encourage the reader to study rubbings of writings by the two Wangs. Instead, the rhyme ends with a reassuring statement:

> When the intention is present, there will be resemblance in the form;
> when the structure is fully rendered, the spirit will also be complete.
> In this manner one can manifest one's true heart;
> when lowering the brush, one will effortlessly comprehend the obscure [principle].
>
> 意到形須似，體完神亦全。
> 斯能透肝腑，落筆自通玄。[260]

Similar to the assertion made in the preface regarding the comprehensive rule that regulates cursive script, the ending of this rhyme declares that beyond the writing of the characters, greater principles must be comprehended. With all these additions and adjustments, the *Cursive Formula in Hundred Rhymes* turned the content of an auxiliary formula for beginners into a self-contained guide to the highest principles of calligraphy in cursive script.

This dramatic shift in how the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* was presented, from a text that could be perused without harming one's studies to a text that embodied a greater principle, did not originate among scholars or commercial printers. Surprisingly, it was the emperor who raised its status.

From Canon to Standard

After the emperors of the Song dynasty, few members of the royal ruling house made efforts to promote cursive script. Following the production and multiple reproductions of the *Model Calligraphy of the Chunhua Reign*, which made works of calligraphy by ancient masters accessible to more scholars, imitating models became the standard and widespread practice for

[260] *Caojue baiyun* 草訣百韻. [n.d.]. 11b. (In the collection of the National Library of China.)

learning calligraphy. This extensive collection of calligraphy, published in 992, aimed to trace writing back to its ancient roots. Previous scholarship has already addressed the political aspirations behind the production of this collection and the ways in which it legitimized the ruling house.[261] More than three centuries later, Ming princes also spared no effort to follow this path of legitimization, recarving previous collections of model calligraphy to make new rubbings and even compiling their own authoritative collections of masters' calligraphy.[262]

When the Wanli Emperor, Zhu Yijun 朱翊鈞 (1562-1620), decided to put forth a standard of his own, he was following this precedent. The Wanli Emperor had been fond of practicing cursive script since his youth. The Grand Secretary Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525-1582), who was also the emperor's tutor during Zhu Yijun's youth, arranged two calligraphy tutors to instruct him. Zhu Yijun had to copy texts such as the *Admonitions on Rulership* (*Da baozhan* 大寶箴) to practice his writing. Beyond these assignments, however, he treasured and repeatedly copied model calligraphy by past masters such as Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿 (709-785), immersing himself in practice for extended periods. It is known that in 1573, the young emperor gave a calligraphy performance before court officials at the palace, later presenting his work to the audience and receiving lavish praise for his achievements as a calligrapher, such as "the structure is majestic, with a layout as sublime as that of Zhou dynasty tripods and Shang dynasty vine vessels" (體格莊嚴，儼然周鼎商彝的陳列).[263] The young emperor's passion for calligraphy was so intense that his tutor found it necessary to admonish him, listing past emperors who indulged in such pleasant pastimes and caused the fall of their dynasties, such as Song Huizong. He later cut calligraphy from the emperor's curriculum and urged him to focus on political matters and study history instead, arguing that minor arts were potential distractions from preventing the decay of virtue.[264]

Needless to say, his tutor's admonishments did nothing to diminish the emperor's interest in calligraphy. In 1584, less than two years after Zhang Juzheng's death, the court published *Distinguishing Structures of Cursive*

[261] McNair. 1994. "The Engraved Model-Letters Compendia of the Song Dynasty." On collecting and cataloguing practices, see Ebrey. 2008. *Accumulating Culture: the Collections of Emperor Huizong*, chapter 7.
[262] Pang. 2016. "Heritage or Imperial Violence," 11-13. Clunas. 2013. *Screen of Kings*, chapter 3.
[263] Cao. 1994. *Wanli huangdi dazhuan*, 49.
[264] Cao. 1994. *Wanli huangdi dazhuan*, 48-50. Huang. 1981. *1587: A Year of No Significance*, 12.

According to Rhyme (*Caoyun bianti* 草韻辨體), a visual reference book—similar to a dictionary—of characters in cursive script by various calligraphers. The volume includes the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* [Fig. 3.6] as well as two additional texts in rhyme, the *Latter Rhymes of the Song Formula for Cursive Script* (*Houyun caojue ge* 後韻草訣歌) and the *Continued Rhymed Song Formula for Cursive Script* (*Caojue xuyun ge* 草訣續韻歌). All songs were written in the emperor's own hand and attest to his continued dedication to cursive calligraphy.[265] The songs are similar in composition and format to previous versions and contain some overlaps, indicating that they were probably variants that circulated at the same time. The first version recorded in the collection was the longest, most likely a revised version with corrections by the official Guo Chen 郭諶 (b. 1488).[266]

The Wanli Emperor's enthusiasm for cursive is tellingly recorded in the prefaces and postfaces he wrote for these works. In the preface to *Distinguishing Structures of Cursive,* the emperor mostly praises the ancient masters of cursive script and the author of the compilation, the official Guo Chen, for their great achievements. In the postface, the emperor goes further, describing the central role that cursive script plays in society.[267] After urging readers to quickly reproduce this reference work, he claims:

> The use of cursive script is beneficial for both governing officials and inspecting the populace. [...] How could one take it only as material for playful enjoyment if it can also be adopted as an aid in governing and inspecting?
>
> 草書之用于治官察民均有裨焉。(...) 匪直為游藝之資，倘亦治察之一助乎？[268]

In this postface he repeatedly claims that cursive script is a tool for governing, and not a pastime. Exactly how he envisioned cursive script to aid him as a ruler is explained in the paratexts he wrote for the three rhymed

[265] The three rhymes are reproduced in Gugong bowuyuan. 2001. *Jinhuji/Caoyun bianti*, 29-147.
[266] According to Gao. 1903-1918. *Baizhou shuzhi*, juan 9, 13b.
[267] In his study on cursive script, Liu Yantao has already pointed out how unusual Wanli's claims about cursive were, and that his endorsement of cursive script was unprecedented, since it went beyond a personal preference and became directly connected to rulership. Liu. 1956. *Caoshu tonglun*, 134-136.
[268] Gugong bowuyuan. 2001. *Jinhuji/Caoyun bianti*, 131.

texts that follow this reference work. Their preface first explains that the three following texts provide the proper method for composing characters, which not only helps the calligrapher to understand its underlying principle, but is also conveniently composed in rhymes to facilitate perusal and memorization (*lan ji zhe bian* 覽記者便). The emperor states that the variations of composition and shape, described and distinguished in detail in the rhymes, are elemental in defining the role that these rhymes should play in calligraphy. To bolster his claim, he makes use of colorful analogies, explaining that "they are comparable to the mold that remains visible in ceremonial vessels; like the musical notes that make up songs" (若型範陳於彝鼎，若節奏按於宮商).[269] Thus, the three *Songs* provide the components that make up the fabric of cursive script. They define a standard that is detached from a specific master and based on abstract notions of placement and composite structure. The rhymes, the emperor claims, "do not mix the principles of the spirit, and thus serve as a guide in the forest of script and as a compass in the garden of arts" (不淆神理。斯固字林之榘矱，而藝苑之指南也).[270] Their content allows one to grasp essential points of cursive script, which can be achieved by those who comprehend the text beyond its words and strokes. Without denigrating the model works of ancient masters, the emperor thus raises the status of the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* to an unprecedented level, hailing it as an appropriate standard precisely because it lacks individuality or style - like musical notes or molds for casting bronze.

His positive judgment of the rhymes and his intention to establish this new standard become even clearer in the postface that follows the rhymes:

> *The Hundred-Rhyme Formula for Cursive*, the *Latter Rhymes* and the *Continued Song* have been printed. Scrutinize and examine them, for all the structural manifestations are present. Although the characters in them do not cover one hundredth of the six categories [for composing Chinese characters], their dots, strokes, hooks and connecting lines are forms cast in their true likeness. Thus, they exhaust the underlying method [of the six categories].
>
> Alas! There has never been a matter in which departing from the standard led to superior results. If it were the case that one had no ambition to excel and did not seek to follow past masters - even Du Du and Cui Yuan [calligraphers of the Eastern Han], Wei Guan and Suo Jing

[269] Gugong bowuyuan. 2001. *Jinhuji/Caoyun bianti*, 132.
[270] Gugong bowuyuan. 2001. *Jinhuji/Caoyun bianti*, 132.

[calligraphers of the Western Jin] could not suddenly deviate from the proper path [i.e. standards]!

Yet, fighting snakes and sword dances can be taken as inspiration for writing. The cutting up of an ox and the making of a wheel[271] served as means to comprehend the Way. In this way the method could be established in antiquity, as there was a sublime harmony [of the Way] with their minds, with its divine variations, leading to the utmost achievements [in calligraphy]. This can be extrapolated to the ten thousand affairs; nothing escapes it. It was through this same method that I have grasped the principles (*li* 理) of governance. It would go against my intentions to use [these rhymes] merely as aids for daubing and splattering as a playful pastime.

《草訣百韻》、《後》、《續歌》梓既成，諦而觀之，體勢咸備，雖其字不當六書之百一，而點畫鉤連，鑄形肖象，則既曲盡其術矣。嗟乎！事未有離法而善者也。儻曰無意於佳，不求踐跡。即使杜、崔運指，衛、索濡毫，惡能遽超畦徑之外哉！雖然鬥蛇舞劍可以資書；解牛斫輪因而悟道；是故成法在古，妙契以心，變化神明，臻於極致，推之萬務，無不然者。朕於是得治理焉。若徒為遊藝揮灑之助，非朕志也。[272]

The emperor makes it clear in this postface and through his previous analogies that this standard for calligraphy, represented by the rhymes he had carved at the imperial workshop, can potentially reveal the Way (*dao* 道) to the practitioner. This shift away from emulating the writing of past masters towards observation of the world and practice based on generalized rules as means to find the Way resonated with contemporary trends in Neo-Confucian thought.[273] Scholars discussed the Way or principle (*li* 理) as something that should be apprehended by the studious mind. The principle permeated everything, and natural phenomena were thus perceived as its manifestations.[274] In this work, the Wanli Emperor takes these assumptions

[271] A reference to two passages in the *Zhuangzi*. According to the anecdotes, the cook Ding and the wheelwright Bian both gained a deep understanding of the Way from their seemingly menial occupations.

[272] Gugong bowuyuan. 2001. *Jinhuji/Caoyun bianti*, 147. A manuscript that reproduces the text faithfully is held in the special collection of the University of British Columbia. Another source that reproduces the edition from the Gugong is Ma. 2017. *Lidai caoshugejue huibian*.

[273] See also chapter 4.

[274] See for example, Makeham. 2010. *Dao Companion to Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, XXVIII-XXIX.

for granted, building his argument that calligraphy embodies this principle and can thus serve as a tool that will aid him in governance, which adheres to the same principle.

Interestingly, the emperor's endorsement of these anonymous rhymes also bypasses the significance of lineage and transmission, which had dominated calligraphy discourses since the Tang dynasty. Even princes of the early Ming went to great lengths to make sure that their calligraphy was connected to the great masters of the Jin dynasty.[275] The Wanli Emperor's position suggests that he perceived copying of ancient masters' calligraphy as a roundabout way to the goal to which he had devised a direct path. The emperor did not perceive memorization and the use of the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* as detrimental to developing a unique style. According to him, trained calligraphers grasped a greater principle by committing it to memory and thus achieved an even higher goal.

The *Hundred-Rhyme Song* approached cursive writing in a syncretic and modular fashion. Its many printed and manuscript versions were not to be regarded as a fixed model, only as several visual instantiations of a standard. This allowed for more creative freedom and expression, since the calligrapher did not have to adhere to the exact shape and strokes of a character from a specific model, only to general rules of structure. The rhymes had been circulating since the Song dynasty and had undergone countless adaptations and alterations. Nevertheless, it took an emperor to establish these mnemonic formulas as an alternative to the established canon. This new standard did not rely on the character or moral achievements of calligraphers or their personal styles, but focused on the formal qualities of script. The *Hundred-Rhyme Song* compressed principles of cursive script so they could be easily comprehended, remembered, and put to use when needed.

Calligraphy remained a self-referential tradition and even such an abstract standard as the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* never overcame, let alone eradicated, the practice of copying model calligraphy. What the *Song* presented was, however, a synthesis of models that were previously conceived as unique reflections of a master's mood. Wu Keji, for instance, claimed to have undertaken a thorough investigation of numerous models of the past before correcting the rhyme. The Wanli Emperor also chose to append the rhymes to a reference work that resembled a dictionary in which characters by various masters were taken out of their original contexts and

[275] Clunas. 2013. *Screen of Kings,* 87-91.

ordered according to rhyme. Through the synthesis of the variations, which meant turning away from individual styles, a broader audience of people who had no access to models could be engaged. By including the transcription of the cursive text in regular script, the iterations of the rhyme also allowed calligraphers to study on their own.

It has often been said that the late sixteenth century witnessed the blooming of a generation of "individualist calligraphers." Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555-1636) is usually given credit as the progenitor of this innovative trend and described as a "theorist and prophet."[276] Yet, when the broad circulation of texts such as the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* is taken into account—texts only rarely discussed in elite theories and removed from their discourse on calligraphy—Dong Qichang's contribution seems less "prophetic." Dong certainly approved of works that decontextualized characters, as is made evident in an inscription he added to a reference work for cursive script titled *Collection of Characters in Cursive According to Rhyme* (*Jigu caoyun* 集古草韻).[277] But his ideas, like other calligraphy theories proposed by late-Ming scholars, were anchored in the common and widespread acceptance of calligraphic principles and rules that did not depend on individual styles. Popular texts provide a glimpse into the broader context of the sixteenth century, in which approaches that mixed and syncretized script types and styles were circulating not just among members of the scholarly elite. This is not to say that calligraphers like Dong or his follower Wang Duo 王鐸 (1592-1652), who was known to create "collages" of masters' calligraphy by tapping into his memory after years of copying models, should not be credited for their efforts to theorize calligraphy practice or to create visual puzzles.[278] However, calligraphy, even cursive script, was no longer an endeavor reserved for the elite, and the tension between the present and the traditional canon that was tied to distant masters and unreliable copies of their works was felt in all strata of the growing society of educated people.[279]

Not surprisingly, the spread of the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* only increased after the Wanli Emperor's endorsement of the text. Several copies were published after the imperial edition, most of which adhered to the content and sequence of the first rhyme published in his collection. Scholars also

[276] Bai. 2003. *Fu Shan's World,* 20-34, esp. 25.
[277] Fang and Chen. 1630. *Songjiangfu zhi*, juan 56, 26b.
[278] Bai. 2003. *Fu Shan's World,* 44.
[279] This issue was addressed in the previous chapter and the lack of trust in rubbings will be discussed in the next chapter.

published or engraved it in stone independently, praising its use in prefaces to their publications. For example, in one edition that is now lost, the scholar-official He Qiaoyuan 何喬遠 (1558-1632) argues that "when its rules are firmly set and your mind has familiarized itself with it, whenever your brush is inhibited, you can use it as an aid to fulfill your intentions" (其規摹一定，若熟於心，則一時筆窘，可以助意).[280] Two iterations from the Wanli period that have survived are a rubbing dated 1592, published under the title *Collected Cursive Formulas of Antiquity* (*Jigu caojue* 集古草訣), and a manuscript written in 1613 by Han Daoheng 韓道亨 (dates unknown).[281] Besides Kuiyu, mentioned above, other members of the imperial clan also promoted the text, a practice that was later taken up by Qing rulers and bannermen. The Kangxi Emperor 康熙 (r.1661-1722) ordered a stele to be carved with the text in 1694, keeping the stele on the palace compound.[282] Two more steles that reproduce the rhyme are preserved in the in the Forest of Steles (*beilin* 碑林) in Xi'an 西安.[283] One is the work of the Ming imperial clan member Zhu Jinghe 朱敬鑉 (style Jinfu 進父, fl. 1573-1620), who made minor changes to the text and praised it for being easy to memorize and thus very convenient [Fig. 3.7]; the second, in the calligraphy of a Manchu bannerman whose name in Chinese was Dalishan 達禮善, is dated 1705.[284] In his rendering of the rhyme, which bears no inscription, he chose to write the text without including the transcription, as was customary for model letters. The text was also included in the Qianlong Emperor's *Compilation on Calligraphy and Painting from the Studio for Admiring Culture* (*Peiwenzhai shuhuapu* 佩文齋書畫譜). Scholars wrote poems to accompany the rhyme, as

[280] This edition of the rhyme has been lost, but the preface is recorded in a collection of Ming literature originally printed during the Qing dynasty. Huang. 1987. *Ming Wenha*i, juan 229, 12a.

[281] Several other editions are recorded in gazetteers but have not survived, such as one engraving made of rubbings in the script of Wen Zhengming 文徵明 (1470–1559) dated 1630; one volume titled *Caojue fatie* 草訣法帖 by Han Yingsong 韓應嵩 (1524-1598); Qing editions including the *Zhengzi caojue zengshan baiyun* 正字草訣增刪百韻, with a preface by Chen Shuping 陳樹苹; and one stele made by imperial command in 1694 (Kangxi reign) and kept in the palace compound. Several printed editions are recorded in different bibliographical records of the Qing.

[282] The current location of the stele is unknown. E et al. 1782. *Guochao gongshi*, juan 36, 8b.

[283] Chen et al. 2006. *Xi'an beilin bowuguancang beike zongmu tiyao*, 26; 34. The inventory numbers for the steles are 686 and 687. See also Lu. 1998. *Xi'an beilin shi*, 287.

[284] Both are reproduced in the collection *Xi'an beilin quanji* 西安碑林全集. The Wanli reign stele, titled *caojue ge* 草訣歌, is reproduced in Gao et al. 1999. *Xi'an beilin quanji, 34,* 3370-3390. The Kangxi reign stele, *caojue baiyun ge* 草訣百韻歌, is reproduced in Gao et al. 1999. *Xi'an beilin quanji,* 45, 4309-4343.

did the Manchu bannerman Kuixu 揆敘, who received a copy of the rhyme along with other didactic texts from the Kangxi Emperor and composed a poem for each.[285] Finally, the text was even used for making forgeries, as in a version written on silk attributed to Zhao Mengfu, which made its first appearance during the mid Qing dynasty.[286]

Conclusion

When the Wanli Emperor embarked on the attempt to establish the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* as a new standard for cursive calligraphy, the text had been circulating in print for at least five centuries. Initially, it presented itself as a guide to the style of Wang Xizhi. However, the *Song* began to shed this association when its popularity increased during the Yuan, and it was slowly adopted as a general reference that addressed challenges specific to grass script and allowed to the student to interpret masters' calligraphy in a flexible way. Scholars and editors took the initiative to continuously reproduce and disseminate the text, be it as a rubbing or in cheaply printed encyclopedias. Thanks to their efforts, the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* became a standard in the collective memory of late imperial society.

One rhyme, written during the Qing dynasty and dedicated to describing steps for learning cursive script, makes the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* an inherent component of the process for learning cursive. Memorizing the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* came to be perceived as the first step in learning the rules of cursive—a step that, in itself, should be memorized:

> The form of cursive is extremely loose,
> but as loose as it may be, rules are still in use.
> When it comes to spirit, steles of the Han and Tang exceed.
> as for style, people of the Jin are in the lead.
> When studying cursive, the *Formula Song* you must read,
> once it is memorized, ancient models you should heed.[...]
>
> 草書形體極放縱，
> 放縱之中規矩用。
> 神奇莫測漢唐碑，
> 晉人風度明淨隨。

[285] Nalan. 1724. *Yijietang shiji*, juan3, 11b-12b.
[286] Wang. 1701. *Juyi lu*, juan 31, 6a.

學識草書讀歌訣，
歌訣熟時閱古帖。[287]

[287] Fu. 1687. *Zixue jinliang*, caofa ge xing, 1a.

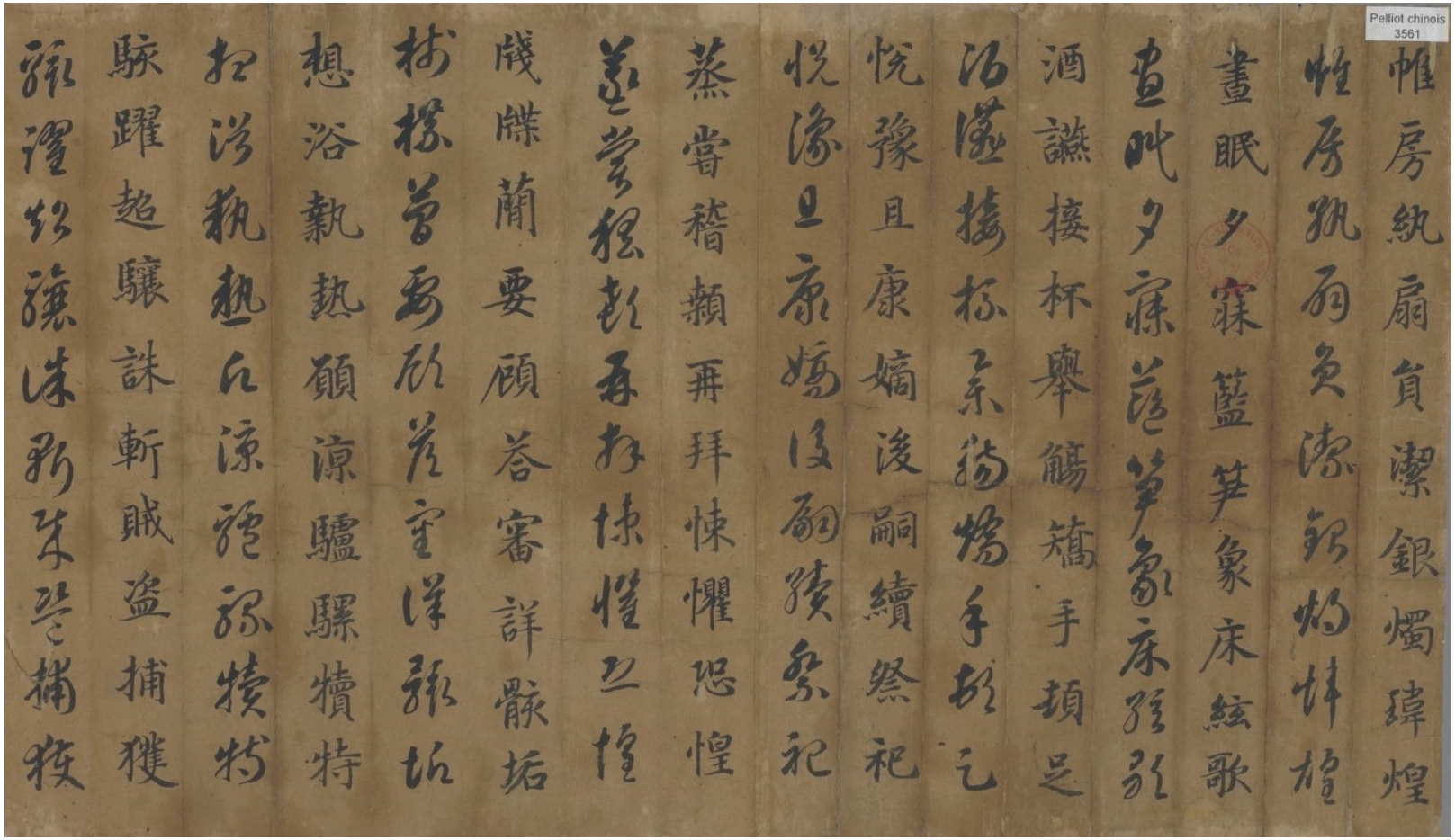
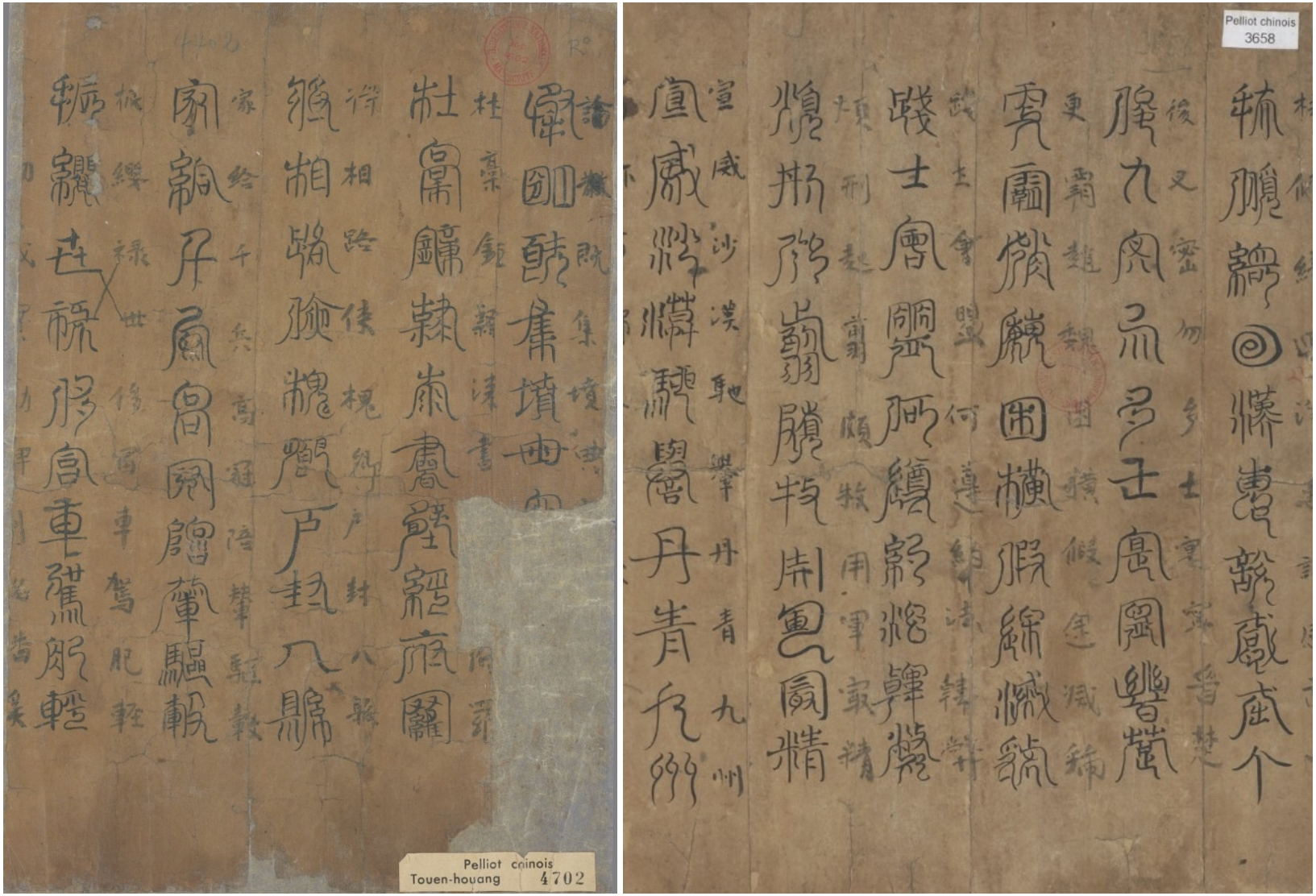


Fig. 3.1
Manuscript of the *Thousand Character Essay* in cursive and regular script found in the Dunhuang library cave. Source: Pelliot Chinois 3561. gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Fig. 3.2 Manuscripts of the *Thousand Character Essay* in seal and regular script found in the Dunhuang library cave. Left: Pelliot Chinois 4702. Right: Pelliot Chinois 3658. Source: gallica.bnf.fr Bibliothèque nationale de France.



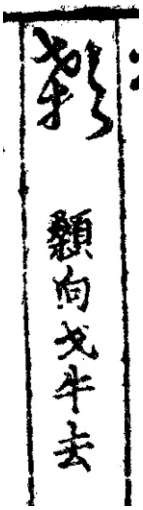


Fig. 3.3 Instructions on how to compose the character *sang* 顙 in the Yuan edition of the *Hundred-Rhyme Song.* Source: Chen and Hu. 1963. *Shilin Guanji*, xu ji, wenyi lei, juan 5, 2a.

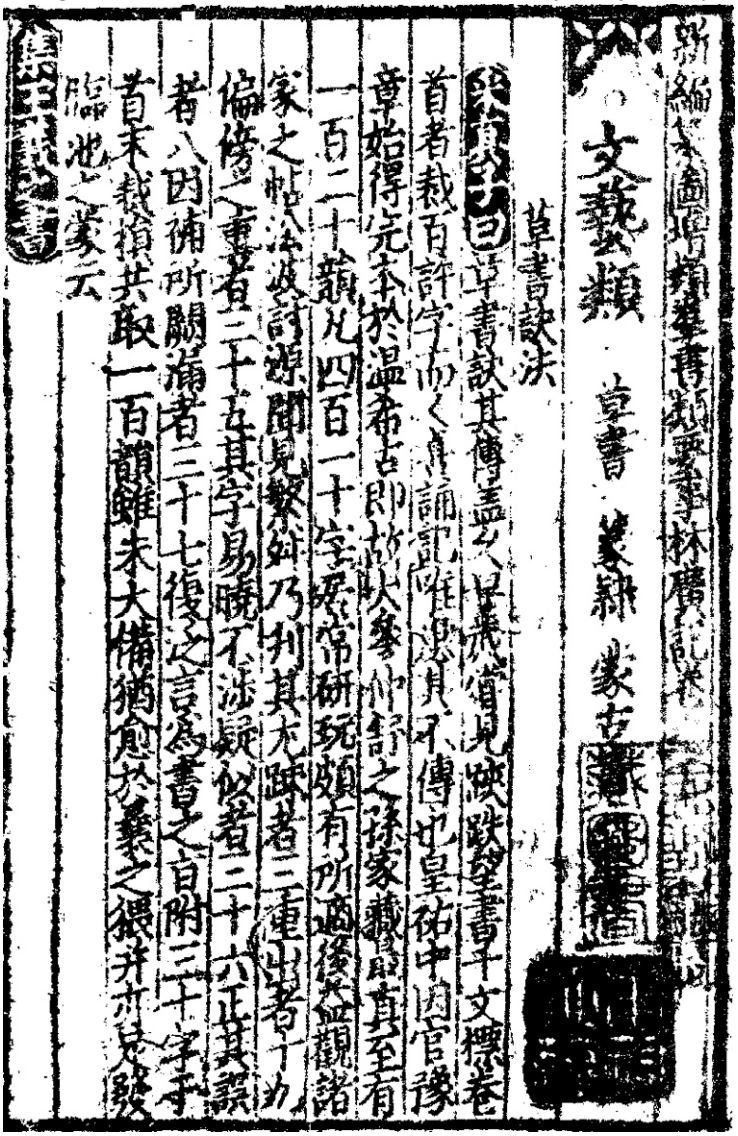


Fig. 3.4 Introductory note to the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* in the Yuan edition of the *Extensive Records from the Forest of Matters* (*Shilin guangji* 事林廣記). Source: Chen and Hu. 1963. *Shilin Guanji*, xu ji, wenyi lei, juan 5, 1a.

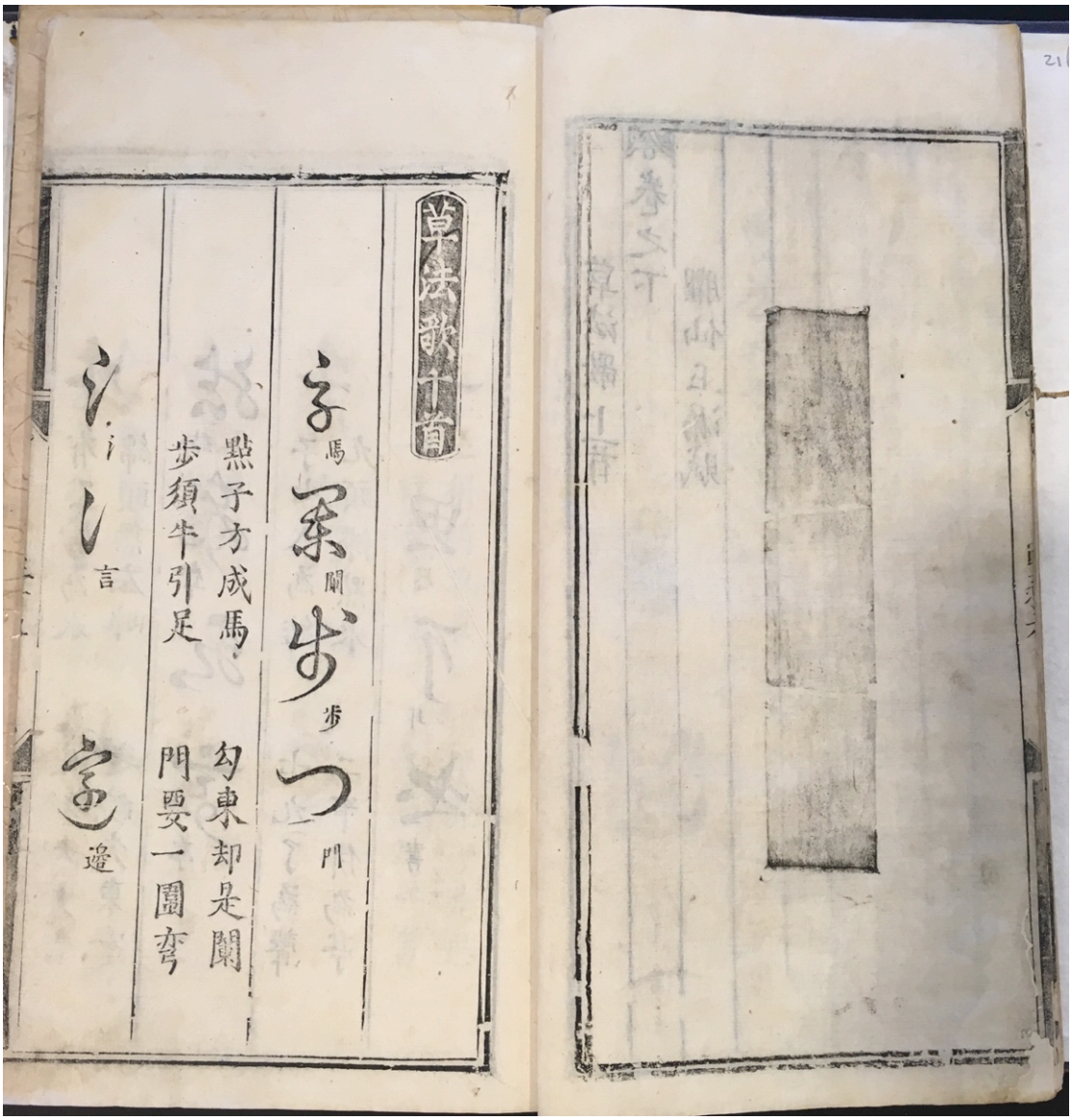


Fig. 3.5 First page of a short version of the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* from the 1531 *Collected Methods for Cursive Script* (*Caoshu jifa* 草書集法) by Hu Tingyu. Source: Hu. 1531. *Caoshu jifa*, juan xia, 38a-39b. Photo by author.


草訣百韻歌
學使百藝彰
草聖最為難龍蛇競筆端
掌重若乃羣龍蛛絲筆鋒
毫釐雖欲辨體勢更須完
毫釐強去留豁然眾更沉
有點方為水空挑却是言
草訣百韻
一
玄玆牙爲沉夷挑右旡
六下同頭無左畔走連關東邊
六沉無左睞心連罪素玄
長短分知去徵莊視每安
右拒今右去淋莊視每每
步觀牛引足羞見羊踏田
步觀朱引元篤兒掌使因

Fig. 3.6
First page of the first of three versions of the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* written in the hand of the Wanli Emperor. Source: Gugong bowuyuan. 2001. *Jinhuji/Caoyun bianti*, 132.

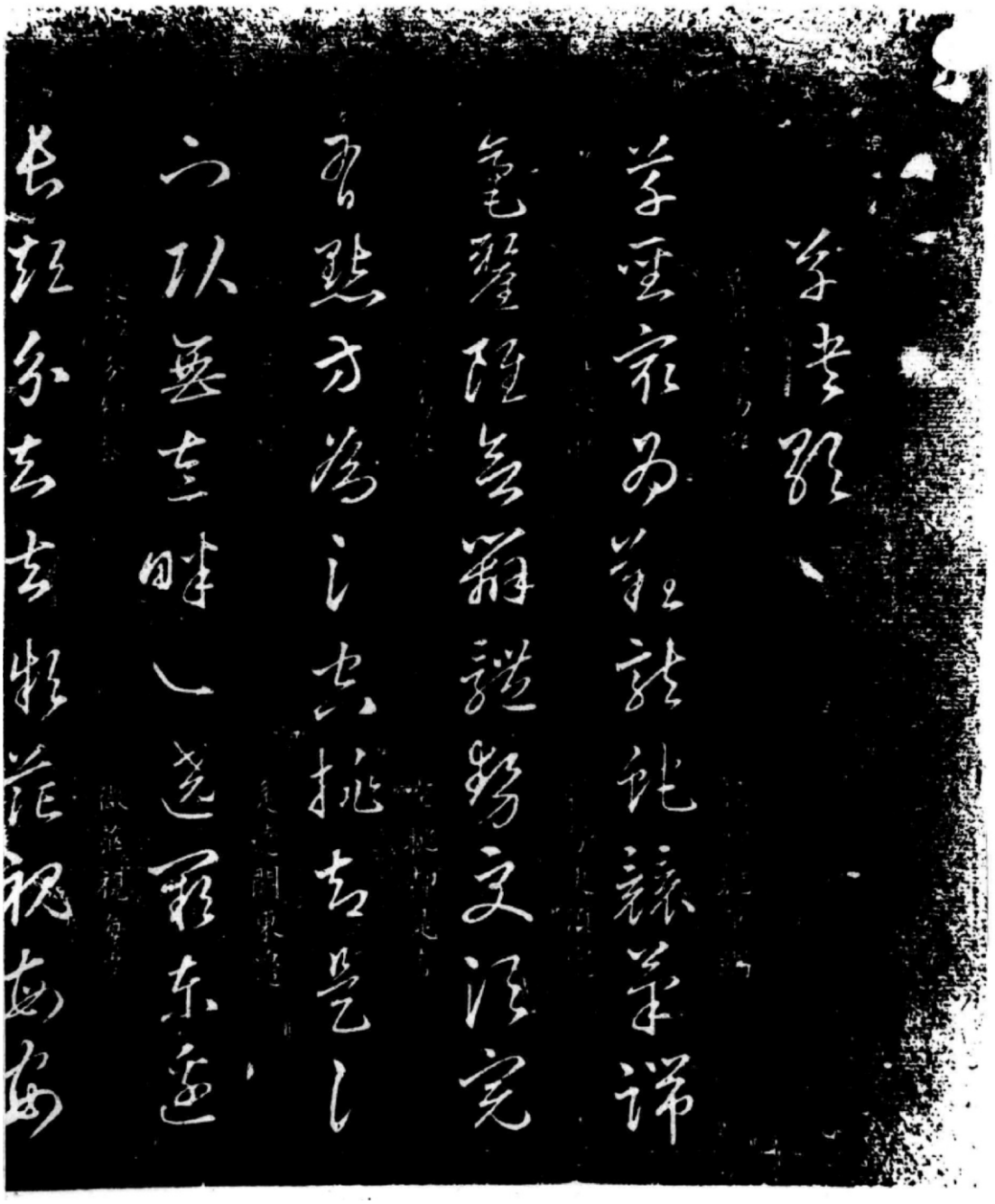


Fig. 3.7 Detail from rubbing of the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* in the hand of the Ming imperial clansman Zhu Jinghe 朱敬鑉. The text of the rhyme was carved in regular and grass script. Source: Gao et al. 1999. *Xi'an beilin quanji,* vol. 34, 3372.

Chapter 4

Looking Through a Grid

Anyone who has attempted to practice Chinese calligraphy will be familiar with the "nine palaces" grid (*jiu gong ge* 九宮格). It is not hard to find practice paper with a grid composed of nine squares printed in red, which helps the student to copy characters by drawing attention to their composition and inner balance. The "nine palaces" are regarded as an indispensable pedagogical tool. Its basic function is akin to that of the grid used by European painters when copying or transferring a small sketch or model to a canvas, or to Tang cartographers who relied on grids to reduce the size of maps.[288] The outlines of the grid are taken as reference to locate the elements in the model and transfer them accordingly to the new surface. A grid segments anything seen through it into visual units. It allows the painter "to halt that movement of interpretation" of forms, and "instead of a picture of a house, he will see squares filled with white and grey paint."[289] In a similar fashion, the "nine palaces" flattens what is seen through it, and at the same time invites the user to place any model within its boundaries. One can then commit the visual content framed within each segment and the relation of the elements to the internal borders to memory. The flexibility of this method allowed scholars from different periods to employ it for different purposes. In this chapter, the different approaches and understandings of the "nine palaces" will be discussed in connection to the esthetic and intellectual trends of each period. The first section is devoted to the developments during the Yuan and Ming dynasties, a period of dissemination, followed by a section on the changes and innovative approaches of Qing scholars, whose new hopes for the field of calligraphy and even political agendas guided their use of the grid.[290]

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[288] While a grid-like layout can be seen in early maps, these were not necessarily used as a visual aid for scaling maps in relation to the perceived world. Instead, the lines were understood as "warp and weft," used to organize space according to cosmological principles. On the layout of early maps and the nine palaces, see Dorofeeva-Lichtmann. 2007. "Mapless Mapping." During the Han dynasty, Chinese cartographers used measures to indicate distances on maps, yet the first known map to depict a grid is the *Yuji tu* 禹跡圖 (Map of the tracks of Yu), carved on a stele in 1136. On the use of the grid as a cartographic tool, see Yee. 1994. "Taking the World's Measure," 124-126.

[289] Gombrich. 1972. *Art and Illusion,* 248.

[290] The use of grids to draw scaled maps became common during the late Qing, as can be gleaned from several local gazetteers that also provide instructions on how to produce

The *Classic of Calligraphy* (*Shujing* 書經) is the earliest known source to mention the "nine palaces" as a tool to evaluate and study model calligraphy. The *Classic of Calligraphy,* short for *The Amended Classic of Calligraphy* (*Shujing buyi* 書經補遺), was compiled in 1351 by the Yuan scholar Lü Zongjie 吕宗傑. However, Lü does not claim to be the creator of the method. According to the preface, his compilation comprises two manuscripts from the mid-fourteenth century that Lü corrected, appending his own comments. One of these manuscripts, an essay titled *The Original Representation of Calligraphy Models* (*Fashu benxiang* 法書本象), was penned by Chen Yizeng 陳繹曾 (style Bofu 伯敷, ca. 1286-1351), a literary theorist and instructor at the School for the Sons of the State. According to Lü's preface, he first met Chen in 1346 and was instantly inspired by his calligraphic skill. Lü obtained Chen's teachings on calligraphy and included the text in his compilation. His compilation thus points to Chen as the earliest scholar to explain the use of the "nine palaces" in writing.

Chen's essay is divided into twelve sections, each devoted to a different type of script, from large seal script to flying white. The sections, despite varying greatly in length, address the origin of the different scripts and discuss the different principles of character composition, also providing some technical pointers to master them. The "nine palaces" are introduced in the section devoted to the small regular script (*xiaokai* 小楷) in order to explain the use of smaller or thinner strokes for characters of slightly larger proportions. The section ends with advice to the student:

> First, use a tablet made of fish head-bone[291] and adhere to the eight methods to copy the model. Then, use fine writing paper, and according to the nine palaces, copy the model. When your skill has been refined, variations will naturally follow.

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scaled maps. This use, however, will not be addressed here, as it is not related to the development of the "nine palaces grid."

[291] Another Yuan scholar, Kong Qi 孔齊, comments on the use of epistolary tablets that had commonly been used by earlier scholars to protect and seal letters when sending them to friends. He describes them as square tablets, with each side measuring about 25cm in length, which could be made out of ivory, red lacquer, or fish head-bone. The last, he adds, were especially good for copying model calligraphy, which could be related to the smoothness and slight transparency of the material. The tablets might have been used to weigh down the paper and serve as a straightedge for the copyist. Kong. [n.d.] *Jingzhai zhi zhengzhi ji*, juan 2, Yushen zuojian entry, unpaginated.

先用魷版依八法模搨，次用楮紙准九宮臨倣。功夫精熟，變化自由矣。[292]

This final comment confirms that in the earliest sources in which the "nine palaces" method is mentioned, it was not only used for balancing the blank spaces within a character, but was also conceived as a visual aid for copying models.

Lü's attribution of the text to Chen provides the context to ascertain Chen Yizeng's authorship of a second text in which the "nine palaces" method is described in even more detail. The *Essential Formula of the Hanlin Academy* (*Hanlin yaojue* 翰林要訣), provides particularly clear instructions on how to employ the "nine palaces" grid. It began to circulate broadly in print during the Ming dynasty, with the earliest surviving printed edition published in 1603 as part of Hu Wenhuan's[293] collectanea *Famous Books of the Hundred Schools* (*Baijia mingshu* 百家名書, also known under the alternative title *Gezhi congshu* 格致叢書). There is overwhelming evidence that the *Essential Formula of the Hanlin Academy* was authored by Chen. In the preface of *The Original Principle of Calligraphy Models,* included in Lü's compilation, Chen states that he often wrote and distributed notes to aid his students, claiming that one of his manuscripts of an "Essential Formula for Calligraphy Models" (*Fashu yaojue* 法書要訣), circulated among the people. The preface lists a set of 12 categories related to "calligraphy models." These correspond to the sections in the *Essential Formula of the Hanlin Academy* but have no connection to the *Original Principle*, which was limited to the description of the twelve types of script. This is a clear indication that Chen regarded the two works as complementary.

A third Yuan text that also points to Chen as the first scholar to record and transmit the "nine palaces," Sheng Ximing's 盛熙明 (fl. 1333-1361) *Study of Calligraphy Models* (*Fashu kao* 法書考), allows us to narrow down the date by which Chen had written his instructions to before 1334, the date of the work's preface. Sheng included parts of Chen's explanation verbatim in his section on composition (*buzhi* 佈置), which includes a small graph of the grid [Fig. 4.1]. The instructions are not directly attributed to Chen, but he is mentioned in other sections of Sheng's text. Thus, Chen seems to have been

[292] Lü. 1926. *Shujing buyi*, juan 2, 4b-5a.
[293] Hu is discussed in more depth in the following chapter.

the center from which the "nine palaces" method began to spread in the Zhejiang area during the second half of the Yuan dynasty.

Only a few decades later, Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (fl. 1360-1368) also mentions the *Essential Formula of the Hanlin Academy* in his *Essentials of a History of Calligraphy* (*Shushi huiyao* 書史會要); and in a note, the Ming painter and calligrapher Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558-1639) recounts how, in 1595, he found a manuscript copy of the book at a marketplace and decided to rescue it from that deplorable environment, just a few years before the earliest known publication of Chen Yizeng's work.[294] Chen Yizeng first transmitted the "nine palaces" method to his students, orally and as short notes. They circulated in the form of manuscripts, and were most likely only disseminated in print during the Ming.

In the 1603 edition, Chen's instructions for the "nine palaces," described under the section titled "Square Method"[295] (*Fang fa* 方法), are very straightforward:

> The nine palaces: the dots and strokes of the eight sides must all bow to the center.
>
> Structural composition: Regardless of whether a character has many or few strokes, whether its composition is dense or loose: each has inner divisions. Make a nine by nine, 81-squared grid and space the lines uniformly. First, take the models of Zhong [You], Wang [Xizhi], Yu [Shinan] and Yan [Zhengqing] and use a seal with the grid pattern and stamp it in red on them. When this is done, look at the segments of the characters and strokes in the model. One by one, copy these, paying close attention to the variations of curvature and straightness and to the original intention. Thus, you will not stray by the slightest bit. The styles of the four calligraphers must be mastered, and then you can broaden your study to various masters. If the characters in the model are large, use a small stamp to shrink each one according to the segments [i.e. proportionally]. If the characters on the model are small, use a large stamp to enlarge them according to the segments. Thus, even if you copy characters from the "Scripture of the Yellow Court" or the "On General Yue Yi" [famous model calligraphy by Wang Xizhi], the characters can also be enlarged to cover a square *zhang* [ca. 3.2 m^2]

[294] Chen. 1606. *Nigu lu*, juan 2, 17b.

[295] In the preface to the *The Original Principle of Calligraphy Models*, the section is listed only as "square" *fang* 方, following a section titled "round" *yuan* 圓. In the text both section titles indicate that a method is being explained, with the added character fa 法.

each!

九宮：八面點畫，皆拱中心。

結構：隨字點畫多少疏密，各有停分，作九九八十一分，界畫均布之。先於鍾、王、虞、顏法帖上，以朱界畫印，印訖，視帖中字畫分數一一臨擬，仍欲察其屈伸變換本意，秋毫勿使差失。四家字體既熟，方可旁及諸家。法帖字大，以小印分數蹙之。法帖字小，以大印分數展之。雖以《黃庭》、《樂毅》展為方丈可也。[296]

Chen is quite particular about the steps to be taken when copying model calligraphy from rubbings: the student should create a stamp with a fine grid with 81 sections and use this to partition every character on the rubbing. The masters mentioned in text were all known for their regular script, which was suitable for applying the grid method due to their square shape. Chen emphasizes that the student must pay attention to each character individually, each dot and each stroke, in order to copy and memorize the character according to the inner balance of blank and filled areas. After discussing the use of the grid for regular script, he proposes a second method:

Another method is to take the red-line-gridded seal and print it on paper, or use a block of Yew wood and apply lacquer on it [to create the grid].[297] One takes Xu Shen's *Explanation of Graphs and Analysis of Characters* as a template and proceeds to copy each, one by one, partitioning them according to the method. There is no doubt this will make it much simpler to become proficient. [Your characters will possess] outer beauty and inner strength, and each and every one will naturally be marvelous.

又以朱界畫印，印紙，或棐板漆之，取許慎《說文》偏傍字樣，一一依法區處，務要簡易精熟，外妍美而內遒健，各各自佳矣。[298]

[296] Chen and Hu. 1603. *Hanlin yaojue*, 9a-9b.

[297] Asian Yew (*fei* 棐) yields a very light-colored wood. Although it is not clear how the woodblock was to be used, it does not seem to be intended for printing, as no carving is mentioned. Most likely, the woodblock was placed under the thin paper. From the context, it is possible to imagine that the lacquer applied to the wood would contrast with the light color of the wood and thus make the grid visible through the paper to aid the copying of models. If the woodblock were intended for printing, there would be no point in specifying the type of wood, nor in selecting one that differs from the types regularly used for printing. For types of wood used for printing, see Needham et al. 1993. *Science and Civilisation in China*, 196.

[298] Chen and Hu. 1603. *Hanlin yaojue*, 9b.

The “nine palaces” is thus introduced as a tool to help students emulate compositions. A graph of the nine palaces and another of a grid with 36 divisions are included later in the manual [Fig. 4.2]. The appearance of the grid with 81 squares for a stamping tool is provided in later publications that reproduce Chen’s instructions [Fig. 4.3].

In the *Explanation of Graphs and Analysis of Characters* (*Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字), the Han scholar Xu Shen 許慎 (f. 58-147) sought to preserve the appearance of characters in small seal script as they had been written. In his text, it is unlikely that Chen is referring to a specific rubbing or model, but instead to works that reproduced the 540 character components from the *Explanation of Graphs* on steles. One such stele, still extant today, is the “Seal Script Stele of the List of Character Components and Origins” (*Zhuanshu mulu pianpang ziyuan bei* 篆書目錄偏旁字源碑), dated 999. It was carved in the calligraphy of the Northern Song Buddhist monk Mengying 夢英 (fl. 964-999), who excelled at seal script. This stele was only one of Mengying’s works produced to guarantee the transmission of small seal script to later generations.[299] One other model that Chen might have had in mind is Guo Zhongnu’s 郭忠恕 (d. 977) *Origin of Characters of the Explanation of Graphs in Small Characters* (*Xiaozi Shuowen ziyuan* 小字說文字源), which is no longer extant but was recorded during the Song.[300] The extant rubbing illustrates that Mengying’s seal script was regular and even and fit within a rectangular grid, making it suitable for Chen’s “nine palaces” method. Chen’s suggestion of this source as copying material would not have struck his contemporaries as unusual, since by the time he wrote his treatise, the “return to antiquity” (*fugu* 復古) movement had already inspired many to follow the calligraphic tradition of the Tang scholar Li Yangbing 李陽冰 (fl. 760-765) when studying seal script. Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322) and his followers, for example, preferred the neat and precise style of more recent calligraphers over ancient models, and Mengying’s small seal script fit within Li’s tradition.[301] It is thus noteworthy that Chen saw no limitations to the use of the grid for writing regular script. The “nine palaces” could potentially be used to partition any type of model writing that fit into a square, including the archaic seal script.

This inclusive use of the grid to copy any model was welcomed during

[299] His most famous work, carved in 965, rendered the *Thousand Character Essay* in small seal script. See Ho. 1996. “The Revival of Calligraphy in the Early Northern Sung,” 68-70.
[300] Ouyang. 1782. *Jigu lu*, juan 10, 151a-151b.
[301] Fu. 1977. *Traces of the Brush*, 45-46.

the Ming dynasty, when seal script experienced a revival and rapidly became popular for titles of printed books and even for prefaces, mostly due to its esthetic appeal as an unusual and marvelous (*qi* 奇) script. Those who devoted themselves to the study of different types of calligraphy still relied on the dominant and widespread practice of copying rubbings. Although anonymous works offering alternative educational approaches, such as the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* discussed in the previous chapter, circulated widely, copying rubbings continued to be one of the main practices that helped students memorize the composition of characters in different styles. However, even though the method of the "nine palaces" was regarded as useful for copying and Ming artists were aware of it, it is mentioned only rarely in texts of the period. This lack of attribution can be explained by the goal Ming calligraphers hoped to reach when copying rubbings. Instead of attempting to recreate the model calligraphy and ancient scripts, they hoped to grasp their spirit and develop an individual style out of it. As an essentially mechanical and precision-oriented learning method, the "nine palaces" did not receive widespread attention in the individualistic discourse of the elite.

The Ming scholar Zhao Yiguang[302] 趙宧光 (1559–1625), who held the opinion that texts such as the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* were rather unrefined but nonetheless useful,[303] still preferred the practice of copying rubbings as a method of instruction. In his *Cold Mountain's Broom Talk*[304] (*Hanshan zhoutan* 寒山帚談) he explains:

> When you start copying model calligraphy, there will be resemblance to the model. You must not be constrained by the model, since this will make it hard to succeed and you will quickly tire. You should copy it several times, without [succeeding to] achieve formal

[302] One character used for the author's name varies. He is also known as Zhao Huanguang 趙宧光, and has been identified this way in previous scholarship, such as in Clunas. 2004. *Superfluous Things*, 176. See also Fu and Fu. 1977. *Traces of the Brush*, 51. However, according to the signature on his own work and reprinted editions of his works, his name used the character *yi*.

[303] Zhao. [17th c.] *Hanshan zhoutan,* fu lu, 16a. In his manual, Zhao reproduces the categorization of pedagogical texts for writing provided earlier by Xu. 1995. *Xushi yimou size*, 29b.

[304] The broom in the title is a reference to the anecdote in which Cai Yong (132-192) created the flying-white script from clerical or *bafen* script after observing men refurbishing the gate of the city and using their broom-like brushes for applying plaster to write large characters on it. The anecdote is contained in the *Shuduan* 書斷, under the heading "Flying White." The treatise has been translated into French. See Escande. 2010. *Traités chinois de peinture et de calligraphie, Vol. 2.*

likeness, and then you must closely inspect the ancient model. Seek the strengths in its writing and seek the weaknesses in your own. Compare the two to see where they do not correspond. Then, according to a stroke in the model, you add one stroke; follow the curve and imitate the straight; copy meticulously. You will not cease if a single character lacks resemblance; you will not cease if a single stroke lacks resemblance. By repeating this procedure several times, each and every character will be imprinted in your memory, not a stroke will be forgotten. Thus, you will reach a point at which you do not have to think about it and no longer make mistakes. Then you will no longer be conscious of your own brush, and pleasing and wonderful characters will naturally appear before your eyes.

臨仿法書，始而彷彿，不必拘泥，拘則難成而易倦。數臨不得形似，然後細閱古帖，求彼好處，求我惡處，參照相左在於何所，逐筆逐畫，依曲效直，詳細描寫，一字不似不已，一筆不似不已。如是數過，字字記憶，筆筆不忘，至不用意亦不誤時，然後著念自己筆端，自有一得意佳字在我眼中矣。[305]

Although the practice of copying as described by Zhao includes striving for likeness as the second step in the learning process, he cautions his reader not to become a slave to the model. The “nine palaces” could have been employed at this stage, but likeness was not one of the main concerns highlighted in Zhao’s text. Instead, the student should internalize the models through repetition and later be free to innovate by seeking to include qualities from other scripts in different types.

The artistry of transformation is marvelous. It does not matter if one takes large characters to make small ones, small characters to make large ones; if one takes the style of Ouyang Xun and makes it into Yu Shinan’s, or takes Yu Shinan’s and turns it into Ouyang’s; if one takes the Han and Wei dynasty style and makes it into Jin and Tang styles, or takes the style of the Jin and Tang and turns it into the Han or Wei style. If this wonderful idea is expanded, one can take seal and clerical script and use it to make regular and cursive script, take regular and cursive and make seal and clerical. One can go as far to take calligraphy to make painting.

[305] Zhao. [17th c.] *Hanshan zhoutan*, juan shang, 51a.

化工之妙，無論取大作小，取小作大；亦無論取歐作虞，取虞作歐，即漢、魏可以作晉、唐，晉、唐可以作漢、魏。推此微言，取篆、隸作真、草，取真、草作篆、隸，以至取文字作繪畫。[306]

According to Zhao, copying attentively was a crucial part of studying, but the essential goal of this exercise was to internalize a variety of styles so these could serve as inspiration and be harmonized in the mind to find the essence of writing. Zhao believed one should never pluck out one individual style or model from the flow of changes that had taken place in the development of calligraphy and narrow one's view by striving to imitate only a single model. To Zhao, this amounted to becoming a slave to the model and thus muddling the true method of calligraphy. Only a broad study of sources would help one on the path to become a master.

Zhao's work stands out for his distinction among proper models for each different type of script: those seeking to learn seal script should base their studies on bronzes and stone drums, while those aiming to learn clerical script should use Han dynasty steles as models, and so forth. Yet, as can be inferred from his statement above, he did not take a purist approach to these different styles. The goal behind learning scripts from different periods and styles was to find one's own method that combined all positive qualities from the pool of transmitted calligraphy, a syncretic approach that resembled the approach to painting proposed by his contemporary Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555–1636).[307] Zhao encouraged the calligrapher to draw on essential features of different types of script and incorporate them into one's own. Zhao also believed that a true calligrapher should know the origin of the different styles in order to write them properly.

If regular script is not imbued with qualities of small and large seal script, if running and cursive script do not follow early cursive [*zhangcao* 章草] and *bafen* [八分, derived from clerical script], it is like a person who eats grain and is clothed in silk but does not know that these come from silkworm cocoons and crop seedlings. Every time I encountered an odd hook, a strangely pulled stroke or a graph that struck me as unusual in the famous models of the Jin and Tang dynasties, I always suspected they were mistakes. Then I looked at ancient written

[306] Zhao. [17th c.] *Hanshan zhoutan*, juan xia, 29b-30a.
[307] Fong. 1992. "Tung Ch'i-ch'ang and Artistic Renewal."

traces and suddenly I found clarity. Looking back, all my assumptions turned into illusions.

真書不師篆、古，行草不師章、分，如人食粟衣絲，而不知蠶繭禾苗所出也。晉唐名帖，每有奇鉤怪引、轉盼非常之文，未始不疑其闕誤。及觀古跡，宛然恍遇，回視前日，都成夢幻。[308]

Zhao was one of the few calligraphers of the Ming to specialize in seal script.[309] He developed his own style, called "cursive seal," which combined flying white with seal script and distinguished his calligraphy as a style liberated from previous models.[310] His treatise, directed at students, emphasizes the search for the origin of script types, reflecting one of the reactions to the lack of trust in transmitted texts and calligraphy models (*tie* 帖). This was, as seen in the previous two chapters, also one of the motivations for scholars to seek new calligraphic standards. The waning authority of the calligraphy canon that established Wang Xizhi's style as normative was accompanied by a growing desire to seek new and more reliable models. Yet, as concern grew about the accuracy and reliability of the calligraphy models that had been repeatedly recut and carved, scholars not only turned to the past, but also began to seek inspiration and new standards in the work of contemporaries.

Albums featuring rubbings of model calligraphy published during the Ming dynasty began to shift their focus from the classical models of the Jin dynasty to model calligraphy by calligraphers of the time. This trend began with the *Antique Model Calligraphy Assembled in the Hall for Treasuring Worthies* (*Baoxiantang jigu fatie* 寶賢堂集古法帖), published by the King Jing of Jin (Zhu Qiyuan 朱奇源, 1450-1501) in 1489, followed by the *Letters of the Halting Cloud Hall* (*Tingyunguan tie* 停雲館帖) by Wen Zhengming 文徵明 (1470-1559), published by his sons in 1560.[311] By the late Ming, the inclusion of contemporary calligraphy had become the rule for most collections of rubbings, with some publications being solely devoted to the reproduction of

[308] Zhao. [17th c.] *Hanshan zhoutan*, juan shang, 3b.

[309] The most renowned calligrapher to have perfected his seal script during the mid Ming dynasty was Wen Zhengming. After Wen, many scholars followed suit and specialized in it.

[310] Fu. 1977. *Traces of the Brush*, 52. This volume by Fu Shen also includes an image of Zhao's cursive seal script.

[311] Ng. 2013. "Challenging the Calligraphy Canon: The Reception of Rubbing Collections in Ming China," 94. For a detailed account of the publication of the *Baoxiantang* models, see Clunas. 2013. *Screen of Kings*, chapter 3.

traces by Ming calligraphers. The practice of including works by living contemporaries was perceived as an innovative quality even during the Ming, and was met by scholars with both enthusiasm and disdain.[312]

The painting theorist Dong Qichang is the earliest known example of a scholar who decided to collect his own calligraphy and have it published in the form of rubbing collections during his lifetime.[313] Dong supervised the publication of several albums, which, most likely due to his fame, received great attention from the public. One striking feature of several of his collections, such as the *Model Calligraphy from the Hall of the Frolicking Goose* (*Xihongtang fatie* 戲鴻堂法帖, 1603) in which he copied old texts in his own hand, was that he included numerous colophons and comments among the calligraphy models intended/designed to be carved in stone together with the model calligraphy.[314] This way of flaunting personal expertise and connoisseurship within the text gained vast popularity among Ming-era publishers.

One of the comments from the *Hall of the Frolicking Goose*, published by Dong in 1603, discusses the "nine palaces" grid as a tool employed by "calligraphers" (*shujia* 書家) in general, indicating that by the mid Ming, the method was well known. Dong's comment attests to the fact that the method was received positively even before it was made accessible through print.[315] Still, Dong raises points that resemble Zhao's view on learning and innovating:

> Calligraphers, when dividing rows and arranging blank spaces, call this the "nine palaces." Someone from the Yuan dynasty wrote in the *Classic of Calligraphy* that the '"Scripture of the Yellow Court" has

[312] Ng mentions the *Baohanzhai guochao shufa* 寶翰齋國朝書法, from 1569, and the *Jinling mingxian tie* 金陵名賢帖, dated 1615, as examples of collections that solely reproduced works by Ming calligraphers. She points out that not all members of the elite accepted these publications as superior to the transmitted canon. 2013. "Challenging the Calligraphy Canon: The Reception of Rubbing Collections in Ming China," 96-98.

[313] Ng. 2013. "Challenging the Calligraphy Canon: The Reception of Rubbing Collections in Ming China," 100.

[314] Adding hand-written inscriptions, comments and notes to rubbings was already standard practice during the Song dynasty. The inclusion of additional comments and even postfaces as carved text on the stones or woodblocks prepared to make the rubbings, however, was unusual. One rare example is the *Album of Authentic Calligraphy and Lü Gong Calligraphy by Huai Su* (*Huai Su shu cangzhen, lügong ertie ce* 懷素書藏真、律公二帖冊), dated to the Song dynasty. Depicted in Shi. 2008. *Mingtie shanben*, entry 24: 83-86.

[315] Dong frequently commented on technical qualities such as method and composition when discussing earlier models. Some of his comments have been translated in Xu. 1992. "Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's Calligraphy," 105.

"nine palaces" that measure six *fen* (about 1,9cm); the "Cao E Stele" has "nine places" of four *fen* (about 1,2cm). Today, when I look at the *Thousand Character Essay* by Ouyang Xun, [I see that he] really had the complete characters in his breast [before beginning to write]. It is like the construction of the Linyun terrace: bit by bit, everything is composed after evaluating and measuring. Mi Fu praised his regular script as being equal to Wang Xizhi's; that statement can be vouched for. This version has been transmitted as part of the family collection of Yang Buzhi,[316] so it was carved in its entirety. If one desires to study calligraphy, one must first establish the inner structure of the characters, and then one can be unbridled and bold, changing what is appropriate.

書家以分行佈白，謂之九宮。元人作《書經》云：《黃庭》有六分九宮；《曹娥》有四分九宮。今觀信本千文，真有完字具於胸中。若構凌雲台，一一皆衡劑而成者。米南宮評其真書到內史，信矣。此本傳為信本真跡(楊補之家藏)，勒其全文。欲學書先定間架，然後縱橫跌蕩，惟變所適耳。[317]
[Fig. 4.4]

In his comment on Ouyang Xun's *Thousand Character Essay* in regular script, Dong praises the meticulous and paced composition of the characters, stressing that Quyang had clearly internalized the composition of each single character before setting brush to paper. His statement, as well as the examples used in it, concern practices for learning and memorizing the composition of characters in regular script. His advice to first carefully study models and then give creativity free reign echoes the beliefs of his contemporary Zhao Yiguang. While Zhao does not mention the "nine palaces" in his treatise, Dong Qichang emphasizes its role as a method that underlies the internalization of harmonic compositions. Although Dong's comment glosses over the relation drawn between stroke thickness and character size in the source he quotes, the *Classic of Calligraphy*, he claims the "nine palaces" helps calligraphers balance the gaps between characters and harmonize the blank spaces within each character. Dong, like his contemporary Zhao, was convinced that relying on memory was necessary to bring forth innovation On

[316] Yang Buzhi (1097-1169) was hailed as a master of the ink plum, also mentioned in the next chapter.
[317] Dong. 1603. *Xihongtang fashu*, folio 4, after *Qianziwen*, unpaginated. Another version of this statement that is taken from a printed edition of Dong's comments on painting states that "it is Ouyang's genuine work" instead of attributing it to Yang's collection. Dong. 1782. *Huachanshi suibi*. juan 1, 33b-40a.

another occasion he drew a poetical comparison of writing freely from memory to playing a zither without strings—a practice which could bring forth the true expression of the stirrings of one's heart.[318]

The broad circulation of Chen's method was most likely indebted to its adaptability. While Chen himself suggested it be used for learning to copy both regular and seal script meticulously, Ming scholars such as Dong Qichang, who were known for striving to achieve "rawness" in their work and often made free copies of calligraphy models, also embraced the use of the grid as a creative aid. Even those who no longer saw copying mainly as a means to uphold a tradition, but as a vehicle for innovation and invention, did not discard the "nine palaces."[319] Thus, it should come as no surprise that a method as flexible as the "nine palaces" was received with new enthusiasm during the mid Qing dynasty by "metal and stone" (*jinshi* 金石) scholars, who had no qualms about repurposing the grid.

The New "Nine Palaces" Grid

Calligraphers of the Ming continued to employ the "nine palaces" to emulate past models, even though this played a less central role in shaping their practice due to the emphasis on the esthetic ideals of rawness and strangeness. The method continued to be transmitted, yet no Ming scholar made substantial claims about its function or suggested innovative uses. During the second half of the Qing, however, the use and perceived function of the grid changed, as two paths developed from the previous method. While both paths were shaped by epigraphic scholarship, one relied on the perpetuation of family teachings and affirmed the traditional use of the nine palaces for copying model calligraphy, while the second broke away from the traditional models of the great Jin masters to introduce innovation in the field of calligraphy.

The connection between the study of inscriptions on "metal and stone" (bronzes and steles) and Ming dynasty loyalists, who refused to serve the new and foreign ruling house of the Qing, has been expertly drawn by Bai Qianshen in his study of Fu Shan's calligraphy. According to Bai, many loyalists went on trips to visit ancient steles to mourn fallen dynasties, a practice that was

[318] Xu. 1992. "Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's Calligraphy," 118. The zither is a reference to Tao Yuanming, who owned a stringless zither and saw a transcendental quality in it, believing it to best express his spiritual depth.
[319] On Dong's views on copying, see Bai. 2003. *Fu Shan's World*, 35.

directly connected to their own feelings of loss. Scholars turned to ancient writings for moral reasons, hoping to recover the roots of their own culture.[320] But although loyalists were often described as recluses, their survival outside of the bureaucratic system relied on patronage by those who served the Qing government. This led to the development of informal social networks and reliance on varied contacts as sources of information.[321] Empirical research, which began to develop as an intellectual trend in the late Ming, became a fully blown movement during the mid Qing, especially in the Qianlong 乾隆 (1735-1796) and Jiaqing 嘉慶 (1796-1820) reigns.[322] Qing evidential scholarship (*kaozheng xue* 考證學) changed the way calligraphy was created and studied. Through evidential scholarship, calligraphers took one more step toward discarding the tradition of Wang Xizhi and his son, shifting attention to more reliable materials, such as recently discovered steles and inscriptions on cliff façades. During the Qianlong reign, several scholars took the initiative to survey various regions to gather information from steles, later publishing their findings. Among these were, for example, Qian Daxin 錢大昕(1728-1804), Weng Fanggang 翁方綱 (1733-1818), Bi Yuan 畢沅 (1730-1797) and Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764-1849).[323] It was in this context of rediscovery of ancient inscriptions that the grid made its comeback as a pedagogical tool.

The official Jiang Heng 蔣衡 (1672-1743), who specialized in seal script, was one of the first Qing scholars of ancient inscriptions to comment on the "nine palaces." Jiang Heng and his descendants shaped the first path that marked the development of the "nine palaces" during the Qing. They traced the "nine palaces" method back to the Tang dynasty and advised the student to observe the rubbings from this period diligently. Their emphasis on the Tang was tied to the acknowledgement that this was the period when rules for regular script became fully developed. The Jiangs also sought to introduce such regularity to seal script, firmly connecting the use of the grid to its study. The consecutive innovations introduced to the method by members of the

[320] Bai. 2003. *Fu Shan's World,* 179.

[321] Polachek traces the late Qing practice of forming loose study groups or associations to the late Ming. 1992. *The Inner Opium War*, 26. Brown provides an example of how late Qing scholars suggested that the master should be replaced by friends and mentors. 2011. *Pastimes*, 37-38.

[322] Stumm. 2020. "Conceptualizing Authorship in Late Imperial Chinese Philology."

[323] Shimonaka addresses such publications. Ruan Yuan, for example, published a volume of inscriptions from Shandong province, titled *Shanzuo jinshi zhi* 山左金石志. Shimonaka. 1961. *Shodō zenshū*, 16.

Jiang family led to an increasingly methodical use of the grid that addressed contemporary needs and perpetuated the family's learning.

Jiang Heng's seal script style had been approved by the Qianlong court, which granted him an appointment to write the *Thirteen Classics.* His calligraphy was later carved on steles erected in the Imperial Academy in 1791.[324] Prior to his comments on the "nine palaces," it seems only reproductions of Chen Yizeng's book had been circulating.[325] To Jiang, the creation of the "nine palaces" was directly tied to calligraphic practices of the Tang dynasty. He followed the arguments of earlier scholars in claiming that the Tang style was always guided by rules and thus consistently regular and tidy. His comments on the study of calligraphy betray his indebtedness to earlier theoreticians, such as Zhao Yiguang, discussed in the beginning of this chapter. Like Zhao, Jiang Heng believed it was necessary to study first and then innovate, and also to look to the past to understand later styles of calligraphy.

> When it comes to copying models, one must let the brush be guided by one's own intention. Examine the unique differences [in the calligraphy] of the people from the past, and strive for what they have in common. It is like when several famous calligraphers each copy the "Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Gathering" [by Wang Xizhi]—none of the renderings will be alike. What distinguishes them is where the innate tendencies of the calligraphers came to fruition, while what they share is what has been transmitted from Wang Xizhi. If one uses this approach in this pursuit, I say that is half the battle won. Also, when writing regular script, use the intention of running or cursive script; when writing running or cursive script, use the method of regular script.
>
> 臨帖須運以我意，參昔人之各異，以求其同，如諸名家各臨《蘭亭》，絶無同者，其異處各由天性，其同處則傳自右軍。以此求之，思過半矣。又正書用行草意，行草用正書法。[326]

Jiang objected to copying models too closely, and like scholars of the

[324] Hummel. 1943. *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing period*, 199.

[325] Reproduced, for example, in Feng Wu 馮武 (1627-ca. 1707) *Shufa zhengchuan* 書法正傳. Feng claims Chen's *Hanlin yaojue* and Li Puguang's "eight methods" (i.e. *Xue'an ziyao*), mentioned in chapter 2, were among the best sources available for studying calligraphy and were thus reproduced in his collection of standard calligraphy. [1750?] *Shufa zhengchuan,* fan lie, 1a.

[326] Chen. 1874. *Yongjianzhai biji*, juan 5, 3a-3b.

early Qing, also condemned unbridled and ahistorical innovation, a flaw often perceived in works from the Ming dynasty. The early Qing critic Feng Ban 馮班 (1602-1671), for example, expressed his concern about applying recent methods to ancient script types because the method had a direct impact on what was being learned. How something was studied was far more critical than the calligraphy model under scrutiny.[327] That is why calligraphers like Wen Zhengming and even Zhao Mengfu came under fire for their rendering of seal script that was too neat and imposed methods from regular script on ancient forms. Thus, dating compositional methods—in essence, the filters through which calligraphers perceived script—became an important task for scholars who were concerned with historical progression. In keeping with this trend, Jiang Heng pinpoints the origin of the "nine palaces" to the Tang dynasty:

> The calligraphy of people from the Wei and Jin dynasties was natural, unrestrained and leisurely. The people of the Tang always relied on method. Thus, there was the "nine palaces" method, which divided [characters] into center, left, right, upper and lower segments by means of borderlines. This allowed students to easily make progress. I suspect that it qualifies as what is called an orally transmitted formula.
>
> 魏晉人書天然宕逸，唐人專用法。遂有九宮，分中左右上下界畫，使學者易趨。竊疑所謂口授訣卽此也。[328]

For Jiang Heng, the "nine palaces" method was conceived as an aid for students, transmitted from a master to his followers during the Tang dynasty. Although Dong Qichang had praised the evenness of Tang calligraphy, he had made no claims to tie the method to a dynasty. Jiang then expounds on his theory of an "orally transmitted formula" (*koushou jue* 口授訣) by proposing four terms of his own to aid composition: Centering (*zhong* 中), regularity (*zheng* 正), spirit (*ling* 靈) and stillness (*jing* 靜). His instructions for these four principles are provided together with the names of steles by Tang dynasty calligraphers that he believes students should consult, and also serve as visual proof of his proposed principles. Jiang Heng's attempt to recover ancient principles thus relies on his observation of selected steles from the specific period. This "see-for-yourself" approach is so central to Jiang Heng's

[327] Bai. 2003. *Fu Shan's World,* 196-198.
[328] Chen. 1874. *Yongjianzhai biji*, juan 5, 2b.

presentation of the principles that for the last one, "stillness," he simply tells the reader that only someone who is thoroughly familiar with the specific steles will comprehend this principle. He claims that the calligraphy by scholars from the Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties lacked stillness, but provides no further instructions or explanation of the concept.

What began with Jiang Heng's dating of the method and somewhat vague comments about the use of the grid was expanded by his son, Jiang Ji 蔣驥 (1714-1787), who was instructed in calligraphy by his father. Jiang devoted an entire treatise to explicating the method: *New Approach to the Nine Palaces* (*Jiugong xinshi* 九宮新式). The treatise, posthumously re-published by his son in 1794, is written in plain language and provides four graphs of new approaches to the "nine palaces." The treatise opens with an explanation of these graphs, first outlining the use and function of the grid. Jiang praises it as being flexible and adaptable to any situation, including both small and large characters and says it can be used anywhere, at any time, while also warning students not to stray from it. He proceeds with an explanation of its historical development which begins with the Tang dynasty. This was doubtless derived from his father's beliefs, but he then jumps ahead to the Yuan dynasty to acknowledge Chen Yizeng's contribution in explaining how it should be used, and jumps again to the Qing dynasty to praise his father's efforts in transmitting it. He suggests that the old method has actually been improved:

> The old system of the nine palaces was made with sections counting nine by nine (81 square segments), which established a very rigorous and accurate method, but easily dazzled the eyes of beginners. Today, the way to partition the nine palaces is to insert dividing lines in the shape of the character *shi* [十, i.e. a cross] within each of the nine palaces, creating 36 square segments. This method aims at evenly decreasing the number of segments. It is easier to understand and makes the system clearer. I took special care to make these drawings and stored them at our home school in order to transmit [the method].
>
> 然舊制九宮，作九九之數。雖去立法精嚴，初學者易於眩目。令分九宮，每宮中界十字，為三十六格。此法于均方減數之旨，簡易明白，繩墨子然。特繪之家塾，以遺後人云爾。[329]

[329] Jiang. 1794. *Jiangshi youyi milu jiuzhong*, juan shang, Jiugong xinshi, 1a-1b.

He continues to explain how the new method can be adapted according to the students' needs. For characters that are elongated, the two columns of segments on the outer sides can be left blank. For characters that are squat, the student should simply avoid the two rows of segments at the top and bottom, while for small characters and square-shaped characters, one can use the second and most central inner squares formed by the segments as reference [Fig. 4.5]. Thus, when practicing a style of calligraphy, the student can keep these shortcuts in mind for the perfect placement and sizing of characters with varying structures.

The lower number of segments and the selective use of segments were the two main innovations of Jiang Ji's "nine palaces." He closes his comments on the graphs by repeating some of Chen Yicheng's suggestions, such as the use of the grid to resize characters. Jiang presents one of Chen's suggestions, however, in a slightly altered form. While Chen referred to models that reproduced the 540 components from Xu Shen's *Explanation of Graphs* without making specific distinctions, Jiang suggests that students should copy these and explicitly says that doing so goes beyond using model letters (*tie*). The distinction between model letters and inscriptions from steles (*bei* 碑), which was an ongoing debate when Jiang published his work, must have prompted him to point out that there were other sources worth copying beyond model letters. One author who produced reference works that studied and reproduced earlier rubbings of the 540 components was Jiang's contemporary, Wu Zhao 吳照 (fl. 1786-1794), who published two volumes on the subject in 1786 and 1792.[330] Jiang Ji's son also wrote a brief essay on the components and their development and produced a chart that used the categories of the "three realms" (heaven, earth, man) to classify them.[331] This organized categorization of the components and derivative characters helped students memorize these connections and the visual components of seal script. A similar emphasis on memory is evident in his discussion of the "nine palaces," which is also employed to help students master seal script and understand the origin of Chinese writing.

Jiang Ji appends a discussion of important tips for beginners to the end of his comments on the "nine palaces." He summarizes lessons learned from his father and cites additional sources to explain how to use the brush and

[330] Wu. 1786. *Shuowen pianpang kao,* and Wu. 1792. *Shuowen ziyuan kaolue.* The most influential work on Xu Shen's book, however, was Duan Yucai's multi-volume commentary, published in 1813-15.

[331] Jiang. 1794. *Jiangshi youyi milu jiuzhong,* juan 2, Shuowen ziyuan biao.

admonish the student about incorrect postures, also commenting on composition and strokes. Close to the end of the discussion, he returns to the "nine palaces" to assure readers that even the dullest mind can benefit from using this method.

> If a beginner relies on the "nine palaces" method to copy five to ten characters daily, paying attention that the manner of the dots and strokes does not deviate by the slightest, then a clever person will comprehend its principle within less than a hundred days. Even a dull-minded person will, if disciplined, easily make progress. If the strokes are numerous, make the blank spaces even; if the strokes are few, be guided by the intention. Even if strokes are numerous, there will still be empty areas within the palaces; one who is capable can then also be guided by intention. Thus, all sections that are empty will be filled, and all sections that are crowded will have open space. By adjusting the voids and the filled areas, everything will be appropriate.
>
> When the ancients studied calligraphy, they took the composition and variations of the components from Xu Shen's *Explanation of Graphs* as reference and in their hearts became thoroughly familiar with them. It was like a carpenter building a house. The rafters and beams are first cut and sanded, and then the structure of the hall can be put together. As soon as one has succeeded [to grasp] this method, it will be the greatest shortcut.

> 初學者每日依九宮法學五字或十字，點畫體勢須使毫髮不爽，智者不待百日可解其理，即質魯者亦磨礪易進也。筆劃多者，使其佈白停習。筆劃少者，運用意思。蓋筆劃雖多，宮分仍有虛處，蓋會者能以意運之，則虛處皆實，實處皆虛，虛盈伸縮，無不合宜矣。古人學書，將許氏《說文》偏旁字樣，分佈開合，熟悉胸中，如梓人作室，榱桷櫨梁先為斫削，則堂構湊合即成，此法最是捷徑。[332]

Here, Jiang emphasizes the role of memorization in the study of calligraphy, which goes beyond learning the correct shape of strokes. He claims it is as vital as the carpenter's skill to put together the wooden structure of a building. What is most striking, however, is that Jiang connects the pedagogical efficacy of the "nine palaces" to Chen's comment on the method as a tool to learn seal script from rubbings. The grid's function to facilitate memorization should help the student internalize the composition

[332] Jiang. 1794. *Jiangshi youyi milu jiuzhong*, juan shang, Jiugong xinshi, 4b-5a.

and the unfamiliar shapes of seal script. The student must memorize the unique qualities of seal script in order to develop their calligraphic skills.

In fact, Jiang implies that seal script constitutes basic knowledge that must be acquired when studying character composition, and that there is no better method to tackle this than with the "nine palaces." The associations of the pedagogical method of the "nine palaces" with models that are not included in the model letter tradition begin with Jiang. This emphasis on seal script is not present in Chen's original comment, but resonates with the intellectual and esthetic trends of the Qianlong period.

Since the mid-eighteenth century, it had become more common for calligraphers to openly reject the model letter tradition. Especially in Yangzhou 揚州, painters such as Jin Nong 金農 (1687-1763) began to explore the esthetic appeal of carved calligraphy in their inscriptions.[333] Deng Shiru 鄧石如 (1743-1805), known for his seal script, is said to have copied Xu Shen's *Explanation of Graphs* twenty times within six months, and Jin Nong stated in a poem that when it came to learning calligraphy, he refused to be a slave. He claimed: "The stone slab from Mount Hua is my teacher."[334] It had become increasingly common even for beginners to learn calligraphy by copying models that did not come from the model letter tradition. Thus, seal script and clerical script had become essential parts of a students' curriculum. Jiang Ji's son, Jiang He 蔣和 (fl. 1782-1794) also advocated that students start by learning seal and clerical in order to understand later scripts.[335] The need to teach calligraphy to children through seal script became so ingrained and accepted that later pedagogical books, such as the 1838 *Primer on Graphs and Characters* (*Wenzi mengqiu* 文字蒙求) and the 1849 *Copy-Book of Collected Characters from the Thirteen Classics* (*Shisan jing jizi moben* 十三經集子摹本), introduced seal script characters together with regular script, having them function as a visual aid for understanding the origin of characters.[336]

Jiang He followed his father and grandfather in disseminating the "nine palaces" grid. In 1782 he republished his father's treatise under the title *The*

[333] For a more detailed account on the work of Yangzhou calligraphers, see Huang. 2012. "Calligraphic Style in Eighteenth-Century Yangzhou."
[334] Jin. [1747.] *Dongxin xiansheng xuji,* juan 1, 12b. On Deng's practices for learning ancient scripts, see Ho. 2012. "Calligraphy of the Mid to Late Qing Epigraphic School," 306, or Ledderhose. 1970. *Die Siegelschrift (Chuan-Shu) in der Ch'ing-Zeit*, 70-71. A stylistic reading of Deng's calligraphy can also be found in Ledderose. 1998. "Calligraphy at the Close of the Chinese Empire."
[335] Jaing. 1989. *Xizi mijue*, 96-97.
[336] For an image of the *Shisan jing jizi moben*, see Yu. 2012. "Character Recognition," 22.

Newly Established "Nine Palaces" Grid (*Chongding jiugong ge* 重定九宮格), but reformulated his father's text and provided additional examples.[337] He praised the new "nine palaces" method for making it easier to focus on the characters without becoming mesmerized by the grid, as had been the case with the traditional method formulated by Chen. However, he suggests that the student can simplify the grid even further, without subdividing it into Jiang Ji's 36 sections, and still achieve accuracy.[338] He adds a note to the end of the text, explaining that he has boiled the method down to its essence, intending it to aid the beginner. He assures the student that simply by copying repeatedly and relying on the "nine palaces" method, he will make great strides. Despite these small adjustments, Jiang He stays close to his father's approach in the republished treatise. It is only in his own texts that Jiang He's innovations for the simplified grid are made explicit.

Jiang continued to develop his father's approach, but began to depart from his father's premises. In the essay titled "Complete Graph of Dots and Strokes" (*Dianhua quantu* 點畫全圖), the grid is no longer reserved for the composition of individual characters or their balance within written texts, nor does his discussion emphasize the use of the grid for seal script. He suggests that not every character requires a grid with nine palaces or sections, and at the same time begins to use grids to section individual strokes or common components. For example, he introduces a four-squared grid with additional diagonals connecting the centers of the upper and side borders of the square. This grid, he claims, is enough to achieve balance for characters that have similar falling diagonals in their composition, such as *xia* 下 or *he* 合 [Fig. 4.6]. Another example is his adaptation of the nine-squared grid to create guiding lines that move away from the corners of the central square toward the outer corners of the grid, used for characters that are broad at the top and bottom, like *feng* 風.[339] He encases certain components, like the three dots for water 氵, within an elongated grid of two by four sections, explaining their balance with terms that resemble those used for the "nine palaces" method [Fig. 4.7]. His partitioning of strokes is not limited to square segments, and several graphs that cut up strokes into rectangular sections illustrate the essay to demonstrate their desirable proportions. Most striking, however, is that he provides written instructions on how the brush should move for every

[337] *Shufa zhengzong* 書法正宗 was the original title, later republished as *Xizi mijue* 習字秘訣.
[338] Jiang. 1989. *Xizi mijue*, 89.
[339] Jiang. 1989. *Xizi mijue*, 44.

different section, thus also segmenting the movement of the hand and brush.[340]

All three members of the Jiang family adopted the grid as a basic tool for teaching children—one that will help the student internalize compositions and components—and not merely as a tool for copying. This use of the grid is often mentioned in pedagogical texts of the early-to-mid 19th century, such as those by Zhou Xinglian 周星連 (ca. 1816-1878), Yao Mengqi 姚孟起 (fl. 1881) and Wei Xizeng 魏錫曾 (fl. 1863-1882). Wei, for example, published his instructions for children under the title *First Things to Hear on Studying Calligraphy* (*Shuxue xuwen* 書學緒聞) He presents the grid as a tool for children above the age of ten to study the inner composition of characters. He suggests using a sheet of oiled paper to allow the tracing of the characters from a model and to apply a red grid over the traced characters. Then the student can playfully explore the composition within the grid on a separate sheet.[341] This next generation of scholars who discussed the "nine palaces" cast off the complex grids that required students to use more than nine segments, following Jiang He's simplified approach.

While Jiang He moves away from the discussion of steles, he claims to be transmitting the method developed by his father and grandfather, who strove to expound the proper calligraphic standards of the Tang dynasty.[342] The "nine palaces" grid became a method closely tied to the calligraphic expertise of the Jiang family and their understanding of the historical development of script. Both Jiang Heng and Jiang Ji strove to broaden the spectrum of what could be copied by the student. By changing what was to be seen within the grid, they also changed what should be remembered—opening up a new pedagogical path for calligraphy.

Even though each member provided revised instructions on how to use the grid, their method was indebted to Chen Yizeng's—focusing on individual characters and regulating internal composition—and they continued this earlier tradition. The Jiangs' discussion of the "nine palaces" shows that they were aware of both the historical development of script and of the transmission of calligraphic method.

Despite their innovations, the views of the Jiangs appear tame when compared to those of their slightly younger contemporaries, who criticized all model letters and disparaged Dong Qichang's calligraphy for being too elegant

[340] Jiang. 1989. *Xizi mijue*, 30; 34. For a detailed description of movements, see *Xizi mijue*, 23.
[341] Cui. 2011. *Ming Qing shulun ji*, 1273.
[342] Jiang. 1989. *Xizi mijue*, 2-3.

and tidy. The most significant changes introduced to the use of the grid occurred as part of ongoing intellectual debates about scholarship.[343] Late Qing scholars who brought the "nine-palaces" grid into their debates on calligraphy appropriated the method to make new claims about its historical origin that corresponded to their ambitious theories about empirical knowledge.

Challenging the Transmitted Method

The trend of evidential scholarship that motivated scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to gather ancient stele rubbings for study led to a repurposing of the grid that went beyond a focus on seal script and the search for the origin of script. One scholar in particular, Bao Shichen 包世臣 (1775–1853), emphasized the relevance of the "great nine palaces" to challenge the transmitted use of the method and to trace its origin back to a pre-dynastic period. Unlike the Jiangs, Bao did not seek to promote regularity in script. He used the grid to challenge the authority of past canons and shape the future developments of calligraphy.

A heated debate in favor of a distinction between the traditions of model letters and stele inscriptions had been going on for some time before it was first theorized by Ruan Yuan in 1823. As mentioned above, Ruan Yuan was one of the many philology enthusiasts who published collections of newly discovered inscriptions.[344] His most influential writings, however, were two essays published in 1823, titled "On the Northern and Southern Schools of Calligraphy" (*Nan bei shupai lun* 南北書派論) and "On Steles in the North and Model Letters in the South" (*Bei bei nan tie lun* 北碑南帖論). In these texts, he created a framework to dichotomize two traditions in terms of the "southern and northern schools" of calligraphy.[345] Ruan Yuan argued that these distinct schools of calligraphy were branches of a linage that had split

[343] Zhou discussed the grid as a tool for the inner composition of characters and copying in a short note in his *Linchi guanjian* 臨池管見. Yao, of whom very little is known, wrote a treatise titled *Zixue yican* 字學臆參, in which he mentions the method. All three treatises are reproduced in Cui. 2011. *Ming Qing shulun ji*, 1211-1220; 1271-1273; 1275-1283.

[344] Several Qing discoveries are listed in the notes of Ledderose's translation of Ruan Yuan's essays. See Ledderhose. 1970. *Die Siegelschrift (Chuan-Shu) in der Ch'ing-Zeit,* especially notes on pages 173-174.

[345] In his published doctoral thesis, Ledderose provides a full translation of both essays with commentary in German. Ledderhose. 1970. *Die Siegelschrift (Chuan-Shu) in der Ch'ing-Zeit*, 155-211.

during the Han dynasty. The northern school was represented by writings on steles, while the southern school, which he disparaged as corrupt, embodied the stiffened esthetic of carved and re-carved model letters. According to Ruan, the decline of calligraphy began during the Tang dynasty, especially due to Tang Taizong's 唐太宗 (r. 626-649) admiration of Wang Xizhi's style, but the southern school only came to dominate during the Song dynasty, when model letters were carved by the court and widely disseminated. Ruan Yuan reserved his highest praise for the steles and inscriptions of the Northern Wei dynasty because they, he claimed, retained the original intention of ancient script. Despite being mostly written in regular script, Northern Wei steles were described as reminiscent of the earlier clerical script.[346]

Following Ruan's rendering of the development of calligraphic styles as a north-south dichotomy, the inscriptions from the northern dynasties, usually written by unidentified calligraphers, began to receive the most attention from Qing scholars.[347] Ruan Yuan also argued in his second essay that anonymous writers of the Jin dynasty, such as simple potters who made roof tiles, did not follow the whims of fashion, and thus did not corrupt the style of their writing with that of Wang Xizhi's *Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Gathering*.[348] Accepting this line of reasoning, many scholars began to value the work of anonymous inscription carvers over that of transmitted model letters by famous scholars, contributing to the creation of a new orthodoxy of calligraphy.[349]

The next scholar to comment on the uses of the "nine palaces" was a contemporary of both Ruan Yuan and Jiang He. Bao Shichen,[350] who helped disseminate the method among scholars of epigraphy, was the student of the famous seal and clerical script master Deng Shiru. For most of his life, Bao did not hold an official position, but was often tasked with special assignments by

[346] For a description of the stylistic features of the calligraphy on steles of the Northern Wei, see Lu. 1999. "Calligraphy of Stone Engravings in Northern Wei Loyang."

[347] For an account on how Zhao Zhiqian became obsessed with steles from the northern dynasties after reading Ruan Yuan's work, see Ho. 2012. "Calligraphy of the Mid to Late Qing Epigraphic School," 317.

[348] Ledderhose. 1970. *Die Siegelschrift (Chuan-Shu) in der Ch'ing-Zeit*, 186.

[349] Bai. 2003. *Fu Shan's World*, 260.

[350] The traditional dates for Bao Shichen are 1775–1855. One inscription by a close friend on a posthumous portrait of Bao reads: "...during the winter of the *guichou* year [1853], when Juanweng was seventy-nine *sui*, he passed away in Haizhou" (癸丑冬李，倦翁年七十九，殤於海州). This clearly indicates that Bao died in 1853. An inscription written by a close friend may be assumed to be more reliable than later accounts. See Ruitenbeek. 2017. *Faces of China*, 307 n243.

men who served the government. Despite not having an official appointment, Bao engaged the intellectual debates of his time and had many close ties to officials and scholars. During the late Qing, the gathering of cliques became a common practice for scholars. They sought to be mentored on practical subjects, such as antiquarian calligraphy and art practice, which were not addressed by the traditional curriculum, and found their mentors and teachers outside of the traditional teaching system. Looser social connections and casual networks characterized the environment in which scholarship was conducted.[351]

Bao is now best known for his hands-on attitude to solving social and economic problems, yet his contribution to the field of calligraphy should not be underestimated.[352] Bao's own calligraphy was not especially innovative, but his theories on the practice and development of calligraphy were widely read by his contemporaries and by later generations.[353] His most influential work was *Two Oars for the Boat of Art* (*Yizhou shuangji* 藝舟雙楫), in which he collected notes on calligraphy and ancient inscriptions, as well as on literature. This book, first published in 1846 and reprinted in 1851, makes it clear that he was indebted to Ruan Yuan's analysis of the two schools of calligraphy. Bao developed the theory even further, however. Via Bao, the rejection of Wang Xizhi's style and endorsement of inscription from the northern dynasties, and specifically from the Northern Wei, moved from a general framework to a specific and more concrete study program. One important contribution was Bao's record of the study process of his master, Deng Shiru, hailed as the first calligrapher to take Ruan Yuan's theories to heart and develop his calligraphy according to the northern style. Deng's fondness for ancient scripts did not conflict with the grid pattern and regular compositions. In fact, a grid layout was often reproduced in his work and influenced later calligraphers.[354] By listing all the proper models his master had used and copied, Bao set a curriculum for students of seal and clerical script, which no doubt contributed to the establishment of a new canon and stylistic direction.[355] Bao's work not only listed the works Deng Shiru had copied, but also recorded esthetic evaluations of some of the inscriptions. For example, Bao was the first scholar to comment on three inscriptions from the

[351] Brown. 2011. *Pastimes*, 39-40.
[352] For a clear description of Bao's practical orientation, see Rowe. 2014. "Bao Shichen and Agrarian Reform in Early Nineteenth-Century China."
[353] Ye. 2005. *Beixue xiansheng*, 45-88.
[354] Ledderose. 1998. "Calligraphy at the Close of the Chinese Empire," 200-204.
[355] Ledderhose. 1970. *Die Siegelschrift (Chuan-Shu) in der Ch'ing-Zeit*, 82.

Longmen grottoes, after having visited them in person in 1819.[356]

In *Two Oars for the Boat of Art*, Bao claims that he himself also learned calligraphy by using the "nine palaces" method. The text he first copied in his youth was the renowned "Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Gathering." He describes how he used the method to transfer the characters from the model, practicing four characters each day and copying each character over a hundred times in a row until they resembled the model.[357] In the section dedicated to calligraphy, he goes into detail on how the model should be used. Like Jiang Ji, he believes a student should first learn the basic strokes before composing characters. Therefore, he dedicates the first part of his discussion on calligraphy to the "eight methods" and the movements of the brush for each type of stroke. His discussion of the "nine palaces," is worth quoting in full because it illustrates the transition from the customary use of the grid to what Bao terms the "great nine palaces":

> When it comes to characters, there is the nine palaces [method]. For the nine palaces, one makes a square grid for each character. The outer borders are much thicker, while the inner borders of the grid are drawn with thin lines in the shape of the character *jing* 井. It is used to evenly distribute the dots and strokes.
>
> Every character, no matter if its constitution is sparse or dense, tilted or straight, will have a spot in which its spiritual vitality gathers and concentrates. This occurs in the central palace of the character. It may be that the central palace is characterized by filling strokes, but also by empty blanks. Either way, it must be where the spiritual vitality of the character is concentrated, and the arrangement [of the strokes] should be according to the central palace within the grid. Only then should the character's head, eyes, arms and legs be distributed in the eight palaces on the sides. This way, what is long or short, filled or blank, and what is above or below, left or right, will all be in concordance.
>
> Within three columns, the adjacent nine characters also form the 'great nine palaces'. The character in the center is the central palace, and it must govern over the eight characters above, below and on the sides. These eight characters must all be oriented towards it in a manner

[356] McNair. 2007. *Donors of Longmen*, 164. While Bao Shichen seems to have been the first to comment on the inscriptions, Jin Nong already commented on the sculptures at Longmen. Hay. 1999.
"Culture, Ethnicity, and Empire in the Work of Two Eighteenth-Century 'Eccentric' Artists," 211-212.

[357] Bao. 1846. *Yizhou Shuangji*, juan 5, 1b.

of reverence, bowing to it, as if moving their gaze toward the central character. When both the great and the small palaces are satisfactorily accomplished, then there will be a harmonic beauty in the upward and downward curvatures, and the marvelous appeal will emerge in its fullest.

The "nine palaces" were first discussed during the Song dynasty. The method was used for charting out characters while maintaining dimensions, and spoken of only in terms of scaling down characters from old models. They did not know how to seek proper arrangement within the character itself, and thus, since the Song, calligraphers have not been able to follow the nine palaces [method].

Genuine stone-carved calligraphy from the two Jin dynasties [Western and Eastern, 266-420] has not been transmitted. The steles from the northern Wei dynasty and the Southern Liang I have seen amount to dozens or hundreds. I have poured my heart into examining them and comprehended them, thus attaining the method of both great and small nine palaces. Based on it I evaluated the earlier stone-carved writings in seal script and clerical script from the Zhou, Qin, Han, Wei and both Jin dynasties that are still extant, and there was none that was not consistent with it. It becomes clear that Zhong Yu and Wang Xizhi invested their efforts into it.

Among the rubbings that circulate today, such as the "Victory Felicitations," "Scripture of the Yellow Court", "Encomium on a Portrait of Dongfang Shuo", "Spirit of the Luo", none has horizontal grid lines, yet the layout of every character is wonderfully unrestrained, and, at the same time, thoroughly planned. Truly, when the entire text is taken together, it forms the large nine palaces. Like the writing on the bronze bells and tripods of the three dynasties [Xia, Shang and Western Zhou], their running script, such as that of the "Orchid Pavilion", "Yu Run," "White Horse," "Pursuing," "Farewell," "Wuxing," "Traveling Outside" and other models, presents myriad transformations of fish and dragons, yet conforms to rules, not deviating in the slightest.[358]

During the Tang dynasty, the knowledge and talent of calligraphers did not match that of the ancients. Thus, their stone-carved running script always has horizontal grid lines. Among them, those who studied the nine palaces were Xu Hao 徐浩 [703-782], Li Cai 李邕 [678-747], and Zhang Congshen 張從申 [fl. 766-779]; these three were the ones closest to it. Of all of them transmitted writings exist. I

[358] The text provides a weight measure that took 10 grains of millet as standard to describe the discrepancies, which can thus be understood as tiny.

scrutinized and examined them carefully and found they can be trusted to have no flaws.

字有九宮。九宮者，每字為方格，外界極肥，格內用細畫界一井字，以均布其點畫也。凡字無論疏密斜正，必有精神挽結之處，是爲字之中宮。然中宮有在實畫，有在虛白，必審其字之精神所注，而安置於格內之中宮。然後以其字之頭目手足分布于旁之八宮，則隨其長短虛實而上下左右皆相得矣。每三行相並至九字，又爲大九宮。其中一字卽為中宮，必須統攝上下四旁之八字，而八字皆有拱揖朝向之勢，逐字移看。大小兩中宮皆得圓滿，則俯仰映帶，奇趣橫出已。九宮之說始見于宋，蓋以尺寸算字，專為移縮古帖而說，不知求條理於本字，故自宋以來書家，未有能合九宮者也。兩晉眞書碑版，不傳于世，余以所見北魏南梁之碑數十百種悉心參悟，而得大小兩九宮之法，上推之周秦漢魏兩晉篆分碑版存于世者，則莫不合於此，其為鍾、王專力可知也。世所行《賀捷》《黃庭》《畫贊》《洛神》等帖，皆無橫格，然每字布勢，奇縱周緻，實合通篇而爲大九宮。如三代鍾鼎文字，其行書如《蘭亭》《玉潤》《白騎》《追尋》《違遠》《吳興》《外出》等帖，魚龍百變而按以矩矱，不差累忝。降及唐賢，自知才力不及古人，故行書碑版皆有橫格。就中九宮之學，徐會稽、李北海、張郎中三家為尤密，傳書俱在，潛精按驗，信其不謬也。[359]

Although Bao's account resembles Chen Yizeng's description of the grid in the beginning, it later becomes clear that the connection of the method with ancient steles and their layout, which was insinuated by Jiang Ji, is represented as an undisputable truth by Bao. His description of the grid shifts the focus to the layout of the characters on the writing surface, and based on this approach, he is able to argue that the principle of the "nine palaces" was present even in ancient inscriptions and bronzes. Ruan Yuan's idealization of calligraphy that predated the Tang is clearly evident in the text. Bao perceives the transmitted comments of "Song scholars"—most likely a reference to Chen's *Essential Formula of the Hanlin Academy*—as a reduction of the actual method.

Bao's questioning of methods proposed by Song scholars was typical for late Qing scholarship. Qing evidential scholars often sought to confront

[359] Bao. 1846. *Yizhou Shuangji*, juan 12, 9b-10b.

transmitted ideas that lacked objectivity and obscured ancient teachings.[360] Like his fellow researchers, Bao strove to return to these ancient teachings by studying the earliest sources available. The information he gathered from the empirical study of ancient rubbings and steles, he claims, has a much higher value and is much more reliable than the transmitted texts by these misguided calligraphers. Thus, he is able to discard the assumption that the "nine palaces" method was created during the Tang, and pushes its use back to the Zhou dynasty (1046-256 BCE), firmly connecting it to antiquity and the ancient principles of writing. Other scholars also commented on the grid pattern on steles, justifying Bao's association of the method with ancient inscriptions.[361] Bao Shichen continues his discussion with several quotes by ancient calligraphers to prove that they valued vigor and strength in their writing, ending the section with a warning to students: All calligraphers should avoid the frailty of Dong Qichang's writing as well as the disarray of Su Shi's, who both failed to reach the ancients because they did not properly study the "nine palaces."[362]

The grid was thus upgraded from a tool for copying rubbings of steles and model letters to the key to understanding ancient writing principles. Bao used the "great nine palaces" to questioned two traditions that the Jiangs had supported. First, the main function of the grid was no longer to copy previous models, and second, Song scholars should not receive any credit for their erroneous description of the method. Questioning the authority behind transmitted knowledge had been a key strategy employed by Qing evidential scholars.[363] By denying the authority of Song scholars, Bao is able to introduce his own interpretation of how the "nine palaces" should be used and what their purpose was. Bao claims authority to refashion the "nine palaces" through his direct study of ancient steles and the dating of the method to pre-imperial times. He can thus distance himself from the regulated script of Tang masters and later models.

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[360] Elman. 1984. *From Philosophy to Philology*, 29-32.

[361] Several entries in catalogues of inscriptions record the use of a grid on steles and bronze objects, showing that scholars paid attention to this feature. One of these comments was recorded by Gu Yanwu (1613 – 1682), translated in McNair. 2007. *Donors of Longmen*, 162. One later scholar, Ye Changchi 葉鞠裳 (1849-1917) even dedicated a comment to the matter. His discussion "On the Square Grid on Steles" is recorded in the *Miscellany of Petty Matters of the Qing* (*Qingbai leichao* 清稗類鈔). He claims, for example, that before the Tang dynasty, all good steles had square grids, but that the pattern on many had vanished due to wear and repeated rubbing. Xu. 1917. *Qingbai leichao,* jianshang lei (72), 155.

[362] Bao. 1846. *Yizhou Shuangji*, juan 12, 11b.

[363] Stumm. 2020. "Conceptualizing Authorship in Late Imperial Chinese Philology," 165.

Bao could not have made the centrality of the method in refashioning writing practices more explicit, and this left its mark on discourses about calligraphy. Several treatises published by epigraphy enthusiasts in the years that followed Bao's bold claims often mentioned the "nine palaces."[364] In accordance with his master's high esteem of the grid, Bao's student Wu Xizai 吳熙載 (1799-1870) claimed to have combined the intention behind the ancients' "eight methods" with that of the "nine palaces" in a description of his own accomplishments.[365] In 1871, Chen Jieqi 陳介祺 (1813-1894) wrote the *Formula for Practicing Characters* (*Xizi jue* 習字訣), in which he laid out a calligraphy curriculum for his grandson. After praising the overall visual composition of inscriptions on ancient bronzes, he claimed that,

> up to the regular script of Zhong [Yu] and Wang [Xizhi], later people have taken the "nine palaces" to pursue it [i.e the overall composition]. It means every nine characters—three characters in a row by three characters in each column—are all connected. From the Tang dynasty onwards, writing could no longer follow that [principle], let alone the overall composition [of bronze inscriptions].
>
> 至鍾、王楷法，後人以九宮求之，謂凡縱三橫三九字習聯貫，唐以來書即不能如此，無論大段矣。[366]

Chen Jieqi mirrored Bao's views in both his disapproval of Tang calligraphy and in his high esteem for the "nine palaces," which he deemed worthy of transmitting to his grandson.

The most noteworthy individual who chose to discuss the "nine palaces" because of Bao Shichen was Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927). Kang's comment on the grid was published in his 1889 volume *The Extended Pair of Oars for the Boat of Art* (*Guang Yizhou shuangji* 廣藝舟雙楫), which was conceived as a response to Bao's volume. Kang's work has been described as an unprecedented attempt to link calligraphy with other socio-historical phenomena, including politics. His view that "the way of calligraphy and the way of government are similarly liable to change" was the guiding motto behind his theories. He strove to show that changes in calligraphy were not

[364] Examples that quote Bao's text are common, such as in Zhen. 1908. *Guochao shuren jilüe*, juan 8, 12a-12b.
[365] Zhao. 1977. *Qingshi gao*, juan 503, yishu zhuan 2, 5a.
[366] Cui. 2011. *Ming Qing shulun ji*, 1207-1208.

the outcome of individual style, but grew "from the collective wisdom of practitioners."[367] In *The Extended Pair of Oars,* Kang provides a list of rubbings that should be acquired and copied by the student.[368] In his short comment on the "nine palaces" it is clear that the models he has in mind are ancient inscriptions:

> When learning calligraphy, it is appropriate to use the "nine palaces" grid to copy it. One should enhance the length and thickness [of the strokes], exhaust the momentum, and give it free reign. All rubbings of writings and scriptures carved in stone will have deficient areas. Copy them by enhancing them, and thus completely attain the intention of the ancient's original calligraphy.
>
> 學書宜用九宮格摹之。當長肥加倍盡其筆勢而縱之。蓋凡書經刻石摹搨，必有瘦損加倍臨之乃僅得。[369]

Given the widespread use of the grid, Kang spares himself the trouble of explaining how it should be used, confirming and responding to Bao's theory of a large and small nine-palaces grid in his work instead.[370] The focus of this specific comment is the materiality of the stone and the influence it has on the rubbings that are used as models. It is interesting to note, however, that while he urges students to take ancient inscriptions as models, they are free to "enhance" what is seen in an attempt to bring the ancient writing to life, which can be achieved by using the grid. This comment can be regarded as parallel to Kang's oft-repeated ideas about not being restricted by the model and not limiting oneself to only a few models.

In line with Ruan Yuan's theory, Kang emphasized the use of inscriptions by anonymous hands, and later claimed that studying one hundred rubbings was the minimum for a student of calligraphy, defending a "more is more" approach to copying. Kang went as far as to claim that "it is better to buy a large number of stone rubbings than to seek teachers."[371] Such a declaration in favour of the personal inspection of steles over the guidance

[367] Wong. 2016. *The Other Kang Youwei*, 11-12.
[368] A translation with images for each rubbing referred to in Kang's text has been published by Wang and Kang. 2017. *The Mirror of Writing*.
[369] Kang. [1889]. *Guang Yizhou Shuangji*, juan 5, 14a.
[370] Kang. [1889]. *Guang Yizhou Shuangji*, juan 5, 8b-9a.
[371] Wang and Kang. 2017. *The Mirror of Writing*, 5-6. Bai has written a wonderful commentary on the prices of rubbings during the Qing. 2017. "Circulation of Rubbings and the Late-Qing Art and Scholarship," 164-172.

of a so-called “erudite” went hand in hand with his political push for educational reforms.

The “nine palaces” grid, which was initially conceived as method for meticulously copying masterworks and developed for this purpose into the Qing dynasty, was gradually altered and repurposed by late Qing scholars to serve new pedagogical functions. They envisioned it as a tool for creating relative balance between characters and for enhancing the emaciated writings of the past. By creating a link between the grid and antiquity, reformers like Bao and Kang were able to put the old method to use in their efforts to change the trajectory of the development of calligraphy. As their new standards challenged the source of authority of the method and shifted the attention of the student to anonymous calligraphy of craftsmen, they hoped to direct how future generations would learn and teach.

Conclusion

The “nine palaces” grid became an increasingly common tool for learning and memorizing calligraphic compositions from the time it was first recorded during the Yuan dynasty. Calligraphers were generally quicker to embrace ideas about stylistic changes than to adopt those changes in practice. Bai makes this case with the example of Fu Shan 傅山 (1607-1684), who lived during the Ming-Qing transition and carried over many stylistic features of Ming calligraphy into the Qing, even after substantial changes in his intellectual environment and stance occurred.[372] Ledderose makes a similar claim about Bao Shichen, who only came in contact with Deng Shiru late in his life and was quick to adapt his theories, but not his calligraphy. The case of the “nine palaces” serves to show that changes in pedagogical practices followed similar tendencies.[373] The three generations of the Jiang family illustrate how a pedagogical method and its practice were continuously transmitted. Although each member introduced changes to how the method should be used, the practice itself was sustained.

Even Bao Shichen and Kang Youwei, who sought to radically alter the direction calligraphy should take, perpetuated the method by adapting it to

[372] Bai. 2003. *Fu Shan's World*, 129.

[373] Ledderose suggests that because Bao met Deng Shiru late in his life—in 1802—it might have been too late for Bao to change his writing style. His theories, on the other hand, were avant-garde and quickly adapted to the input from his master. Ledderhose. 1970. *Die Siegelschrift (Chuan-Shu) in der Ch’ing-Zeit,* 84 n175.

their needs and making new claims about its origin. They must have been aware that education and habits have a lingering influence on how calligraphy develops.[374] Kang's suggestions to choose rubbings over selecting a teacher and to use the grid to copy ancient inscriptions greatly encouraged autodidactic calligraphers and challenged the idea of calligraphy schools and lineages. Kang's belief in the changing power of practitioners was the impetus behind his refashioning of practices for a future generation, which could enhance the spread of his reformist ideas for calligraphy. Through the implementation of new a curriculum that the student could follow independently and the internalization of a practice that relied on the "small" and "great nine palaces," future students distanced themselves from both narrow familial learning, as defended by the Jiangs, and from limiting master-student relationships.

As a pedagogical tool, the grid is so flexible that it lends itself to being repurposed. During the Qing, several pedagogical publications for calligraphy began supplying students with pre-printed grids next to characters, often simplified with only four squares [Fig. 4.8].[375] Jiang Ji even suggested the "nine palaces" should be employed by portrait painters, expanding its use to another field (see chapter 6). The status the grid was granted through the numerous publications of prominent scholars who embedded it into their theories surely also helped to turn the grid into an esthetic element in calligraphy. Although works of calligraphy on paper with drawn-on grid patterns have been produced since at least the Song dynasty,[376] Qing scholars employed it to generate an unprecedented esthetic appeal in their works. Many of them drew out the grid in red paint, only to allow substantial parts of their strokes to cross over its borders or be slightly misaligned, creating an interesting tension between pattern and script.[377] The "nine palaces" grid

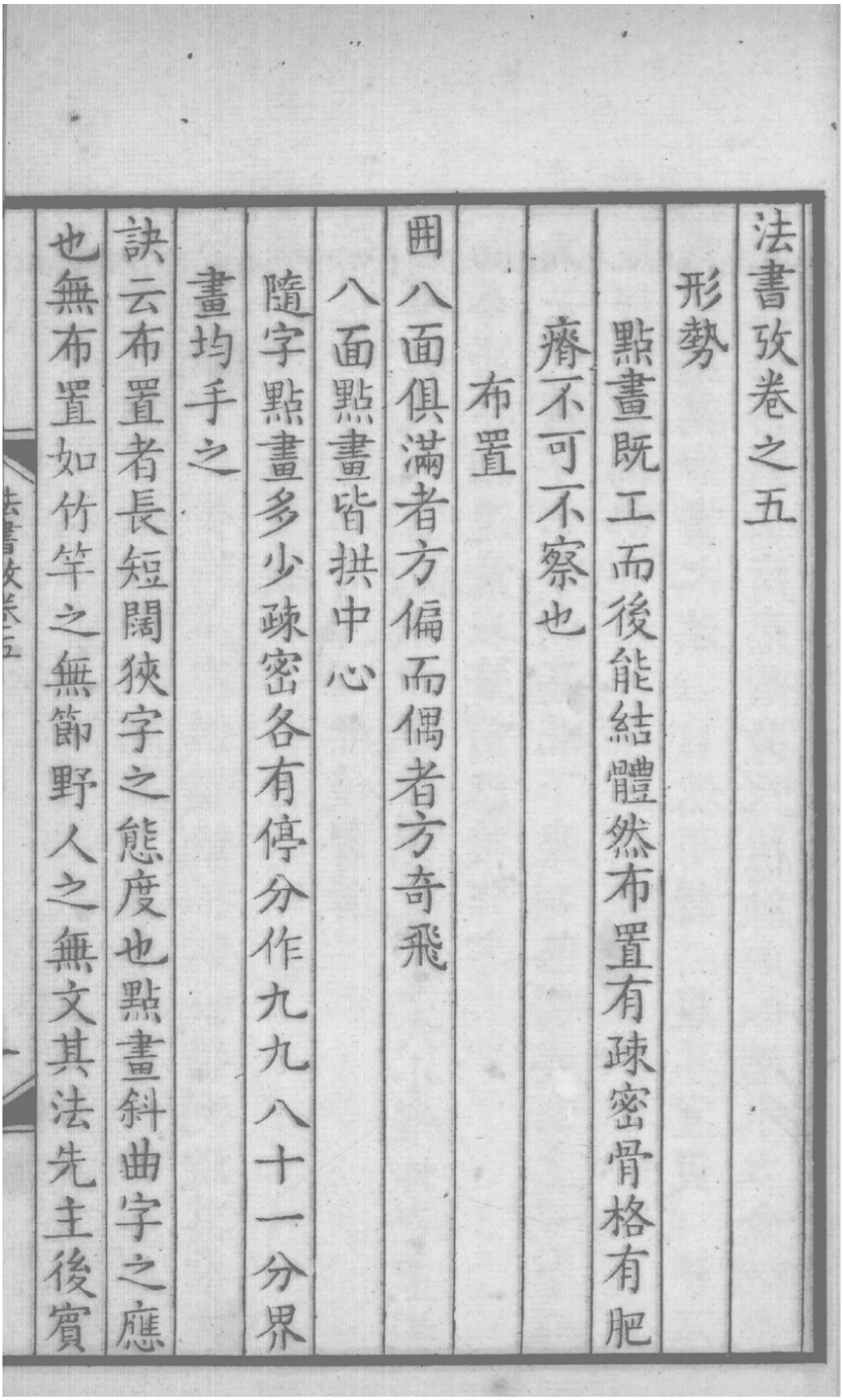
[374] Practice and training remained a constant concern of Qing scholars. Bai discusses how Qing scholars attempted to overcome the influence of Tang dynasty rules that had been ingrained in calligraphic practices up to the Ming dynasty. 2003. *Fu Shan's World*, 192-201.

[375] There are several booklets of this kind in the collection of the British Library, bound together into one volume titled *Youtong xizifa* 幼童習字法.

[376] Examples from various dynasties include Zhao Ji's (1082-1153) *Thousand Character Essay*, depicted in Ouyang and Fong. 2008. *Chinese Calligraphy*, 266-267. Zhao Mengfu's frontispiece to "Record of the Huaiyun temple," depicted in Fu. 1977. *Traces of the Brush*, 45. Wen Zhengming's colophon on "The Studio of True Connoisseurship" depicted in Clunas. 2004. *Elegant Debts*, 137.

[377] For works that share this quality, see Knight and Chang. *2012. Out of Character: Text in Clerical Script* by Jin Nong, 281; *Master Chen's Admonitions on Seeing, Hearing, Words and Deeds* by Deng Shiru, 324-325; *Yang Xiong's Prefaces to Model Statements in Clerical Script* by Zhao Zhiqian, 333.

even became an element to be celebrated in an “eight brokens” (*bapo* 八破) painting by Zhu Wei (1836-after 1908) [Fig. 4.9]. This genre of paintings collected torn paper elements reminiscent of the pre-Taiping-War past (discussed in chapter 7). In this particular work, Zhu depicts a sheet of paper used for practicing calligraphy which reproduces the “nine palaces” grid printed in red. The torn red grid thus becomes one of his symbols of the past. Far from becoming the relic Zhu alludes to, however, the practice of the “nine palaces” withstood the ravages of time as well as intellectual shifts, and it continues to shape the practice of calligraphers today.


法書攷卷之五

形勢

點畫既工而後能結體然布置有疎密骨格有肥瘠不可不察也

布置

囲八面俱滿者方偏而偶者方奇飛

八面點畫皆拱中心

隨字點畫多少疎密各有停分作九九八十一分界畫均手之

訣云布置者長短闊狹字之態度也點畫斜曲字之應也無布置如竹竿之無節野人之無文其法先主後賓

Fig. 4.1 Small graph of a grid and explanation on how to create a nine-by-nine square grid in the composition section of Sheng Ximing's 盛熙明 *Study of Calligraphy Models* (*Fashu kao* 法書考). Source: Shen. 1921. *Fashu kao*, juan 5, 1a.

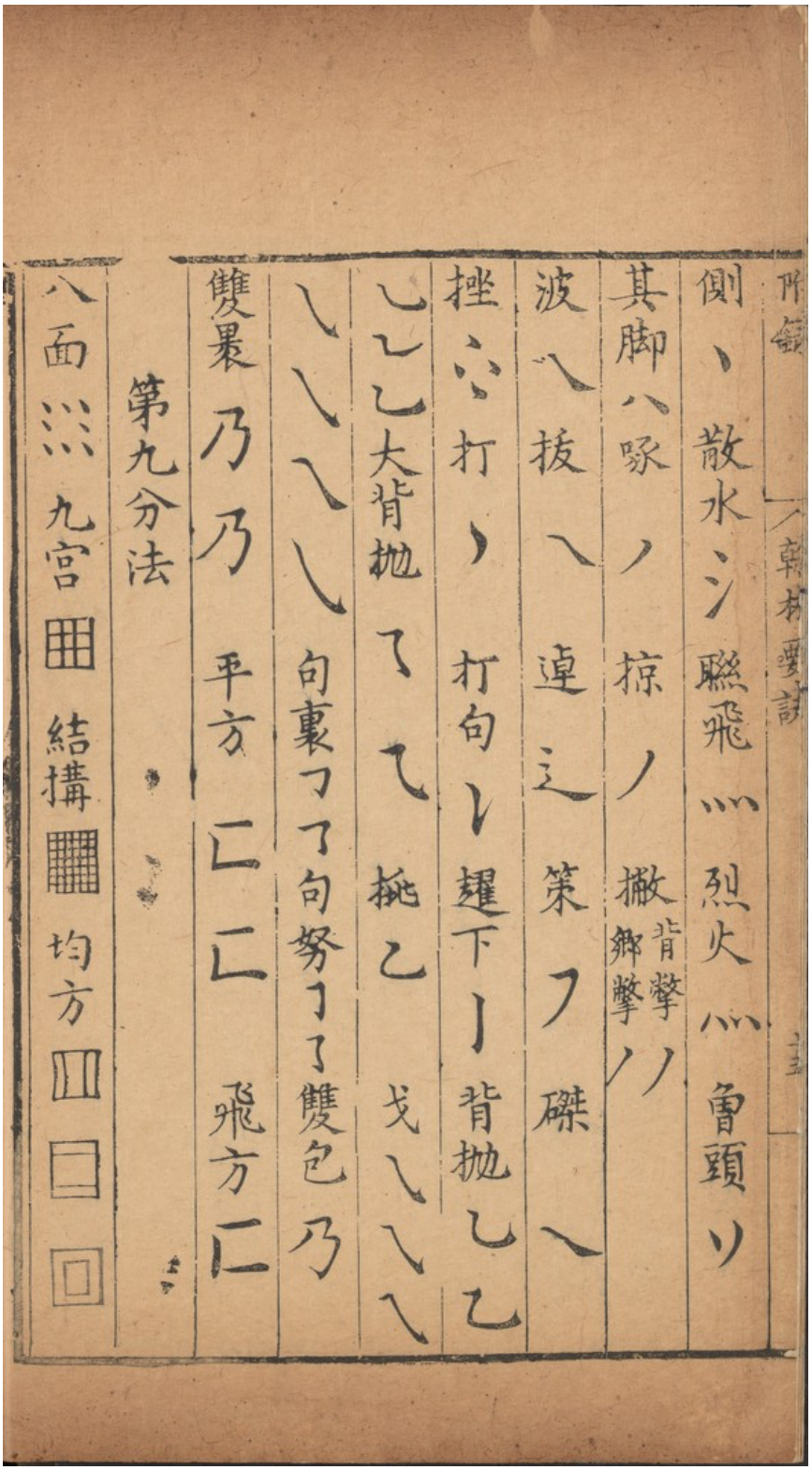


Fig. 4.2 Small graphs of the nine palaces and composition modes in a Ming edition of Chen's *Essential Formula of the Hanlin Academy* (*Hanlin yaojue* 翰林要訣). Source: Chen and Hu. 1603. *Hanlin yaojue*, 9b.

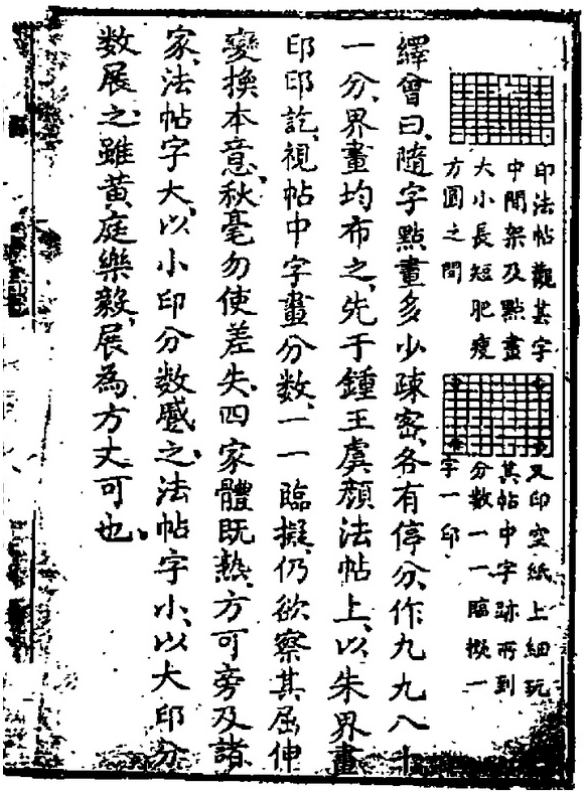


Fig. 4.3 Model for a stamping tool provided by Wang Xihou 王錫侯 in his rendering of Chen Yizeng's instructions on the nine palaces. Source: Wang. 1771. *Shufa jingyan*, 5a.

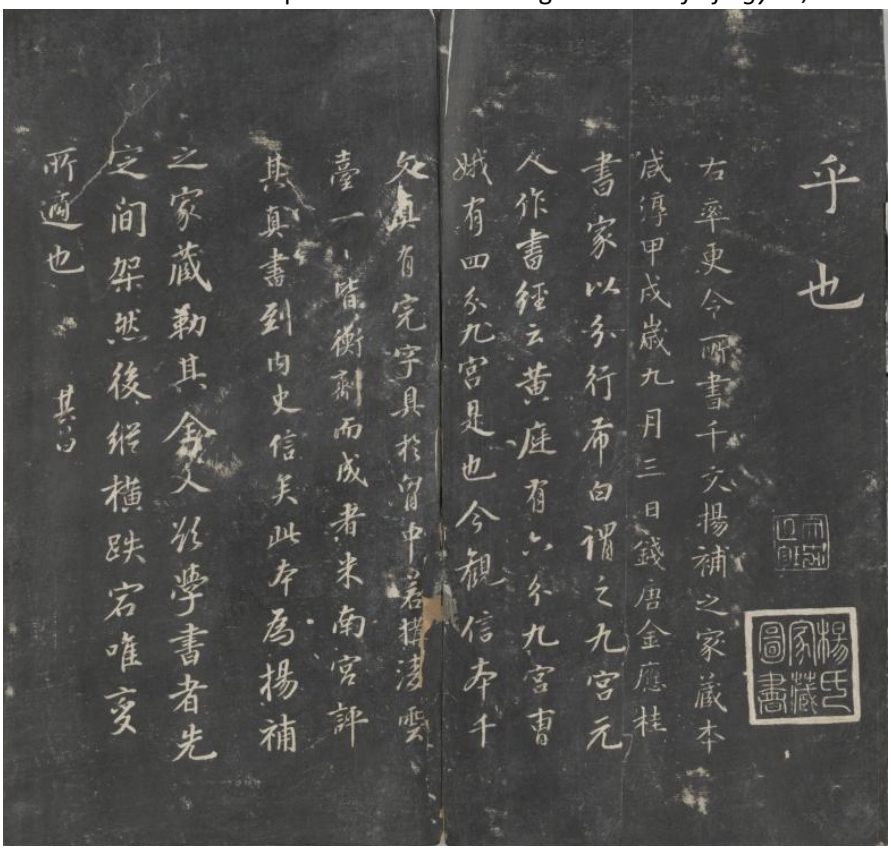


Fig. 4.4 Dong Qichang comments on the use of the nine palaces in his collection of rubbings, the *Model Calligraphy from the Hall of the Frolicking Goose* (*Xihongtang fatie* 戲鴻堂法帖). Source: Dong. 1603. *Xihongtang fashu*, folio 4, comment following *Qianziwen*, unpaginated. Image source: UTokyo Digital Archives Project.

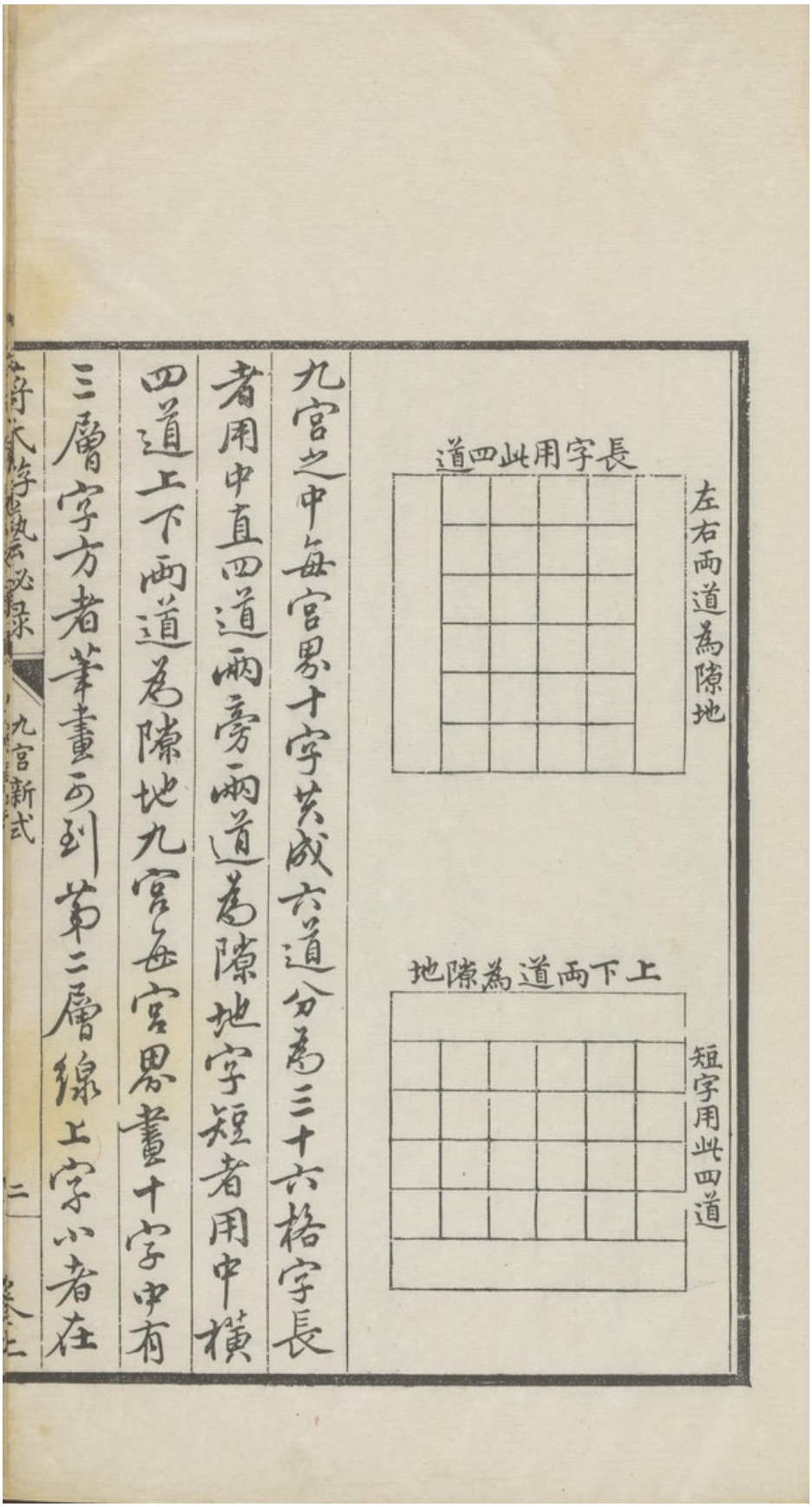


Fig. 4.5 Jiang Ji's adapted grids for narrow and flat characters. Source: Jiang. 1794. *Jiangshi youyi milu jiuzhong*, juan shang, Jiugong xinshi, 1a-1b. Image source: Harvard College Library, Harvard-Yenching Library.

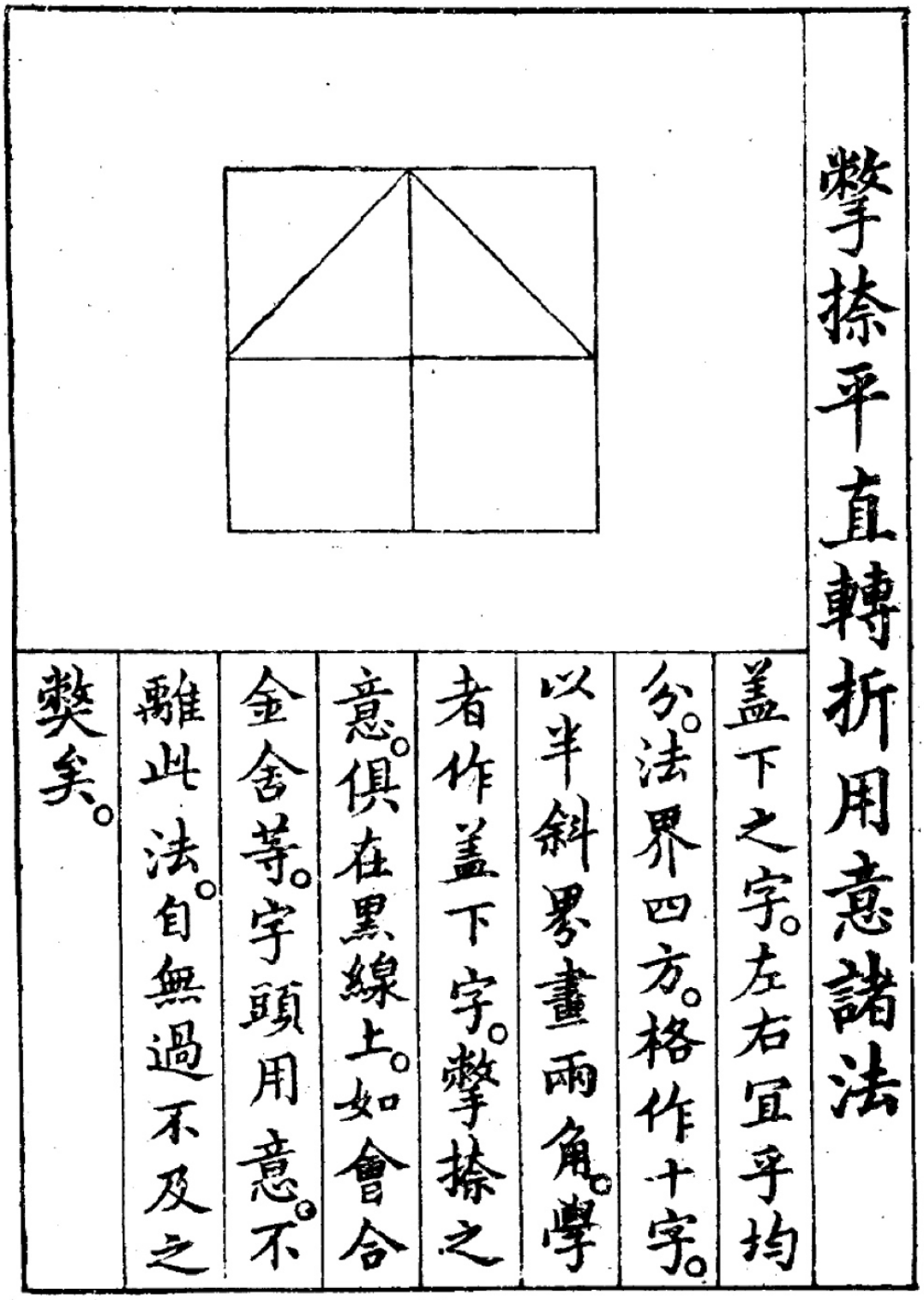


Fig. 4.6 Jiang He's grid for characters that have a triangular top, such as *he* 合. Source: Jiang. 1989. *Xizi mijue*, 42.

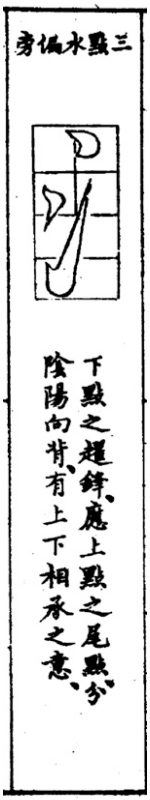


Fig. 4.7 Jiang He's narrow grid for the character component "water." Source: Jiang. 1989. *Xizi mijue*, 30.

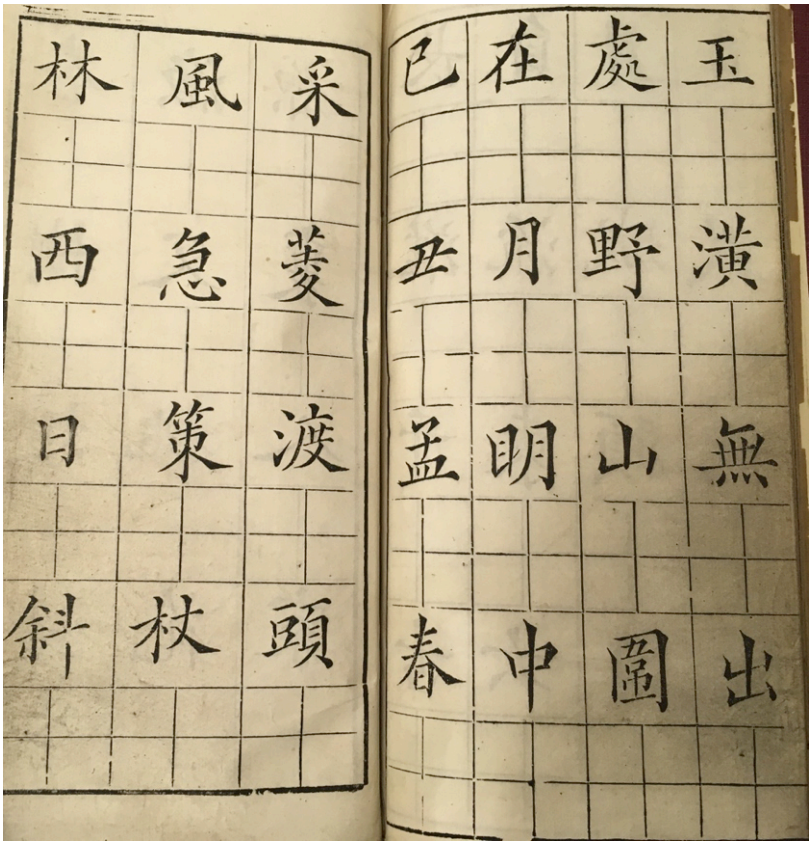


Fig. 4.8 Grid in Qing practice booklet for children. Source: *Youtong xizifa* 幼童習字法. [n.d.] . Unpaginated. Bound volume with several booklets in the collection of the British Library. Photo by author.



Fig. 4.9 Detail from Zhu Wei's eight brokens (*bapo* 八破) painting depicting a practice sheet with a printed nine palaces grid in red. Source: Berliner. 2018. *The 8 Brokens,* 1.

PART III
The Painter's Memory

Chapter 5

The "Painting Section" of Ming Daily-Use Encyclopedias

Having a good memory was just as important for painting as for other practical activities, such as playing music or chess. Renowned painters were often praised in anecdotes for their ability to grasp the vitality of their painting subject and gather every detail in their breast, which was the seat of memory. The Tang (618-906) painter Wu Daozi 吳道子 (ca. 689-after 755), for example, received imperial orders to paint the scenery of the Jiangling 嘉陵 River.[378] After visiting the area, he returned to the capital and was asked by Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 713-756) to show him his drafts. However, Wu explained he did not make any, having recorded all that was necessary in his memory, upon which he promptly painted three hundred *li* of the scenery within a single day.[379] From the Song dynasty onwards, grasping the essence of things "in one's breast" also became part of scholarly discourses on painting as the premise for producing a truly good work.[380]

The textual codification of painting practices flourished from the Song dynasty (960-1279) onwards, when specialized compilations on painting proliferated. However, their transmission began much later compared to the formulas and mnemonic aids developed for the practice of calligraphy. One early example, the *Formula for Painting Landscapes* (*Hua shanshui jue* 畫山水訣) by Jing Hao 荊浩 (fl. ca. 900-950) is first mentioned in Song sources.[381] The earliest extant version of the text, datable to the Ming, provides instructions in the form of a dialogue between a man and an immortal he encounters in the woods. The immortal teaches him the essentials for painting landscapes and then vanishes. The orally received precepts, the main character explains, were later captured in writing. This is most likely the earliest surviving formula

[378] Runs through present-day Sichuan province.

[379] Acker. 1954. *Some T'ang and pre-T'ang texts on Chinese Painting,* vol. 2, pt. 1, 234-235.

[380] Fuller discusses the meaning of Su Shi's 蘇軾 claim of having "bamboo in the breast." Fuller. 1993. "Pursuing the Complete Bamboo in the Breast." Other sources of the Song published after Su Shi's comments, such as the imperial painting catalogue *Xuanhe huapu* 宣和畫譜, or Dong You's 董卣 *Guangchuan huaba* 廣川畫跋, also include similar statements. Translations in Bush and Shih. 1985. *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, 119; 210; 215.

[381] Lui Daochun's 劉道醇 *Wudai minghua buyi* 五代名畫補遺, from 1059, is the first source to use this title in Jing Hao's biography. Guo Ruoxu's 郭若虛 (ca. 1020-after 1075) *Tuhua jianwen zhi* 圖畫見聞誌, published about 15 years later, also lists the volume by Jing Hao as one of the sources consulted by the authors.

for painting.[382] A second early example is the "Painting Formula" (*huajue* 畫訣) contained in the *Lofty Record of Forest and Streams* (*Linquan gaozhi* 林泉高致) by the 11th-century court-painter Guo Si 郭思, in which he provides a list of notes on painting elements and techniques according to motif categories. Its practical content is substantially different from the rest of the treatise, in which theoretical matters are discussed. Other formulas, often attributed to Wang Wei 王維 (ca. 701-ca. 761) of the Tang, or Li Cheng 李成 (919-967) of the Five Dynasties period, are very likely later texts whose publishers borrowed the names of famous painters to enhance their status.[383]

During the Song dynasty, practical formulas became acceptable sources of knowledge among members of the literate elite. Scholars began to record formulas and discuss hands-on knowledge in their collections of notes (*biji* 筆記), a practice that continued during the next centuries.[384] Combined with the high status that was attributed to the activity of painting during the Song dynasty, since painting was perceived as an expression of a man's character, it also became increasingly common for scholars to address the practical aspects of painting.[385] The late Yuan (1271-1368) scholar Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (fl. 1360-1368) produced one collection that included formulas for painting. In his collection of texts, *Records Compiled after Retiring from Farming* (*Chuogeng lu*

[382] For a careful discussion on the dating of the text, refer to Munakata. 1974. "Ching Hao's 'Pi-fa-chi'."

[383] Ming scholars raised doubts about the authorship of texts titled *Huaxue mijue* 畫學秘訣 and *Shanshui jue* 山水訣, which appeared under the names of several renowned painters. Since the 1930's, western scholars have also questioned the attributions. In the paper I presented at the 2017 *Second Middle Period Conference* in Leiden, I showed that there is no evidence that predates the Yuan dynasty to support any of the attributions. The texts themselves compile parts from other sources that only appeared after the Song dynasty. The content of such formulas might have circulated orally during the Yuan dynasty before being disseminated during the late Yuan or early Ming.

[384] Shen Gua 沈括 (1031-1095), for example, is known to have addressed several practical activities in his *Mengxi bitan* 夢溪筆談, such as medicine and printing, often describing matters as having been "seen and heard" by him in person. The historical context and intellectual impact of Shen's work has been studied by Zuo. For a description of the topics in Shen's work, see Zuo. 2018. *Shen Gua's Empiricism*, 165-168. Connecting knowledge to personal experience and observation was a common feature of accounts in *biji* 筆記. On Song *biji* and scholars' interest in everyday and particular matters, see Zhang. 2012. "To Be 'Erudite in Miscellaneous Knowledge.'"

[385] The *Tuhua jianwenzhi* 圖畫見聞誌, produced during the Song, is the earliest catalogue that lists painters according to status, instead of, for example, field of specialization. This form of categorization, which had great impact on later works, took place as scholars engaged in connoisseurship and debates about "scholars' painting" and spontaneity. Bush and Shih. 2012. *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, 91-92; 193.

輟耕錄), he records two formulas: one on portraiture, the *Secret Formula for Painting Portraits* (*Xiexiang mijue* 寫像秘訣) by Wang Yi 王譯 (fl. 14th c.),[386] and the second on landscape, the *Formula for Painting Landscapes* (*Xie shanshui jue* 寫山水訣) by Huang Gongwang 黃公望 (1269–1354).[387]

The first is Tao's record of an oral account Wang Yi gave him, while the second is described as notes Huang collected to disseminate among his painting students. While Huang comments on a variety of issues that are related to motifs and also discusses former painting styles, Wang Yi is the first to describe a sequence of steps on how to paint a portrait, followed by a list of instructions on how to mix colors. Yet, while both records describe practical activities, they are still products of the social interactions among scholars and represent elite views on practices.

During the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), the publication of formulas that described practical steps and sequences for painting, often in a rhymed format and accompanied by illustrations, saw an unprecedented upsurge. They differed from earlier accounts because many were not recorded by members of the elite and also did not circulate only among scholars. As described in chapters 2 and 3, new standards and pedagogical methods that suited the needs of changing audiences were constantly being developed, while their authors were allowed to fade into obscurity in order to increase the accessibility to knowledge. The expansion of the printing market and the decline in book production costs during the late Ming led to the publication and compilation of works by professionals and commercial printers that catered to audiences beyond the scholarly elite and presented knowledge in accordance with the ideals of different social groups.

Popular novels and plays often included useful and practical knowledge that was considered base by the elites,[388] while books published for rural audiences also propagated values that contradicted elite ideals, including the

[386] The treatise and the prolegomena by Tao have been translated by Franke. 1950. "Two Yuan Treatises on the Technique of Portrait Painting."

[387] The instructions were most likely written after Huang retired from office and began to focus on painting and Daoism, being surrounded by students. For a description of Huang's life, see Gyss-Vermande. 1984. *La Vie Et L'œuvre De Huang* Gongwang (1269-1354), 15-27.

[388] Shang's study on the Ming novel *Jin ping mei* 金瓶梅, which most likely circulated before the publication of the daily-use encyclopedias discussed here, also provides insight into practices of appropriation and inclusion of content from earlier sources by Ming editors. 2006. "The Making of the Everyday World." Ogawa has studied the novel and its references, comparing passages, especially those related to games and divination, to content in daily use encyclopedias. He also addresses a similar use of popular knowledge in other Ming and Qing novels. 1995. *Nichiyō ruisho ni yoru Min Shin shōsetsu no kenkyū*.

association of painting with a man's character. One type of publication that made such discrepancies visible were character miscellanea (*zazi* 雜字), a category of primers composed in rhyme that provided lists of characters according to categories. While they enjoyed less regard among scholars, character miscellanea were popular in the countryside.[389] In such popular pedagogical works of the late Ming, painting (*miaohua* 描畫) was listed among the "hundred crafts" (*bai gong* 百工) and equated to portraiture (*xiezhen ye* 寫真也). The entry on painting ascribes the creation of the craft to a minister of the mythical Yellow Emperor, who excelled at painting figures and whose paintings embodied the patterns of heaven and earth.[390] Painting was thus described as a commercial craft that had its roots in the depiction of heavenly principles and living beings.

The understanding of painting as a profitable occupation became even more explicit in later works of the *zazi* genre, in which painting and other crafts were praised for their contribution to society.[391] It was most likely the growing importance of merchants and craftsmen in the burgeoning economy of the late Ming that led to the gradual change in social values. Scholars, who at that time were seeking to reform neo-Confucian learning and the social values connected to it, show a growing awareness of the social contribution of these two classes in their writings. Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472-1529), a central figure of this movement, challenged the scholarly elite's place within the four classes (*simin* 四民). In this hierarchical schema, scholars were the

[389] Wu Huifang discusses character miscellanea in detail. The distinction of such works from elitist primers is addressed in Wu. 2007. *Ming Qing yilai minjian shenghuo zhishi de jian'gou yu chuandi*, 128-131.

[390] The work is attributed to Li Zhi 李贄 (1527-1602). According to Chia, the publisher of this volume was active during the Wanli reign (1573-1619). Chia. 2002. *Printing for Profit*, 293.

[391] One late Qing work that describes the social role of the "painting craftsman" (*huajiang* 畫匠) is the *Farmer's Character Miscellanea* (*Zhuangnong zazi* 庄農雜字). The painter, or painting craftsman, is described in this popular source as one who produces statues and paints portraits and figures from popular culture and religion. Characters featured in popular plays, such as Tang Sanzang 唐三藏 from the *Journey to the West* (*Xiyou ji* 西遊記) or the general Lü Bu 呂布 from *the Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義), are listed as the painter's main motifs next to Buddhist figures and popular deities, such as the eighteen Arhats, the Thunder God (*Leigong* 雷公) and the dragon. The last verse of the entry is a comment on the social role of the painter, who can, via painting, transform the tavern into a temple. Cheng. 1894. *Zhuangnong zazi*, 19b. The volume also describes the activities of several other craftsmen and their social functions, such as the furrier, the smith, the carpenter, the veterinarian, and the stonecutter. Gu also discusses the valorization of crafts in *zazi* during the late Qing, providing other examples. 2013. *Richang shenguo bianqian zhong de jiaoyu*, 128-132.

foremost contributors to society, followed by farmers, artisans and merchants. In the epitaph composed in 1525 for the merchant Fang Lin 方麟 (dates unknown), for example, Wang explains that "in ancient times the four classes had distinct occupations, but shared the same Way (*Dao* 道); their efforts were equal," arguing that all four classes were equally important for a harmonious society.[392]

The increasing publication of daily-use encyclopedias during the late Ming was made possible by the combination of three factors: economic changes and shifts in social values, the booming printing market, and the increasing output of works that represented non-scholarly ideals and views. Commercial daily-use encyclopedias are the focal point at which all of these developments converge. Their "Painting Section" serves as a lens to address how knowledge was shaped and how the dissemination of the content was justified within this context. Ming encyclopedias were the culmination of earlier efforts to render knowledge in a mnemonic format. Encyclopedia editors combined sources and appropriated the pedagogical approaches of earlier authors. They relied on cosmological beliefs to lend coherence to their collections, mirroring earlier formulas that connected practical knowledge to these beliefs. The result was a set of diverse contents woven together into a comprehensive mnemonic system.

Through the analysis of the painting sources included in the encyclopedias, it becomes clear that editors of Ming encyclopedias hoped, like the publishers of the content they incorporated, to contribute to society by disseminating anonymized practical knowledge that could be put to use by the less educated. Beyond this shared concern, however, Ming encyclopedia editors also embraced an attitude to homogenize knowledge useful for all "four classes." With the "four classes" in mind, they created a cohesive system to order knowledge that helped the reader to both memorize the content and discover connections among the different fields. They adapted both scholarly discourses to a general audience and popular knowledge to elite ideals, essentially harmonizing what had been discrete kinds of knowledge into a more general–and thus generally accessible–form. The ideas and values that led to these changes can be understood through a close study of earlier publications that may have served as sources for the content of the "Painting Section" and by situating this content within the encyclopedias.

[392] Gu. 2013. *Richang shenguo bianqian zhong de jiaoyu*, 76.

Ming Daily-Use Encyclopedias and the "Painting Section"

Encyclopedias, or "category books" (*leishu* 類書),[393] began to be published on a variety of topics during the Song dynasty, under imperial supervision as well as by private publishers.[394] Imperial encyclopedias often focused on the arrangement of anecdotes and literary works according to a thematic category, or were devoted to the organization of religious canons.[395] Private encyclopedias, which proliferated due to the development of commercial printing during the Song, often excerpted administrative and historical texts to serve as aids to students preparing for the civil service examinations.[396] Such reference books were popular because they suited reading practices that became common with the spread of printing during the Song, such as speed-reading and browsing through books instead of reading them from beginning to end.[397] The organization of content under established categories favored intermittent reading and facilitated the retrieval of information.

Another type of private encyclopedia that developed from Song compilations targeted the needs of elite households. During the Yuan dynasty, the Mongol ruling house curtailed the role of the civil service examinations. In order to remain profitable, one Song encyclopedia, the *Extensive Records from the Forest of Matters* (*Shilin guangji* 事林廣記),[398] which had originally focused on content for the examinations, came to include additional sections that were intended for a less specialized reader. By 1332, it featured sections on several new topics, such as Daoism, mathematics, topography, plants and alcoholic beverages, providing useful and entertaining information for members of elite households.[399]

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[393] Despite the publication of works that shared formal qualities with encyclopedias prior to the Song dynasty, the concept of "category book" became current only during the eleventh century. De Weerdt. 2007. "The Encyclopedia as Textbook," 77-78.

[394] Sakai lists encyclopedias according to function or focus and publication period. 2011. *Chūgoku nichiyō ruishoshi no kenkyū*, chapter 4.

[395] Drège. 2007. "Des ouvrages classés par catégories," 30-31.

[396] The connection of encyclopedias to the civil service examinations is discussed in De Weerdt. 2007. "The Encyclopedia as Textbook."

[397] Fu. 2007. "The Flourishing of Biji or Pen-Notes Texts," 110-111.

[398] The original publication can be roughly dated to the Xianchun 咸淳 era (1265-1274). Sakai. 2011. *Chūgoku nichiyō ruishoshi no kenkyū*, 74.

[399] Sakai. 2011. *Chūgoku nichiyō ruishoshi no kenkyū*, 57; 91. For a comparative list of the topics that were in the *Shilin guangji* and other encyclopedias from the Song, see Sakai, 2011. *Chūgoku nichiyō ruishoshi no kenkyū*, 85-86. Sakai also lists titles of sections to provide an overview of the changes between a Yuan and Ming edition of the *Shilin guangji.* 2011.

Other works that were meant as guides for "local clerks' learning"[400] were published during the Yuan and early Ming, such as the *Indispensible Household Matters* (*Jujia biyong* 居家必用), with a preface dated 1301, and *Various Abilities in Mean Matters* (*Duoneng bishi* 多能鄙事), published by the early Ming commander and poet Liu Ji 劉基 (1311-1375). These early works, which were reprinted several times over the course of the Ming dynasty, broadened the scope of the content to include subjects ranging from dream divination to building, even providing detailed instructions on how to construct an outhouse. Yuan and Ming encyclopedias already contained a small number of rhymed formulas, such as the *Hundred-Rhyme-Song* discussed in chapter 3.[401] Their format and varied content show that they were reader-oriented, including new content as it became available and removing outdated information as new editions came out.[402]

Early household encyclopedias divided fields of knowledge into the three categories of Heaven, Earth and men, a system that was adopted by the Ming editions. Despite the adoption of this old framework, household encyclopedias published during the Wanli reign (1572-1620), the first boom phase of printing and literacy, introduced several formal changes to make their content more accessible. They included a greater variety of topics, were richly illustrated and presented a large part of their content in rhymes. These compilations, which contemporary scholars refer to as daily-use encyclopedias (*riyong leishu* 日用類書), claimed to provide knowledge that was useful for the "everyday needs" (*riyong suoxu* 日用所需) of the four classes.[403] The titles and prefaces often promised the reader that he or she would no longer need help from others, since the encyclopedia provided all the necessary useful

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Chūgoku nichiyō ruishoshi no kenkyū, 88-91. Elman briefly addresses these changes. 2007. "Collecting and Classifying," 134.

[400] This statement is taken from the preface to the *Jujia biyong*. Elman. 2007. "Collecting and Classifying," 135.

[401] One of the prefaces discussed here, from the *Mo'e xiaolu* 墨娥小錄 mentions the *Jujia biyong* 居家必用 and the *Duoneng bishi* 多能鄙事 as books that contain useful information, indicating the editors were well aware of them during the period. Wu. 1569. *Mo'e xiaolu*, preface, 1a-b. The *Caojue baiyun ge* 草訣百韻歌, discussed in Chapter 3, first appeared in the *Shilin Guangji.*

[402] Liu. 2006. *Mingdai tongsu leishu yanjiu*, 27; 14.

[403] This claim is included in the note on the cover of the *Xinke tianxia simin bianlan santai wanyong zhengzong* 新刻天下四民便覽三台萬用正宗, transcribed in Sakai. 2011. *Chūgoku nichiyō ruishoshi no kenkyū*, 110. The four classes are mentioned in the title of this edition.

information.[404] While the editors' rhetoric of catering to the needs of all four classes was a common trope utilized to market their publications, this desire also had a concrete impact on the content of the encyclopedias

Ming daily-use encyclopedias addressed a broader spectrum of topics than earlier encyclopedias, including calendrical calculations, geomancy, how to wield weapons, how to raise and care for livestock, basic mathematics, how to write letters, rules and strategies for playing chess, how to read and interpret a face, how to educate children, ways to entertain friends and tell jokes, how to write calligraphy and—last but not least—how to paint. Thus, knowledge from both elite and popular sources was included, such as letter composition on the one hand, and popular songs on the other.[405]

Along with covering a wider range of topics, late Ming encyclopedias were also cheaper than their earlier counterparts. The flourishing of the publishing industry during the late Ming, especially in present-day Fujian 福建 province, allowed the broad dissemination of cheaply printed editions.[406] Non-scholarly publications, such as fiction and household reference works, were among the most commonly printed works during the period of 1506-1644, paralleling the increase of literacy during the period.[407] During the late Ming, encyclopedias were some of the cheapest publications on the market. The average late-Ming worker would be able to afford a daily-use encyclopedia with two days' wages, and it is estimated that most urban families who could afford books most likely owned one.[408]

The earliest extant encyclopedia of this type was published in 1596,

[404] A set of titles has been translated by He, who addresses the promise of independence made by editors. 2013. *Home and the World*, 95-98.

[405] Lowry. 2005. *The Tapestry of Popular Songs*, 59.

[406] Chia has discussed the development of the region's publishing industry from the Song to the Qing period. For an account on the extraordinary growth and output during the late Ming, as well as on how books were sold and circulated, see Chia. 2002. *Printing for Profit*, chapter 5.

[407] Chia. 2002. *Printing for Profit*, 186-187. Brook describes the development of literacy during the Ming. While lower levels of literacy are reported in the early period, later accounts attest to the expansion of education. 1998. *The Confusions of Pleasure*, 56-62; 131; 172; 257.

[408] According to Ōki, whose calculation is based on the average cost of one *qian* 錢, as recorded in encyclopedias. Ōki. 2004. *Minmatsu Kōnan no shuppan bunka*, 122-125. There is one case of an encyclopedia that was unearthed from a 'modest tomb' from 1631. The owner of the encyclopedia was most likely not a member of the elite. Clunas. 2004. *Superfluous Things*, 37. Wang believes encyclopedias were a go-to commodity because they compiled content from several fields, rendering the purchase of other specialized books unnecessary. 2003. "Shenghuo, zhishi yu wenhua shangpin: wan Ming Fujian ban 'riyong leishu' yu qi shuhua men," 22.

after which numerous nearly identical editions were printed. From 1596 up to 1614, a new daily-use encyclopedia, with 30-40 *juan* on average, appeared on the market almost every year.[409] The majority of them were printed in Jianyang 建陽, Fujian province.[410] Their contents were very similar and it seems likely that editors directly copied the content of previous volumes. In some cases, printing houses even used old printing blocks from different encyclopedias and re-bundled them into a 'new' collection after reprinting them. This practice did not disrupt the flow of the content, since many encyclopedias followed the same order for their thematic volumes, yet the titles on the first page of each volume indicate that the blocks were originally intended for different editions. Editors also frequently altered the order of texts within a section when carving new woodblocks. Despite these differences in layout and content, the encyclopedias and those who produced them shared crucial similarities that deserve a closer analysis.

It is possible to identify a set of core texts that were included in the majority of daily-use encyclopedias of the Wanli period and defined what constituted their "Painting Section" (*huapu men* 畫譜門). The texts were selected for their brevity, as they were often rhymed or prose summaries of steps and instructions for painting specific motifs. Although the earliest extant edition, dated 1596, is the most extensive one, later editions settled on a limited and relatively stable set of texts.[411]

The texts contained in the majority of encyclopedias included the following: a general introduction to painting appreciation and its categories; an instructive text on painting landscapes (attributed to Wang Wei of the Tang dynasty or Jing Hao of the Five dynasties); a second landscape text by Huang Gongwang; a section on plum blossoms; a section on painting bamboo; one text on portraiture by the Yuan painter Wang Yi, followed by instructions on

[409] In her survey of Ming encyclopedias Wu Huifang lists the number of publications by date. A number of encyclopedias are not dated to a specific year, or the information has been lost because some of the encyclopedias are incomplete. However, even if the 6 undated editions from the Wanli period are disregarded, new editions were still being introduced to the market on regular intervals of one or two years. Wu. 2005. *Wanbao quanshu*, vol.1: 49-50. For the appendix with publication details, see Wu. 2005. *Wanbao quanshu*, vol. 2, appendix 1: 355-364.

[410] According to Wu's survey, only one of the encyclopedias of this period was printed outside of Fujian, in Jinling 金陵, Jiangsu. Wu. 2005. *Wanbao quanshu*, vol. 1: 51-52.

[411] The 1596 edition, *Assembled Treasures form the Ten Thousand Books* (short for *Xinqie tianxia beilan wenlin leiji wanshu cuibao* 新鍥天下備覽文林類記萬書萃寶), is the earliest dated edition. Most extant encyclopedias do not contain information on the place or date of publication, while for some sets the first or last volume, which could contain this information, is also lost.

how to use colors in portraiture by the same author; and at the end, some passages on how to store and care for paintings in a collection, including practical recipes. Two additional texts, one on painting chrysanthemums and one on birds, are exceptional cases because despite being frequently included in the encyclopedias, they were not always part of the painting section [Fig. 5.1]. The implications of the unusual placement of these two sections, which provide a glimpse into the meaning of the overall structure of encyclopedias, are addressed in the last section of this chapter.

The *Pearls from the Sea of Learning* (short for *Xinke hanyuan guangji buding simin jieyong xuehai qunyu* 新刊翰苑廣記補訂四民捷用學海群玉), published in 1607, reproduces all of these core texts [Fig. 5.2].[412] It is taken as reference, so that the content of encyclopedias and the related sources that connect the various editions can be analyzed in a linear fashion. In [Table 1] the core texts of the painting section are listed according to the order in which they appear in the *Pearls from the Sea of Learning*, while the sections on chrysanthemums and birds are appended to the end and identified by the color ◆. Ming encyclopedias were commonly divided into an upper and a lower segment, with texts running through on a single layer. [Table 1] reflects this structure. A number of the sources indicated in Table 1 might not be the first publication instance of a specific text, yet the table provides an overview of the material that could have been available to Ming editors and served as sources for their own compilations.

The analysis of these earlier sources and their creators sheds light on the efforts of Ming encyclopedia editors to level the social value of knowledge produced by practitioners belonging to different classes. While some original texts used by editors were the products of individual authors, other sources were the result of a commercial interaction between publishers and craftsmen. Discussing the distinct circumstances in which the texts originated is essential to understanding how encyclopedias' editors altered the format and the role of transmitted text and introduced them into a coherent system designed for memorization.

Practical Knowledge and Scholarly Ideals in Early Texts on Painting

One set of texts included in encyclopedias were works of individual authors that focused on specific motifs. The texts selected by encyclopedia

[412] An incomplete copy of the encyclopedia is held in the special collection of the Leiden University library. The section on painting and calligraphy of this edition is intact.

editors were summaries that addressed only the essentials for painting portraits, landscapes, bamboo, plum blossom, birds and chrysanthemums. Editors chose to present texts on certain motifs according to the traditional attribution to a specific master, while motifs that were not traditionally associated with a unique painter lacked an attribution.

The connection of certain motifs to early masters is also emphasized in one of the short entries in the encyclopedia, titled "Famous Painters of the Past and Today" (*Gujin minghua* 古今名畫), which lists motifs along with a renowned painter that should be associated with each one. For example, the Tang poet Wang Wei should be coupled with landscape painting, while Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (ca. 346-405) was the name to be remembered in connection to figure painting [Fig. 5.2 b]. The links contained in this list served as a mnemonic support and complemented the attributions of the textual content in the painting section.

The earliest sources included in the painting section can be dated to the Yuan dynasty: the *Records Compiled after Retiring from Farming*, by Tao Zongyi, the *Detailed Record on Bamboo* (*Zhupu xianglu* 竹譜詳錄), by Li Kan 李衍 (1245-1320), and *Songzhai's Plum Manual* (*Songzhai meipu* 松齋梅譜) by Wu Taisu 吳太素 (active mid-14th century). All of these sources were produced by individual scholars who perceived painting as an activity of self-cultivation and as a polite pastime.

In Tao's collection of miscellaneous notes, the author recorded, among other things, his encounters with other scholars. Tao's friend, Sun Zuo 孫作 recounts in the preface how Tao's notes were collected over a period of about ten years and later compiled under the title *Records Compiled after Retiring from Farming*.[413] As mentioned above, one such note describes a set of portraiture and coloring techniques Tao recorded after an encounter with painter and long-time friend Wang Yi. He provides a title for this brief description of practical instructions, calling it the *Secret Formula for Painting Portraits* (*Xiexiang mijue* 寫像秘訣).[414] The entry, besides being a record of practical information, is also a celebration of the bond of friendship between

[413] Unfortunately the compilation does not include a preface by the author himself. The preface by Sun in which the compilation process of the book is described has been called a "fantastical story." Yet scholars seem to agree that Tao recorded the notes during his time of leisure, and that he might not have originally intended to publish them. For a discussion on the writing process of the *Chuogeng lu*, see Mote. 1954. "T'ao-tsung-I and his Chuo Keng Lu," chapter 4.

[414] The treatise and the prolegomena by Tao have been translated in Franke. 1950. "Two Yuan Treatises on the Technique of Portrait Painting."

Tao and the painter Wang Yi. The *Formula for Painting Landscapes* (*Xie shanshui jue* 寫山水訣), which contains instructions on landscape painting by Huang Gongwang, who was also one of Tao's close friends, was most likely recorded during a similar encounter. These two prose texts from *Retiring from Farming* were both included in the Ming encyclopedias in their entirety. However, the names of Wang Yi and Huang Gongwang are omitted together with the introductory notes in which Tao described his social encounters and connection to the painters.

From the manuals on bamboo and plum blossoms written by Li Kan and Wu Taisu, both highly educated men and painters themselves, the encyclopedias reproduced only passages in rhyme and some illustrations.[415] The entries provided summaries of the content from the earlier sources while omitting lengthy and heavily theoretical sections.

The bamboo and plum blossom motifs had both undergone a process of simplification and codification from the Song dynasty onwards. Together with others that could be depicted in monochrome ink, such as the orchid, they were transformed by scholars into a systematized language "through which to lodge feelings in forms" that "could be studied, practiced, and mastered."[416] Scholars simplified the painting technique of such motifs so only the skill and materials needed for calligraphy were required to depict them. Both bamboo and plum blossom thus became codified symbols for the representation of the painter's character and feelings, used by scholars as a means of communication together with poetry and calligraphy. The bamboo, for example, was often perceived to represent a scholar's resilience, while the plum blossom pointed to transience and its branches to endurance.[417]

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[415] The authenticity and attribution of the bamboo manual can be disputed. Although most editions contain the preface by Li Kan, dated 1299, the *Siku quanshu* edition that is often used as reference contains far more material than the earliest extant version of the manual published in the *Wangshi huayuan* 王氏畫苑 during the Ming, without the preface from which the date is taken. From a single *juan* with no illustrations, the volume came to comprise 10 *juan* during the Qing. The discrepancy in length has long been pointed out by Yu. 1968. *Shuhua shulu jieti*, juan 2, 20b. Most likely later scholars bundled unattributed materials circulating as manuscripts that discussed bamboo painting techniques under Li Kan's name, which came to be used as a label for bamboo painting. Furthermore, parts of the text are elsewhere explicitly attributed to other authors. It is quite possible that the compilers also used Gao Song's expanded version of Li Kan's manual as their source. [416] Bickford. 1996. *Ink Plum*, 144.

[416] Bickford. 1996. *Ink Plum*, 144.

[417] On the symbolic meanings of the plum and bamboo, see Bickford. 1996. *Ink Plum*, 49-68; 102-105.

Li Kan's manual on bamboo is one of the few texts in the encyclopedia ascribed to an author [Fig. 5.2 h]. His original work is a record (*pu* 譜) specializing on bamboo. *Pu* became a commonly accepted class of texts during the Song dynasty, often amassed by scholars as a pastime. They were compilations of information on a specific topic, such as particular plants the authors cultivated as a hobby and appreciated esthetically, or objects they collected for personal enjoyment and study.[418] In keeping with this convention, the bulk of Li Kan's text is a descriptive list of types of bamboo with illustrations. However, it also contains a section that discusses methods for painting bamboo in ink, which reflects Li's inclination to paint bamboo in the scholarly style. These passages, all written in prose, describe painting techniques in different styles and provide detailed instructions on how to render each individual part of the bamboo, including leaves, joints and small twigs.[419]

Unlike the text on bamboo, attributed to the scholar-official Li Kan in the encyclopedias, the content from *Songzhai's Plum Manual* by the Yuan painter Wu Taisu was presented as being authored by a Song scholar, Yang Buzhi 楊補之 (1097-1169). Yang had been elevated to the status of progenitor of the orthodox tradition of ink plum painting by the thirteenth century, which most likely prompted editors to associate all content relating to plum blossoms with him [Fig. 5.2 f].[420] Yang's plum blossoms, painted with calligraphic strokes and describing the different stages of the blossom's life, were often accompanied by his poetic compositions. Yang sought "to unite himself with the flowering plum, simultaneously conveying its essence and his own kindred spirit through his painting," an attitude that was taken up by the actual author of the texts, Wu Taisu.[421]

It is unclear what Wu's main occupation was, but from his poem exchanges, it can be inferred that he maintained close friendships with both scholars and officials. He mastered poetry, enjoyed meditation, and was best known for his plum blossom paintings, which were appreciated by men of

[418] Weitz. 2015. "Privately Published Illustrated Books on Arts," 50. According to Siebert, writings that could be classified according to this genre began to be written in the 5th century. However, the class "*pu lu*" as a bibliographical category only came to be used in the 11th century. Siebert. 2006a. *Pulu,* 9. See also Siebert. 2006b. "Neue Formen für neue Themen."

[419] The first *juan* of the book deals with bamboo painting in different styles. The following 6 *juan* discuss qualities and types of bamboo.

[420] Bickford. 1996. *Ink Plum*, 131.

[421] Bickford. 1996. *Ink Plum*, 107.

elite families.[422] Wu Taisu most likely based his painting manual on an earlier work, Song Boren's 宋伯仁 (active mid 13th century) *Record of Plum Blossom Portraits* (*Meihua xishen pu* 梅花喜神譜) published in 1261. Song's compilation, which is also a *pu* dedicated to the study of one flower, is the earliest known work to provide illustrations meant for esthetic appreciation.[423] Song's book was most likely repurposed as a painting manual by the fourteenth century and its illustrations appropriated by authors such as Wu, who reproduced them in a new context. This could be called a "migration" process, in which images and modes of representation are used in a variety of ways by different audiences and appropriated for different functions—similar to the case of the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* and the other texts discussed in chapter 3, which were ascribed new pedagogical functions over time.[424] Yet, despite the migration of the images to a painting manual, Wu Taisu maintains the scholarly ideal imbued in the plum blossom motif. He continues to represent it as a suitable medium to codify one's thoughts and feelings.

Wu's treatise also expounds on the correspondence of the plum blossom with the cosmos, specifically with the metaphysical values of yin and yang, which can be attributed to the influence of Neo-Confucian thought on Wu's painting theories.[425] Editors of Ming encyclopedias, however, intentionally discarded Wu's valorization of the plum blossom as a carrier of abstract ideals in favor of content that was more functional. Wu's painting technique, however, was very much bound by the transmitted tradition of scholarly painting and metaphysical values he attributed to the motif.

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[422] A tentative biography in presented in Zhang. 1987. "Yuan Wu Taisu Songzhai meipu ji xiangguan wenti de tansuo," 446.

[423] Clunas. 1997. *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China*, 136-138.

[424] A parallel claim is made in a study of European model books and painting manuals. Heilmann describes a similar process, in which workshop model drawings were re-appropriated into didactic painting manuals. Heilmann et al. 2014. *Punkt, Punkt, Komma, Strich*, 193. Wiedehage compares the illustrations in Song's *Record* with the illustrations of the *Songzhai meipu* 松齋梅譜, arguing that the similarity indicates that Song's work was taken as a reference by Wu. See Wiedehage. 1995. *Das Meihua xishen pu des Song Boren aus dem 13. Jahrhundert*, 320-336. Bickford engages in a similar exercise of comparison in Bickford. 1996. *Ink Plum*, 188-196. Zhang suggest that Wu Taisu's book might have been based on a plum manual by the Yuan painter Wang Mian 王冕. Although this could be plausible, he does not provide concrete evidence for this assumption. Zhang. 1987. "Yuan Wu Taisu Songzhai meipu ji xiangguan wenti de tansuo," 455-459.

[425] On the neo-Confucian influences see Shimada. 1956. "Shōsai baifu teiyō," 104-106. A translation of this section, also contained in another later manual, the *Huaguang meipu*, can be found in Bush and Shih. 1985. *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, 280-282.

In his preface, Wu describes how he gathered information from multiple sources and compiled his own work according to his ideas and years of experience in painting:

> [...] I took up the technical secrets of the masters and the painting scrolls in old collections. Then, according to my own ideas, I deleted superfluities and supplemented deficiencies, compiling these into one collection. It is titled *Songzhai's Plum Manual* and it is [intended] to aid amateurs. [...] As for later painters, how could they understand, were there not such as I who [have undergone] the hardship of preserving the steadfast heart and [have acted with] the earnest concern of devoted attention? Not daring to keep this secret to myself, I have had woodblocks carved to widen its transmission. Therefore I relate this outline at the head of this book."[426]

Wu, who claims in his preface to have mastered the methods for painting the plum, takes his practical experience as grounds for his expertise. In the treatise he presents a rhymed text for memorization, giving pointers for the painter to keep in mind when painting a plum composition. This rhyme addresses the importance of variation and provides general notions on how to capture the principles of a flower's life cycle, respecting the natural changes that occur over time. Yet, the rhyme contained in this volume discusses painting methods in a general manner. It is not written in an instructive manner and does not provide regulated steps on how to proceed when painting a motif. Instead, it provides the reader with material for further reflection and imagination. If considered in the context of the entire manual, which even contains a section titled "Preserving in the Mind and Visualizing the Images" (*cunxin xiangxiang* 存心想象) that describes a meditation technique most likely derived from Daoist practice to visualize the plum in the mind before painting, the rhyme can be understood as a medium intended for self-cultivation and meditation.

Wu's attachment to scholarly ideals of painting is also illustrated by an anecdote he includes in his treatise:

> Once, there was an artisan-painter. He showed a magpie he had painted to Su Dongpo, claiming that it had taken him an entire month to complete the work. Everyone around them commented how lifelike the

[426] Translation adapted from Bickford. 1996. *Ink Plum*, 187.

depiction was. Yet, Su said: 'It's not bad, but it is merely a caged bird.' Upon hearing this the artisan muttered: 'Scholars are truly odd people.'

有一匠獻畫鵲於東坡，自云一月乃就。左右莫不言其逼真。破曰：「好則，乃籠中之禽耳」。匠曰：「學士真奇人也。」[427]

The anecdote reflects how Wu Taisu conceived of painting as an activity that involved more than skill. In his manual it becomes clear that personal involvement with the motif was more important than the craft. Wu Taisu's work focuses on the importance of embodying the motif and depicting all the variations of the blossom. The notions of balance and variation present in Wu's rhyme stand in stark contrast to the aim set by Ming authors, whose major concern was not to present a holistic view of a painting motif, but to define clear steps for painting that made practice easier. As will be discussed below, it was this lack of pragmatism in Wu's rhyme that most likely led Ming editors to abridge it before including it in the encyclopedias. The attribution of the texts to Yang Buzhi, who was admired for establishing the strong connection between motif and expression, thus seems even more jarring. However, when the name is regarded merely as a mnemonic reference for the motif of the plum blossom, Yang Buzhi's fame and association to the motif justify the connection.

Motifs that did not have a long tradition or a strong connection to a certain name were often presented as anonymous by the editors. During the 1550s, Gao Song 高松, whose life and calligraphy manual are discussed in chapter 2, composed formulas with a more direct and practical approach. In his painting manuals on birds and chrysanthemums, he highlights the pedagogical use of the rhymes and of painting steps. Gao's compositions are simple and provide clear instructions, allowing editors to include them verbatim in the encyclopedias. Gao's rhymed formulas were reprinted in encyclopedias well into the 19th century, attesting to their perceived practicality.

Although the modesty permeating the prefaces of Gao's works betrays his scholarly background, his manuals were based on his personal experience as a professional painter and teacher. As discussed in chapter 2, he expressed a clear conceptual shift toward the valorization of practical knowledge in the preface he wrote for his calligraphy manual. Albeit less elaborate in content,

[427] Anecdote included under section "On Plum" (*meishuo* 梅說). Shimada. 1988. *Shōsai baifu*, 67-68.

the prefaces for his manuals on birds and chrysanthemums adopt a similar tone, highlighting the importance of disseminating basic practical instructions for the further development of an art and downplaying the author's own identity in relation to the content. Gao believed that is was crucial to develop basic skills before developing a personal style. This skill-oriented approach made it easier for Ming editors to appropriate parts of his work without making changes, as they shared his attitude.

Gao Song's painting manuals, of which one on bamboo, one on chrysanthemums and one on birds are still extant, differ from previous works due to the relatively small portion of text in prose and the focus on rhymes. His bamboo manual is a revised version of the painting sections from Li Kan's manual mentioned above. While most of the texts were originally composed by Li Kan, Gao restricted his contributions to summaries and rhymes appended to each section.[428] The reader of his manual would, for example, be able to grasp the twenty-eight pitfalls of bamboo painting at a glance, and recite the relevant rhyme so he knew what to avoid while painting, all without having to check a lengthy text. Gao's manuals on chrysanthemums and birds, which he authored himself, contained even less text.

The manual on chrysanthemums is constructed like a record (*pu*) of different kinds of chrysanthemum and presents numerous models for an aspiring painter to copy, accompanied by poems. However, unlike earlier *pu* that focused on the compilation of textual information on a subject, Gao focuses on the visual aspect of the flower and provides model poems that could be copied by the student to create complete compositions. Aside from the short preface and the poems, the manual includes only a short, rhymed formula on the steps for painting the flower. His manual on birds relies even less on text. It gives brief instructions in the two-page preface and then summarizes these same instructions in a short, rhymed formula, followed only by a set of illustrations.

In his formulas, Gao deconstructs the painting motifs into steps that are easy to follow, streamlining the construction process of the motif. His instructions on how to paint birds, for example, rely on the sequencing of actions:

[428] It is unlikely that the work currently attributed to Li Kan in the *Siku quanshu* was actually composed by him. One source indicates that besides the illustrations and rhymes, the text under the heading "Record on Painting Bamboo" (*Hua zhu pu* 畫竹譜) in Wang's edition was a preface by Gao Song, dated to 1549. It is recorded in Cui and Wang. 1673. *Chongxiu Wen'an xianzhi*, *juan* 3, 22a-23b. Compare to Wang. 1590. *Wangshi huayuan - buyi*, *juan* 2, 59b-60b.

When painting birds, start with the mouth; then place the eye by the beak.
The forehead is drawn around the eye; next come the shoulders and back by the cheek.
Add the wing feathers: a semi-circle, then large and small; a second row of longer strokes is the next thing to seek.
Add a last sharp stroke for the wing; for painting a tail feather, nothing beats a long streak.
In the back, add wings and plumes; in the front, add breast, belly and thigh, with a result oh so sleek!
Finally paint the feet either open or closed, and no more of it shall we speak!

翎毛先畫嘴，眼照上唇安，
留眼猫頭額，接腮寫背肩，
半環大小點，破鏡短長尖，
細細稍翎出，徐徐少尾填，
羽毛翅脊後，胸肚腿肫前，
臨了綽添脚，踏枝或展拳。[429]

Gao sought to present the practical steps for painting birds in the most straightforward and efficient manner. The formulas for chrysanthemums and birds were both accompanied by illustrations of the steps, which also enabled an illiterate public to engage the content of the work. In his prefaces, Gao shows awareness that his manuals might fall in to the hands of scholars, who could become exasperated with the 'base' content of his books: both close with protestations of modesty. In his manual on chrysanthemums he remarks:

I am aware that this [manual] only addresses a small matter, and that it will probably receive no attention from officials. I even fear that by

[429] This is a free translation that maintains the rhyme pattern of the original text. A translation closer to the original text can be rendered as follows: When painting birds, start by painting the beak. The eye is accordingly placed at the base of the upper beak. Around the eye, draw the forehead, continuing with the back and shoulders, which start at the cheek. Paint a feather shaped like a semi-circle, then large and then small dots, [followed by] a stroke in the shape of a crescent moon, then sharp strokes, short and long. Carefully paint a part of the wing showing; slowly add fine tail feathers. [Add] the feathers and wing behind the spine. [Add] breast, belly and thigh and buttocks in the front. Continue by adding the feet, [which can be] stepping on a branch, either open or grasping it. Gao. 1959b. *Gao Song lingmao pu*, 2a.

transmitting this, I will be laughed at. However, I still had it carved to ask for instructions from all in the realm. If by chance a learned gentleman were willing to correct me, he would have my gratitude.

自揣襪線之材，固不足以入縉紳之目邃，恐有貽笑於世傳々。姑以刻出，請教四海。倘遇博雅君子尚可規正者，則有所感焉。[430]

Nevertheless, a similar remark in his book on birds is followed by a more positive note encouraging the reader, regardless of his status, not to renounce the desire to learn:

I would be grateful to all in the realm who are wiser than me for their instructions. I am fond of the saying [by Confucius]: "If one is of an active nature and yet fond of learning, there is no need to be ashamed to ask and learn from one's inferiors."

感托四海大方家斤正。是愛嘗謂「敏而好學，不恥下問」而矣。[431]

These two concluding comments indicate that Gao was aware that his manual addressed a large audience. Interestingly, he states that one should not be ashamed to learn from those of lower rank or status, once again emphasizing that the identity of the reader should not be an obstacle in one's search for knowledge. Gao's two short prefaces are apologetic in nature, yet the aspirations to make greater claims about painting as a craft worth pursuing are clearly present. His modest tone indicates his familiarity with the scholarly discourse, yet he dismisses the connections to morality and emphasizes the value of practical skills.[432] Most of Gao's texts that were appropriated by the editors of encyclopedias make no reference to their creator and no other attribution is provided. Because Gao had already removed himself from the texts in order to bring the techniques to the

[430] Gao. 1959a. *Gao Song ju pu*, second page of preface, unnumbered.
[431] Gao. 1959b. *Gao Song lingmao pu*, 1b.
[432] Although Gao Song never earned a degree, he had been educated to take the examinations. It was common for scholars who made a living from painting to be apologetic, even if this was only to pay lip service to fellow scholars. The famous Ming painter Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470-1524), for example, claimed in a poem that painting was a means to survive without engaging in morally questionable activities. "I get up and paint a landscape of blue mountains to sell. It does not force me to earn sinful money among the people." Quote in Gu. 1831. *Yibaizhai shihua*, 8a-8b.

forefront, and even discouraged the reader to think in terms of status, his texts suited the intentions of encyclopedia editors. Encyclopedia editors embraced the process of forgetting authors and only made attributions to individuals when these had mnemonic functions, such as in the case or Li Kan and Yang Buzhi.

In the decades that followed Gao Song's publications and preceded the publication of the encyclopedias, commercial editors who published books and specialized manuals that dealt with practical knowledge seemed to take Gao Song's message to heart. Like Gao, they were very aware that publishing could potentially reach a very broad audience. Most importantly, however, they did not shy away from reaching out to people of different classes to obtain materials for their publications. While the texts authored by individuals provide a view of how elite painting motifs came to be appropriated in encyclopedias, compilations that collected materials from several sources offer a unique understanding of how craftsmen's knowledge could be disseminated for public consumption.

Editors and Craftsmen: Sharing Practical Knowledge and Benefitting Society

The varying relationships among authors, editors and publishers shaped the second group of sources from which content was incorporated into Ming daily-use encyclopedias. Publishers claimed their task was to spread knowledge that could, potentially, be used by someone else. Educated men involved in the printing industry believed that they could "recover what had been forgotten" and "bring what had been lost to light" again. The concern with practical knowledge being forgotten was a reaction to the ideas that had dominated scholarly discourses for more than two centuries.

Scholars believed that practical study was connected to the "investigation of things" (*gewu* 格物) that led to higher forms of understanding. As a form of self-cultivation, it was the foundation for moral conduct. This "investigation" did not mean, however, that scholars engaged in crafts, which they continued to disparage. Although practical knowledge was often perceived as useful and pursued to achieve higher goals, crafts were not among the topics that were to be studied in depth.[433] Mid-Ming editors

[433] Long before the Ming dynasty, numerous individual scholars justified the publication of expert knowledge by highlighting its usefulness. For example, the Song dynasty author of the *Kaogu tu* 考古圖, Li Gonglin 李公麟, argued that the investigation of antique bronzes was

realized that valuable knowledge was being forgotten, in large part because of the diminished value placed on crafts and the focus on canonical works. This prompted them to search for and disclose information on practices and crafts.

Although commercial editors did not author the contents of their compilations and might not have fully comprehended the content, their role went beyond preparing the books for print. The practical knowledge described in them did not necessarily speak to the editor or publisher as an individual, to his life or his experience, yet the prefaces of the three works I discuss below, written to introduce highly specialized knowledge to the reader, praise the potential uses of this knowledge in fostering morality and ordering society. Numerous editors claimed that tracking down useful knowledge and making it available to others was a worthy contribution to society in itself, going beyond the financial benefits tied to publication. Editors thus assumed responsibility for mediating the content and framing it within contemporary scholarly ideals, claiming that practical knowledge, too, was beneficial to society.

Although editors of late Ming encyclopedias took up such claims to a certain extent, a study of how practical knowledge was presented in these earlier sources reveals that during the mid Ming, printing came to be seen as a moral activity that served the greater good. In order to achieve this, however, editors and compilers of books had to interact with craftsmen to obtain their first-hand knowledge. It was only due to the efforts of these editors that the content eventually reproduced in encyclopedias became accessible at all.

The interaction of publishers with those who had authored the practical content created an environment, or an abstract 'zone,' that was conducive for the exchange of knowledge and interaction between less educated men, merchants and educated scholars who had been exposed to elite values. These exchanges, however, did not always take place without conflicts. The three mid-Ming books discussed here illustrate three different cases: how an unattributed manuscript was found and an editor took the

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necessary to understand the secrets of antiquity, which would, by extension, benefit the government. Weitz. 2015. "Privately Published Illustrated Books on Arts," 60. During the 12th century, the self-taught geographer Ni Pu 倪樸 claimed that expert knowledge and "the dedication to one art" had been essential to government since antiquity. He argued that knowledge on geography played a comparable role in the preservation of civilized society during his time. De Weerdt. 2015. *Information, Territory, and Networks*, 201-204. Parallel to such claims of 'public usefulness', authors also recorded specialized knowledge in collections of notes (*biji*), often justifying the compilation of specialized and practical knowledge along with anecdotes and personal accounts as a source for private distraction and enjoyment, as shown in Cong Ellen Zhang's study on literati's *biji.* Zhang. 2016. "Of Revelers and Witty Conversationalists."

initiative to disseminate the work; how a craftsman and an editor worked together to publish a work; and how one publisher connived to posthumously publish a work the author had refused to make public during his lifetime. In all three cases, the practical knowledge had already been recorded before editors and publishers became involved in its dissemination.

The discovery of an old manuscript that contained practical knowledge prompted Wu Ji 吳繼, the editor of the *Brief Record by Mo'e* (*Mo'e xiaolu* 墨娥小錄), to publish it in 1569:

> Things can be obscured, and come back to light again. They can vanish, and then reappear. One often hears of this happening. On a day of leisure, I came across this collection titled "*Brief Record by Mo'e*" when I was inspecting my bookshelves. [...] My friend and I both thought that this volume contained knowledge that was useful for the people's daily activities. [...] By following its instructions, which are written in simple language, the fool can comprehend and the clumsy can become skilled. Variety and breadth also offer a path to educating the world.
>
> 事有晦而復明，湮而復顯者，嘗聞之矣。余暇日撿篋藏書，偶及是集，名《墨娥小錄》。(...) 值容有訪余，出共閱之，以為民生日用所需甚悉。(...) 按簡應事，則愚可明，拙可巧；雜而廣之，亦覺世之一道也。[434]

He then begins to discuss the matter with his friend Rong, asking:

> "Can a short passage of text be put on the same level with the Classics? Can a single vase be put on the same level with a record of objects? Would this trivial material not be laughed at by great men?"
>
> 「懷片言而市墳典之門，甄小技而于才器之錄，寧無嗤於大方耶？」[435]

Upon which his friend tells him:

> "The manners of the common people have been regarded [by emperors] to order and govern them, thus, every single blade of cut

[434] Wu. 1569. *Mo'e xiaolu*, preface, 1a-1b.
[435] Wu. 1569. *Mo'e xiaolu*, preface, 1b-2a.

grass can be put to use. Su Xun (Su Shi's father) once said: '[Suppose] there are ten things under heaven. We can enumerate up to nine of them, but we do not truly understand a single one of them.' It cannot be said that we are very knowledgeable! In former times, the Duke of Zhou, who would not neglect small matters, reigned over the people. Confucius did not discard [this way] and would not neglect trivial activities. Why do you struggle with this?"

「民風者可以飭治，納蒭蕘者可以致用。蘇子云：「天下有物十焉。歷數之至於九，而不知其一。」非所以言大智。昔周公克勒小物，尼父不棄多能，至今為天下後世之大明。子何艱於此哉？」[436]

Wu thus comes to agree with his friend and concludes that it is indeed very beneficial to society to disseminate knowledge about skills. His closing statement provides a striking image of how he perceived his contribution to society and learning:

What has been obscured for a long time is now clear; what has been forgotten for long is now revealed. I only publish this book to contribute to the reconstruction of [an understanding of] nature's principles.

晦久而明，湮久而顯。夫亦理數之相成者歟！[437]

Rong convinced Wu Ji that every bit of knowledge can potentially be put to use, no matter how trivial it may seem. Citing the two sages who had gained clarity over the order of things and comprehended the Way—the Duke of Zhou and Confucius—as forerunners who valued the small and the trivial, no scholar could be ridiculed for also deeming them valuable. Wu Ji can thus confidently mention earlier encyclopedias as reliable sources of useful information and, more importantly, address the trivial and practical matters that were not contained in the previous compilations.

The preface alludes to the ongoing debate about the transmission of the *Dao* (*dao tong* 道統), in which scholars argued that they were the successors of the sages because they could interpret the classics. Yet, it also makes clear that these learned men felt that their social responsibility had

[436] Wu. 1569. *Mo'e xiaolu*, preface, 2a.
[437] Wu. 1569. *Mo'e xiaolu*, preface, 1b-2b.

been broadened. Educating the people was no longer merely a matter of interpreting the classics and regulating society, but about making knowledge available to everyone and thus motivating others to grasp the broader connections of the Dao through their actions. This differed from the earlier scholar-officials' understanding that one engaged in practical learning to achieve moral self-cultivation and inner virtue in order to regulate society.[438]

A similar approach was taken by the composer of the preface to *Apprenticeship in the Painting Business* (*Huishi zhimeng* 繪事指蒙), a record that covers every aspect of painting in minute detail. It explains the nomenclature for painting and types of strokes, provides detailed instructions, such as how to properly layer colors or gold application, and also provides recipes for mixing colors and model patterns intended to be used as decoration in depictions of deities. *Apprenticeship in the Painting Business* was published before 1509 by Zhang Chun 張春 (dates unknown),[439] who describes the regulating potential of painting in his preface and his interactions with a professional painter whom he could persuade of this idea:

> I believe that the art of painting is not a trivial matter, and that its function is to assist [in the upholding of the] Way. [...] The endeavors of the chess player and the pitch-pot player are difficult. However, the steps and rules of these activities have been defined, and [the conditions for] victory and defeat have been established. A dilettante has applied his brush to record them and transformed it into a book, thus preserving well these matters so that they would be transmitted without being lost. How come there is no such text to consult for the matters of painting? [...] If [the ancient painters] had not made [the principles of painting] known to others, the common people would not have been able to comprehend them on their own.
>
> 余觀畫之術非細務也，功能助道，非淺淺也。(...) 夫奕者、壺者，其事難已焉。可也其辨先後、决勝負，好尚者猶筆之成編，其事賴以存而傳無泯。孰謂繪畫而反無文之可稽哉！(...) 匪其不使知於人，而人自弗克知爾。[440]

[438] This stance became common during the Song dynasty and was even defended in examination essays. De Weerdt. 2007. *Competition over Content*, 356-357.

[439] Not much information could be found on the preface writer. There is no indication that he ever earned a high degree, yet he uses references from the classics, such as the Yijing, in his preface and mentions that he "recited lessons" as a child, indicating that he most likely had been educated to take the examinations.

[440] Hu and Zhang. 1596. *Huishi zhimeng*, preface, 1a

He continues to list all the virtues that different painted motifs can bring out in the viewer, and praises the importance of recording practical knowledge for the craft of painting:

> [This contribution in achieving the way,] how can it be taken lightly!? It is sublime! And if this art can be thusly praised, how can one dare to record it as a trivial matter? How could those who practice it [record it] in a sketchy and generalizing manner? To regard chess and pitch-pot to be in fact [mere] playful activities, how can this be truly so?!
>
> 豈淺淺乎，美哉！斯術之可尚者如此，庸敢以細務錄？攻斯者又詎可以率略為耶？視奕與壺誠為戲也，誠可已也？[441]

By making repeated allusions to the games of chess and pitch-pot, which were related to strategic thinking, mindfulness and ritual conduct,[442] the preface firmly establishes painting as an activity that is useful for regulating social customs and upholding moral values. Having established the value of painting, Zhang recounts how he himself had unsuccessfully attempted to understand its principles, but was later able to seize the opportunity to disseminate practical knowledge for the craft after a fortunate encounter:

> Since my childhood, during the breaks from reciting lessons, I was very fond [of studying painting], often lamenting that I could not understand its basics. And whether copying side by side or imitating, a hundred [copies] did not resemble anything. It even came to a tiger looking like a dog, and a hawk looking like a chicken. Not only was it an unpleasant sight, but also incredibly ludicrous.
>
> By chance I once met Master Zou from Zichuan in Wulin. Master Zou is a worthy recluse. His fondness [for painting] corresponds to mine, and he is an outstanding expert in this enterprise, making his living from it.

[441] Hu and Zhang. 1596. *Huishi zhimeng*, preface, 2a-2b.
[442] On the ritual significance of pitch-pot see, for example, Clart 2008. "The Concept of Ritual in the Thought of Sima Guang (1019–1086)," 244-248.

> 予自垂髫課誦之隙，亦頗鐘情於是，屢歎不得其門，而如臨摹、倣效，百不肖一。其至虎類狗、鸛儕雞，非惟不可觀，而深為可笑也。偶與淄川鄒公邂逅武林。鄒公隱君子也。嗜同於予，而業尤專，且衣飲藉以給。[443]

Zhang then describes the open exchange on technical matters between the professional painter Zou and himself, ending the preface by praising the craftsman for having the courage to share his knowledge and also making his own role as mediator explicit:

> Because, unfortunately, the professionals of our time, even if they have had such insights, resolutely hide these without revealing them–afraid that the people might know and anxious that people might transmit them–and even if they do transmit them, they are also ridiculed and ruined by their colleagues. When we see the book that Mister Zou is presenting to the crowds, will he not also be disgraced? Thus, this deed of Mister Zou, how can it not be an act of benevolence?[444] I dare to express my opinion in the preface, and ahead of the rest, I collected and organized [the content] and requested it to be carved on woodblocks. This should allow the one who studies it to easily investigate it, and also circumvent [the situation in which] chess and pitch-pot are the only activities for which there are writings, while practitioners of painting can only accept the fact that no books [for them] exist.

> 因歎今之業斯者，或有所見，無不堅匿深韜，恐人之或知，慮人之或傳；甚至傳之，亦為同列訕毀。見鄒公君之書公於眾人，得無恥歟？顧鄒君之行，得非仁者之一事歟？余敢序意，冠諸集端而請梓之。使攻斯者便其攷，且毋使奕、壺得專有其文，而繪事者甘無其書也。[445]

In this anecdotal account, Zhang portrays the act of sharing knowledge as a social contribution–a virtuous act of Confucian benevolence. He illustrates how craftsmen considered their practical knowledge to be valuable secrets of their trade. However, in his portrayal of the situation, such unwillingness to share practical information that was indisputably beneficial

[443] Hu and Zhang. 1596. *Huishi zhimeng*, preface, 2b.
[444] Zhang. [1509?]. *Huishi zhimeng*, preface, 1a-3a.
[445] Hu and Zhang. 1596. *Huishi zhimeng*, preface, 2b-3a.

to society and helped maintain social order was a sign of pettiness. Those who took the brave step to reveal such knowledge and were willing to benefit others, despite the danger of being mocked by other craftsmen, should be praised for this worthy deed. Thus, Zhang's own initiative to mediate this knowledge should, following his logic, also be understood as rooted in benevolence.

Zhang perceived painting itself as an activity of moral value, compared to other practices related to ritual conduct. Thus, to fulfill this potential, it should be conducted with utmost care in accordance with rules and regulations. Zhang claims that in order to succeed in painting, it is "necessary to investigate all the principles under heaven" (*tian xia zhi li, bu ke bu ge* 天下之理，不可不格), implying that Zou succeeded in capturing the principles in his practical instructions that are now being shared with the reader. The use of the term "investigate" (*ge* 格) in the statement also indicates that this was no longer understood as an activity to cultivate one's morality through study as had been originally associated to the "investigation of things" (*gewu*) in the Song, but that knowledge gained from different activities and fields could be beneficial to society in a broader sense.[446] Thus, the craft of painting could also be perceived as a regulating activity that was beneficial to both individual and society.

This joint effort and the 'social sacrifice' undertaken by both Zhang and Zou reveal that the goal of disseminating these rules and practical instructions could be shared by both educated and less educated groups. However, there was not always a consensus on the benefits of sharing knowledge, as Zhang hints at in his description of craftspeople who refused to share their secrets.

In 1592, Weng Ang 翁昂 published the *Secret Essentials of Portraiture* (*Chuanzhen miyao* 傳真祕要), a manual on portraiture that he had not authored himself, but rather 'seized.' Weng heard that a friend of his who excelled at painting, Wu Yuebo 吳月波, kept a manuscript manual on the techniques for portraiture hidden at home. However, the old painter would

[446] Wang Yangming also addressed the "investigation of things" in connection to *li* 理 , but denies it to be the engagement of things outside of the mind. Instead, he refers to *ge wu* as "rectification of thoughts," understanding *wu* as objects within the mind. He believes that the principle of heaven permeates all things and the mind, and can thus be grasped through reflection. Yet, knowledge gained from reflection can only be extended through action, which he considers to be superior. Tien. "Metaphysics and the Basis of Morality," 303-305; 312. Elman associates the implications of this shift in Ming thinking towards an extension of knowledge "whether moral, textual or worldly" to the encyclopedias. 2007. "Collecting and Classifying," 133.

not allow anyone to see the book, protecting the secrets of his craft. It was only when Yuebo passed away that Weng Ang finally saw the opportunity to negotiate with the painter's son for the chance to look at the manuscript. The son handed the manual to Weng, who had it carved and wanted to publish it under his own name, without mentioning the painter. If Weng's hired editor, Hu Wenhuan 胡文煥 (fl. 1592-1613), had not recorded these events in a postface appended to the treatise, the fact that Weng was not the author of the book would probably never have come to light. Hu had been having doubts about Weng's authorship, so one day he decided to confront him about it. Weng then explained to him how he came across the book, telling the story of his exchanges with Wu Yuebo and Wu's son.[447]

Despite the painter's reluctance to share his notes and provide Weng with specialized knowledge, Weng eventually managed to publish them, and just as Wu Ji and Zhang Chun had done, the editor Hu Wenhuan praised the social functions of portraiture in his preface to the printed edition. He described the transmission of specialized knowledge as crucial for the fulfillment of the social function of portraiture: Because verisimilitude played a central role in capturing the spirit of the sitter, only the painter who mastered the technical challenges was able to properly practice filial piety. The postface by Hu is a rare record of how knowledge that was in fact kept secret was suddenly made available to the public—a decision that was not taken by the author, but by someone who saw the dissemination of the content as profitable and beneficial to society. Benefiting the reader and society was a common trope used in prefaces to praise the contents of the book.[448] The frequent use of this trope by Ming editors to justify the publication of a work was nonetheless tied to the specific context and goal of the publications.

The Ming witnessed the appearance of educated men who may not have fully comprehended the matters at hand, but actively included the expert or the craftsman into their publishing enterprise. Craftsmen were prompted to share their knowledge on the grounds that it would benefit society, transforming the printing industry into something that could be called

[447] Weng and Hu. 1603. *Chuanzhen miyao*, postface, 3a.

[448] Literary encyclopedias of the Song, for example, claimed that their beneficial role was to enhance the reader's writing skills. De Weerdt. 1994. "Aspects of Song Intellectual Life," 16.

a 'trading zone.'[449] It created an environment conducive to the exchange of knowledge and interaction between less-educated men and highly educated scholars who had been exposed to elite values, such as in the case of Zhang Chun and the painter Zou.

The editors, men who had a high level of education but who often held a low scholarly degree or none at all, played a mediating role in disseminating this knowledge by relating the content to elite values. Editors praised the craft for its potential to foster virtues in the painter and in the viewer, thus bringing it into consonance with Confucian moral standards. They also pointed out that the knowledge of practical matters was a boon to all scholars desiring to become more like the sages, since both Confucius and the Duke of Zhou advised against dismissing such knowledge. Practical matters, which had long been ignored by learned scholars, should once more be valued for their potential to regulate and order the world. The mediators, who claimed the responsibility for disseminating this beneficial knowledge, portrayed themselves as selfless figures, as teachers of society—whether they had obtained this knowledge from craftsmen by will or by force.

Through their prefaces, editors harmonized the practical content of the manuals with Confucian ideals, presenting knowledge that would have been considered base within a scholarly discourse and regarded as secret by craftsmen to a broad audience of readers. Their publications, editors believed, would reinstate the value of crafts that had long been neglected by scholars and thus forgotten. Their positive presentation of crafts surely influenced later scholars, such as Song Yingxing 宋應星 (1587-ca. 1666), who also came to perceive knowledge of crafts as equally beneficial to society as other forms of knowledge.[450] This endeavor to bring knowledge created by authors of low and high status into equilibrium was taken even further by the editors of encyclopedias, who mined works concerned with practical knowledge for content to be included in their own compilations.

[449] The term is borrowed from Pamela Long's theory on the dynamics of interactions of craftspeople and artisans with more educated scholars and scientists in early modern Europe. Long. 2011. *Artisan/Practitioners and the Rise of the New Sciences.*

[450] Schäfer has conducted a thorough study on Song's work, *Exploitation of the Works of Nature* (*Tiangong kaiwu* 天工開物), and the cultural context in which it was composed. On the benefits of knowledge of crafts, see Schäfer. 2011. *The Crafting of the 10,000 Things,* 87-88.

Summarizing and Rhyming Practical Knowledge for Encyclopedias

The juxtaposition of unrelated texts and views on facing pages in encyclopedias was quite common. Editors created no hierarchy of texts or values within their sections, often flattening the framework of elite knowledge. They adopted a seemingly uncritical attitude when it came to layout, giving the reader the option to follow the content according to his or her own needs.[451] That did not mean, however, that editors did not pay attention to *how* these diverse ideas were presented.

Unlike authors of specialized manuals, editors of Ming encyclopedias refrained from including long theoretical texts about painting in their compilations. Instead, they offered overviews to enable the reader to get the gist of the methods for painting a specific motif at a glance. Even the longest prose texts in the painting section were, in fact, summaries, often titled *jue* 訣. Rhymed formulas or prose summaries, both called *jue*, were often composed to facilitate the recitation of the content, presenting the key issues discussed elsewhere. The term *jue* had been in use to describe practical matters long before the Ming. Just as in the fields of calligraphy, law or mathematics, practical knowledge of painting was frequently transmitted via summaries and rhymed instructions. One early example of a craft-related matter being summarized in a rhyme is presented in the section on brushes in Su Yijian's (958-997) *Record on the Four Treasures of the Study* (*Wenfang sipu* 文房四譜). After providing numerous quotes on how to craft a brush, he records how school children (*xiaoxuezhe* 小學者) of his time are taught a four-phrase formula (*siju koujue* 四句口訣) to identify a well-crafted brush: "[A brush should have] a stiff core and fine covering bristles, [with a tip] pointy as an awl and [bristles] even like a chisel."[452] The formula summarizes key issues that are mentioned in earlier quotes, providing these criteria in a rhymed format for school children to recite and memorize. Editors of encyclopedias sought to reproduce this format in their overarching compilations and preferred to present content in a condensed format.

They often included the accessible summaries penned by earlier authors verbatim in their encyclopedias. Gao Song's rhymes from his manuals on chrysanthemums and birds, for example, were appropriated without alterations. Gao's rhymes were also reproduced in a number of later painting

[451] Shang. 2006. "The Making of the Everyday World: *Jin Ping Mei cihua* and Encyclopedias for Daily Use," 73.
[452] Su. 1782. *Wenfang sipu*, juan 1, 14b.

manuals published during the Ming, such as the *Extensive Documents from the Secluded Residence* (*Yimen guangdu* 夷門廣度) published by Zhou Lüjing 周履靖 in 1597.[453] Unlike the encyclopedia editors, Zhou adapted the content created by Gao before including it in his own publications. Just like them, however, Zhou mentioned neither the source nor its author.[454]

Reformulating and compressing the content of earlier texts was common practice among editors and compilers of specialized manuals. However, earlier manuals did not attempt to present a coherent view of painting, focusing only on specific motifs. Hu Wenhuan, editor of Weng Ang's 1592 *Secret Essentials of Portraiture* mentioned above, appended his own summary (*zongkuo* 總括) to the end of the volume, indicating that he had authored this part. He compressed the content of the entire volume, including the prose *jue* on portraiture by the Yuan painter Wang Yi, into one page, writing in plain and accessible language and structuring the text into phrases of ten characters that all end on an *-ong* rhyme (*tong* 通, *qiong* 窮, *zong* 崇, etc.). Hu claims in the last two phrases of the rhyme that whoever manages to keep his secret formula (*mijue* 秘訣) in his breast (i.e. mind), will surely succeed in portraiture.[455] This closing statement makes explicit the author's intention to render the content of the entire manual in a format that is short and easy to memorize.

Editors of encyclopedias took similar liberties in their editing of the content and abridged transmitted sources in order to harmonize the format of the content. One example that illustrates how they adapted the wording to produce a rhyme is the mnemonic formula for portraiture edited for inclusion in encyclopedias. In the *Secret Essentials of Portraiture*, one graph depicts a

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[453] Although Zhou published his *Forest of Paintings* (*Hui lin* 繪林) around 1580 as a stone-carved edition, with material that was later included in the 1597 "Groove of Paintings" (*Hua sou* 畫藪—the section on painting in his *Yimen guangdu* 夷門廣牘), there is no indication that the texts by Gao Song or his illustrations were featured in the earlier *Forest of Paintings.* In the *Yimen guangdu* Zhou collects 42 inscriptions by friends and acquaintances that praised his stone-carved edition. It was conceived as an equivalent to the imperially commissioned *Calligraphy Models of the Chunhua Reign* (*Chunhua getie* 淳化閣帖 *Chunhua getie*)—as a book that perpetuated models of ancient paintings (according to Zhou's imitation of them). This issue has been addressed in Park. 2012. *Art by the Book,* 62-64.

[454] Wang Chang'an, who compared the two manuals on bamboo published by Gao and Zhou, believes that Zhou's rendition of the material affected the content negatively, claiming that Zhou seemed not to have "completely understood" the principles of bamboo. Wang's analysis is mainly based on the rendition of the illustrations. Wang. 1958. *Gao Song zhupu*, 175-176. Zhou's version of the instructions on how to paint birds takes its core from Gao Song's text, including his rhymed formula in a new context.

[455] Weng and Hu. 1603. *Chuanzhen miyao*, 16a-b.

man in a three-quarter profile with a beard and mustache wearing a scholar's cap and robe.[456] Two lines of text run down the right side of the image. The first eight characters of the caption read "*heng fen wu yan, zhi xia san ting*" 橫分五眼，直下三停: Horizontally, divide into five eyes; vertically, measure three planes. In the *Secret Essentials of Portraiture* this opening statement is followed by an explanation that spells out how to measure these proportions: Horizontally, one should measure five equal parts that correspond to the size of one eye; vertically the face is divided into three even sections [Fig. 5.3].

This graph and its caption reappear in various later encyclopedias. However, both seem to have been adapted. Although the illustrations in the encyclopedias vary according to the edition, they all depict a frontal view of a man with a scholar's cap and robe, with a portraiture rhyme in two lines flanking the image. The first line in the *Pearls from the Sea of Learning* [Fig. 5.2 k] is almost identical to the first eight characters of the manual, reading "*heng fen wu yan, zhi tui san ting*" 橫分五眼，直推三停. Only one character has been changed, but a new line was added to match the first: "*ba fa si zheng, xuan wu tong ming*" 八髮四正，玄武通明. The content of the additional line only reaffirms the common belief that the face was a mirror of, or equivalent to, the cosmos, the basic idea behind physiognomy, which does not enlighten the reader about any additional practical moves. The rhyme can be translated as follows:

> Horizontally, divide into five eyes;
> Vertically, measure three planes.
> Consider the eight directions [i.e. heaven] and the four quadrants [i.e. earth],
> thus, the entire cosmos [i.e. the face] [the rhyme] explains!
>
> 橫分五眼，直推三停。
> 八髮四正，玄武通明。[457]

[456] Weng and Hu. 1603. *Chuanzhen miyao*, 18a.

[457] It is unlikely that the character *fa* 髮 is to be understood according to its basic meaning as "hair." Portraiture manuals published up to the end of the Ming dynasty do not focus on the depiction of hair, beard or mustache. In fact, when establishing the proportions of the face, the hair is regarded as being 'outside' of the face, and the proportions were meant to apply to both men and women. Although it is not entirely clear why the character *fa* is used here, the term most likely carries the meaning of "root" (*gen* 根) in this context, as reference to the eight basic trigrams of the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing*). These were ordered in a circle on the eight directions to determine the annual cycle according to the changing winds. This interpretation is in accordance with the other terms used in the rhyme. In popular belief,

It seems that the editors of the encyclopedia appropriated existing material, abbreviated its content, and created a rhyming text. The same rhyme appears in other editions in a slightly different version. The first two lines remain unchanged, but the reference to heaven is now given by a different term. Instead of the Eight Directions, this rhyme uses the term Six Diagonals (*liuxie* 六斜) to describe heaven, making reference to the six diagonal pairs within the celestial circle.[458] This line was added to form a rhyme, an effort to reformulate knowledge to make it easier to recite and retain. This in turn made the content more accessible, even to an illiterate audience.[459]

Another text that was cut and adapted in the encyclopedias is the formula for painting plums, contained in Wu Taisu's plum blossom manual described above. The original rhyme begins with the statement that "the method for painting the plum is rooted in nature" (本天然). After a few passages on how the strokes should be modulated and how the twigs and branches vary according to different growth stages, the rhyme reads:

> The stamens are like the whiskers of tigers; the blossoms weep dew or hold mist in their cups as if they were wailing and lamenting. They can stand the snow and the freezing cold. Some open big, some small; some stand upright, others lean more or less towards the side. They announce the very beginning of spring. Blushingly they turn away their shapes and smiling faces from the sun. They spread wide open, and then begin to fade—they are the very first harbingers of early spring.[460]

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xuanwu, the black turtle, represented the cosmos. The turtle's shell, with its round top and a flat bottom, resembled the Chinese understanding of a domed heaven and flat earth. See Allan. 1991. *The Shape of the Turtle,* 104. Similarly, the eight heavenly winds that blow from the cardinal directions stand for the round heaven and the four quadrants of the earth. In similar encyclopedias published during the Ming, the third line of the rhyme reads *liuxie sizheng* 六斜四正, in which the Six Diagonals also stand for heaven, as a reference to the six pairs of earthly branches, which would be ordered in a circle and be connected through diagonals going across the circle.

[458] The variations in the rhyme, which do not affect the content, could also indicate that at some point the rhyme was circulating orally in two different versions.

[459] Rhymed text makes the content more accessible to the reader of low literacy due to its repetitive structure, and also allows an illiterate person to memorize it with ease. Didactic texts for children, such as the *Thousand Character Essay* (*Qian zi wen* 千字文) were rhymed to facilitate recitation.

[460] Translation by Sirén, 1956. *Chinese Painting*, pt. 1, vol. 2, 157.

The encyclopedias truncated the original rhyme, which was composed of 70 phrases of four characters, to comprise only 14 phrases [Fig. 5.4]. Only the initial statements about the painting manner were retained, while the core part that focused on the qualities of branches and blossoms, partially cited above, was discarded. The version contained in several Ming encyclopedias reads as follows:

> The method for painting plums has its roots in nature.
> Use concentrated ink, being thick and plenty; when lowering the brush, be unrestrained.
> One cannot eliminate mistakes; do not attempt to mend them.
> The brushwork must have strength; one should not hesitate nor falter.
> If [your posture is] misaligned or leaning towards one side: urgently seek to correct that.
> If the hand and the mind are in consonance, you will be able to create mystery within mystery!
> This is the secret formula, be careful not to transmit it recklessly.
>
> 寫梅之法，性本天然。
> 醮墨濃飽，下筆放顛 。
> 不可去朽，不可在填。
> 筆勢有力，莫怯遲延。
> 倘歪斜側，急救無偏。
> 心手相應，玄之又玄。
> 此為秘訣，慎勿輕傳。[461]

The Ming formula retains the original introduction of the rhyme, and despite minor alterations, presents the same general instructions on the use of ink and brushwork for painting the plum blossom. It adds generic comments on posture and on consonance of mind and hand, which were not specific to plum painting and often repeated for other motifs. The formula ends with a warning, also present in the original, to memorize it accurately and transmit the knowledge responsibly.

The formula in Wu Taisu's plum manual does not emphasize the division of steps or practical instructions; rather it functions as a text that should be committed to memory so the principles of nature, present in the painting of the plum, can be reflected upon or visualized during meditation. As

[461] *Xinke hanyuan guangji buding simin jieyong xuehai qunyu*. 1607. Juan 17, 5b-6a.

illustrated above, Wu describes the plum as representing the cosmic forces of Yin and Yang; repeating the rhyme in the mind could incite reflection and contemplation on this relation between cosmos and craft, which could lead the painter to gain new insights through meditation on the motif.[462] However, the truncated Ming formula retained only the instructions on the use of ink and brushwork. Thus, the editors of the encyclopedias discarded the complex analogies and the discussion on variation and balance, substituting these with generic comments on posture to make the rhyme shorter and simpler. This was their true contribution to the promotion and dissemination of practical knowledge.

During the Ming, the content of earlier works was adapted to become more pragmatic and focus on practical steps, such as in Gao Song's rhyme for painting birds. These new works did not aim to incite further contemplation. Instead, they catered to the needs of a broader public that did not necessarily share the desire to meditate, but rather hoped to engage in a profitable or enjoyable activity. No truly new texts were produced, however; editors adapted older works to make them accessible to the new audiences the editors hoped to engage. Simpler, rhythmic language and less complex texts indicate their desire to also reach semi-literate readers. Taking advantage of trends in popular oral culture, the editors recast elite and specialized knowledge in short and catchy rhymes.

Publishers hoped to disseminate the content, without necessarily indicating its source and probably without ever mastering the content or understanding all of its subtleties. Once practical knowledge was effectively divorced from the practitioner who had recorded it, its form was no longer sacred. Editors embraced the opportunities to depersonalize knowledge through print, believing this would benefit a more varied audience.[463] Publishers, whose expertise lay in marketing and not in painting, reframed the knowledge offered in the original text, as the intended audience was no longer elites who valued the subtle connections of the motifs to moral values and self-cultivation. Editors provided instructions to develop skills, bringing together elite motifs that were imbued with the notion of self-cultivation,

[462] The role of memorization in the attainment of a deeper understanding of complex topics, as a form of meditation, was also advocated by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200). McLaren. 1998. *Chinese Popular Culture and Ming Chantefables*, 75.

[463] McDermott makes a similar claim for Qing scholars who attempted to create a "community of learning" of literate men who shared interests. McDermott. 2006. *A Social History of the Chinese Book*, 119.

such as bamboo and plum blossom, with practices that were regarded as craft, such as portraiture.

After a number of editing stages, texts composed by the elite found their way into the encyclopedia, which further simplified what was already presented in summaries within painting manuals. By abbreviating and adapting existing texts, editors were able include more information in less space. The rhymed format of the formula was a result of a continuous process of summarizing (or editing) and of the publishers' aim to make knowledge more accessible. With the growing market for practical guides, the use of rhymed formulas increased.

This indicates that even though these texts were rhymed, they did not necessarily originate in oral culture. Converting prose text into songs and rhymes was also not driven by an esthetic concern. Rather, the intentional adoption of this format was related to its didactic capabilities. Rhymes, the use of colloquial language and the presentation of schematic flow-charts were adopted as methods to better transmit the content.

Rhymes and songs were a proven method to both disseminate knowledge and to teach language among illiterate audiences. During the Ming, they were also used in novels and plays to present useful knowledge to the audience.[464] They made it easy to absorb practical steps and remember the content even in the absence of a book. This was especially useful for practical activities that required undivided attention and demanded physical involvement. The use of versified content in encyclopedias was pervasive, addressing all sorts of common activities. Along with songs in the sections on painting and calligraphy, which included not only Gao Song's rhymes but also the *Hundred-Rhyme Song*, discussed in Chapter three, as well as the *Thousand Character Essay* or the *Hundred Surnames* in different types of scripts, the reader could recite knowledge on pressing oil, avoiding common crimes, physical labor, mathematics and even current political issues.[465]

Flow-charts that presented blocks and components for the reader to compose his own texts were another common feature throughout the different sections of encyclopedias. Taking these as a basis, the reader could

[464] Schonebaum discusses the use of rhymes and songs in novels for transmitting medical knowledge. 2016. *Novel Medicine*, 81-96.

[465] Liu. 2006. *Mingdai tongsu leishu yanjiu*, 136; 144; 168-69. Bréard has addressed the use of rhymes in mathematical treatises and in daily-use encyclopedias. 2014. "On the Transmission of Mathematical Knowledge in Versified Form in China;" 2010. "Knowledge and Practice of Mathematics in Late-Ming Daily-life Encyclopedias."

compose poems, letters and even legal claims.[466] Although no flow-chart is provided in the painting section, these were most likely also produced by the compilers of the encyclopedias, once again showing the editors' practice-oriented attitude.[467]

While editors made sure that the reader would remember the content of distinct sections by reformulating it and presenting it in accessible formats, the individual sections and topics were not divorced from the broader framework of the encyclopedias. When the painting content is scrutinized in terms of layout and distribution, it becomes clear that individual sections were not perceived as distinct fields of knowledge.

Remembering the Universe

In late Ming daily-use encyclopedias, painting practices that had been marginalized by the elites came to be included together with content from elite discourses. The editors of the encyclopedias modified and adapted the content to make it uniform and accessible to all potential readers. Their hopes of catering to members of all "four classes" were often expressed both in their sentence-long titles, such as the *Newly Carved Complete Book of Broad Reference, Convenient for the Four Classes to Engage in Independent Learning* (*Xinke simin bianyong buqiuren bolan quanshu* 新刻四民便用不求人博覽全書) or the *Newly Edited and Thoroughly Extended Complete Book of the Ten Thousand Treasures from the Exquisite and Intricate of the Forest of Scholars for Practical Use by All under Heaven* (*Xinban quanbu tianxia bianyong wenlin miaojin wanbao quanshu* 新版全補天下便用文林妙錦萬寶全書). Similarly, the jargon commonly used in their prefaces referred to the books as being "for the convenience of the four classes" and "for ready reference in the daily needs of the four classes."[468] Thus, the editors made their desire to cater to a broad audience patently obvious.

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[466] Liu. 2006. *Mingdai tongsu leishu yanjiu*, 22; 26; 155.

[467] In his analysis of the legal section of Ming encyclopedias, You Chenjun 尤陳俊 pointed out that the flow-chart has no counterparts in earlier manuals that specialize on legal matters. His findings were presented at the international symposium on Ming daily-use encyclopedias and historical research ("Mindai nichiyō ruisho to rekishigaku kenkyū" 明代日用類書と歴史学研究) at the Toyō Bunko on June 10, 2018.

[468] Lowry takes the "four classes" described in prefaces as the idealized audience of encyclopedias and discards previous assumptions that they were meant to merely peddle elite knowledge to the populace. 2005. *The Tapestry of Popular Songs*, 104. See Sakai for more examples of how the encyclopedias were presented to the reader. 1970.

This concern with the four classes and how each class could put the knowledge contained in an encyclopedia to use is described in one preface:

> The scholar can use it to serve the government. He can be entrusted with great concerns and also be knowledgeable in little matters; the farmer can use it in farming, becoming acquainted with the changes of the seasons and the products of the earth; the craftsman can use it for performing his skills; the merchant can use it for commerce.
>
> 士以之仕，可大受亦可小知。農以之耕，知天時亦知地利。工之所以奏技，賈之所以市倚。[469]

Prefaces often promised the reader that no daily activity would henceforth be challenging and that the reader no longer needed to seek help from anyone else.[470] In this specific example, the author indicates that the members of each class and of "all professions" (*bai jia* 百家) can select what is useful to fulfill their social functions and reap the benefits of its "infinte great uses" (*da yong zhi bu qiong* 大用之不窮). However, he provided a new view on the role of the scholar by adapting a passage taken from the *Analects*.[471] While the original text claimed that the scholar can be entrusted with great responsibilities, but may not be knowledgeable in small affairs, the preface suggests that the highly educated should also master small affairs. This inversion of the meaning of a canonical text shows the skepticism towards the idea that truth was only to be found in ancient books. Instead, the reader should seek the cosmic principle by becoming knowledgeable about all activities.

The preface to the *Newly Carved, Collated and Corrected Myriad Volumes of Celestial Patterns Containing the Treasures from the Forest of Letters for All Under Heaven by Master Yantai* (*Xinqie Yantai jiaozheng tianxia tongxing wenlin jubao wanjuan xingluo* 新鍥燕臺校正天下通行文林聚寶萬卷星羅) provides a similar statement about the importance of expanding one's knowledge beyond canonical texts. After listing the categories of the encyclopedia, the preface claims

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"Confucianism and Popular Educational Works," 334. Shang provides a translation of a preface excerpt. 2006. "The Making of the Everyday World," 68.

[469] *Xinke hanyuan guangji buding simin jieyong xuehai qunyu.* 1607. Preface, 3a.

[470] Liu. 2006. *Mingdai tongsu leishu yanjiu*, 108.

[471] Chapter 15:34.

> There is nothing that is not included; nothing that is not clear. It certainly is no different from the distribution of the stars [in the sky]. This publication is the universe in print. Gentlemen who are interested in this will find benefits within and without; advantages hidden and obvious; support in fortune and misfortune; resources when far or near; help in matters great and small. All matters between heaven and earth will be grasped within the breast. What difficulty will be left? Alas! This compilation is essential for everyone. Browsing it will benefit the world. The *Dao* is not contained within the Six Classics and Four Books. Those in this world who are insightful will recognize it as a treasure. Mother has told me: "Words that come from various sources can be compared to scattered stars: it is not only the sun and moon that fill the sky."
>
> 靡所不載，靡所不昭。信無異於星辰之羅。刋太虛也。君子而有心於斯，則內外有裨，隱顯有益，夷險有藉，遠近有資，巨細有補。兩間內事羅之胸臆。又何艱哉？嗟夫！是編最為生人之要。覽其有功於世。道不在六經、四子書下。有神識者盍知寶焉。母曰：「雜出之言僅比明星，而非日月之當天者。」[472]

The preface explains that the encyclopedia provides the reader the overview required to identify the greater principle that connects the universe, or *Dao*. The *Dao* is not only contained within the canonical texts of Confucianism, just as the sun and the moon are not the only lights in the sky. Instead, the unidentified author claims that the *Dao* permeates every matter and activity, which opposed the scholars' claim that the proper principle had to be recovered through the study of the canonical works. This alternative view expressed in the preface shows that, like with character miscellanea (*zazi)*, different classes consumed and perceived knowledge, as well as sources and fields of knowledge, differently.

Editors sought to promote their encyclopedias as works of great coherence and unity, in which each section was a vital part of the whole. At the same time, the preface states that the connecting principle underlying the organization of the encyclopedia was also linked to memorization. The comparison of knowledge to stars scattered in the night sky and the claim that the encyclopedia represented the entire universe are both connected to a person's breast, or memory.

Editors had adapted the format of the individual texts to make sure the

[472] Yu. 1600. *Xinqie Yantai jiaozheng tianxia tongxing wenlin jubao wanjuan xingluo*, preface, 1b.

knowledge was accessible and easy to retain. In order to achieve uniformity within the sections, editors made use of rhymes, summaries and visual models.[473] The format of the texts in the individual sections would thus support their bold claims that the reader would be able to learn on his own by using the encyclopedia. The editor's concern with unity, however, was not limited to individual sections. In fact, unity was the guiding ethos behind the organization of the entire encyclopedia.

The preface suggests that the reader should retain the entire order and categories presented in the encyclopedias in his memory, which together represent the celestial pattern. If the metaphor of celestial bodies is extended, the content is equivalent to scattered stars, while the sections are possible ways to delineate groups of stars in the firmament of knowledge. The sections in the encyclopedias could thus be understood as rough outlines for how to connect scattered information and practices. The cosmic coherence that connected all sections also mirrored the strong connection of practical knowledge to cosmological beliefs present in many of the formulas. In portraiture, for example, a man's face was compared to the three planes of Heaven, Man and Earth; in calligraphy, strokes were described through analogies to natural patterns.

The commercial quality of the encyclopedias often led to editions that may now appear chaotic. Not only did publishers put together volumes of different editions; one encyclopedia included information on painting in the calligraphy section; some had a separate "Bird Section," devoted only to painting birds but not included in the painting section; and one even included a list of a hundred types of chrysanthemums in its painting section, which probably would not have helped a painter to improve his skills in painting flowers.[474] Nonetheless, when the editors' intention to create coherent works is taken into account, it becomes clear that the unusual and apparently random placement of these contents within the encyclopedia is not merely a matter of chaotic production.

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[473] Liu has suggested that the visual mismatch between text and images in the encyclopedias did not affect the reader's comprehension because they were expected to combine the relevant information in the mind. 2006. *Mingdai tongsu leishu yanjiu*, 175.

[474] One example of a calligraphy section that contains painting texts and images is the *Xinke simin bianyong buqiuren bolan quanshu* 新刻四民便用不求人博覽全書 in the collection of the Hōsa Bunko. The additional bird section can be found in two editions. See Sakai et al. 2001. *Gosha Banpō Zensho*, vol 2, 43-60; and Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan. 2011. *Mingdai tongsu riyong leishu jikan*, vol 11, 88-92. The list of chrysanthemums is included in the earliest edition from 1596.

The edition that embedded painting knowledge in the calligraphy section primarily provides information on how to judge old works and how to care for painting scrolls, which also applied to works of calligraphy. While the section focuses on models for grass and seal script, all the painting motifs that are briefly introduced are types of trees and vegetation. These are described in terms of analogies, similar to those used for calligraphy, such as "silk threads" (*si* 絲), that alluded to connections between strokes, but are used to describe the shape of a willow tree's leaves. Similarly, the visual composition of characters, such as *ge* 个, was taken as reference for painting a cluster of bamboo leaves.[475] Because painting is discussed in terms of calligraphy, including it in this section does not disrupt the coherence of the work.

Editions that included a separate "Bird Section" reproducing Gao Song's step-by-step instructions on how to paint birds placed it after a section on husbandry and horses. The placement is justified through the association with other animals instead of the practice of painting. A similar reasoning could underlie the inclusion of a list of hundred types of chrysanthemums within the painting section. Although similar lists were sometimes included in a "Flowers and Grasses Section" (*huahui men* 花卉門),[476] knowledge of the types of flowers could be expected from painters, especially if the types carried different poetic allusions. All three examples show that practice and content related to painting could easily fit into other sections in an organized manner. While the "scattered stars" were present in the sky, the groupings of these celestial bodies within sections did not limit their relevance to a single field.

The concept of unity or universal coherence that, according to editors, bound the categories together helps explain how even marginal knowledge about painting gained through browsing an encyclopedia could have practical and beneficial uses. While a deep engagement with portraiture could have helped a merchant to express his filial piety and the practice of painting birds or chrysanthemums based on the encyclopedia's models might have allowed women or men who had no access to teachers to create paintings to be pasted on the walls in their homes, the general understanding of how painting

[475] Xiong. [n.d.] *Xinke simin bianyong buqiuren bolan quanshu* 新刻四民便用不求人博覽全書, juan 10, 19a-20b. The volumes of this edition are mixed. The first volume identifies "Mister Xiong" as the printer, but the volume referred to here seems to be from another edition. This copy can be found in the Hōsa Bunko.

[476] *Dingqie longtou yilan xuehai buqiuren* 鼎鍥龍頭一覽學海不求人, unnumbered volume titled *Xinke huixuan simin bianyong zhushu zhaijin wanjia cuanji* 新刻彙選四民便用諸書摘錦萬家璇璣, 5b-6b.

was produced and of the significance of the motifs could illuminate the reader about elite and commercial practices he was unfamiliar with, and help him comprehend the principle that connected all sections within the encyclopedia.

Conclusion

Painting motifs such as the bamboo and the plum underwent a process of codification from the Song dynasty onwards. Scholar-painters broke the painting experience down into its constituent elements – a procedure that played a key role in disseminating the conventions and values with which they had imbued these motifs. Authors of painting manuals of the Yuan and Ming continued to streamline the painting process of these and other motifs, further systematizing them into painting steps. The focus of Ming authors, as in the case of Gao Song, lay on the pedagogical function of the texts. They discarded metaphysical values as well as the focus on the scholarly persona, homogenizing knowledge from different levels of society, leaving it up to the reader to make use of the content as they pleased.

Alongside the codification process undertaken by authors as well as editors, the format for the transmission of the information also underwent changes, and this worked in two directions. Editors continuously summarized the textual descriptions of the motifs that literati painters had transmitted and presented them in a simpler language that aided rote memorization—a process that can be described as *simplification.* At the same time, they introduced texts composed by professional painters of lesser education to an educated public, and the writers of prefaces harmonized these texts with neo-Confucian ideals—a process which can be called *valorization.* Their prefaces show that they were actively searching for sources of practical knowledge in order to disseminate it through print.

Fujian-published daily-use encyclopedias from the Ming dynasty can be regarded as the next step in the process of transmission. Early sources from specialized textual genres, composed by both scholars and craftsmen, were brought together in encyclopedias without distinction. Content from all sources was subjected to alteration and often truncated into lists and rhymes, while the authorship of the texts was usually glossed over. Of course, the section on painting was only one among many in the encyclopedias. Aiming to provide a comprehensive view of their subjects, encyclopedias neglected the diverse contexts in which knowledge had been produced and ignored the possibly contradictory nature of the sources. The practice of summarizing not

only allowed encyclopedia editors to cover more content in fewer pages, but also to categorize this encapsulated knowledge and present a complete and overarching picture of knowledge from all fields combined, which helped the reader memorize the content and grasp connections between fields.

With the detachment of the editors from the content and their desire to present a unified view of painting knowledge that could potentially be used "by members of the four classes," mnemonic rhymes became a valued format that reflected broader social and cultural trends.[477] The heavy use of rhymed formulas, lists and summaries should be understood as an editorial choice, driven by the hope to give the reader the gist of a lengthy text or complex tradition. Even if the texts were rhymed and composed in a simple language, these qualities do not necessarily indicate that their sources originated in popular oral culture. Nor can the opposite be claimed, that the content is merely informative and presents elite ideals digested for the less educated.[478] Early publications that served as sources for the encyclopedias included books written by experts and professionals who received support from publishers or were coerced to publish their work by well-educated men engaged in the commercial publishing business. Thus, specialized knowledge from craftsmen and professionals could reach a larger audience.

The way in which publishers dealt with knowledge changed, and this also altered the social role of memory. Painting rhymes were composed to compress knowledge so it could be juxtaposed with specialized knowledge from other fields in one overarching compilation. By categorizing knowledge and creating functional blocks, the encyclopedia supported the reader in committing its contents and order to memory.

The instructions in the encyclopedias, which were extracted from other manuals, surely did not endeavor to provide the reader a complete picture of each topic. Editors sought to offer a broad selection of topics from which individual readers could choose the sections most relevant or interesting to

[477] Wu Huifang discusses the spread of literacy and the blurring of social classes. Wu. 2005. *Wanbao quanshu*, vol. 1, 30-36.

[478] Wang argues that the painting sections only offered 'chit-chat' material to the reader, who could make use of it during social gatherings. In her paper she contests the usefulness of the sources, claiming encyclopedias are merely commercial products. 2003. "Shenghuo, zhishi yu wenhua shangpin," 36-44. However, this theory is at odds with some of the contents. Although Ming encyclopedias were indisputably commercial publications, it is hard to imagine that a man who can list the correct sequence of strokes for painting a bird would impress a scholar. Scribbles and signs of use in encyclopedias also show that people had their brushes out while going through the sections and were not only browsing them casually.

them. One indication of the possible use of the painting manual section of such encyclopedias is that in the extant volumes from the Wanli period, the section on painting did not survive, while it is even more common for the calligraphy section to be lost.[479] It is likely that readers separated the volumes they used most from the rest, and these were eventually lost or damaged. Some of the painting sections also contain doodles made by readers, such as painting over the mustache of the printed portrait model, while other sections are profusely annotated and punctuated, revealing the reader's selective interests.

It is unlikely that the painting section provided enough guidance to make a master painter out of anyone, but it did give the reader a few crucial models and the key to deconstructing the traditional motifs into distinct elements. In this way, the careful reader gained a foundation from which to approach such motifs and an indication of how to decode them.[480] The information was brief and reduced to its essence but still eminently usable. In many ways, a Ming encyclopedia as a whole functioned in a similar manner as a painting manual that dissected the parts of the motifs it analyzed: the difference was one of scale.

The encyclopedia selected parts of the whole knowledge corpus and provided some information on each part. Knowledge was divided into different sections and summaries were provided as content. Editors decontextualized the texts by 'harvesting' them from the specialized sources, but at the same time embedded them in a larger context, a new "whole" or a "bigger picture." By ordering practical knowledge into the traditional categories and allowing the reader to engage the distinct parts through summaries, the encyclopedias helped the reader to acknowledge the broad corpus of existing knowledge, which not only reached beyond the classics and histories, but also beyond authorship.

[479] Of the thirty volumes that were viewed by the author and those recorded by Wu, 6 of the encyclopedias no longer have the volume on painting. 2005. Wanbao quanshu, appendix.

[480] Gombrich describes how painters in Europe were accustomed to begin a drawing with basic shapes, and adapt these as the situation required. They resorted to structural schemata and then developed their drawings into more complex images. Gombrich. 1972. *Art and Illusion*, chapter five. Painting manuals published in sixteenth-century Europe also used this strategy of "geometrical reduction" to instruct the reader. Heilmann et al. 2014. *Punkt, Punkt, Komma, Strich*, 150. Thus, providing the reader a deconstructed model of a motif could be enough to allow him to explore the potentials of such a model on his own.

Table 1: Headings of the painting section texts and **possible** earlier sources

Page	Upper Layer	Possible Earlier Source	Year	Pub. Area	Lower Layer	Possible Earlier Source	Year	Pub. Area
1a	觀畫訣法	新編纂圖增類群書類要事林廣記[1] also in 繪妙	±1330 1580	Fujian (re-ed.) Donghai/Jiangsu	畫山水賦	類箋唐王右丞詩	1524[2]	Xishan/ Jiangsu
1b	畫有六格 畫有八格 辨畫古今 古今名畫	新編纂圖增類群書類要事林廣記 新編纂圖增類群書類要事林廣記 墨娥小錄 新編纂圖增類群書類要事林廣記	±1330 ±1330 1571 ±1330	Fujian (re-ed.) Fujian (re-ed.) ? Fujian (re-ed.)	識畫訣法 畫分數科	宋朝名畫評 新編群書事林廣記	±1059[3] ±1330 (Song)	? Fujian (re-ed.)
2a-2b	山水論訣	王氏畫苑	1590	Jinling /Jiangsu	(landscape models)			
3a-5b	論寫山水訣	輟耕錄	1366	Songjiang (2nd ed. c. 1475)	(landscape models)			
5c	符熹應評畫 評說時畫 楊補之梅譜 寫梅談法	(rep.唐荊川先生稗編) also 新編纂圖增類群書類要事林廣記 新編纂圖增類群書類要事林廣記 松齋梅譜 松齋梅譜	1581 ±1330 ±1330 ±1351 ±1351	Donghai/ Jiangsu Fujian (re-ed.) Fujian (re-ed.) ? ?	(landscape model)			
6a	補之寫梅賦 寫梅病 梅有四貴 梅之貴格	松齋梅譜 松齋梅譜 松齋梅譜 松齋梅譜 (above also in 香雪林集 and 永樂大典)	±1351 ±1351 ±1351 ±1351 (±1555 1408)	? ? ? ?	(bird painting model)			
6b-7b	(plum models)	松齋梅譜	±1351	?	(bird painting model)			
8a	李息齋竹譜	based on 竹譜詳錄 (or 高松竹譜)	1299 (1549)	?	(scholar in landscape			

[1] Texts in the 新編纂圖增類群書類要事林廣記 are recorded in the 文藝類, which was a section added later to the Song edition of the 事林廣記.
[2] The text is often attributed to the Tang dynasty poet Wang Wei, and sometimes to the Five Dynasties painter Jing Hao.
[3] For a discussion on the dating of this work see Lachman. 1989. *Evaluations of Sung Dynasty Painters of Renown*, 3.

					model)			
8b	寫竹歌訣	based on 竹譜詳錄 (or 高松竹譜)	1299 (1549)	?	(scholar in landscape model)			
9a-10a	(bamboo models)	based on 竹譜詳錄 (or 高松竹譜)	1299 (1549)	?	(9a: scholar in landscape; 10a: horses)			
10b	Portraiture rhyme	based on 傳真祕要	1592	Hangzhou/Zhejiang	(deer model)			
11a	寫真秘訣	輟耕錄	1366	Songjiang (2nd ed. c. 1475)	(cranes model)			
11b-12b	彩繪法	輟耕錄	1366	Songjiang (2nd ed. c. 1475)	(11b:carp model; 12a-b: bamboo stances)	竹譜詳錄	1299	?
13a	合顏色紵絲 合顏色衣服	六如居士画谱[4] prob. based on 繪事指蒙	(Wanli reign) (before 1509)	? Hangzhou/Zhejiang	(plum views)	松齋梅譜	±1351	
4 pages	寫菊譜說 寫菊下手歌訣 菊花種名	based on 高松菊譜 高松菊譜 高松菊譜	1550 1550 1550	?	(Chrysan-themum models)	高松菊譜	1550	?
5 pages	寫翎毛下手口訣 (Bird models)	高松翎毛譜 高松翎毛譜	1554 1554	?	(Bird models)	高松翎毛譜	1554	?
13b	洗古書畫法	居家必用事類	±1333	?	(plum views)	松齋梅譜	±1351	?
14a-b	背書畫不瓦法 粘書畫軸法 收烘書畫法	便民圖纂 居家必用事類 居家必用事類	1544 ±1333 ±1333	Suzhou /JS ? ?	(plum 'poses')	松齋梅譜	±1351	?(Kuaji/ZJ)

◆ additional sections from the 1596 edition.

[4] According to Yu this work is not by Tang Yin, thus date is uncertain. Yu. 1968. *Shuhua shulu jieti*, juan9, 14b. Clapp comments briefly on its disputed authenticity. Clapp. 1991. *The Painting of T'ang Yin*, 16-17.

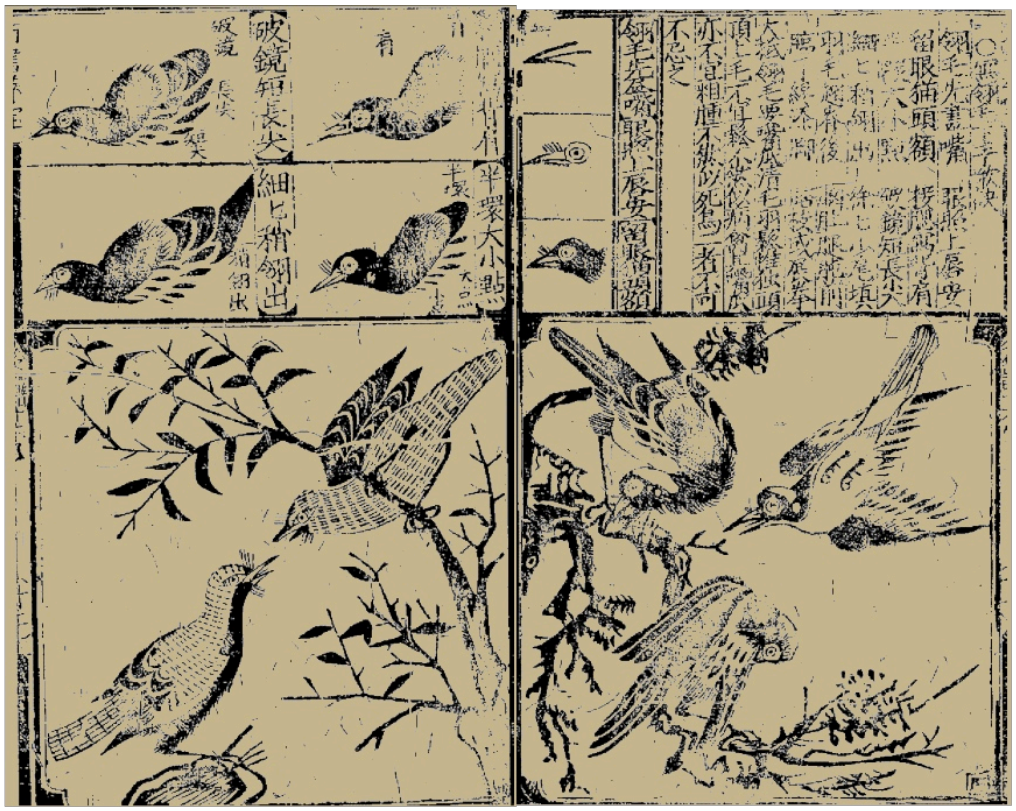


Fig. 5.1a Instructions on how to paint birds from the painting section of the 1596 edition of the *Assembled Treasures from the Ten Thousand Books.* Source: *Xinqie tianxia beilan wenlin leiji wanshu cuibao*, juan 16, 11b-12a. Erudition-Chinese Ancient Encyclopedia Database.



Fig. 5.1b Instructions on how to paint birds from the painting section of the 1596 edition of the *Assembled Treasures from the Ten Thousand Books.* Source: *Xinqie tianxia beilan wenlin leiji wanshu cuibao*, juan 16, 12b-13a. Erudition-Chinese Ancient Encyclopedia Database.



Fig. 5.1c Instructions on how to paint birds from the painting section of the 1596 edition of the *Assembled Treasures from the Ten Thousand Books.* Source: *Xinqie tianxia beilan wenlin leiji wanshu cuibao*, juan 16, 13b. Erudition-Chinese Ancient Encyclopedia Database.

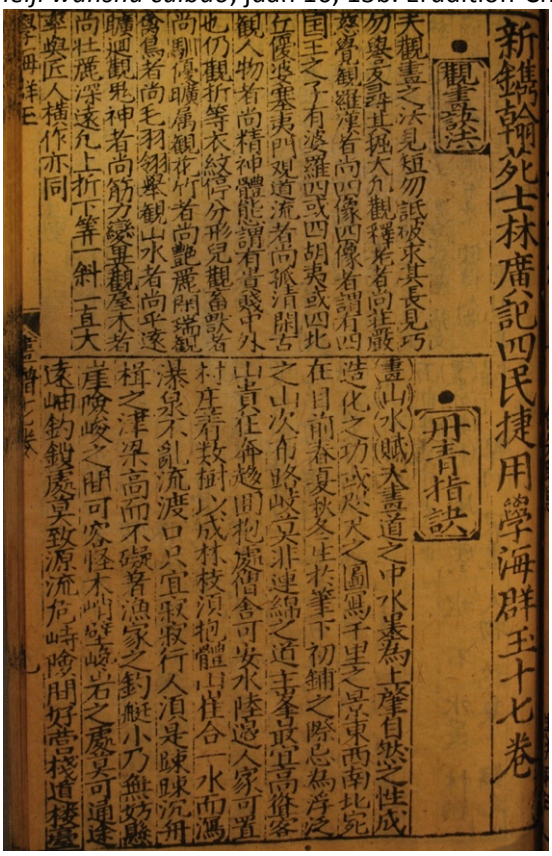


Fig. 5.2a The painting section of the *Pearls from the Sea of Learning*, published in 1607. Source: *Xinke hanyuan guangji buding simin jieyong xuehai qunyu*, juan 17, 1a.

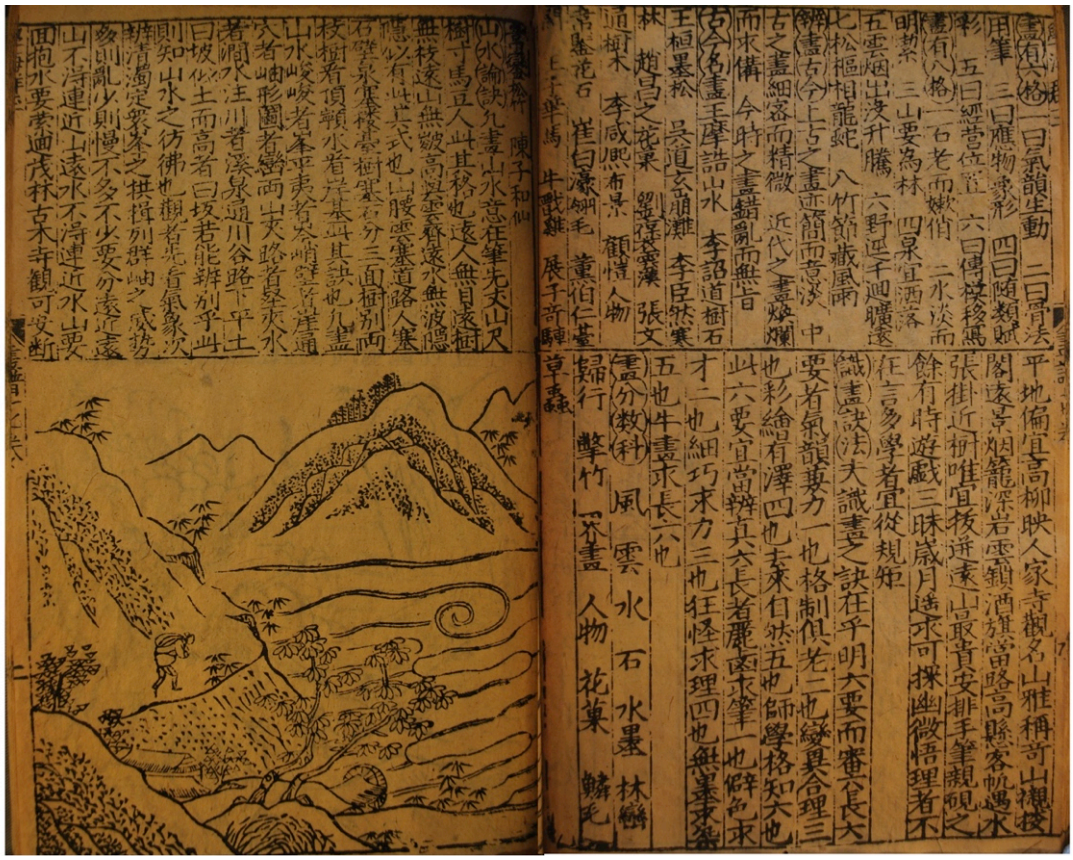


Fig. 5.2b The painting section of the *Pearls from the Sea of Learning*, published in 1607.
Source: *Xinke hanyuan guangji buding simin jieyong xuehai qunyu*, juan 17, 1b-2a.

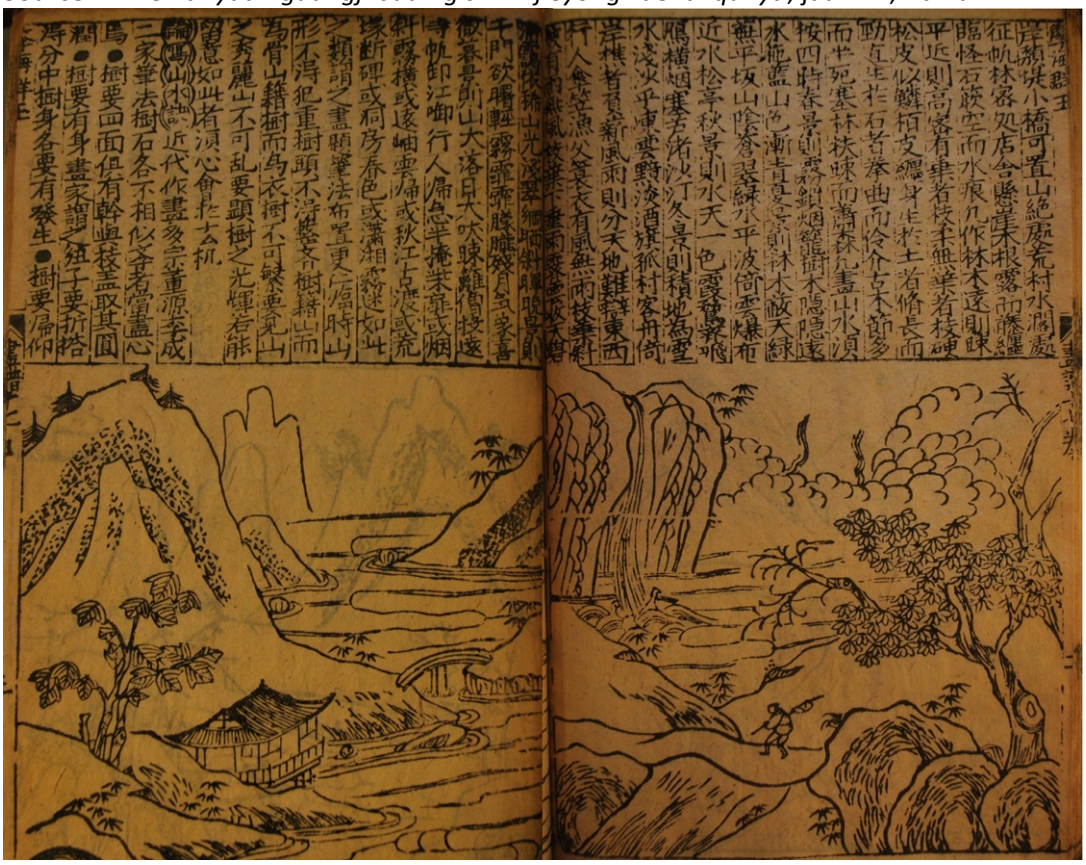


Fig. 5.2c The painting section of the *Pearls from the Sea of Learning*, published in 1607.
Source: *Xinke hanyuan guangji buding simin jieyong xuehai qunyu*, juan 17, 2b-3a.



Fig. 5.2d The painting section of the *Pearls from the Sea of Learning*, published in 1607.
Source: *Xinke hanyuan guangji buding simin jieyong xuehai qunyu*, juan 17, 3b-4a.



Fig. 5.2e The painting section of the *Pearls from the Sea of Learning*, published in 1607.
Source: *Xinke hanyuan guangji buding simin jieyong xuehai qunyu*, juan 17, 4b-5a.



Fig. 5.2f The painting section of the *Pearls from the Sea of Learning*, published in 1607.
Source: *Xinke hanyuan guangji buding simin jieyong xuehai qunyu*, juan 17, 5b-6a.

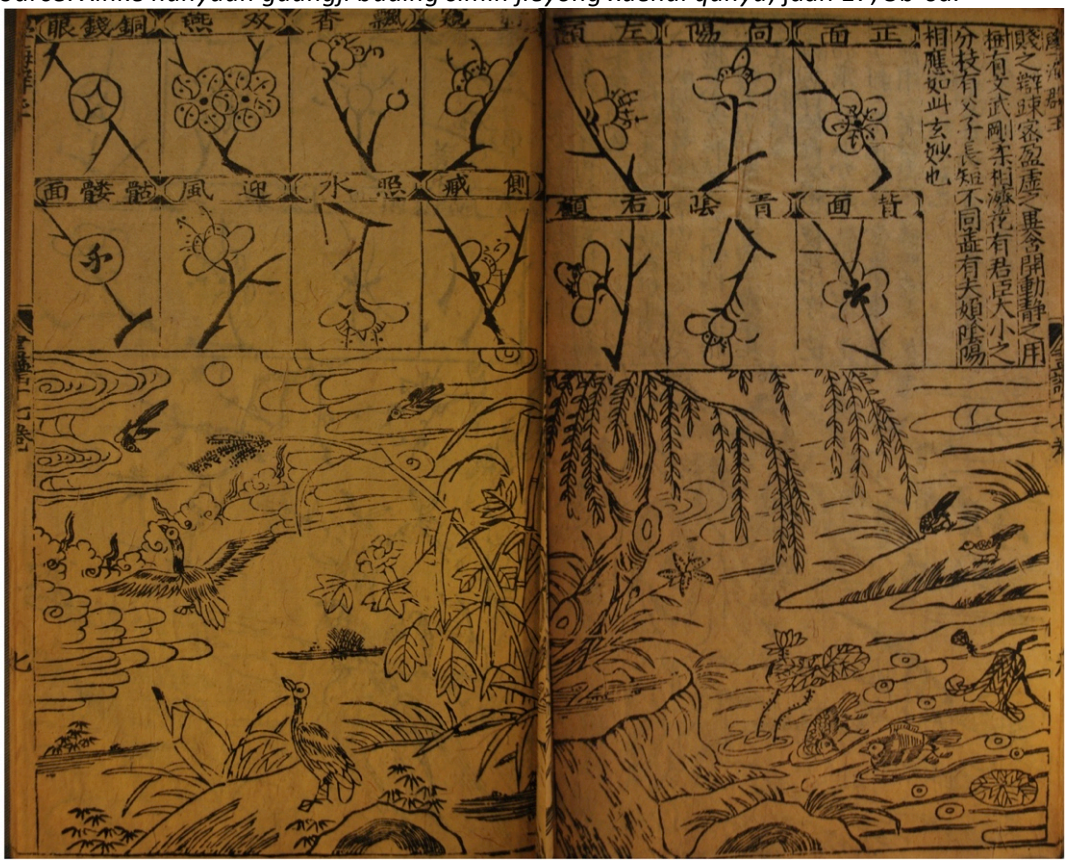


Fig. 5.2g The painting section of the *Pearls from the Sea of Learning*, published in 1607.
Source: *Xinke hanyuan guangji buding simin jieyong xuehai qunyu*, juan 17, 6b-7a.



Fig. 5.2h The painting section of the *Pearls from the Sea of Learning*, published in 1607.
Source: *Xinke hanyuan guangji buding simin jieyong xuehai qunyu*, juan 17, 7b-8a.



Fig. 5.2i The painting section of the *Pearls from the Sea of Learning*, published in 1607.
Source: *Xinke hanyuan guangji buding simin jieyong xuehai qunyu*, juan 17, 8b-9a.



Fig. 5.2j The painting section of the *Pearls from the Sea of Learning,* published in 1607.
Source: *Xinke hanyuan guangji buding simin jieyong xuehai qunyu*, juan 17, 9b-10a.



Fig. 5.2k The painting section of the *Pearls from the Sea of Learning*, published in 1607.
Source: *Xinke hanyuan guangji buding simin jieyong xuehai qunyu*, juan 17, 10b-11a.



Fig. 5.2l The painting section of the *Pearls from the Sea of Learning*, published in 1607.
Source: *Xinke hanyuan guangji buding simin jieyong xuehai qunyu*, juan 17, 11b-12a.



Fig. 5.2m The painting section of the *Pearls from the Sea of Learning*, published in 1607.
Source: *Xinke hanyuan guangji buding simin jieyong xuehai qunyu*, juan 17, 12b-13a.



Fig. 5.2n The painting section of the *Pearls from the Sea of Learning*, published in 1607. Source: *Xinke hanyuan guangji buding simin jieyong xuehai qunyu*, juan 17, 13b-14a.



Fig. 5.2o The painting section of the *Pearls from the Sea of Learning*, published in 1607. Source: *Xinke hanyuan guangji buding simin jieyong xuehai qunyu*, juan 17, 14b.



Fig. 5.3 Weng Ang's instructions on how to measure the width and height of the face with the five eyes and three planes. Weng and Hu. 1603. *Chuanzhen miyao,* 8a. Image source: National Archives of Japan.

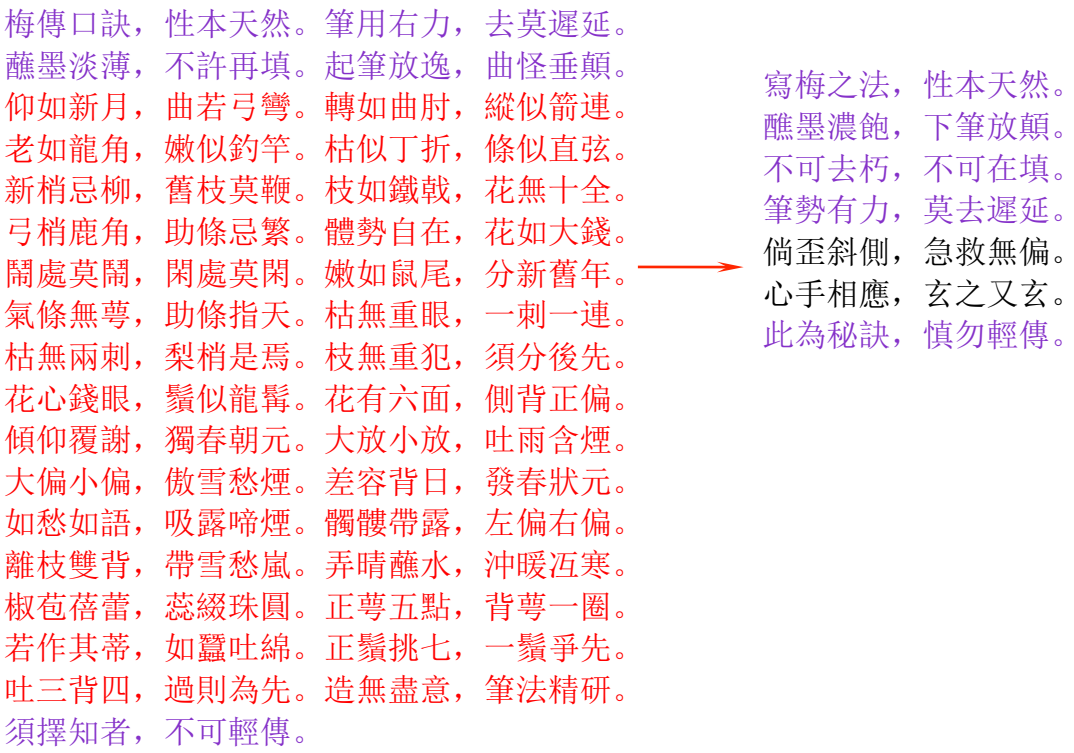


Fig. 5.4 Cuts made by encyclopedia editors to the rhyme on painting plum blossoms. The red portion from the original rhyme was cut and replaced with broader instructions on how to paint.

Chapter 6

Translating Practical Knowledge: Portraiture Theories of the Mid Qing Dynasty

From the Song (960-1279) up to the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), portraiture was mostly regarded as a commercial activity performed by craftsmen, who produced portraits to be used in ancestral or religious worship.[481] While portraits with this ritual function were most common, a second type of portrait, meant to represent an individual's virtues and pastimes, began to be produced by scholars from the Song dynasty onwards. Both types aimed to represent a sitter faithfully, yet the elements that were emphasized in each kind of portrait differed.[482]

Ancestral portraits, meant as seats for the soul of the deceased, made use of naturalistic painting techniques. This assured that family members, followers or friends could easily recognize the sitter, and most importantly, that the portrait fulfilled its ritual function of sending offerings to the correct spirit.[483] Typically, such portraits were produced close to the time of death of the model or posthumously, and they represented men and women, young and old. The sitter was depicted in a full-frontal position, looking out from the painting as if engaging the viewer, sitting in a high chair in splendorous bright-colored robes with auspicious motifs. Such portraits were put on display over the ancestral worship table, and viewers were often not restricted to family members.[484]

Scholarly portraits, on the other hand, did not emphasize verisimilitude as much as ritual portraits. Normally, the sitters were men, depicted in an informal setting, such as in their studios or enjoying nature, with simplified facial features that might not have sufficed for the viewer to recognize the

[481] Vinograd. 1992. *Boundaries of the Self*, 29.

[482] Although depictions of specific individuals survive from the Han dynasty (-206 to 220), these do not seem to focus on capturing accurate facial features to identify the individual. Portraits that clearly make reference to the real features of a person became common during the Tang dynasty (618–907), such as portraits of Buddhist masters or emperors. See Seckel. 1997. *Das Porträt in Ostasien*, Teil 1, 43–76. For a brief and general introduction to the early development of portraiture in China, see Ching. 2016. "The Language of Portraiture in China."

[483] Clunas. 1997. *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China*, 93.

[484] Song scholars objected to women being portrayed during their lifetime, but by the Ming it was acceptable to depict women for ancestral worship. Clunas. 1997. *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China*, 90-91.

sitter. The addition of inscriptions, such as eulogies or poems, or the inclusion of objects that represented the sitter's hobbies in the portrait were oft-used techniques to identify the depicted scholar. Such portraits were smaller scale than ancestor portraits, and many were also painted on horizontal scrolls, indicating that they were intended for private viewing. In a few cases, they were painted only with ink contours (*baimiao* 白描), but most were colored with pale and toned-down washes.

The two social contexts in which portraits were produced and viewed shaped the way in which portraiture techniques were described and disseminated. While craftsmen developed techniques that aimed at verisimilitude and explored the use of vivid colors, they often kept the knowledge of their craft secret. Up to the Ming dynasty, scholars rarely engaged in portraiture. Unlike motifs valued by scholars, such as bamboo and plum, portraiture was not an art that allowed the painter to express his feelings and character—it focused too much on the sitter.[485] Thus, their interest in its techniques was very limited. As a consequence, texts and theories on portraiture developed at a slower pace than for other painting motifs.

During the Ming dynasty, portraiture began to be accepted in elite circles, as individualism and even self-obsession became a focus of scholarly discourse.[486] Painters began to explore the expressive qualities of portraiture and self-portraiture in depth, adopting it as a vehicle for the construction of the self.[487] This phenomenon could also have been related to the growing interest of Ming urban audiences in imagery of great individuals from the past. The desire to gaze upon the visage of a famous scholar or ancient ruler was based more upon curiosity than on ritual traditions. The dissemination of cheaply printed books and imagery allowed the viewer to observe and take note of the characteristic features of exemplary and eccentric figures of the past and identify with them.[488]

At the same time, due to increased social mobility, scholars and

[485] Siggstedt. 1991. "Forms of Fate," 721.

[486] Zeitlin discusses the rise of obsession with things and its connection to the image of eccentricity during the late Ming. She provides one example of how the scholar Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568-1610) claims that his contemporaries who became obsessed with certain things were in fact obsessed with themselves. 1991. "The Petrified Heart," 9.

[487] Vinograd. 1992. *Boundaries of the Self*, 29-30.

[488] Clunas. 1997. *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China*, 96. It was common to identify with objects or eminent figures associated with them for their moral values and character. Zeitlin. 1991. "The Petrified Heart," 11.

merchants were beginning to negotiate their positions by publicizing their moral values and social connections, leading to the development of a visual culture of display.[489] Portraits, especially group portraits of social gatherings, became one of the means to affirm status. Many publications also came to include outline portraits of the authors, often in an idealized setting and accompanied by words of praise, indicating the author's aspiration to resemble a man of the gentry.[490] The demand for portraits increased with this growing concern of social climbers to display their connections and virtues, which must have sparked an interest in the practice that had become a profitable enterprise.

These social developments coincided with the efforts of commercial publishers to disseminate practical knowledge and valorize portraiture techniques, which were most likely welcomed by those seeking to develop this profitable skill. Specialized manuals on portraiture and daily-use encyclopedias disseminated knowledge of portraiture practices that helped aspiring painters create convincing representations according to standardized practices. These popular publications led to consolidation and dissemination of the vocabulary used for teaching portraiture.[491] This vocabulary, which dominated in theories published before the Qing dynasty, relied heavily on terms and concepts borrowed from physiognomy.

The global circulation of information and people during the late Ming also led to the appropriation of Western techniques and the development of a shading technique that relied on the layering of ink. Zeng Jing 曾鯨 (1564-1647), who painted several portraits of high officials and scholars of the provinces of Zhejiang 浙江 and Jiangsu 江蘇, is regarded as one of the first painters to explore shading inspired by Western portraits.[492] This technique was subsequently adopted by craftsmen in other regions, such as Huizhou 徽州, and continued to be used and developed into the Qing dynasty.[493]

Theories on portraiture, however, did not develop at the same pace as the new techniques. Even though the status of portraiture began to rise during the Ming dynasty, it was only during the mid Qing that painters and

[489] Clunas. 1997. *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China*, 94; 213.
[490] One example is described in Brook. 1998. *Confusions of Pleasure*, 213-214.
[491] Especially during the Wanli reign (1573–1620), the printing industry developed rapidly and cheap books became available to consumers. On the development of the printing industry during the Ming dynasty, see Chia. 2007. "The Use of Print in Ming Dynasty China,"143–196.
[492] Siggstedt. 1991. "Forms of Fate," 723.
[493] Shi. 2001. *Huizhou rongxiang yishu*, third page of the preface, unpaginated.

scholars began to record traditional techniques in writing. The eighteenth century marked a turning point for portraiture both at court and among professional painters. While Western-style painting shaped the taste of emperors, infiltrating even memorial paintings at court, scholar-painters and craftsmen began to approach traditional techniques in an innovative manner.[494]

The new theories produced during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century were indebted to the overarching discussion of crafts that took place during the late Ming. The belief expressed by both Gao Song and the Wanli Emperor that knowledge could be inferred from different practical fields and transposed to others because they were connected by one principle provided the context for the innovations of the mid Qing. The three treatises discussed here represent a conscious attempt to realize this belief in concrete terms. They appropriated techniques and vocabulary from other fields in order to address new and old issues of portraiture, effectively translating practical knowledge from one specialization to the next.

Each of the three publications targeted a different audience, taking a field of knowledge that the reader would have been familiar with to not only describe techniques, but also present coherent systems for portraiture. One author drew on physiognomy, another from calligraphy, and the third from landscape painting to construct a new theory on portraiture. They revised traditional techniques to overcome the limitations of schematic mnemonics presented in Ming manuals and encyclopedias. Their systems relied on the student to form connections between their texts and knowledge he already possessed, shifting the focus from memorization of rhymes and schemata to associations within the mind. This shift allowed students to engage portraiture techniques in a more flexible way.

Through these revisions and the new conception of knowledge, authors strove to elevate the status of portraiture, arguing that it was not merely a source of income, but also a virtuous activity related to filial piety and self-cultivation. In fact, they hoped to present themselves as moral paragons through their publications. The contrast between this new conception and the tradition that had dominated portraiture theories up to the late Ming dynasty illustrate how innovative and meaningful their revisions of portraiture techniques were.

[494] Stuart. 2001. *Worshipping the Ancestors*, 58.

Early Portraiture Theories

Before the Ming dynasty, techniques for portraiture were mostly transmitted orally and relied on mnemonic formats to be remembered. From the Tang to the Yuan, it was mainly artisans who painted portraits, and if they produced manuscripts, these were most likely kept secret. As a result, the choice of words and metaphors employed to describe steps and details of the practice were more susceptible to change. The two early manuals that survive indicate that except for the use of physiognomy denominators for the parts of the face, no authoritative vocabulary had been formulated to discuss this practice. Physiognomy, for which manuals had long been available, lent itself to the practice of portraiture due to its detailed terminology that described the various parts of the face and helped the painter identify and remember the features of the sitter's face.[495]

The earliest known account of portraiture techniques, the *Secret Formula for Painting Portraits* (*Xiexiang mijue* 寫像秘訣), was written by the late Yuan scholar Wang Yi 王譯 (fl. 14th c.) and circulated in print during the early Ming. Wang Yi's focus on portraiture in a text that was initially intended to circulate among an elite circle of scholars was unusual, as scholars rarely engaged in this craft.[496] Nonetheless, his account provides a glimpse at the techniques that were employed by early portrait painters, which were still in use well into the Ming.

In the *Secret Formula*, Wang Yi not only makes use of physiognomy terms to discuss portraiture, but claims that "whoever paints a portrait must be thoroughly familiar with the rules of physiognomy."[497] These "rules of physiognomy" require that the face be divided into Five Mountains (*wuyue* 五

[495] Physiognomy was most likely used since the Spring and Autumn period (771-476), and was widely practiced during the Han dynasty, when manuals for the art were first recorded in catalogues. Wang. 2020. *Physiognomy in Ming China*, 2. See also Chu. 1989. *Handai de xiangrenshu*, 23. The earliest extant manual on the art was probably compiled during the Song dynasty, while manuscripts uncovered from Dunhuang are the earliest datable sources. Hou studied the manuscript "Pelliot Chinois 3390," in which complexion color is used for prognostication. 1979. "Physiognomonie d'après le teint sous la dynastie des T'ang." The manuscript is richly illustrated.

[496] The text was part of Tao Zongyi's 陶宗儀 (fl. 1360-1368) collection *Chuogeng lu* 輟耕錄. Tao's volume and how Wang Yi's text was featured in it is discussed in chapter 5. The compilers of the *Complete Books in the Four Treasuries* (*Siku quanshu* 四庫全書) comment that portraiture was a craft scholars seldom engaged in. Yu. 1989. *Hualun congkan*, vol. 2, 870.

[497] Tao. [n.d] *Chuogeng lu*, *juan* 11, 1b. Siggstedt provides an overview of the relationship between portraiture and physiognomy. 1991. "Forms of Fate."

岳) and Four Rivers (*sidu* 四瀆). Physiognomy theories define the Five Mountains as the forehead, chin, nose, right cheekbone and left cheekbone, and the Four Rivers as the ears, eyes, mouth and nostrils [Fig. 6.1]. According to Wang Yi, these parts and the relation between them is what a painter must strive to remember when analyzing the face of the sitter:

> Only during a lively conversation will they show their original and genuine character. Then I remain quiet and try to grasp them, noting them in my memory. With my eyes closed, it is as if I had them before my eyes; when I put down the brush, it is as if the image were already there.
>
> 彼方叫嘯談話之間本真性情發見，我則靜而求之，默識於心。閉目如在目前，放筆如在筆底。[498]

Thus, Wang Yi takes the Five Mountains and Four Rivers as his analytical tools for memorizing the features and proportions of a face. He emphasizes the importance of observing these features while talking to the sitter, so that the true appearance of the Five Mountains and Four Rivers can come forth. By breaking the face down into parts, the painter can better remember how these parts stand in relation to one another. Furthermore, Wang Yi introduces a sequence of steps for painting a portrait that utilizes other terms from physiognomy. In the sequence he describes, Wang starts every portrait by painting the sitter's nose and finishes his draft with the outline of the face, which he calls "drawing the outer circle" (*dajuan* 打圈). He describes the process of painting a portrait stroke by stroke, giving the reader a clear guide on how to proceed. Relying on vocabulary from physiognomy to describe standard portraiture practices provided the reader with the necessary analytical tools to decode a face and pay sufficiently close attention to the details, which could then be painted step by step.

While Wang Yi's steps and his reliance on terms borrowed from physiognomy continued to shape portraiture theories in the late Ming, the content of the manuals underwent significant changes as the theories came to target a new audience. Weng Ang's 翁昂 (n.d.) *Secret Essentials of Portraiture* (*Chuanzhen miyao* 傳真祕要), with a preface dated 1592, shows that portraiture manuals no longer merely addressed the elite. As discussed in Chapter 5, it was most likely not authored by Weng Ang, but based on a

[498] Tao. [n.d]. *Chuogeng lu*, *juan* 11, 1b.

manuscript obtained from the son of a painter after the latter's death.[499] The *Secret Essentials* contained techniques that had been kept secret by the painter and thus exemplifies the trend to include non-elite practitioners in the publication process.

According to the preface of the *Secret Essentials*, written by the editor Hu Wenhuan 胡文煥 (fl. 1592-1613), the manual was disseminated to help future professionals to follow this occupation (*ye* 業).[500] In line with this focus on professional artisans, the text is much more functional than Wang Yi's manual, containing detailed instructions and numerous mnemonic formulas. Furthermore, while the editor emphasizes the importance of portraits in ancestral worship and of verisimilitude in portraying someone, he discards the claim made by "earlier Confucian scholars" (*xianru* 先儒) that if a single beard hair is added to a portrait, it already depicts someone else. Instead, he argues that once one grasps the principle (*li* 理) of portraiture, resemblance will no longer rely on minor details.[501] This claim resonates with similar statements by his contemporaries, who also believed that comprehending the guiding principle behind a craft was more important than following claims by erudite men.

Weng's manual still makes ample use of terms from physiognomy, yet their function is recognizably to aid the painter in his craft. His division of "Three Planes and Five Eyes" (*santing wuyan* 三停五眼), for example, downplays its use as a tool to read faces in favor of painting them in proper proportions.[502] The first plane starts at the hairline and stretches down to the point between the eyebrows; the second plane is measured from this point to below the nose; and the last plane continues down to end below the chin. The division is based on the popular belief that the human face mirrors the cosmic order. In physiognomy, the upper plane stands for heaven, the central plane for man and the lower one for earth. Yet, Weng employs the planes as a tool for painting. Each plane should measure four fingers from top to bottom, making the entire face twelve finger-widths in height.[503] Although these units of measurement are clearly related to the face, they are simply a means of

[499] Kobayashi has also suggested that Weng might not have been the author of the text. For a brief summary of the contents of Weng Ang's treatise, see also Kobayashi. 2017. *Chūgoku hanga shiron*, 497–506. A copy of the treatise can be consulted in the National Archives of Japan, vol. 28 of the collectanea *Baijia mingshu* 百家名書.
[500] Weng and Hu. 1603. *Chuanzhen miyao,* preface, 2a.
[501] Weng and Hu. 1603. *Chuanzhen miyao,* preface, 1a-b.
[502] Weng and Hu. 1603. *Chuanzhen miyao,* 8a.
[503] Weng and Hu. 1603. *Chuanzhen miyao,* 9a.

keeping proportions and are unrelated to physiognomy. Similarly, the measure of "five eyes," used to define the width of the face, only functions in the context of painting.

These are not the only instructions that highlight the importance of proportions and placement of the elements within the face. For example, in one of his many illustrations, Weng tells the reader that

> the pupils are aligned with the corners of the mouth; the root of the nose is aligned with the root of the eyebrows; the base of the ears is on the same level as the nose; the philtrum is aligned with the center-point between the eyebrows; the middle of the mouth is aligned with the philtrum.

> 眼珠對口角，鼻根對眉根。
> 耳根上齊眉，耳垂下齊鼻。
> 人中對眉心，口中對人中。[504]

He continues with the claim that the Five Mountains are all placed according to the character *tian* 田, a square with a cross inside, and that only the ears are depicted outside of the square [Fig. 6.2].[505] Another interesting example, present only in Weng's volume, is the so-called "single-trunk pine tree" (*yi zhu song* 一株松) method. Unlike the other methods, it seems to take the sitter's face itself as reference when painting. It draws a circle for the tip of the nose as a central reference on a vertical line—the "trunk". This circle, becomes the reference for other curved lines that depart from the central vertical line, which form the branches of the "pine tree," demarcating the placement of the lip, arches of the eyes, marked folds of the skin, and so forth.

Weng Ang also introduces a method that is based on five characters to describe the general outline of a face: *jia* 甲, *you* 由, *shen* 申, *tian* 田 and *mu* 目.[506] *Jia* 甲, for example, stands for a head that is broad at the top and has a pointy chin; *tian* 田 describes faces that are square and broad, not to be confused with the use of the character in his explanation on the alignment of the parts. This mnemonic method that made use of characters was most likely

[504] Weng and Hu. 1603. *Chuanzhen miyao,* 5a.
[505] Weng and Hu. 1603. *Chuanzhen miyao,* 5a.
[506] The earliest extant record explaining this practice for portraiture is Weng Ang's *Secret Essentials of Portraiture*. Weng and Hu. 1603. *Chuanzhen miyao*, 2a–b.

also derived from physiognomy.[507] It was sometimes also depicted in manuals for fortunetelling, such as in the Qing manual *Selected Truths from the Principle of Physiognomy* (*Xiangli hengzhen* 相理衡真). The *Selected Truths* presents an expanded set with ten characters instead of Weng's five, adding *yong* 用, *wang* 王, *feng* 風, *yuan* 圓 and *tong* 同 to the list and including a rhyme to memorize the characters, which ends with the statement that "all changes are represented by these [characters]" (*zao hua zai qi zhong* 造化在其中) [Fig. 6.3]. [508]

Weng's instructions on composition were much more precise than the methods presented by Wang Yi. Not only does Weng furnish readers with a visual typology for face types; he also presents elaborate typologies of noses, mouths and eyes in the volume. Each type is illustrated and described by a catchy name, ready to serve as reference for painting and to be memorized. This typology also has its roots in physiognomy, with several terms being equivalent to typologies found in physiognomy manuals [Fig. 6.4]. Nonetheless, a number of the terms he chooses to describe the different eyes and noses depart from the conventions of physiognomy manuals. Omitting references to animals, such as "Monkey Eyes" (*houyan* 猴眼) or "Horse Eyes" (*mayan* 馬眼), very common in physiognomy manuals, Weng uses terms that describe shape and mood. For example, Weng's "bow eyes," "almond eyes" and eyes that "seem to smile" do not appear in physiognomy manuals. Such descriptions were meant to help the painter better categorize and remember the features of the sitter according to the visual qualities of the parts; they were no longer abstract references to animals that ostensibly described a person's character.

In addition to detailed descriptions of procedures and conventions of portraiture, the manual also includes several rhymes and summaries. Rhymes were often employed to help readers memorize the content and procedures; Gao Song and editors of Ming daily-use encyclopedias, for example, made ample use of this approach. *Secret Essentials of Portraiture* presents rhymes for painting specific body parts, such as the eyes or nose, and for general procedures as well. One of the summaries in prose is attributed to the Tang poet Wang Wei 王維 (ca. 701-ca. 761), who was known to excel at portraiture. The text, titled "Wang Mojie's Sequence on the Marrow of Portraiture" (*Wang*

[507] Records from as early as the 7th century suggest that, in physiognomy, Chinese characters were employed to describe the shape of the face. See Yang. 2005. "*Xiaoxiang hua yu xiangshu,"* 96–97.
[508] Chen. [1833] *Xiangli Hengzhen,* 2a-8b.

Mojie chuanzhen gusui xu 王摩詰傳真骨髓序), provides a prose summary of the ideas expounded in Weng Ang's manual. Another summary, this time in rhyme, was written by Hu Wenhuan. The editor appends his rhyme to the end of the *Secret Essentials of Portraiture*, in which he addresses differences between people of different class and age, and closes with the following statement:

> When the secret formula is ripe in the breast,
> planning and execution will effortlessly flow.
> Portraiture is unlike other forms of painting,
> grasp the methods and naturally your fame will grow.
>
> 秘訣胸中熟，設施手下鬆。
> 傳真非畫列，得法自名隆。[509]

Hu emphasizes the importance of studying and memorizing the rules of determining proportions and the typologies presented in the manual, which, once internalized, will facilitate the process of composition and recollection. In this way, Hu echoes Wang Yi's assertion: what the painter observes can be retrieved effortlessly from his memory and put down on paper.

Unlike Wang Yi's description of his painting process, however, Weng's manual is directed at the professional, even providing context for the activity of portraiture. Weng lists four kinds of portraits and the situations a professional painter should be prepared to encounter. The two first types should depict the sitter facing East—where the sun rises—because this indicates they were alive when the portrait was made. One, a "transmission of the spirit" (*chuanshen* 傳神) portrait, is painted while facing the sitter in person. The other, a "recording the appearance" (*xiezhao* 寫照) portrait, is painted in the studio, without looking at the sitter. The two last types should depict the sitter facing West, where the rivers flow into the sea, never to return.[510] Again, there are two types: a "lifting the veil" portrait (*jiebo* 揭帛), usually painted with the deceased in the coffin as reference; and a "chasing the true [essence]" portrait (*zhuizhen* 追真), made without reference to the person being depicted and thus requiring imagination.[511]

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[509] Weng and Hu. 1603. *Chuanzhen miyao,* 26b.
[510] Weng and Hu. 1603. *Chuanzhen miyao,* 1b-2a.
[511] Another manual, the anonymous *Jottings of Mr. Zhao's Family Instructions* (*Zhaoshi jiafa biji* 趙氏家法筆記), can only roughly be dated to the end of the Ming or early Qing. An early

Both the *Secret Formula for Painting Portraits* and the *Secret Essentials of Portraiture* used terms borrowed from physiognomy and instructed the portrait painter to begin with the outline of the nose. While Wang Yi's account was not intended as instructions for the professional painter, Ming works hoped to address aspiring commercial practitioners. The emphasis of functional typologies and rhymes that rendered the content easy to remember allowed this approach to be perpetuated by craftsmen. The "constructivist" and "formulaic" approach of putting the correct type of nose, ears and mouth together was even reported to be a current practice during the early twentieth century. Armed with a "Book of Faces," the painter visited the family of the deceased and presented models of features that could be selected by the family as most fitting. [512]

Though the methods presented in early portraiture theories helped painters avoid the pitfalls of faulty proportions, Qing scholar-painters were not convinced that they aided the painter in producing lifelike portraits. Qing craftsmen, who hoped to emulate scholarly values through the publication of their knowledge, were also faced with new challenges after new shading techniques had become popular during the early Qing.

Change and Innovation During the Qing

The social environment of the Qing led to innovations both in regard to the content of portraiture theories and the format in which they presented that content. Three treatises on portraiture, published within a span of eighty years between 1742 and 1818, show the efforts of portrait painters to raise the social status of their craft. During this period, the bureaucratic system was

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manuscript is said to have been part of the *Qinshi shiyan zhai* 秦氏石研齋 collection, whose owner lived during the mid Qing. A colophon attributes the text to the Yuan painter Zhao Mengfu, yet this is generally taken to be a false attribution. Yu. 1968. *Shuhua shulu jieti*, juan 9, 14a. The manual's approach is similar to Weng Ang's, and it also relies heavily on terms borrowed from physiognomy. One notable innovation is that the reader is instructed to fold the sheet of paper according to the character *shi* 十—the shape of a cross. On the vertical line, the painter marks the position of the eyebrows, the root of the nose, the philtrum and the chin. The eyes are placed on the horizontal line. The painter is advised to paste the sheet onto a wooden board and make adjustments while holding the board up in order to compare the drawing to the sitter. Wang. 1967. *Zhaoshi jiafa biji*, 37b-38a.

[512] Kesner. 1994. "Memory, Likeness and Identity in Chinese Ancestor Portraits," 8. Ruitenbeek discusses sets of small-scale portraits, produced during the Qing or early Republican period, that were most likely drafts for larger portraits but might also have served as models for customers to chose the appropriate features to depict their loved ones. Ruitenbeek. 2017. "Albums of Faces," 63-73.

saturated and the Manchu government offered Han scholars few opportunities to rise within the system, leading many men from scholarly families to engage in painting as an economic activity. Other social factors, such as loyalty to the fallen Ming dynasty, also led scholars to take up painting as a profession. The status of the professional painter began to be negotiated and the long-standing division between scholar-painters and craftsmen slowly disintegrated. Gong Xian 龔賢 (1618-1689), a scholar who decided to remain loyal to the previous dynasty, went as far as to claim that "scholars" was no longer a valid category to describe painters.[513] This changing composition of the pool of professional painters impacted the presentation of portraiture theories. Painters were no longer satisfied with being anonymous craftsmen and began to discuss and transmit practices for portraiture as a means to assert moral values.

Although the authors of the three portraiture manuals discussed in this section provide different motivations for publishing their texts, they all describe portraiture as an act of self-cultivation. The manuals were meant to help aspiring professionals who also had social aspirations. They appealed to like-minded men for whom portraiture was no longer merely a practice that produced images for ancestral worship, but also as an activity connected to virtuous behavior and even an act of filial piety. In fact, by the eighteenth century, even the distinctions between ancestor portraits and commemorative portraits had begun to disintegrate.[514]

During the mid Qing, scholarly values were incorporated into portraiture, with manuals describing the professional painter as a man of virtue. The infusion of scholarly ideals into portraiture theories was also indebted to the inclusion of the craft in discussions of practical knowledge during the Ming, in which a unifying principle is described to connect all matters. Qing authors employed the elementary assumption that knowledge can be inferred from other fields to discuss new and old issues of portraiture. Their scholarly values can be perceived in their theories, as they reintroduced abstract concepts and philosophical connections to character, which had been stripped from the content of Ming daily-use encyclopedias, into the description of practical activities.

Qing painters writing on portraiture took different approaches to the craft. While some suggested new starting points for a portrait, others recognized the pitfalls of composition according to the Three Planes and

[513] See Silbergeld. 1981. "Kung Hsien," 405.
[514] Stuart. 2001. *Worshipping the Ancestors*, 65.

standardized typologies. Although they accepted that traditional methods were useful to get proportions right, Qing scholars questioned these methods and claimed they yielded stiff and lifeless portraits. The three authors discussed below perceived a tension between the need for clear rules that could easily be memorized and the desire to avoid rigid rules in order to give the painter the freedom needed to convey the true essence of the sitter. One of their major concerns was that portrait painters had to adapt their practice according to the sitter and the size of the portrait. They needed to capture the sitter's expression, transmit the changes of volume through shading, and convey an individual's constant character even though his mood was constantly changing. At the same time, they required a set of rules that was easy to commit to memory. In other words, they needed to develop methods that could be packaged in catchy, memorable (and memorizable) texts yet still allowed for changes and individual expression. For this reason, each of the three authors tried to strike a balance between fixed rules and free drawing in their theories. Beyond presenting useful vocabulary unrelated to physiognomy to analyze the face, their goal was to introduce comprehensive notions in order to turn portraiture theories into coherent systems.

Each scholar chose a different field of reference to describe the steps involved in portraiture, namely physiognomy, calligraphy, and landscape painting. The authors' previous experiences and knowledge not only manifested themselves in their choices of words and figurative descriptions, but also shaped their views on portraiture and the techniques they transmitted. At the same time, the knowledge they referred to played a major role in helping the reader understand new information through association. In other words, their efforts to adapt theories from other fields for portraiture was a means to articulate practical matters that would otherwise be difficult to describe and grasp. Thus, the analogies in their texts functioned as tools that helped them develop new didactic approaches to the field of portraiture.

This process of appropriation and adaptation can be understood as a translation exercise. The desire to describe the steps of portraiture in detail and to transmit practical knowledge beyond theory led the authors to reflect on their own knowledge and experience, each choosing the vocabulary from a field they deemed most suitable to describe portraiture practices. The resulting treatises are translations between fields of knowledge, relying both on selection—the appropriation of the suitable ideas—and on adaptation—the attempt to convey new meaning in a different context. As such, they are the outcome of a process of re-conceptualizing portraiture practices, in which

the existing knowledge chosen by the authors possesses considerable agency in molding the understanding of portraiture itself. Their focus thus shifts away from mnemonic formulas to systems that can be remembered through association.

The New Physiognomy Approach

Like Yuan and Ming painters, Ding Gao 丁皋 (d. 1761) and his son, Ding Yicheng 丁以誠 (1743-after 1823), relied heavily on notions from physiognomy in their treatise, the *Secret Formula for Painting Portraits* (*Xiezhen mijue* 寫真秘訣). Their treatise builds on the traditional approach, yet their undertaking goes beyond the earlier texts discussed above, making physiognomy and its cosmological understanding the material that ties the practical steps of painting together. Their theory can best be described as a new physiognomy approach to portraiture. Not only is the connection to physiognomy stronger in the Ding family's tradition than in the other treatises discussed here, but it also began to take shape in the late seventeenth century.[515]

With a preface dated 1818, the earliest extant edition of their manual was published as the first section of the *Fourth Part of the Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* (*Jieziyuan huazhuan-si ji* 芥子園畫傳-四集).[516] The *Mustard Seed Garden* series enjoyed relative popularity, and publishing the manual within the series assured that it reached a large audience. This edition was a reprint of the original treatise, completed in 1766 under the title *Insights on the Transmission of True Likeness* (*Chuanzhen xinling* 傳真心領), which was in turn based on an even earlier manuscript by Ding Gao, written before 1756. In the preface to the *Insights on the Transmission*, Ding Gao recounts how the techniques for painting portraits had been transmitted in his family for four generations—five generations if we include his son, who later edited the volume. Ding Gao's great-grandfather, Ding Yuchen 丁雨辰, first developed an interest in studying the tricks of portraiture. His knowledge was handed down to Ding Gao's grandfather, Ding Yihou 丁依侯, and his

[515] For a description of possible changes in the content, see Klasing Chen. 2017. "Introduction to the Translation of the *Secret Formula for Painting Portraits* by Ding Gao and Ding Yicheng," 316-317.

[516] A version with the title *Chuanzhen xinling* was published in 1964, yet the editors do not specify which edition was used as base for the publication. It is most likely not a faithful reproduction of an original manuscript or early edition. Ding. 1964. *Chuanzhen xinling*.

father, Ding Siming 丁思銘.[517] When Siming was 70 *sui* old, he recorded short guidelines for portraiture, and Ding Gao took these as a starting point to develop a complete treatise on portraiture. Ding Yicheng, who edited his father's work for publication, appended a section of questions and answers to the end of the treatise in 1766. Yicheng himself was also a portrait painter, and published a *Continuation to the 'Insights'* (*Xu xinling* 續心領), in which he supposedly discussed shading techniques for portraiture.[518]

When the treatise was first published, the preface stated that it was meant as an instructional volume that could promote moral behavior. Students who read the treatise could "do away with the vulgarity that lowly teachers transmitted" (破除俗師相傳之陋). Painting portraits according to the instructions of the manual was also a display of filial piety. The preface claimed that "the benevolent man and filial son will, without being aware of it, develop the ambition to honor and respect his ancestors" (而仁人孝子亦不自覺而油然生其尊祖敬宗之心). [519] Thus, the Dings left no doubt that portrait painting itself was a form of self-cultivation, an exercise that prompted moral behavior.

This association of the craft with moral ideals allowed the Dings to proudly display their knowledge and present their family tradition to a broad urban audience of educated dilettantes and aspiring professionals. The volume definitely served as a medium to advertise their mastery of portraiture techniques.[520] At the same time, by disclosing secret knowledge that had been transmitted from generation to generation, the Dings foregrounded their good-natured concern with helping others perform their filial duties. Since the Ming dynasty, displays of filial piety had become crucial in shaping an individual's identity and social image. [521] Their desire to contribute to the moral enhancement of society frames the easy-to-follow rules and standards presented in their manual.

The 1818 treatise deals with several topics also addressed by Weng Ang and Wang Yi, from coloring to body proportions. Ding Gao and his son are very

[517] Ding and Ding. 1818. *Xiezhen mijue*, juan 1, author's preface, 2a-2b.
[518] There are no known surviving editions of this volume. For a description of the content, refer to Li. 1795. *Yangzhou huafang lu,* juan 2, 14a.
[519] Li. 1795. *Yangzhou huafang lu, juan* 2, 13b. The preface was written by the official Lu Yayu (1690–1768).
[520] Several extant portraits by both Ding Gao and Ding Yicheng attest to their extraordinary ability. One example for each painter can be seen in Ruitenbeek. 2017. *Faces of China*, 272-275.
[521] See Zhang. 2017. *Confucian Image Politics*, chapters 1-3.

consistent when it comes to the structure of the manual; each section in prose is summarized with a mnemonic rhyme, in keeping with the trend of the Ming dynasty. For example, after the explanation in prose on the divisions of the face, they write:

> When lowering the brush, miss not by a hair,
> of lines curved and straight, each must match their pair.
> Carefully examine the position of all parts,
> and of the five parts and three planes one must first be aware!
>
> 落筆絲毫不得移，對真曲直總相宜，
> 細開細省官星位，五部三停要預知。[522]

Like in earlier manuals, the value of memorizing and internalizing the steps and standards remains a central concern. The numerous illustrations included in the treatise also help the reader visualize the steps and divisions.

The manual opens with a discussion on divisions of the face: the Three Planes (*santing* 三停), Five Parts (*wubu* 五部), Four Earthly Sections (*disi* 地四) and the Three Heavenly Sections (*tiansan* 天三). The authors borrowed the Three Planes from physiognomy, but the other three subdivisions were their own inventions. The two main points that show how the Ding family had restructured portraiture practices become evident in their discussions on composition and shading.[523]

The section that follows the initial introduction to composition, titled "On Starting a Draft," makes use of several loan-terms to describe the specific elements, concavities and folds of the face. The accompanying illustration familiarizes the reader with these terms and areas of the face, once again showing the connection with the tradition of physiognomy [Fig. 6.5]. Yet, although previous manuals were also indebted to the analytical tools of physiognomy, Ding Gao's graphs differ substantially from previous illustrations of aspects of portraiture, such as those in Weng Ang's manual. Earlier graphs represented the face at an angle, showing a profile of seven or eight tenths, while Ding Gao's manual always depicts a man's face in full frontal view,

[522] Ding and Ding. 1818. *Xiezhen mijue*, juan 1, 3a.This is a free translation that aims to maintain the rhymes of the original. For a more literal translation, refer to Klasing Chen. 2017. "Ding Gao and Ding Yichen: *Secret Formula for Painting Portraits,*" 326.

[523] The treatise has been translated in full into both German and English. Contag. 1937. "Das Mallehrbuch für Personenmalerei des Chieh tzŭ yüan." Klasing Chen. 2017. "Ding Gao and Ding Yichen: *Secret Formula for Painting Portraits.*"

bearing more resemblance to charts in physiognomy manuals than to the actual poses used in portraiture. In other aspects as well, Ding Gao's family seems to have embraced the concepts and notions underlying physiognomy in their understanding of portraiture to a much greater extent than previous authors. The depth of their approach becomes evident in the section "Starting a Draft with a Circle" (*qigao xian juan shuo* 起稿先圈說).

Starting a draft with a circle, or the face's outline, represented a radical departure from previous practice. Painters up to the early Qing consistently took the nose as the starting point when painting a portrait. In the *Collected Excerpts of the Tea-Fragrance Study* (*Chaxiangshi congchao* 茶香室叢鈔), with a preface dated 1883, Yu Yue 俞樾 (1821–1907) states that even the painters of his time usually started a portrait with the nose. He comments that the approach suggested by Ding Gao, which relies on an initial outline, is extremely unusual and curious.[524]

The commentary on "Starting a Draft with a Circle" explains that an oval shape is the first thing that should be drawn when painting a face. However, as indicated by the name given to this oval outline—the Circle of Primordial Chaos (*hunyuan juan* 渾元圈)—it becomes clear that it is not merely a shape, but in fact a mirror image of the cosmos [Fig. 6.6]. In Chinese cosmology, it was believed that multiplicity was generated from oneness. The creation of the universe began with chaos, the only thing that existed before things came into being—before the division of heaven and earth. The undefined chaos separated into two essential forces, Yin and Yang. All things in the universe appear and disappear according to the changing rhythm of these primary forces. This process of cosmic creation, in which the primordial chaos divides itself into the myriad things, was widely known in Qing society. Thus, the Dings were referring to something the common reader was able to comprehend and build on.

The oval shape the painter is instructed to draw represents this primordial chaos (or undifferentiated chaos, *hunyuan* 渾元). The step that follows the delineation of the *Circle of Primordial Chaos* is to place the eyes, which are called Sun and Moon. With the correct placement of the eyes, the painter creates the division between Yin and Yang, thus establishing the four directions, heaven above and earth below: in short, the result is order in the universe. The next step is the placement of the nose, here called *Saturn* (*tuxing* 土星), with which the painter sets the position of the *Three Brights*

[524] Yu. 1899. *Chaxiangshi congchao*, juan 11, 12a.

(*sanguang* 三光), which serve as reference points for the other facial features [Fig. 6.7].[525]

Thus, Ding Gao and his son started with the idea from physiognomy that one could make predictions and interpret facial signs because each individual's face mirrored the divine structures of the cosmos, and then took it further. They elaborated on the relation of cosmos and face not only to develop an analytical tool, but also to describe a creative process. Their approach invites the reader to remember the steps in painting by reconstructing the process of cosmic creation for each face and thus bringing order to the elements on paper.

Ding Gao and Yicheng take their unusual approach further, also applying the idea of dividing their *Circle of Primordial Chaos* to shading techniques. Shading had not been the focus of any previous portraiture theory, and the Dings introduced it as an essential means of capturing the sitter's essence. Ink, yellow and red pigment were to be applied with several layers of graded washes on the silk to bring out the "blood" (*xue* 血) and "energy" (*qi* 氣) of the sitter. While Wang Yi had addressed the use of color in portraiture, his focus was on the application of the proper shades according to part or area, such as lips or forehead. More generally, shading had not been a concern of Chinese painters. Whereas scholars valued flat and often monochrome styles that allowed the viewer to perceive brushstrokes and textures in a painting, craftsmen often applied narrow gradations of color along contour lines to produce a visual effect of volume. Only during the Qing did portrait painters become concerned with shading to enhance the effect of three-dimensionality. Ding Gao and his son lived during a period in which European shading techniques and linear perspective were becoming popular both at court and in the marketplace. As Chinese audiences, including emperors, became increasingly fascinated with Occidental imagery and accustomed to the use of shading in portraits, especially in the face, craftsmen adapted to the demand to create more life-like depictions.[526]

Because shading techniques had not been addressed in depth in previous theories on painting, writing about shading was a challenging task in

[525] Ding and Ding. 1818. *Xiezhen mijue*, juan 1, 5a-5b.

[526] In his description of the activities of Jean Denis Attiret at the Qing Court, Keller provides an example of how the emperor was still unhappy with the use of shading in portraits, because the shades looked like stains. 2008. "Un pinceau utile pour le bien de la religion," 63. Kleutghen has written extensively on the use of linear perspective in China, both at court and for commercial purposes. See, for example, Kleutghen. 2015. "From Science to Art."

itself. Yet, Ding Gao embeds his theory on the application of shades into his division of the *Primordial Chaos*, describing shading as a further step in creating order [Fig. 6.8]. The shades are used to bring out the Five Mountains—forehead, two cheeks, chin and nose—also known from physiognomy treatises. These Five Mountains were supposed to be kept lighter than the areas surrounding them. To do this, the painter must add graded black shades for the concavities, and leave the paper blank for the protrusions hit by the light.[527] Ding's conception of shading is also based on Yin and Yang. Ding ties the application of values of ink and nuanced gradations to the two forces. In the cosmological system of the Dings, graded washes are regarded as Yang and flat washes as Yin. Both are used together to construct volume, just as Yin and Yang generate everything in the universe. Thus it is the painter's task to use his brush with graded and flat washes to make the variations within the face visible, bringing out what would not be visible with the use of contours alone—to create distinctions within the chaos. Ding Gao explains that even protrusions require shading to give the impression of standing out, while concavities might sometimes have to be left blank to seem low when the light hits them directly from the front and the lower areas reflect the light. He explains the distribution of light over a round surface with a vivid image:

> Take, for example, a round pearl and suspend it inside a room between white walls. Both pearl and wall are white, so when looking from the distance at the Yin and Yang [shade and light] of its shimmer, do you add washes to the pearl? Or add washes to the wall?
>
> 譬如一圓珠，懸於室內粉壁之間，珠壁皆白，外看其光之陰陽，染珠乎？染壁乎？[528]

Yet, he also emphasizes that one should not depict exactly what one sees, which could lead to half light, half dark faces.[529] Only someone who can weigh and distribute the forces correctly according to the incidence of light can represent the changes and variations of a face's three-dimensionality and bring out the spirit of the sitter. This section on shading, which concludes the discussion on composition, ends with an encouraging rhyme:

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[527] Ding and Ding. 1818. *Xiezhen mijue*, juan 1, 7a.
[528] Ding and Ding. 1818. *Xiezhen mijue*, juan 1, 8b.
[529] Ding and Ding. 1818. *Xiezhen mijue*, juan 1, 37b-38b.

By discerning Yin and Yang, transparent and opaque wash,
the true appearance of the myriad images you will paint.
To exhaust this principle, there is no secret formula;
with a bit of insight, you will overcome every constraint.

辨別陰陽虛實，筆端萬像傳真。
窮理毫無秘訣，一點靈機自神。[530]

Gao's explanation of shading techniques values the "true appearance" (*zhen* 真) of the sitter, which did not mean that he wanted to reproduce what the eyes saw, but rather to grasp the unique qualities and features of someone's character. In fact, Ding Gao took pains to create a clear divide between his technique and the Western techniques for shading and linear perspective, which relied on optics. Because his shading process is embedded in his cosmological system, he was able to balance all visual input and grasp the vital qualities of his sitters.

In the final section of the treatise, Ding Yicheng asks his father questions about shading, and Ding Gao explains that while the Chinese way of shading might seem similar to the Western shading technique, it is different in nature. Unlike the vistas produced by Westerners that created planes in recessions by bringing in darkness, his shading technique relied on bringing out volume and expression—it relied on light. [531]

Ding Gao's dissatisfaction with Western shading techniques and the challenge he faced in the absence of any equivalent discussion of shading in Chinese painting theories led him to develop a new approach to the issue. He created a coherent system that relied on common knowledge of universal creation to relay his technical knowledge to the uninitiated student who sought instruction via a commercial painting manual. By using this as a reference for the composition of the portrait on paper, the authors took a structure embedded in the reader's mind and built new knowledge upon it. While previous authors made use of terms from physiognomy, which relied on the equivalence of face and universe, Ding Gao and his son took this conception further. References to the cosmos were no longer used only for reading and remembering, but became the concepts that bound together the processes of composing and executing a portrait.

[530] Ding and Ding. 1818. *Xiezhen mijue*, juan 1, 8a.
[531] Ding and Ding. 1818. *Xiezhen mijue*, juan 1, 37b-38b.

The Calligraphy Approach

Jiang Ji's 蔣驥 (1714–1787) *Secret Essentials for Transmitting the Spirit* (*Chuanshen miyao* 傳神秘要), with a preface dated 1742, was published in 1794 by his son, Jiang He. Jiang Ji is the heir of Jiang Heng's approach to the nine-palaces grid in calligraphy practice covered in chapter 4. Jiang's approach to portraiture was based on establishing a system of proportions within the individual face, taking the nose as its standard measure. By relying solely on proportions to measure the distance and size of the other parts of the face, Jiang uses an approach that is similar to that of composing Chinese characters. Thus, his theory could be called a calligraphy approach to portraiture. Although he does not explicitly draw a connection to this field of knowledge, his debt to calligraphic theories becomes clear when his entire work is taken into account. The practice of portraiture, which he only took up in adulthood, was shaped by the practical skills he had learned from his father in his youth.

Secret Essentials for Transmitting the Spirit is a short treatise that was included in a compilation of calligraphy- and epigraphy-related texts authored by members of the Jiang family. It is essentially a collection of notes organized according to topics, without illustrations, and thus corresponds to the format of "jotted notes" (*biji* 筆記) preferred by scholars for the discussion of practical matters. The treatise was most likely intended for an audience of educated calligraphy students, and not aspiring professionals. Jiang's treatise is even carved in running script, making some of the characters hard to recognize at a glance. This surely also narrowed the audience it attracted.

In the preface, Jiang claims to have written his treatise while seeking to depict his own deceased mother. He collected information where he could and began painting portraits of her after being dissatisfied with a portrait painted by an artisan. However, even after painting several portraits of his mother, he remained unsatisfied with the results and gave up the craft, never painting a portrait of anyone else. When a friend asked him about his notes on portraiture, Jiang Ji wept and told him it was compiled with this purpose in mind, for his personal research and his personal quest to portray his mother. His claims seem to be true, as no portrait by Jiang Ji is known today and no referencing to a portrait painted by him can be found.[532]

[532] Besides digital sources, the following painting indexes were consulted: Zhongguo gudai shuhua jianding zubian. 1986-1999. *Zhonguo gudai shuhua tumu*, 20 vols; and Suzuki. 1982. *Chūgoku kaiga sōgō zuroku*, vol. 2.

This anecdote included in the preface to his work depicts Jiang Ji as a scholar of high morality who is most invested in showing his filial devotion toward his deceased mother.[533] Echoing the social convention to enact filial piety publicly, Jiang collected practical knowledge in memory of his mother. Even his repeated references to calligraphic practices in the portraiture treatise can be understood as an act of filial devotion to his father. The reverence for the Jiang's family tradition was continued by Jiang Ji's son, who published the compilation of family works, making sure Jiang Ji's filial piety and extensive knowledge of portraiture were acknowledged.[534]

Overall, the topics in the treatise are diverse and somewhat disorganized, with several distinct and scattered sections covering issues related to coloring, shading, and specific parts of the face. Jiang describes some interesting practices that were not mentioned in previous treatises. For instance, one section that exposes Jiang's scholarly background is his inclusion of a section dedicated to portraits drawn only in ink with fine contours (*baimiao* 白描) and monochrome shading.[535] Although Jiang provides information on shading, coloring and even instructions on how to apply layers of alum sizing to avoid the bleeding of ink into the colors, the section on contour painting stands out because it is a direct reference to scholarly portraits and unrelated to memorial portraiture.

In another a section called "Method for Capturing the Spirit from a Distance" (*yuan qushen fa* 遠取神法), Jiang introduces rules that define the proper distance between the sitter and the painter at different stages of the work. For example, when depicting the eyes, the painter should always have the model sit at a greater distance so the eyes will act lively and look up. Under the topic "Capturing a Smile" (*quxia fa* 取笑法), Jiang describes how to depict the several parts of the face that change their shape and position when the sitter smiles. Although Jiang describes the methods of the "Three Planes" and "Five Parts" in his appendix, both sections exemplify how Jiang conceived of portraiture as an activity that should not rely on stifling composition formulas.

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[533] Jiang. 1794. *Jiangshi youyi milu jiuzhong*, juan shang, *Jiugong xinshi*, preface, 1a-1b.

[534] Jiang Ji's treatise is also included in the *Complete Books in the Four Treasuries* (*Siku quanshu* 四庫全書). Its inclusion is justified by the compilers' claim that it transmits traditional knowledge on portraiture by complementing Wang Yi's text, and should therefore not be disregarded. Yu. 1989. *Hualun congkan*, vol. 2, 869–870.

[535] Jiang. 1794. *Jiangshi youyi milu jiuzhong*, juan shang, *Jiugong xinshi*, 15b-16a.

Like Wang Yi, Jiang Ji underscores the importance of observing the sitter acting naturally before starting the portrait, but what Jiang seems to deem most important is to develop a keen eye (*muli* 目力) for proportions. Jiang finds it crucial for the beginner to strengthen his ability to grasp the proportions of the face visually, and not by relying on types of faces and parts. This can be done while facing a sitter or by copying other portraits without tracing them. To train this skill, the painter must pay special attention to the nose, as it plays a central role in the composition process.

In the manual, Jiang reproduces the steps advocated by earlier portrait painters, such as Wang Yi, who began every composition with the nose. Jiang also advises painters to start the composition with the nose, yet his approach to this initial step departs from previous theories. According to Jiang, the painter should not only follow steps to move from one part of the face to the next when painting, but also to establish internal proportions. He introduces his "Comparative Checking Method of the Nose Tip and Nose [Wings]" (*Bizhun yu bi xiangcan hefa* 鼻準與鼻相參核法), which defines the nose as a standard measure. The painter must start by painting the two nostrils, followed by the stroke below the nose tip, the two sides of the tip, and finally the two nose wings. Jiang instructs the reader to

> take the tip of the nose as measure of ten to check the height of the nose [wings]. (...) Then, again take a nose [wing] as measure of ten to make sure the breadth of the tip is correct.
>
> 以鼻準作十分算，定鼻之大小。(...) 再以鼻作十分算，定鼻準之寬狹。[536]

Thus, the painter should first make sure the correct proportions of the nose have been established through comparison of its own parts. Then the nose can be taken as vertical and horizontal measure for the entire face. The tip of the nose provides a bigger horizontal measure, while one nose wing can be used as a smaller vertical or horizontal measure.[537] These two measures function like rulers that, however, must be defined anew for every portrait. Once the basic measures are established, the painter moves along straight lines to measure across the face, creating an imaginary grid that has 'nose wings' as units. The painter measures the correct position of other parts by

[536] Jiang. 1794. *Jiangshi youyi milu jiuzhong*, juan shang, Chuanshen miyao, 8b–9a.
[537] Jiang. 1794. *Jiangshi youyi milu jiuzhong*, juan shang, Chuanshen miyao, 9b.

prolonging the ending point of lines in the face upwards or downwards, or measuring with a straight line from the central fold of the paper. Thus, Jiang makes relative measures his standard for structuring. The painter starts a painting with the sitter's nose, and once this is fixed on paper, it defines and regulates the painter's perception.

Thinking in terms of regulating a visual composition by balancing elements according to inner proportions was not unusual in the field of calligraphy. Manuals of the Ming, such as Gao Song's *Origins of Brush Methods*, represented graphically the required inner coherence of the proportions within the written character [Fig. 6.9]. Characters were often divided into horizontal or vertical sections that should be evenly distributed according to the number of parallel lines within the character. Jiang Ji, who was the son of a renowned calligrapher and wrote didactic manuals for learning calligraphy himself, stressed the importance of creating a relation between the lines of within a character and maintaining proportions in his texts.[538] In these didactic manuals, he also presented the theory that calligraphers should imagine having a "Host Stroke" and "Guest Strokes" within a character, with the latter being placed in accordance with the former.[539]

Even more telling is that Jiang introduces the "nine palaces" method in the appendix to his treatise on portraiture as a means for rescaling portraits. Copying techniques are not recorded in any of the earlier manuals, and his devotion to the topic reveals Jiang's life-long experience with copying calligraphy models. Departing from one tradition to appropriate another, Jiang takes the method he had inherited from his father for copying and composing characters and transposes it to portraiture.[540] In the section "Scaling Down and Enlarging with the Nine Palaces Grid Method" (*Shou fang yong jiugongge fa* 收放用九宮格法), he provides instructions on its use, making explicit reference to calligraphy:

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[538] Jiang. 1794. *Jiangshi youyi milu jiuzhong*, juan shang, *Jiugong xinshi*, 4b. Jiang Ji's *New method of the nine palaces* (*Jiugong xinshi* 九宮新式) is discussed in chapter 4.

[539] Jiang. 1794. *Jiangshi youyi milu jiuzhong*, *juan shang, Xu shufa lun,* 6b.

[540] Although this section on the Nine Palaces, along with the Mnemonic Formula of the Ancients, is appended to Wang Yi's treatise in modern publications, such as Yu's *Hualun congkan* 畫論叢刊, it is not recorded in the *Records Compiled after Retiring from Farming* (*Chuogeng lu* 輟耕錄), but does appear in Jiang Ji's text. The attribution to Wang Yi is incorrect and was appended to Wang Yi's text for Jiang's description of the technique as transmitted by the "ancients."

> The nine palaces for calligraphy is a grid of nine by nine, with eighty-one [squares]. It can be used for scaling down and for enlarging. Take the frame of the entire face and paint it within a large nine-palaces grid. At the top border you align the hairline, at the bottom, the chin. Then you use a small nine-palaces to scale it down, and you will not miss by the slightest thing. The grid must be square.
>
> The nine palaces grid method of scaling down and enlarging should only be used after one has learned to paint. If one is only getting started with painting, it is appropriate to practice well according to the "Formula on how to Get Started" [provided in the treatise] and to develop a keen eye [for proportions].
>
> 作書九宮本九九八十一格。収小即所以放大。將全面眶格画于大九宮格內，上頂髮際，下齊地角。即用小九宮一箇收小，便絲毫不爽。格須斬方。
>
> 九宮格收放法祇以能畫後用之，若和學當熟習「起手訣」，目力方準。[541]

The nine-palaces grid helped calligraphers maintain the inner proportions of a written character by paying attention to the blank areas between the strokes and their fixed positions within the grid. Jiang's experience with the grid as a tool for copying characters from model calligraphy clearly allowed him to adapt the method to accommodate the face. The face is cropped off at the top to fit into the square and to help the painter focus on the distribution of the parts. Just like in the practice of copying model calligraphy, the face becomes detached from its context as one looks at it through the grid. Jiang thus appropriates two principles from calligraphy – those used to compose, maintain internal proportions and rescale characters – and applies them to portrait painting. Proportion and internal measures become the structuring ideas of his portraiture practice.

Jiang's suggestion to use the grid to scale down portraits is also striking. As mentioned above, unlike ancestral portraits, scholarly portraits were often small in size and intended for private viewing. If this is read against the content of the manual, in which he also devotes one section to black-and-white portraits that relied mostly on contours, it seems that Jiang is suggesting the use of the grid for producing scholarly portraits.

[541] Jiang. 1794. *Jiangshi youyi milu jiuzhong*, juan shang, *Jiugong xinshi*, 17b.

Besides introducing this visual tool into portraiture practice, Jiang devotes an entire section to praising copying, claiming that students must copy masters in order to develop their skills.[542] As mentioned above, he also suggested students train their eyes to be discerning by using models—another, less mechanical, form of copying. Copying, whether by placing model and paper side-by-side or by tracing a model, had long been perceived as the best method to transmit a master's style, both in landscape painting and calligraphy. It was also a common practice for portrait painters to replace damaged portraits for ancestral shrines or to combine individual portraits into one painting. Yet, Jiang is the only one to suggest that it should play such a central role in the development of skills for portraiture.

Only later publications, such as Ding Gao's treatise, provided techniques for reproducing an existing portrait.[543] Ding's approach, however, did not rely on a grid to transfer the proportions to the new sketch, but on a set of paper guides on which he marked the position of the elements.[544] Most importantly, Ding did not recommend this technique for practice as Jiang did. Other Qing scholars who painted portraits most likely avoided the practice of copying as a means to develop painting skills because they worried that students would develop bad habits and produce stiff portraits. Jiang's emphasis on copying thus shows that not only his methods, but also his perception of copying as a means to perpetuate stylistic traditions were innovations in portraiture. By repeatedly copying a portrait, the student kept alive both the memory of a loved one and a master's style.

As calligraphy had always been an expressive art practiced by members of the elite, the inclusion of a portraiture treatise within the Jiang family's collection of texts dedicated to calligraphy and epigraphy surely helped raise the status of portraiture. Jiang's emphasis on calligraphic techniques made portraiture appealing to an educated audience who now saw it as a means to fulfill their social duty of filial piety. His emphasis on copying reflected a desire to perpetuate visual traditions, which was facilitated by using the grid. Jiang's schematic method of relating parts of the face to the pattern of the grid was so simple that it was even introduced to children as a method to paint faces in

[542] Jiang. 1794. *Jiangshi youyi milu jiuzhong*, juan shang, *Jiugong xinshi*, 16b.
[543] Shen Zongqian also discusses the downsizing of portraits, yet he describes no concrete method or tool to do so. In accordance with his portraiture theory, the process relies on observation. Shen. 1845. *Jiezhou xuehua bian, juan* 3, 4a-7b.
[544] Ding and Ding. 1818. *Xiezhen mijue*, juan 1, 31a-32a.

a periodical from the Republican era (1912-1949) [Fig. 6.10].[545] Instead of relying on the traditional mnemonic rhymes, Jiang proposes that the proportions of a face could all be established through clear steps and a standard measure, a method that could be easily understood and remembered.

The Landscape Approach

Shen Zongqian 沈宗騫 (ca. 1720-1803), who had obtained a "talented scholar" degree (*xiucai* 秀才) and came from a family of officials, was an acclaimed calligrapher and painter of both portraits and landscapes. In 1781, he published a painting manual for his students, *Jiezhou's Compilation on the Study of Painting* (*Jiezhou xuehua bian* 芥舟學畫編), written entirely in prose. It deals mainly with landscape painting, in which received his initial training and later specialized,[546] but also contains a section on portraiture.

Shen Zongqian, who was a professional painter and revered for his art during his lifetime, used his treatise to assert his identity as a cultivated and virtuous man. He wrote the treatise for his students, with the major claim that it was useful to counter "vulgar learning." Thus, he seeks to present the content of his treatise as the material through which he and his students could garner social prestige. He employs an elitist approach to painting by claiming that only those who are morally worthy should be allowed to paint, but he also gives the reader directions on how to become worthy. Shen insists that every scholar should wish to depart from the vulgar world of dust and cultivate himself through painting. By establishing portraiture as a form of art that aims to grasp the variations of nature, he is able to equate it with landscape painting and appropriate the values and status awarded to landscapes for portraiture.

Like Jiang Ji's notes, Shen's treatise also contains no illustrations and covers a variety of topics. However, Shen has structured these much more clearly in a way that the topics move from general instructions and concepts to specific discussions on techniques and finally to guiding principles for the

[545] Although the illustrations use a grid with sixteen squares instead of nine, the author nonetheless calls the method the "nine-palaces grid."

[546] His master was the renowned landscape painter Zhang Geng 張庚 (1685-1760). Zhang is mentioned in an anecdote in which Shen recounts his learning process and a "harsh" word from the master that made him reconsider his style. Shen. 1845. *Jiezhou xuehua bian,* juan 1, 16b–17a.

portrait painter. His vocabulary for describing practical steps of portraiture comes from landscape painting, in which ink gradations, modulated lines and texture strokes feature prominently. His theory could be described as the landscape approach to portraiture.

The lack of structuring schemata for the composition of portraits in his treatise makes it stand out from the treatises and manuals discussed above. Shen discussed earlier mnemonic aids and methods for composition only to criticize them. Although he occasionally uses a term from physiognomy, he attacks the well-known method of the "Three Planes" and "Five Parts." Such base methods, he believes, can be used to paint base people, but they will not capture the character of a distinguished sitter.

He introduces a method that relies on eight characters (*you* 由, *jia* 甲, *tian* 田, *shen* 申, *yong* 用, *bai* 白, *mu* 目 and *si* 四),[547] similar to the earlier set of five characters provided by Weng Ang, as a more accurate guideline that provides a general rule for painting the outlines of faces. This method, though elaborate, does not focus on the features that were constantly changing with the mood and expression of the sitter, and is intentionally allocated a marginal position in the manual in relation to his main argument.[548] Shen believed that the features of the sitter varied according to age and mood, changing every moment, which meant that no single rule could be fruitfully applied to capture these changes.

Instead of relying on fixed typologies and methods, "one must seek the rule outside the rule. Add change and variation within variation, seeking the path of change."[549] Shen introduces the "Lively Method" (*huofa* 活法) which cannot be subsumed under one rule, but that can help the painter develop the sensitivity to capture the varying moods of people. He describes the method as being diametrically opposed to "dead" (*si* 死) methods that only aim to faithfully and superficially represent ears, eyes and mouth of the sitter, but do not capture his or her essence. Shen argues that portraying another person cannot be narrowed down to attaining formal likeness—the task is only achieved when there is resonance between the sitter's and painter's

[547] Shen. 1845. *Jiezhou xuehua bian,* juan 3, 16b–17a.

[548] Shen might have preferred this method due to his affinity with calligraphy. He spent about thirty years of his life compiling comments and transcribing the texts of the *Calligraphy Models of the Chunhua Reign*, which he later published. The volume, titled *Chunhua mige fatie kaozheng* 淳化密閣法帖考證, has a preface written in his hand, dated 1768.

[549] Shen. 1845. *Jiezhou xuehua bian,* juan 3, 26b–27a.

souls. This, he adds, may require long hours of interaction with the sitter and deep reflection.[550]

To anyone acquainted with landscape painting theory, this discourse that emphasizes variation must have sounded Very familiar. In landscape painting, the painter has to respect the four seasons and at the same time bear in mind that the seasons do not represent the constant vital energy of nature. The Song landscape painter Guo Xi 郭熙 (ca. 1000-1090), for instance, advocated for variations that follow the principles of nature when composing a landscape.[551] Shen contends that the same is true when it comes to portraiture: a person's varying moods do not correspond to the constant spirit of that person. The spirit only manifests itself through the changing appearance, so the painter must observe the sitter for a while before painting in order to grasp the constant features lying below the variations.[552]
While other portrait painters, such as Wang Yi, had stressed the importance of observing the many moods of the sitter before painting, Shen is the only one to connect this principle to the observation of a landscape over the course of the seasons.

Shen thus sees both portraiture and landscape painting as ways to depict natural changes. It is therefore not surprising that he proposes similar methods for both subjects, even stating that the student should master different motifs to master portraiture.[553] In his instructions, he emphasizes the use of ink, just as landscape painting theories do. Shen believes ink plays a much more important role than color, a claim similar to one in his instructions for painting landscapes, and he even warns painters that applying shades only through layers of pigment will make a painting appear vulgar.[554] In the instructions on portraiture, he introduces the system of ink-gradations, which can be regarded as basic knowledge that every landscape painter would possess.

Every landscape composition should convey a lively rhythm through variations in the use of different strokes, textures and ink tones, a point Shen

[550] Shen. 1845. *Jiezhou xuehua bian,* juan 3, 24a-b; 25b.
[551] The *Formula for Landscape Painting* (*Shanshui jue* 山水訣), most likely a Yuan text, also warns against repetition and uniformity in composition. Bush and Shih. 2012. *Early Chinese Texts on Painting,* 180–81, 176-177.
[552] Shen. 1845. *Jiezhou xuehua bian,* juan 3, 3a.
[553] Shen. 1845. *Jiezhou xuehua bian,* juan 3, 7a-b.
[554] Similar comments for landscape painting can be found in Shen. 1845. *Jiezhou xuehua bian,* juan 1, 12a. The concept of vulgarity permeates and structures Shen's theories of landscape painting. Shen. 1845. *Jiezhou xuehua bian,* juan 3, 10a.

emphasizes in his own treatise when discussing landscape painting.[555] The variations of ink are addressed by Shen in the landscape painting section he dedicated to "Applying Ink" (*yongmo* 用墨), in which he associates different intensities of ink with different elements of the composition.[556] In his portraiture instructions, the importance of the application of ink is equally underscored for bringing out the "mounds and valleys" (*qiu huo* 邱壑) of the face.[557] Ink-tones are scaled from one to ten, with ten being the darkest and one being the lightest. The pupils of the eyes are painted in the darkest tone; the grooves in the face of an old person or the lines that demarcate the eyes or the nostrils are to be painted in ink of density seven; the elevation of the bone under the eyebrows should only be brought out by applying the lightest ink, one or two on the dilution scale.[558]

Shen emphasizes brushwork when painting portraits, which goes hand in hand with the appropriate use of ink. The underlying idea is that by looking carefully at a face, one will "come to realize that the face is composed of the brushwork of nature," and that once one has grasped this, the "principle of nature will appear naturally below one's brush" (能識面上有天然筆法，自筆下有天然神理).[559] Such notions were common fare in texts on landscape painting but novel in portraiture. One of his metaphors offers an apt description of the role of brushwork:

> The use of the brush is like constructing a house: The outlines grasp the general shape—the beams, columns and walls; The texture strokes are thus like the trellis of windows and the stonework added to the walls.
>
> 用筆之道譬如蓋造房屋。勾取大概，則如梁柱牆垣；寫及皴紋，則如窗櫺垣砌。[560]

The metaphor he chooses to illustrate the role of both lines and texture strokes indicates that he perceives these as the essential and structuring

[555] Guo Xi (after 1000-ca 1090) and Han Zhuo (ca. 1095-ca. 1125) both make similar points. See Bush and Shih. 2012. *Early Chinese Texts on Painting,* 179; 184.
[556] Shen. 1845. *Jiezhou xuehua bian,* juan 1, 13b.
[557] Shen. 1845. *Jiezhou xuehua bian,* juan 3, 10a.
[558] On ink gradations, see the section on "Distinctions" (*Fenbie* 分別) in Shen. 1845. *Jiezhou xuehua bian,* juan 3, 17a–18a.
[559] Shen. 1845. *Jiezhou xuehua bian,* juan 3, 2b.
[560] Shen. 1845. *Jiezhou xuehua bian,* juan 3, 9b.

elements of the portrait, not fixed standards and proportions. Shen goes so far as to borrow specific texture strokes from landscape painting, such as in his recommendation to paint the texture of the skin of elderly people with the strokes used to paint dry trees.[561] He is convinced that applying the discourse of gradations and texture strokes to portraiture will make the task of portraying someone easier. After all, the techniques he discusses are helpful for landscape painters, and could thus also help the portrait painter to capture nature's changes. He even claims that if a portrait painter is not familiar with landscape painting, he will not succeed in his craft.[562]

While earlier theories relied on typologies and described standard proportions to provide concrete guidelines to the painter, Shen opted to highlight the constant changes of the features. Shen believed that even if the proportions were correct and the colors had subsequently been applied according to the model, the image would still lack vitality. The general features of the face had to be grasped in a quick sketch in light ink, which assured that the spirit was accurately captured. [563] In fact, while Shen stresses the importance of observing the sitter, he claims that the most important skill a portrait painter must acquire is the proper use of the brush. He emphasizes the appropriate use of textures and application of ink as crucial techniques the student should master. It is through the use of the brush that a painter can distinguish himself from vulgar painters.[564] The mastery of the brush was perceived as something that could only be achieved by someone who was sensitive to subtle variations and could reflect on their implications.

In the section on landscape painting that precedes his portraiture theory, Shen emphasizes the notion that painting is a means to cultivate one's spirit. Throughout his treatise, it becomes clear that he sees it as an efficient instrument for avoiding vulgarity. The same is true for portraiture. Shen argues that when a painter is limited by standard rules, he creates portraits that emanate vulgarity. By rejecting fixed formulas and stressing the importance of variation achieved by proper brushwork and appropriate use of ink, he seeks to make the practice of painting portraits into a tool for self-cultivation. The underlying idea is that the practice of grasping nature's variations–in faces and in landscapes–nurtures the mind of the painter, keeping him distant from worldly affairs. Thus, landscape painting and

[561] Shen. 1845. *Jiezhou xuehua bian,* juan 3, 12b.
[562] Shen. 1845. *Jiezhou xuehua bian,* juan 3, 7a-7b.
[563] Shen. 1845. *Jiezhou xuehua bian,* juan 3, 4b.
[564] Shen. 1845. *Jiezhou xuehua bian,* juan 3, 8b.

portraiture not only share the same techniques, but are understood as two paths to the same goal.

Conclusion

The three Qing manuals discussed here all made extensive use of mnemonic aids, such as Ding Gao's summarizing rhymes, Jiang Ji's trusted nine-palaces grid and Shen Zongqian's set of eight characters to define the shape of a face. The differences between the treatises are also striking. All three theories derive from the personal backgrounds and practical expertise of the authors as well as their imagined target audiences, yet are unique in their approach to and understanding of portraiture. The different fields that the authors used as reference bound their theories into cohesive and intelligible systems. Still, the treatises were also products of a specific period and the authors' social environments.

Statements recorded by the authors or their close friends explain the motivation lying behind the composition of their work and reveal that knowledge transmission was often not their only goal. By writing these texts, the authors also aimed to transmit virtues that they believed would benefit society and ensure social harmony. The practice of accumulating merit by performing good deeds, such as disseminating useful knowledge, became widespread during the Ming dynasty.[565] Authors could improve their social image by promoting Confucian virtues and ritualised behaviour. All three authors introduced here presented themselves as moral paragons by showing how portraiture practice could become a virtuous activity related to filial piety and self-cultivation.

The efforts invested by the Qing authors in translating portraiture theories into cohesive systems reflect their understanding of knowledge. Knowledge of portraiture was to be acquired through reflection and reasoning, and the reader of these theories had to be committed and engaged, with a predisposition for moral cultivation and aspirations to benefit society. Rote memorization, valued in past theories, was allotted a secondary role, and thus traditional approaches could be re-appropriated and practical techniques could gain new flexibility. Memory still played an important role

[565] For a brief description of how merit was accumulated by individuals and moral performance perfected by using morality books, see Lee. 2000. *Education in Traditional China*, 354–355. For examples of how performing good deeds and practices of evaluating merit unfolded during the Ming dynasty, see Handlin Smith. 2009. *The Art of Doing Good.*

when recalling the sitter's features and following the correct steps for painting, but the steps were connected within a system or tradition. The reader should, above all, *understand* the content, thus gaining more freedom to employ this knowledge.[566]

This new perception of knowledge also allowed scholars to project a positive image of themselves. While their painting theories functioned as moral guides, the authors also portrayed themselves as moral paragons and cultivated, discerning and virtuous men. The three treatises prompt the readers to reflect on portraiture in order to bring out their virtues, while the authors' own efforts to value reason by making analogies to other fields also serve as an example of how to avoid being vulgar and coarse. Once the act of reflecting on practical matters was perceived as a means of keeping the mind free of undesired thoughts, knowledge transmission and morality were bound together. Painting portraits was no longer considered a lowly craft, but rather a worthy activity for an aspiring scholar or earnest professional, and portraiture theories became tool kits to help readers to avoid vulgarity and practice filial piety – in short, to become virtuous.

[566] During the Qing dynasty, traditional medical knowledge was also given a new format to become more accessible and entertaining for common readers. Information from *materia medica* was later rewritten into novels, using narrative structure and family ties as mnemonic aids. See Schonebaum. 2016. *Novel Medicine,* 95–96.

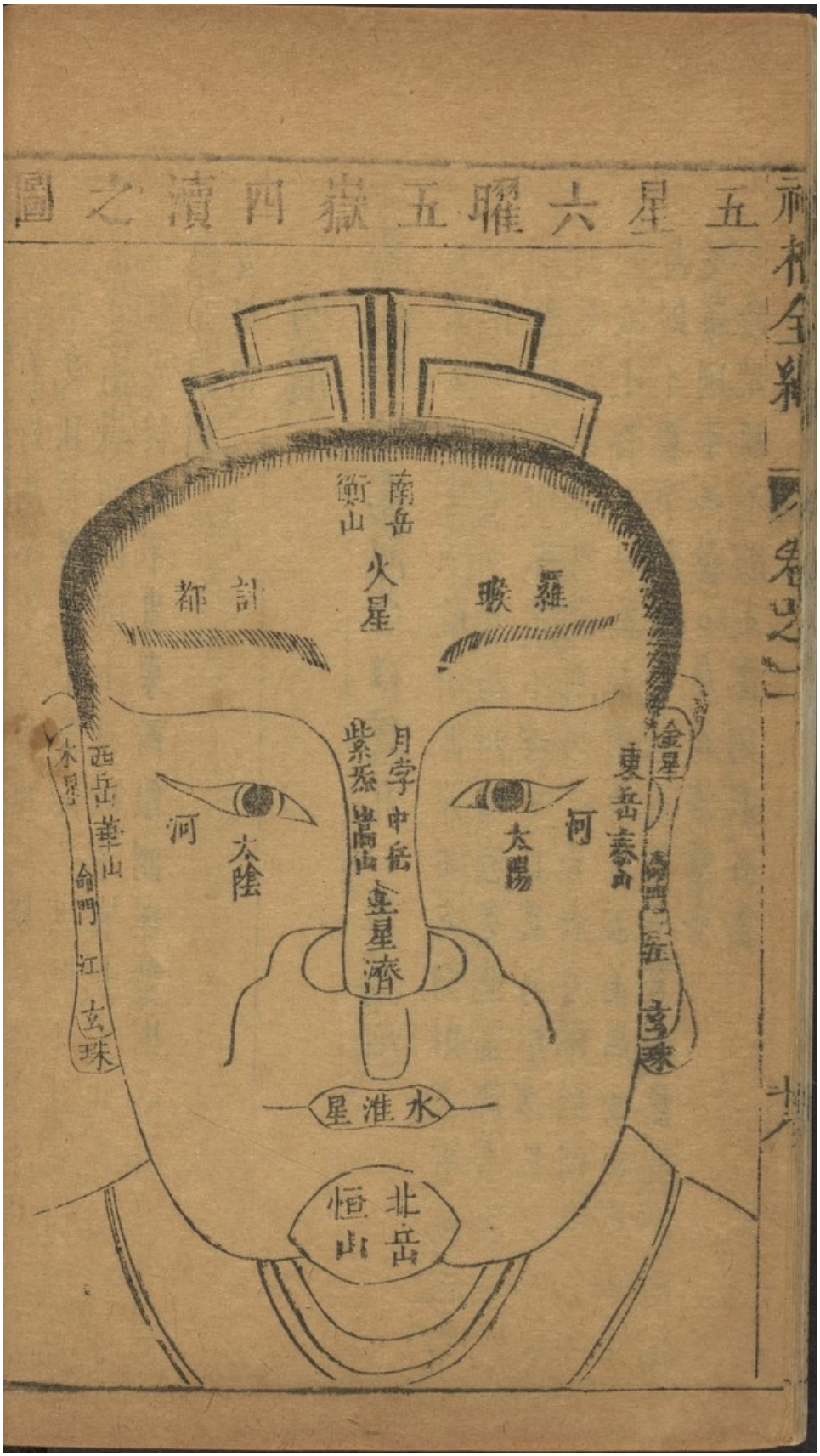


Fig. 6.1 Five Mountains (*wuyue* 五岳) and Four Rivers (*sidu* 四瀆) in the physiognomy manual *Compendium for the Expert Physiognomist* (*Shenxiang quanbian* 神相全編). Source: Yuan. [between 1465-1620]. *Shenxiang quanbian*, juan 1, 18a. Image source: Harvard College Library, Harvard-Yenching Library.



Fig. 6.2 Graph for placing the elements of the face. The instructions on the right refer to the placement of the five mounds that should be contained within the character *tian* 田, while the ears go outside of the square. Source: Weng and Hu. 1603. *Chuanzhen miyao,* 5a. Image source: National Archives of Japan.

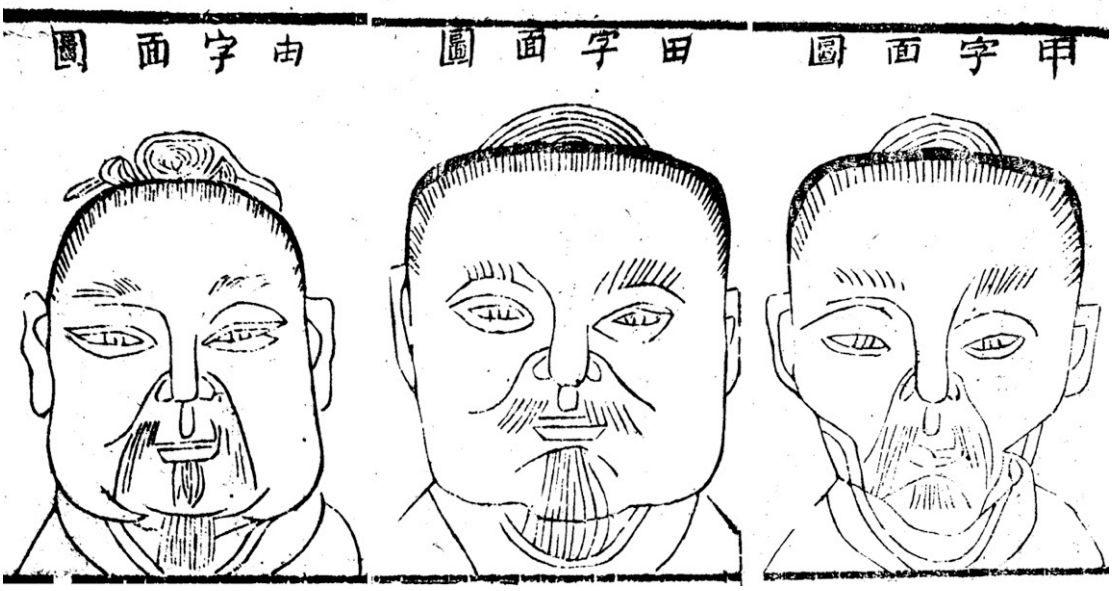


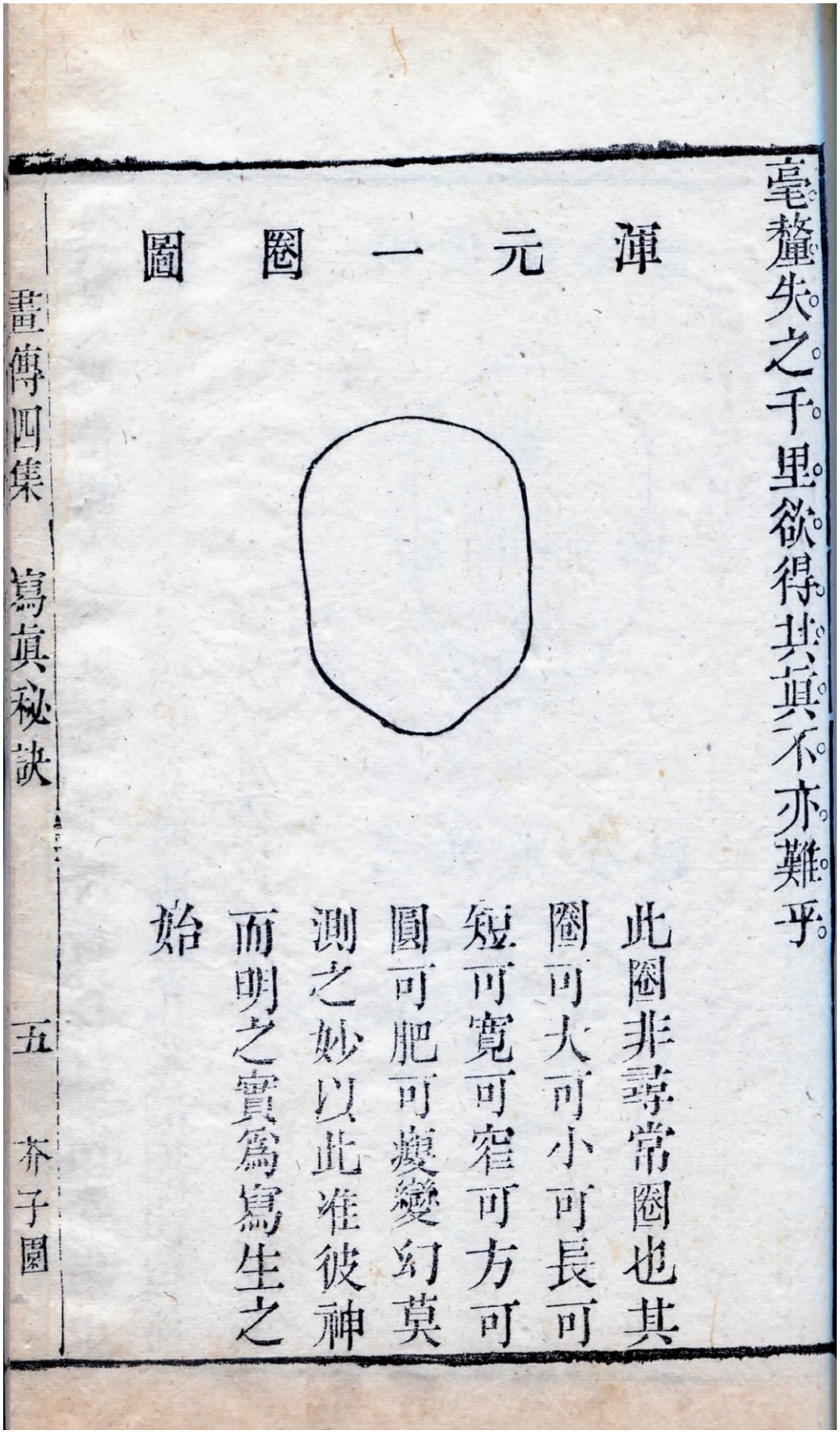
Fig. 6.3 Three illustrations of how characters are used to describe the shape of faces from the physiognomy manual *Selected Truths from the Principle of Physiognomy* (*Xiangli hengzhen* 相理衡真). Source: Chen. [1833]. *Xiangli Hengzhen*, juan 2, 1a; 3a; 4b. Image by author.



Fig. 6.4 Examples from the typology of eyes and eyebrows from Weng Ang's manual. The first type is "tearing eyes," the second describes eyes that "seem to smile," and the third "remarkable" eyes. Source: Weng and Hu. 1603. *Chuanzhen miyao,* 15a. Image source: National Archives of Japan.



Fig. 6.5 Graph of the main divisions of the face in frontal view. Source: Ding and Ding. 1818. *Xiezhen mijue*, juan 1, 3a.


毫釐失之千里欲得其眞不亦難乎

渾元一圈圖

此圈非尋常圈也其圈可大可小可長可短可寬可窄可方可圓可肥可瘦變幻莫測之妙以此准彼神而明之實爲寫生之始

畫傳四集 寫眞秘訣 五 芥子園

Fig. 6.6 Graph of the “Circle of Primordial Chaos” (*hunyuan juan* 渾元圈). Source: Ding and Ding. 1818. *Xiezhen mijue*, juan 1, 5a.

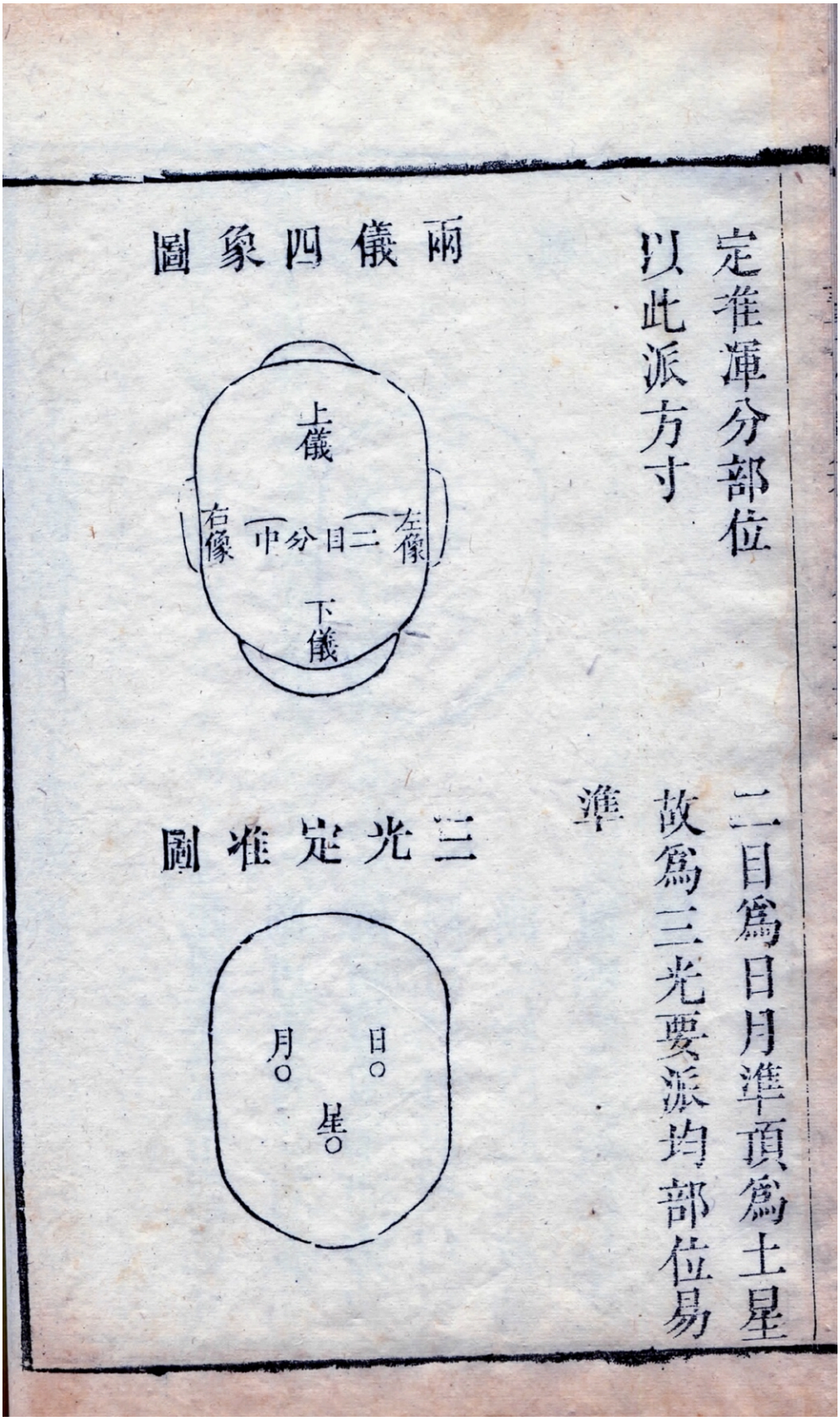


Fig. 6.7 Graph of the division of the primordial chaos into the two basic elements at the top and the "Three Brights" (*sanguang* 三光) at the bottom. Source: Ding and Ding. 1818. *Xiezhen mijue*, juan 1, 5b.



Fig. 6.8 Graph of the division of the primordial chaos through shading. Source: Ding and Ding. 1818. *Xiezhen mijue*, juan 1, 6a.



Fig. 6.9 Two examples from Gao Song's *Origins of Brush Methods* for balancing the space between horizontal and vertical strokes in characters. Source: Liu and Gao. 1568. *Chongke neige michuan zifu*, 43b-44a. Image source: Library of Congress.

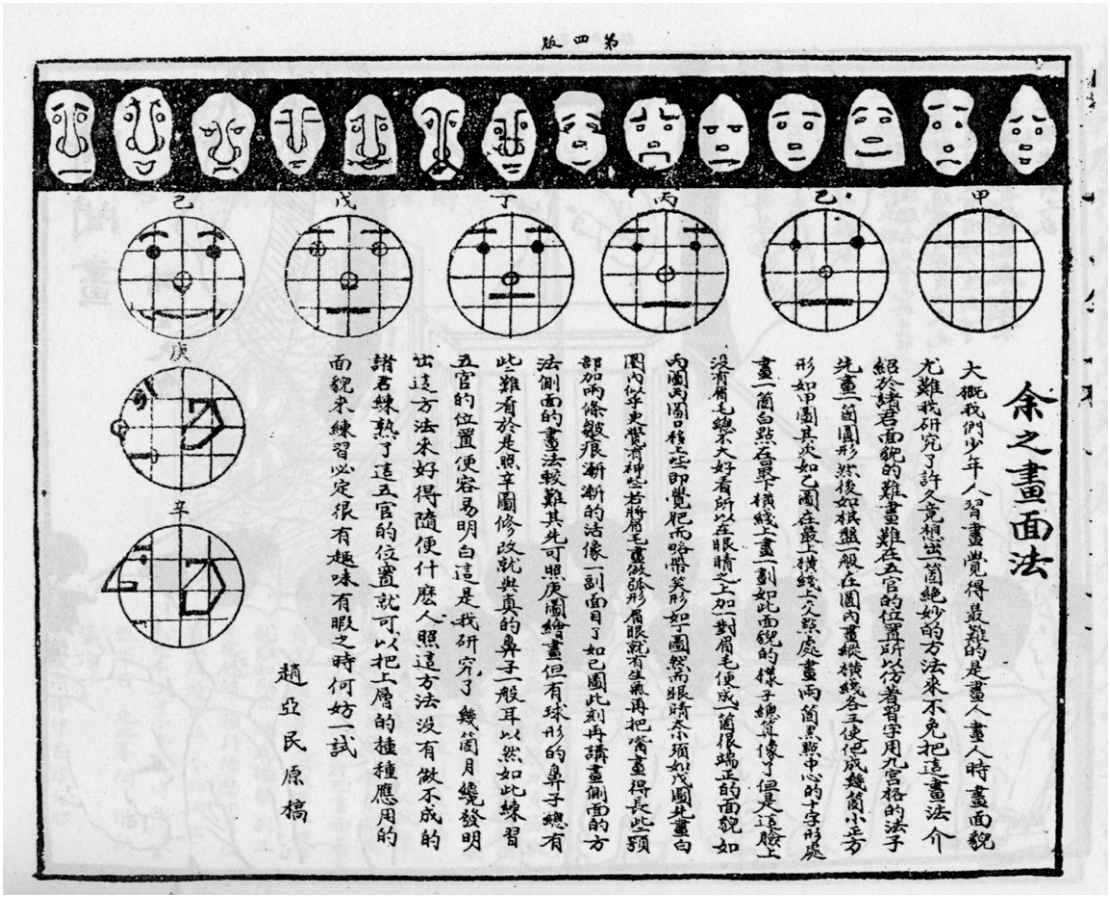


Fig. 6.10 Periodical from the Republican Period introducing the nine palaces method for drawing faces to children. Source: Guojia tushuguan fenguan 國家圖書館分館. 2003. *Qingmo Minchu baokan tuhua jicheng, vol. 20: Jingshi jiaoyu huabao,* 9037.

Chapter 7

Memory in Historical Perspective: A Nineteenth-Century Mnemonic Painting Treatise

During the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth century, the cultural market prospered and painting underwent unprecedented stylistic changes. Not only were portrait painters claiming new ground through their theories, but other painting traditions, such as those of flowers and birds, landscapes, and figure painting, were challenged by painters to meet the tastes of urban audiences and merchant patrons.

In the bustling centre of Yangzhou 揚州, for example, commercial painters, who came from a variety of backgrounds, rarely painted landscapes in the scholarly style. Instead, they engaged their expanding pool of consumers by including figures in the images and creating paintings that were narrative and entertaining. Eighteenth-century Yangzhou consumers were not interested in style, but in stories and subjects they could relate to. In a similar fashion, commercial painters explored new compositional features for paintings of flowers, fruit, insects and birds. They reduced the elements in the painting to abbreviated strokes and light washes and added playful poems in bold calligraphy to their compositions, creating a new visual appeal.[567]

Even though Yangzhou painting was indebted to past traditions and maintained associations with a number of values that had been codified by earlier painters, commercial painters responded to the present, even through satire and social criticism.[568] Their engagement with current issues, bold approaches to composition and broadening of the scope of motifs paved the way for Shanghai painters of the nineteenth century. Like Yangzhou painters, commercial painters in Shanghai commonly specialized in specific subject matters. While nineteenth-century painters expressed their indebtedness to Yangzhou styles, the historical moment in which they produced and sold their works was drastically different.[569]

In the middle of the nineteenth century, China faced unprecedented military challenges, both foreign and domestic, in rapid succession. Domestic

[567] Hsü. 2001. *Bushel of Pearls*, 8; 118. Yangzhou innovations in landscape and figure painting are also addressed in Karlsson. 2004. *Luo Ping*, 76.
[568] Hsü. 2001. *Bushel of Pearls*, 222-226.
[569] Kalsson provides examples of how Ren Bonian (1840-1895) claimed to emulate Luo Ping in his work. 2004. *Luo Ping*, 78; 224.

upheavals, the Opium Wars and the Taiping War not only brought chaos and destruction to the south of China, but also challenges to Confucian ideology and to scholarly cultural standards. The Taiping movement began with Hong Xiuquan 洪秀全 (1813-1864), a man who believed he was the younger brother of Jesus Christ. He declared himself the savior of China and many heeded his call to overthrow the Manchu ruling house, which he saw as a force of evil. Starting in 1850, Taiping forces attempted to overthrow the Manchu ruling house of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), engaging imperial and local forces in one of the bloodiest civil wars in history, which only ended in 1864.

The catastrophic devastation of the civil war was especially felt in the Yangzi Delta—the cultural heart of China—where cities like Yangzhou, Hangzhou, and Nanjing were left in ruins. Not only were cities destroyed during the war, but Taiping forces also massacred residents who failed to escape before the invasions.[570] The population of the southern Yangzi region was scattered and families of all classes suffered incredible material and human losses. Unsurprisingly, the vibrant art scene of Yangzhou was crushed and sponsorship dropped as merchant patrons dealt with hardship. Yet, the blow that devastated cultural practices most likely hit the scholarly community the hardest.

The Taiping War shattered intellectual communities, scattering those who shared cultural practices and their cultural capital. As Taiping adherents had actively sought to burn collections and destroy books, allegedly also using pages as toilet paper,[571] books and artworks left behind by those who had fled were often destroyed. Following the war, sorrow over lost books overcame many scholars. Lu Yitian 陸以湉 (1802-1865), for example, recounts how painful it was for him to return to his home in Hangzhou to find that of his collection of medical books, many of which he had copied by hand, only a quarter could be recovered.[572]

Scholars had traditionally shouldered the responsibility of recording history and meaningful events, and it was part of the scholarly identity to maintain records about the past in order to instruct future generations.[573] Many scholars therefore made efforts to recover the fragmented cultural legacy when the war was over. Compiling records and reframing existing texts

[570] Meyer-Fong. 2015. "Where the War Ended," 1726.
[571] Berliner. 2018. *The 8 Brokens,* 28.
[572] Hu. 2010. "Li luan Hangzhou," 67.
[573] Huntington. 2005. "Chaos, Memory, and Genre," 64.

to mitigate past losses became a common practice among scholars. Numerous scholarly families recarved lost woodblocks and created records of what had been destroyed.[574]

Ding Bing 丁丙 (1832-1899) and his brother Ding Shen 丁申 (d. 1880) were responsible for the largest compilation of works that dealt with the aftermath of the war in Hangzhou, titled *Weeping for Hangzhou, 1860 and 1861* (*Geng xin qi Hang lu* 庚辛泣杭錄). The brothers gathered scattered information as a way to reconstruct local memory and emotionally process the events of the war.[575] At the same time, commercial publishers in Shanghai came to regard the preservation of Chinese culture as a profitable enterprise and printed cheap versions of popular books to satisfy public demand.[576]

Survivors of the civil war made use of various platforms to express their feelings of grief. Describing events of the war, for example in novels and plays, attested to the purity of deceased individuals and exhorted moral transformation from the audience.[577] Beyond the written word, spaces to gather and remember those who had passed were constructed. Zhang Guanglie 張光烈, for example, built a garden to honor his mother, whose murder he witnessed as a seven-year-old boy.[578]

The unique case of Dai Yiheng 戴以恆 (style Yongbo 用伯, 1826-1891) provides a glimpse at how practices of remembering loved ones and scholarly efforts to represent the past merged in the field of art. A native of the prosperous city of Hangzhou, Dai watched his world crumble and his family perish when the Taiping armies took over his hometown. After the war, Dai Yiheng moved to Shanghai and took up painting as a profession. Shanghai was home to a flourishing art scene that decisively shaped painting in the late nineteenth century. However, unlike his fellow commercial painters who worked to develop Yangzhou trends, Dai resolved to produce landscape paintings in the scholarly style. Furthermore, he published a mnemonic painting treatise composed entirely in rhymes dedicated to the explanation of techniques central to elite painting practices.

Both Dai Yiheng's paintings and his treatise illustrate a perceived

[574] See Hummel. 1943. *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing period,* 64; 139; 338. Stackmann. 1990. *Die Geschichte der Chinesischen Bibliothek Tian Yi Ge*, 68.
[575] Hu. 2010. "Li luan Hangzhou," 58; 70).
[576] Wagner. 2008. "Joining the Global Imaginaire," 109.
[577] Hu. 2010. "Li luan Hangzhou"; Huntington. 2005. "Chaos, Memory, and Genre"; Meyer-Fong. 2013. *What Remains,* 110.
[578] See Meyer-Fong. 2014. "Civil War, Revolutionary Heritage, and the Chinese Garden," 86; Meyer-Fong. 2013. "Chaos, Memory, and Genre," chapter 6.

disruption in the coherence of time and subjectivity.[579] The abrupt rupture and loss of the elite cultural environment coupled with the bewildering social and cultural changes that were taking place in the treaty-port city of Shanghai created a visible tension in his work. His works were monuments to the past that framed lost practices and at the same time pointed to the present. Dai made use of a long-standing scholarly historiographical practice to highlight this disconnect and to come to terms with his traumatic past. At the same time, through this scholarly practice of temporal layering, he was able to combine his personal traumatic memories with his mnemonic rhymes and paintings. As his personal past and the mnemonic treatise became inseparable, the mnemonic function of his rhymes took a subordinate role to his personal memory.

His scholarly identity was also what made his work as a painter economically viable. Like landscape painters in eighteenth-century Yangzhou, Dai found a niche of customers who appreciated orthodox styles. Yet, these were not status-conscious and culturally insecure merchants who perceived such paintings as symbolic goods.[580] Dai catered to a multicultural audience that hoped to appropriate and make sense of the Chinese past. His personal grief, the tension he felt in the urban environment of Shanghai and the circle of his fellow painters, the demands of a new audience, and finally the moral values he upheld all come together in his mnemonic manual.

Tragic Beginnings

On March 21, 1860, Dai Yiheng's uncle, the retired scholar and painter Dai Xi 戴熙 (b. 1801) jumped fully clad into a pond in Hangzhou and drowned himself. Before ending his life, he left the world a resolute message in the form of a farewell poem:

> With a sick body, at the twilight of my life, the situation I encounter is distressing;
> For eight years now, the efforts I made to organize patrolling defenses leave me deeply ashamed.
> I let go [of this life] and withdraw into a heap of white clouds;

[579] For a parallel development in literary works in nineteenth-century Europe, see Terdiman. 1993. *Present Past,* 4.
[580] Hsü. 2001. *Bushel of Pearls*, 80; 89.

I follow the [heavenly] command [to depart from this world], and would not be willing to return to the world of the living.

病軀晚歲遇事艱，八載巡防總汗顏。
撒手白雲堆裡去，從令不願到人間。[581]

Dai Xi committed suicide two days after the invading Taiping army breached the city's walls. He was a high-ranking official who had earned his "advanced scholar" degree (*jinshi* 進士) in 1832 and had served in the capital and as educational commissioner in Guangdong. At the age of forty-eight he returned to his hometown of Hangzhou, where he began to organize volunteers to strengthen the city's defenses against the Taiping forces.[582]

For a man of Dai Xi's status and post, suicide was the action expected to be taken in face of imminent defeat by rebels who opposed the Qing Empire. It was the ideal means to conserve one's loyalty to the court and one's honor.[583] This course of action was broadly recognized in Qing society, and even Dai Xi's younger brother, the "talented scholar" (*xiucai* 秀才), renowned mathematician and painter Dai Xu 戴煦 (b. 1806, style *Eshi* 鄂士), on receiving news of his brother's suicide, smiled and sighed: "His death was for a deserving cause" (吾兄得死所矣),[584] proceeding to commit suicide on the same day by throwing himself down a well. Even though the Taiping army was driven out of the city five days after the occupation, Dai Xi's act of loyalty was later officially acknowledged by the Empire; he was buried as a martyr in Hangzhou and honored with the posthumous name Wenjie 文節.

However, his farewell poem reflects personal shame instead of the desire to be loyal to the Qing Empire. In the second line of his poem, he addresses his failure to suppress the Taiping rebels, who had caused turmoil in the Jiangnan region for about eight years, beginning with the siege of Nanjing in 1853. His attempts to organize a local militia to defend Hangzhou had failed. In the last line of the poem, his bitter disappointment in himself is even more pronounced, as he claims he could not be prompted to return to the world in which he has played such a shameful role.

The poem appeared in print in the *First Edition of the Record of Poems by Teachers and Friends of Willow Hall* (*Liutang shiyou shilu chubian* 柳堂師友

[581] Li. 1861. *Liutang shiyou shilu chubian*, 13a.
[582] Hummel. 1943. *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period, 700.*
[583] Meyer-Fong. 2013. *What Remains,* 71-72.
[584] Zhao. 1977. *Qingshi gao,* juan 493, 13650.

詩錄初編), published in Guangdong province in 1861 by fellow painter Li Changrong 李長榮. It was not included in imperially sanctioned records that cast Dai Xi as a martyr, but appeared in notes passed around among local scholars. Compilations that were not produced under official auspices served as a medium through which opinions that differed from the official agenda could be circulated.[585] Such unofficial records did not always idealize loyalty to the empire. Private accounts show that among survivors, disenchantment with the government was not uncommon. Although Dai Xi seems to claim the responsibility for failing to defend his hometown, many survivors blamed the Qing government for creating the situation that led to the massacres and the loss of their relatives to either Taiping or Qing soldiers.

Dai Yiheng, Dai Xi's nephew, was one of the survivors who did not perceive his suicide only through the lens of loyalty. To Dai Yiheng, the destruction of Hangzhou during the war led to the loss of both his home and his loved ones, including his father. Yet, it was the loss of his role model Dai Xi that affected him most. Unlike many of his male ancestors, Dai Yiheng did not pursue a bureaucratic career, though his upbringing was that of a scholar. He received extensive training in traditional scholarly painting from his uncle, whose works had been highly esteemed among colleagues during his lifetime. Yiheng remained attached to Dai Xi, who had taught him the moral values and scholarly ideals that shaped him and his art, even after taking up commercial painting to earn a living in Shanghai.

Remembering the Master

For Dai Yiheng, Dai Xi was someone he could always approach with questions. Dai Xi recorded some of their interactions in his *Remarks on Painting from the Studio of Being Accustomed to Hardship* (*Xikuzhai huaxu* 習苦齋畫絮), in which Yiheng is mentioned several times. The close relationship of uncle and nephew was one driven by both personal affection and love for painting. In the most detailed passages, Dai Xi vividly describes his fondness for Yiheng:

> When I was serving in Yue [Guangdong province], my nephew Yongbo [Yiheng], at the time still a child, sent me a letter asking for calligraphy models. I appreciated his regular script for its uprightness

[585] Meyer-Fong. 2013. *What Remains,* 133-135; 205.

and I produced four sheets with paintings and sent them to him. Yongbo saved them for seven years and then backed them. How can it be that his childlike innocence has not yet faded?

余在粵時，猶子用伯尚童稚也。寄書請安帖來，喜其楷法平正，作小畫四紙付之。用伯藏七年而裝焉。豈童心尚未退耶？[586]

Dai Xi describes Yiheng's attentiveness to the materials and his willingness to preserve them as an act of purity of character. Calligraphy was believed to reflect the writer's character, so it is telling that Dai Yiheng's is described as upright, indicating how much Dai Xi esteemed his nephew. Further passages in Dai Xi's records recount their shared love for painting and their intimate conversations. Dai Xi writes: "Whenever Yiheng has free time from his studies, he investigates the Six Principles of painting. Under lamplight we discussed how the ancients applied ink."[587] The statement illustrates how the master Dai Xi transmitted his knowledge to his nephew in an intimate familiar setting, reflecting a scholarly tradition to cultivate "family learning."[588] During his youth, Yiheng was mainly occupied with his studies, and painting gave him the opportunity to engage in intimate discussions with a family member to comprehend abstract values and principles of landscape painting.

The bond between Yiheng and his uncle remained unbroken even after the suicide, as Yiheng remembered his uncle with a fondness that matches Dai Xi's description. For example, after the war, Yiheng wrote an inscription on a landscape album painted by Dai Xi, showing how close the two had been:

This is a work uncle Xi produced when he was twenty-six years (*sui*) old. That was seven years after he took part in the local exams of 1819. I was born in that year, 1826, on the 10th day of the 9th lunar month. In 1831 I entered private school. After class I would hurry to secretly borrow his paintings and copy them on my own. Today I am 58 years old and ten years have passed since my uncle sacrificed himself. One can only sigh deeply.

[586] Dai. 1893. *Xikuzhai huaxu*, juan 2, 14b-15a.
[587] Dai. 1893. *Xikuzhai huaxu*, juan 2, 6b. The "Six Principles" were recorded by Xie He 謝赫 (fl. 6th c.). They functioned as guidelines for painters in imperial China.
[588] Clunas. 2013. "The Family Style."

此先伯父二十六歲時作也，去己卯登賢書之歲已七年，以恆生於是年之重九後一日，辛卯始入塾， 課餘即偷取先君畫私自摹擬，今以恆年五十九，去先伯殉難之期只十閱年，可勝嘆哉。[589]

Memories of his youth and the loss of his uncle weighed on Dai Yiheng. The close relationship he had developed with Dai Xi as his apprentice is a continued theme in his works. Even in simple inscriptions on his own works, Dai Yiheng promotes his uncle as a model worthy of emulation. An inscription on a round fan painted with a landscape, dated 1889—just two years before Dai Yiheng's own death—is the last known instance in which he mentions his uncle.[590]

Dai Xi also reappears constantly in Dai Yiheng's miscellaneous writings, in his personal objects and in notes recorded by friends. All attest to Yiheng's torment and feelings of loss. Wang Kun 王堃 (1815-1887), also a native of Hangzhou and a close friend of the Dai family, describes how even twenty years after the invasion of the city, the painful memory of having lost his uncle still caused Yiheng anguish: "[Yiheng] inscribed one of my painted scrolls, recounting his utterly genuine feeling that he could not forget his uncle. It was deeply touching" (用伯題余畫卷，尤惓惓不忘先人，甚可感也).[591]

Dai Yiheng's memory of his uncle as painting master and righteous man shaped his activities as a painter. Feelings of loss permeated his oeuvre; whether through inscriptions or impressions of seals on paintings, his attachment to the past was evident. Most importantly, however, Dai was perennially reminded of his uncle through the act of painting and the lessons Dai Yiheng had embodied as habits through continued practice, as attested by another inscription:

I feel his words still ring in my ears and his style continues to appear before my eyes; I often meet him below my brush. I fear that later generations will remove my name and sign his name in an inscription. If I tried to get rid of my habits, I would not succeed. This painting truly possesses a spiritual likeness [to his work].

[589] Transcribed in Lao. 2013. *Lao Jixiong shuhua jianding conggao,* 136.
[590] Reproduced in Lu. 2001. *Haishang huihua quanji*, vol. 1, 90.
[591] Wang. 2000. *Ziyixuan duilian zhuiyu*, 1649.

余耳濡目染，腕底不期而遇，恐後之人去余名而署文節款字。求擺脫結習而未能。此作尤為神似。[592]

The style Yiheng had incorporated during his youth accompanied him throughout his life. Both the content and the brushwork of his paintings greatly resembled his uncle's, as these examples show [Figs. 7.1 and 7.2]. In these intimate landscapes, both artists make use of angular strokes in ink to depict flowering trees, which are then brought to life with diluted washes of color. Mountains in the distance are rendered without contours, in gradients of color that gently fade toward the horizon, alluding to the mist that rises from the damp shores. The presence of buildings in the mountains is subdued by the painters' use of light ink to render the structures. The inscriptions on both paintings allude to poetry, while uncle and nephew often referred to earlier masters and their painting styles in their dedications.

As his hands and heart remembered what he learned from Dai Xi during their conversations and shared experiences in viewing paintings, these lessons and practices were embodied in Yiheng's own style and habits. In a simple inscription Yiheng penned at 63, he still promotes his uncle's "meticulous work." [593] He did not abandon the practices he had internalized over the course of several years, even as his environment changed abruptly.

An Orthodox Painter in Shanghai

During the nineteenth century, Shanghai became a bustling cultural center. Locals appropriated technologies and products from abroad and reconfigured traditional urban spaces. With the introduction of Western printing presses, newspapers and periodicals increasingly informed citizens about current events. Thus, traditional social and commercial practices and even the notion of time were disrupted.[594] The foreign presence in Shanghai and the developing economy of the city attracted refugees of the Taiping War hoping to establish themselves away from their devastated homes. The multicultural center that appealed to collectors from abroad gave painters an opportunity to make a living through commercial painting. Among the migrants from cities that had been the cultural centers of the Jiangnan area, such as Suzhou, Nanjing and Hangzhou, were numerous painters, some with

[592] Transcribed in Lu. 2019. "Dai Yiheng de yishu he sixiang."
[593] Lu. 2001. *Haishang huihua quanji,* vol. 1, 90.
[594] Liang. 2012. *Mapping Modernity in Shanghai,* chapter two.

scholarly backgrounds. As artists gathered in Shanghai to secure patronage for their craft, they created bonds based on economic relationships and shared professional interests instead of official or familial ties.[595]

In the modernizing city, it was profitable to develop a public persona that looked to the future and to consumers when producing works.[596] The painter Chen Yunsheng 陳允升 (1820-1884), who claimed he was motivated to publish an album of his landscape paintings in 1876 by the obliteration of his painting collection during the war, quickly cast the issue aside. Instead of arguing for the value of past masters' guidelines or lineages in his album, Chen took advantage of the new possibilities in the Shanghai publishing market to publicize his own works and disseminate "the fruits of his old age."[597] Like most Shanghai painters, Chen came from a poor family, working as a carpenter before picking up the craft of painting, in which he prioritized commercial goals. The album he published provided Shanghai consumers an intimate view into his social circle, with images depicting trite landscape motifs introduced by numerous prefaces with a profusion of praise by peers and friends. His sales were boosted by advertisements of the album printed in local newspapers, in which Chen was also portrayed as a well-related and cultivated man.[598]

Dai Yiheng most likely settled in Shanghai in 1862, the year following the second invasion of Hangzhou by Taiping forces.[599] Yiheng's scholarly persona, as represented in his paintings and writings, often clashed with the reality of the rapidly changing city and the commercial painters that inhabited it. Unlike others engaged in commercial painting, who made use of the printed media available in the city to construct a public image by publishing poems or advertisements in newspapers,[600] Yiheng did not seek public exposure.

Most painters of the period had "little reason to look back."[601] Acclaimed artists who took refuge in the treaty-port city, such as Ren Bonian

[595] Wue. 2014. *Art Worlds*, 10; 56.
[596] Hay. 2001. "Painting and the Built Environment in Late-Nineteenth-Century Shanghai," 85.
[597] Chen. 1876. *Renzhai hua sheng*, juan 1, 20b.
[598] Wue. 2014. *Art Worlds*, 123-126.
[599] Dai Yiheng received treatment at the foreign hospital in Shanghai that year, which is the earliest known evidence of his presence there. His name appears in a medical report of the missionary hospital in Shanghai, published by the British physician James Henderson (1829–1865). It is unclear what kind of ailment tormented him, but he thanks Henderson for curing him. See Gao. 2017. "Renjiyiguan de yihuan guanxi," 1.
[600] Wue. 2014. *Art Worlds*, chapter two.
[601] Wue. 2014. *Art Worlds*, 28. See also Hay. 2001. "Painting and the Built Environment in Late-Nineteenth-Century Shanghai," 93.

任伯年 (1840-1896) and Yang Borun 楊伯潤 (1837-1911), were known for reshaping Chinese ink painting in terms of composition and for embracing the new urban consumers' heterogeneous painting requests. Their art was captivating and could even be appreciated in public media. In contrast to Ren Bonian and Yang Borun, who are listed as famous painters with their specialties in guidebooks of the period, such as the *Miscellaneous Notes on Travelling in Shanghai* (*Huyou zaji* 滬遊雜記) of 1876, and the *Record of Dream Images of Shanghai* (S*ongnan mengying lu* 淞南夢影錄), Dai was not considered a "famous gentleman" (*mingshi* 名士) of the Shanghai art scene.

Juxtaposed with works from his Shanghai colleagues, Yiheng's paintings exhibit a conservative and outdated style. Whereas his contemporaries opted for cropped, dynamic compositions that exuded "big-city edginess,"[602] Dai Yiheng continued to paint as he always had. The landscapes he painted on scrolls and fans are centered and enclosed within the visual frame. They still relied on textures and subdued color washes. He continued to produce conservative paintings according to his habits and training, which, as he himself claimed, could not have been altered even if he had tried. His work required him to maintain practices he had internalized during his youth, while the practice itself had a lingering effect and reminded him of what had been lost.

In an attempt to praise Yiheng's achievements, an old friend of the Dai family said that his painting style "is one passed down for generations" (*hua fa jia chuan* 畫法家傳).[603] Similarly, in a newspaper article published after his death, the author describes Yiheng's early style as identical to his late uncle's, stating that "his early paintings were very refined and could almost be confused with the real works of Dai Xi."[604] His outdated style translated into the relative unpopularity of his work among his countrymen and his portrayal as a painter who merely "follows the family's tradition" in contemporary publications.[605]

Like in Yangzhou, landscape was not a dominant genre in the Shanghai art market. Painters who painted landscapes, such as Wu Shixian 吳石仙 (d. 1916) and Ren Yu 任預 (1854-1901) introduced innovations like patterns and bold diagonals as well as influences from western painting, such as

[602] Hay. 2001. "Painting and the Built Environment in Late-Nineteenth-Century Shanghai," 87.
[603] Wang. 2000. *Ziyixuan duilian zhuiyu*, 1649.
[604] Chen. 1923. "Zuilingxuan duhua ji."
[605] Yang. 1989. *Shanghai molin*, 71.

atmospheric effects and stark contrasts.[606] Dai Yiheng, however, rejected new stylistic trends. His skepticism toward commercial painters and their work was most likely connected to his perception of the declining moral behavior that some of his more avant-garde contemporaries exhibited. To him, landscape painting was still connected to self-cultivation.

An anecdote that describes an encounter between Dai Yiheng and the acclaimed painter Ren Bonian, originally published about 25 years after Dai's death, illustrates how conservative Dai's mindset was. The contrast between him and Bonian, the central character of the anecdote, is striking. Although the anecdote might be a caricature of these figures, it provides us a glimpse of how Bonian's eccentricity clashed with Dai's moral rectitude, a tension that surely amused readers.

In the anecdote, Ren Bonian is described as a "distant and arrogant character" (*shu ao* 疏傲) who defied laws and refused to tonsure his hair. His portrayal as an opium addict is connected to his failure to complete commissions and "even when painting material was repeatedly sent to him, he would still not stretch out the paper" (倍送潤資，猶不一伸紙), allowing the painting material to pile up in mounds. The anecdote recounts how Dai and Yang Borun, also an acclaimed painter, passed by Ren Bonian's studio and saw a boy sobbing by the door. They inquired about the cause for the boy's tears and learned that Ren had failed to produce any paintings for the boy, who had in turn been accused by his boss of stealing the money for the paintings. Upon hearing the boy's story,

> Dai said angrily: "How can a gentleman of renown act this way? Taking people's money and yet producing no paintings in exchange!" After having said this, Dai and Yang both entered Ren Bonian's studio. Ren was lying on a square daybed smoking when Dai stormed in, hit the table and yelled at Ren to get up. Startled, Ren asked what the reason for the racket was. Dai replied: "You accept people's money, yet you produce no paintings for them, causing a boy to cry at your door! How can that be?! If you don't start painting fast, I will be forced to beat you." There was no escape for Ren, so he immediately got up to paint. As for Dai and Yang, one stretched out the paper for him, while the other mixed the colors. Ren wielded his wet brush and in a trice he had painted two fans. Dai handed them over to the apprentice, who happily thanked him and left.

[606] Li. 1998. "Looking at Late Qing Painting," 24-25.

戴怒曰：「名士可若是乎？受人錢，乃不為人畫。」遂與楊同入。任方臥榻吸煙，戴突拍案呼任起。任驚問故。戴曰：「汝得人錢，不為人作畫，致使豎子哭於門，何也？不速畫，我必打汝。」任不得已，即起畫。戴與楊一人為伸紙，一人為調顏色。任援筆濡染，頃刻間，兩扇並就。戴以付學徒，欣謝而去。[607]

The moral behavior of Yiheng and Yang Borun stands in stark contrast to Ren's lack of propriety and abuse of opium, a direct criticism of his moral values. Yang Borun was known for his scholarly inclinations, avoiding discussions of business matters in writing and taking great pride in his poetry. He managed to balance tradition and the new trends, and was an active contributor to the press.[608] Dai Yiheng, who plays an active role in the anecdote, comes across as a stern man who strives to enforce the moral values of the scholar.

The anecdote can be read as an allegory of the Shanghai art scene. Ren Bonian, a painter who quickly rose to fame, is given the central role in the story, despite being criticized by conservative scholars. The moral characters are placed below the eccentric painter and turn to menial tasks, grinding the ink and preparing the paper, leaving the creation of art to the modern master, Ren Bonian. Modern relations and new artistic standards have moved to center stage, overhauling traditional values.

In another anecdote, Wang Kangnian 汪康年 (1860-1911) recounts that during a visit to Dai Yiheng's home, he was shown a painting of a deity holding a sword in the right hand and a bleeding head in the left. The blood-dripping head, to his horror, was a self-portrait of Dai:

> In my life I have seen a number of portraits that are painted in the style of photography, but none was as strange as the one painted by Dai Yongbo from my hometown of Hangzhou. One time Mr. Dai took out a paper on which the female deity [Yuebei] was depicted, holding a sword in the right hand and a human head in the left. Fresh blood was dripping [from the head], and it was a portrait of Mr. Dai himself. Even though he did say it was meant to admonish, it was nonetheless horrifying.

[607] Xu. 1917. *Qingbai leichao,* yishu lei (71), 97-98.
[608] Wue. 2014. *Art Worlds*, 77-78.

余生平見畫本及攝影法寫真多矣，然無怪于吾杭戴用柏先生者。先生嘗出一紙，畫天女（即月孛星），右手把撿，左手提一人頭，鮮血淋漓，即先生小像也。雖云示威，然未免怖人。[609]

The anecdote describes Dai's desire to admonish himself in order to adhere to moral conduct and avoid divine retribution in an extremely graphic way by borrowing a motif from Buddhist painting tradition.[610] In the urban context, however, most painters had no desire to create didactic or moralizing images, which were less attractive to consumers.[611] Dai continued to practice painting as a form of self-cultivation, and not merely as a commercial activity. His moralizing self-portrait reflected values different from those held by his colleagues who employed portraiture as medium for satire and self-ridicule.[612] It was not only for moral reasons, however, that Dai was reluctant to abandon the orthodox style. He embraced the past in order to make a name for himself as a traditional painter in a city racing toward the future. To foreign audiences in Shanghai, his outdated scholarly persona and personal history rendered him commercially appealing and gave him a reason to continually reflect on his painting practices.

New Audiences to a Foreign Past

Selling paintings and teaching was enough for Dai to earn a living. Although he showed uneasiness in navigating the commercial currents in the bustling Shanghai of the late nineteenth century, he did adapt his mindset to cater to the demands of a new audience, especially when it came to accepting students. Unlike other landscape painters in Shanghai, his close connection to the renowned painter Dai Xi obviated the need to look for customers through public advertisement. Dai Xi's fame as a traditional master attracted plenty of foreign customers and students.

Japanese painters had long been forbidden to leave Japan and visit China, and as soon as Japan began to reopen in stages in the decade after 1860, many of them seized the opportunity to do so.[613] The Japanese

[609] Wang. 1997. *Wang Rangqing biji*, 64.
[610] Brokaw discusses how Daoist, Buddhist and Confucian beliefs of morality and divine retribution became entangled during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. 2014. *The Ledgers of Merit and Demerit*, chapter three.
[611] Wue. 2014. *Art Worlds*, 21.
[612] Vinograd. 1998. "Satire and Situation."
[613] Fogel. 2015. *Between China and Japan,* 193; 197.

admiration for Chinese traditions and antiquities was far from a recent phenomenon and it had continued to develop during the years of restricted exchange.[614] When Japanese art dealers were finally allowed to travel to China, collectors' pent-up desire for Chinese art was unleashed and paintings and antiques quickly became very profitable commodities. In the second half of the nineteenth century, interactions between Chinese and Japanese elites reached an extraordinary level, and Shanghai served as a hub for such exchanges that led to close friendships and productive scholarly collaborations.[615]

One Japanese critic, Kishida Ginkō 岸田吟香 (1833–1905), comments that during the 1880s, paintings produced in Shanghai had already become overly commercialized, with painters estimating the value of their work according to the size of the paper – a practice he perceived as vulgar.[616] However, Dai Yiheng's orthodox style continued to be admired by Japanese painters and attracted foreign students. Records show that many of Dai's students were young men and women from Korea and Japan who hoped to learn the traditional style of Qing masters.[617] His association with Dai Xi, who was well known in Japan, surely attracted many students to his doorstep. While it is not known how much Dai earned by accepting apprentices, his work as a teacher and the sale of his paintings were enough for him to get by.

In 1886, on one of the rare occasions where Dai Yiheng was mentioned in the media, the newspaper *Shenbao* carried a thank-you note submitted by the father of one of Dai's Japanese students for having mentored his son as an apprentice. The student, Koyama Shokei 小山松溪 (1863-1903), arrived in Shanghai in 1885 and studied with Dai for about eight months. Koyama returned to China in 1887, where he met and travelled with his former teacher for a short period of time, exchanging inscriptions on paintings.[618] Koyama was an avid student, even taking a manuscript of Dai's treatise back to Japan,

[614] Chen. 2012. "Travels to Japan by Chinese Painters in the 1870s and 1880s," 14-15.
[615] Lai. 2012. "Tea and the Art Market in Sino-Japanese Exchanges of the Late Nineteenth Century," 61-62. In the article, Lai discusses the collaborative publication of a tea manual.
[616] Chen. 2012. "Travels to Japan by Chinese Painters in the 1870s and 1880s," 22.
[617] See *Shenbao*. 1886. "Xiaoshan Songxi xiansheng qu sui shi you Zhina"; Zheng. 2017. *Yilin sanye,* 314.
[618] His travels are recorded in Imaizumi. 1915. *Hokuetsu meiryū ihō*, vol. 2, 196-198. A set of paintings sold at auctions in 2010 and 2014 includes an inscription in which Dai recalls a trip with Shokei to Hangzhou. Wang. 2016. "Yin bei ru nan-shanshui xinfeng."

where colleagues copied it.[619] If he had not died young, cutting short his career in Japan as a painter specializing in the traditional Chinese style, Dai's treatise might have reached more aspiring painters.

The relationship between Dai Yiheng and his students, however, differed greatly from what he and his uncle had shared. Dai was very aware that his students, especially those from abroad, had few opportunities to gather with friends to discuss antique Chinese paintings in their home countries. Foreign students did not intend to stay with him for long, and often traveled on their own to visit important sites. The traditional master-student relationship was cut short, and it would be unrealistic to expect them to spend their young years absorbing a single master's instructions. Those who came to him saw painting as a profession and sought to learn quickly.

With this in mind, Dai condensed orthodox practices and customs into rhymes so they could be grasped by students who perceived the past he had lived as utterly foreign. In a dedication inscribed in Dai's manual, one of Dai's students commented that under his tutelage—unless the student was mediocre to start with—he or she became proficient in painting within a few months. He added that the rhymes helped students to recall the practices even if they stopped painting for a while. This format was chosen, the student noted, because Dai feared many did not engage the craft wholeheartedly and repeatedly abandoned it.[620]

Practices and relationships between painters and their students had changed irreversibly. Dai Yiheng knew that students who sought to learn a craft quickly to make a living did not perceive painting as a means of self-cultivation. Although the students who came to him elected to learn the orthodox style associated with scholars, the intimacy and cultural practices shared by the scholars of the past were foreign to them. The new international audience that Dai was confronted with in the urban environment of Shanghai led him to mediate his past experiences. In order to describe past customs and the practices instilled in him during his youth, Dai had to take a step back from them and scrutinize them with an objective eye. However, the result was far from an organic transmission of the practices in question. It was a commemoration and reconstruction of a lost tradition that should not be

[619] According to the inscription on the manuscript of the manual in the Zhejiang Library, it was passed on to Murase Ransui 村瀨藍水 (fl. 1861-1892). Lu. 2019. "Dai Yiheng de yishu he sixiang." Murase traveled to China in 1886. See Nakayama. 1972. *Shinbun shūsei Meiji hennenshi*, 282.

[620] Lu. 2019. "Dai Yiheng de yishu he sixiang."

forgotten—a monument to the past. While his connection to the lost past and his uncle Dai Xi made his work economically viable because it met the expectations of his international audience, his profession led to the effective collapse of his individual memories and his creative output.

Scholarly Practices of Layering and Bracketing Time

Not only Dai's understanding of landscape painting as an act of self-cultivation corresponded to elite values, but the way he presented his knowledge to the reader also has roots in scholarly practices. As mentioned above, scholars had long perceived the production of historical records and the creation of archives as their social duty to future generations. Their approaches to make the past and historical changes meaningful for the present were characterized by acts of layering and bracketing that attempted to highlight temporal distances in a meaningful way.

In the field of cartography, Song dynasty scholars visually layered time in order to re-contextualize the past in the present. The *Handy Geographical Maps Throughout the Ages* (*Lidai dili zhizhang tu* 歷代地理指掌圖), addressed briefly in chapter 1, provided examination students several maps of the Chinese empire which functioned like layers of different periods and dynasties. Some maps conflated information from distinct periods, such as pre-Qin maps that provided a base reference for Song dynasty prefecture areas, including those that had no equivalents in the earlier periods described in the maps. In Song historical cartography, past place names were selected to be included in maps according to their relevance in the present. The selection process, which took present historical memory as its guide, indicates Song cartographers were aware that the meaning of the past becomes clear through the lens of the present.[621]

Strategies to represent distinct moments in time to highlight historical transitions and new contexts were even more common for texts. A well-known example that highlights a turning point in history is the *Records of Metal and Stone* (*Jinshu lu* 金石錄) compiled over an extended period of time by the Song scholar Zhao Mingcheng 趙明誠 (1081-1129). *Records of Metal and Stone* presents three temporal layers, or brackets.

The records included in the volume were Zhao's colophons to the rubbings of inscriptions taken from ancient bronze vessels and steles. The

[621] De Weerdt. 2011. "The Cultural Logics of Map Reading," 257.

content of the ancient inscriptions, to which he points by beginning his comments with "To the right is...," constitute a first temporal layer that Zhao distinguishes from his own time. In fact, he hopes to raise the status of the inscriptions to the level of canonical writings by firmly locating their creation in the past. Through his appended comments and preface, Zhao constructs the second layer of meaning connected to the inscriptions and their study. He describes his own intellectual endeavours and situates these within Song scholarship of epigraphy.[622]

Zhao's wife, Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1084-ca. 1150), created the third temporal layer. In her afterword to the *Records,* dated 1132, she tells how she and her husband collected materials and recorded the colophons. Although the extent of her contributions to the comments on the ancient inscriptions is unclear, the couple shared a love for art and antiquities, often discussing and savoring them together. Her afterword highlights how their collection was scattered and lost during the turmoil of dynastic transition as the Jin invaded the Song, an experience that affected her view of the past. Her description of the process of collecting is filled with joyous memories, yet she claims the objects themselves became a growing burden. She only has the collection of colophons left to remember the past, and her afterword admonishes others not to fall into the trappings of wealth and their distortions of value.[623] By consciously distinguishing three periods of time, the content of the inner brackets is reinterpreted through the lens of the present.

The content of both composite maps and texts exposes the awareness of creators that rhetorically establishing distance between one layer or bracket and the next is an effective means to allow reinterpretation of past events. Assembling these layers allowed them to produce new meaning. This historiographical practice was common in scholarly writings, and expected of scholars who took the imperial examinations, which required them to construct essays by explaining the relevance of classical passages to the present political situation.[624]

During the nineteenth century, after the Taiping War, temporal layering continued to be a relevant strategy for reframing the past. A volume republished in 1876 by the refugee Ge Yuanxu 葛元煦 (fl.1824-1876), best

[622] Moser. 2020. "Learning with Metal and Stone," 159-163.
[623] Owen. 1986. *Remembrances*, 83-88; 96-98. Owen also describes how the couple used to play memory games in which they tried to recollect in which volume, page and line a certain passage could be found within their collection of books and histories.
[624] De Weerdt. 2011. "The Cultural Logics of Map Reading," 260.

known for his travel guide *Miscellaneous Jottings on Travel in Shanghai*, serves as an example contemporaneous with Dai's creation of his manual. Ge decided to republish a collection of notes on painting by another author, Wu Xiu 吳修 (1764-1827), who composed his *Poem on Painting from the Blue Cloud Pavilion* (*Qingxiaguan lunhua jueju* 青霞館論畫絕句) with one hundred quatrains on painting in 1824.

Ge expressed concerns about the disappearance of skills and practices of connoisseurship that had been connected to the cultural environment of the cities destroyed during the war. He believed that Wu's poem, which describes important artworks he had viewed during his lifetime and his impressions of the works as well as his interactions with collectors, was an important record of the past. Wu Xiu claims to have composed the poem while traveling on a boat, when he "had plenty of free time." Despite Wu Xiu calling his own work "crude" or "wanton" and deeming it appropriate only for light entertainment or chatter, Ge Yuanxu believed that Wu's personal memories were worth reproducing for a post-Taiping audience. Ge, however, emphasized a different use for the volume, as he explains in his postface to the new edition:

> [...] with the chaos of the [Taiping] war during the Xianfeng and Tongzhi reigns, the [book] collections [on painting] in the realm all perished in the great disaster. Now, for anyone who wishes to obtain and look at the written traces of the ancient worthies, how incredibly hard it is to achieve that!
>
> When I read the *Poem on Painting from the Blue Cloud Pavilion* with its numerous comments and lost stories, I couldn't help but to be touched and sigh gratefully. Thus, I wanted to make it known to the world, so eyes could see it and hands could safeguard it. It can be relied on without a doubt, and when one reads what it describes, it is like meeting the ancients without meeting them; like seeing antiques without seeing them. Clearly, it is unlikely that all the works recorded in this compilation remain among us. [...] Because I lament that the original woodblocks were reduced to ashes and lost, I promptly entrusted this to the carvers and offer it to those who share my interest.

> 咸同兵燹以還，海內收藏都歸浩劫。居今之世思獲覩前賢手澤戛戛乎難哉！吾讀思亭居士所刊青霞閣論畫詩及附注、逸事若干，則不禁慨然有感。蓋居士躬逢盛世，目覩手藏。鑿鑿可據，觀其記述，不見古人，如見古人；不覩古物，如覩古物。明知編中所載諸

作，未必尚在人閒，而一時韻事美談，流傳簡策，亦可為後世談六法者增耳食之一助。惜原板燬失因，亟付手民以公同好焉。[625]

Contrary to the entertaining nature of the content emphasized in the original author's preface, Ge Yuanxu praised Wu's poem as a source of information on lost social practices and works of art that had once been central to educated pastimes. The content could still be perceived as entertaining, but it had also become a critical means to understand a nearly extinct culture of scholarly gatherings,[626] of collecting, judging and enjoying works of art. The need to reproduce them on paper indicates Ge's awareness that these practices were dying out with the practitioners. For men like Ge Yuanxu, seeing painting practices through the lens of reflexivity became necessary for the preservation of these practices. They could no longer sustain themselves as customs and had to be historicized.

Dai Yiheng's paintings and manual, which relied on layers to highlight the distance of the past, not only helped him cope with his personal losses, but also presented orthodox practices to his foreign students. His individual memory was woven together with his prescriptive mnemonic rhymes to meet these challenges.

Consolidating Memory and Identity Through Layers

Unlike the examples discussed above, Dai was not dealing with transmitted texts or knowledge from the official histories. His layers were produced consecutively, yet he rhetorically highlights a break to invest the content of his works with new meaning. Through the inscriptions and seals imprinted on his paintings, as well as the preface to his manual, Dai creates distance between his current situation and his outdated painting style and scholarly training.

While the painting inscriptions he produced in Shanghai often referred to his departed uncle Dai Xi, one of his paintings makes reference to a broader context. On a hanging scroll with a landscape in the style of the master Wang Wei, dated 1886, Dai Yiheng describes his personal experience of viewing a painting and his effort to reconstruct it from memory:

[625] Ge and Wu. 1876. *Qingxiaguan lunhua jueju*, untitled postface, 1a-1b.

[626] Wooldridge explores a nearly contemporary case to discuss gatherings as a scholarly practice of remembrance. 2015. "What Literati Talked about When They Talked about Memory."

> Regarding the Wangchuan Villa by Wang Wei, once I saw Song Xu's copy of Wang Meng's rendition of it, and I regretted that Master Song's was deficient on account of [his predilection for] sharp-cutting contour lines. As a consequence, his is not able to evoke the effect of the dispersing and gathering of mist and clouds. [In this work] I am trying to recreate a segment of the Wangchuan scroll from memory (*beimo* 背摹).[627]
> [Fig. 7.3]

Song Xu 宋旭 (1525-ca. 1605), the artist mentioned in the painting, was also a native of Hangzhou.[628] Dai most likely saw this copy of the long hand scroll in a private collection during his youth and attempted to emulate its composition from memory in Shanghai. His own painting, on which he inscribed this experience, once again resembles his uncle's style. Although painters often copied and emulated earlier masters, it was not particularly common to refer to this as painting "from memory." The distance between a past viewing of the painting and his own painting is underscored by the seal he adds to the inscription, which also speaks to the present instead of the past.

Seals were impressed onto paintings as a means of authentication and appreciation. Scholars often owned seals that stated their name, style, studio name, or even year of birth, and it was not uncommon to have seals engraved with short sayings or witty quotes to showcase one's life mottos. Dai Yiheng was a talented seal carver with many ties to other carvers in the Shanghai area. The seals Yiheng used were also mostly variations of his name and studio name, but one stands out: it is carved with two characters reading "Blame the empire" (*qiaoguo* 譙國) [Fig. 7.4]. The inscription left on the side of this unusual seal reads:

> May 12, 1863. Yuan Xin presents this stone to his dear friend Yongbo. Carved by Yu Sangeng in the style of a Han dynasty bronze seal.
>
> 同治二年三月二十五日，袁椒孫（袁馨）以此石持贈用伯仁兄，屬徐三庚仿漢人鑄銅印。[629]

[627] Translation in Chou. 1998. *Journeys on Paper and Silk,* 163.
[628] Although several copies of the Wangchuan Villa attributed to Song exist, none can be safely described as his legitimate work.
[629] Xu. 1993. *Xu Sangeng yinpu,* 19.

The inscription reveals that the seal was given to Yiheng as a gift about a year after he arrived in Shanghai to take refuge from the war. It was presented to him by Yuan Xin, a friend who must have known the tragic fate of Yiheng's family. Yiheng's approval of the carved text is confirmed by his use of the seal on his painting.

Yiheng's seal is a material manifestation of the grudge he bore towards the government for its failure to maintain social harmony and subdue the rebels.[630] Blaming the government also exonerated his uncle, who had expressed embarrassment and guilt in his farewell poem. For Yiheng, the government was unable to prevent chaos and thus put worthy men like Dai Xi in untenable situations. This idea could be captured in two characters and imprinted on his works like a motto that marked the paintings as distanced from the past of worthy men.

In a similar fashion, Dai layers the present over his mnemonic treatise that describes orthodox painting practices. The treatise epitomizes his unwillingness to forget the moral and cultural practices of the scholars who perished during the war, yet the preface highlights his awareness that he is describing the practices to a new audience.

Dai Yiheng's treatise, the *Painting Formula from the Studio of Being Awake from Drunkenness* (*Zuisuzhai huajue* 醉蘇齋畫訣), with a preface dated 1880, circulated for at least ten years as a manuscript before it was published by another Hangzhou native, Ye Ming 葉銘 (1867-1948).[631] It is the longest known treatise on painting techniques written completely in rhymes. The title of his treatise contains his studio name, "Being Awake from Drunkenness," which reflects Yiheng's feeling of uneasiness in relation to his times and surroundings. Instead of choosing a studio name that celebrates whimsical obsessions and the intoxicated poets of antiquity, who were celebrated as free-spirited men detached from wordily concerns, he chose to

[630] It was not uncommon for scholars to blame the government for its political incompetence in maintaining social harmony, which ultimately led to the civil war. Meyer-Fong. 2013. *What Remains*, 102. For example, Cai Yuying 蔡玉瀛 draws a historical connection between the imperial court and moral decay in the city of Hangzhou in his preface to *Weeping for Hanzhou* (*Geng xin qi hang lu* 庚辛泣杭錄). Ultimately, the imperial house distorted the customs of the residents, who were unable to restore them, leading to the city's punishment by heaven in the form of its obliteration during the war. Quoted in Hu. 2010. "Li luan Hangzhou," 57.

[631] The treatise survives as an 1891 edition by Ye, a manuscript titled *Xuehua jiefa* 學畫捷法 in the Zhejiang Library, and several shorter iterations in newspapers from the twentieth century. See Dai. 1915. "Tan xie: Xuehua gejue"; and Dai. 1945. "Xuehua gejue." The *Hualun congkan* edition reproduces the 1891 text.

deny these idealized figures and occupations in a name that is austere and unvarnished. The time for drunkenness and for dreams had passed; he was, willingly or not, sober and awake. The past, often described as a dream-like situation, could not be retrieved.[632] The ideal of the drunken scholar could no longer be reached.

The treatise included no illustrations, which was surely tied to Yiheng's conviction that students should not blindly copy models, a practice that hindered learning and would lead to mockery of one's works. As expressed in his inscription, Dai distrusted in the accuracy of copies and authenticity of transmitted works from the past, an attitude that was widespread among Qing scholars. Continuous practice according to abstract standards instead of models, Yiheng believed, was the single most crucial principle for beginners.[633] Thus, he included sections that discuss methods for painting the elements in a landscape, such as forests, different types of trees, buildings, mountains and rocks in his treatise. Furthermore, he addresses a number of different methods and problems concerning the painting of landscapes, ranging from composition to the practice of adding inscriptions and a signature to a painting.

All his practical instructions are formulated in rhymes designed to aid memorization and the internalization of the content. The rhymed format can be understood as an attempt to make knowledge transcend the materiality of the book. While a book was easily destroyed by fire, students could effortlessly commit rhymed content to memory and perpetuate it. Past painting practices were thus codified in an old mnemonic format. Practices and procedures for painting landscapes, however, were topics rarely treated in rhymes.

Like Shen Zongqian, earlier painters who adhered to scholarly styles did not believe fixed methods and formulas could properly describe the principles of landscape painting. They were not only concerned with esthetic matters and stylistic lineages, but also regarded painting as a practice of self-cultivation. While the content of Dai's treatise often addressed issues similar to those in earlier painting manuals, Dai's rendition is much more precise and detailed when it comes to technical issues, resembling commercial painting manuals. In a section titled "Methods for Painting Dry Trees," for example, Yiheng writes:

[632] Huntington. 2005. "Chaos, Memory, and Genre," 66.
[633] Dai. 1989. *Zuisuzhai huajue*, 538.

With a firm base branches of dry trees must grow;
one branch attaches to the next, between them no gap must show.

枯樹枝頭須生牢，根貼著根莫差毫。

and,

When painting thin twigs of dry trees, avoid crossing three;
add one twig left or right if such a situation you see.

枯樹細條忌三叉，若遇三叉左右加。[634]

This unusual and straightforward format was most likely chosen by Dai because he was not addressing scholars with his treatise. His audience was composed of his multicultural students, who hoped to recover a lost tradition to become commercial painters abroad. The knowledge contained in the rhymes, although describing practices Dai had learned from his uncle, was subordinate to his identity as a scholar in the present. Dai's preface makes it clear that the information he hoped to transmit related to his personal experience. His preface creates a bracket that distances and memorializes the knowledge that his uncle had transmitted to him.

In the preface, Yiheng, following a scholarly tradition, apologizes for engaging in painting as a commercial activity. He explains that he spent years painting and mulling over written comments from master painters before writing the rhymes.

> In a lifetime, [one may] not be able to do good, but one can surely not have the intention to do evil. Yet, due to the existing needs of being fed and clad, one must exhaust one's ability and wisdom on making a living. Thus, one does evil unintentionally, without even being conscious of it. It was well said in a poem by [the painter] Tang Yin, ranked first in our county's exams:
> "At leisure, I would paint a landscape of blue mountains to sell. I would not allow myself to use any ill-earned money."
> Thus, among the occupations to feed and clothe oneself, none is like painting. But how could it be that everyone can do that?

[634] Dai. 1989. *Zuisuzhai huajue*, 530-531.

人生不能為善。斷不有心為惡。然衣食所需。必竭其才智以謀。是無心為惡。亦不自知矣。善夫唐解元之詩曰：「閒來寫幅青山賣。不使人間作孽錢。」是衣食之謀莫如畫。然焉得人人而能之？[635]

Dai takes the Ming painter Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470-1524), who was known for his outstanding scholarly accomplishments but was banned from officialdom due to a cheating scandal, as the example that embodies difficult decisions that men of high moral standards must take to survive.[636] Tang's example thus provides moral cushioning for being a professional painter and for teaching others in this art. He continues to discuss his personal experience in this occupation and new challenges posed by the dire times:

> Thus, one must read the books of past generations that teach painting. What was written in those books was not more than:
> "Only pine trees are appropriate for towering mountains, only willows for close waters. Huang Gongwang's style is relentless. Clouds and forests in fleeting light ink," and other such [short] phrases.
>
> With time, I came to reflect on these [comments] and get the gist of them. But after the catastrophe [Taiping War], nothing was left. In recent years, those seeking to learn the profession have increased. I would inform them with bittersweet words [about the art]. Because of their inquiries, I jotted down some informal ditties to respond to their requests. I only expected people to recite them and understand [the content], and assumed they would be forgotten as time went by. Yet, all my students copied them by hand and recited them aloud, taking this to be an urgent task. [...] If one has a nature and character that surpasses that of others, then in one stride one can master the content. May this [preface] serve as a golden mirror to my mind in bitterness. Do not make a laughing stock out of a leftover [man], for his suffering is deep.

則必讀前人教畫之書。而書中所載不過「高山宜松，近水以柳，大癡生辣，雲林淡逸」等語而略。以時自省。劫後無存矣。年來問業者多。輒以甘苦之言相告。因隨筆作俚語以與之。求人人誦解。不至日久遺忘而已。同學諸子手鈔口誦。視為急務。(...) 儻有

[635] Dai. 1989. *Zuisuzhai huajue*, 529.
[636] Tang Yin's life as a professional painter and the examinations scandal that led him to choose that life are described in Clapp. 1991. *The Painting of T'ang Yin*.

> 質性過人。一超便如者。當金鑑余之苦心。勿以賸物貽笑。則辛甚矣。[637]

Before signing the preface, Yiheng refers to himself as a "leftover." The term *sheng* 賸 (or 剩) was widely used in China during the early Yuan and Qing dynasties in the context of dynastic transition to refer to "leftover subjects" (*shengmin* 剩民) who continued to pledge their loyalty to an overthrown dynasty. Yiheng refers to himself as a "leftover thing" (*shengwu* 剩物), "a surviving portion of a vanished whole."[638] The rupture he witnessed, however, was not one of dynastic power, nor was he a loyal subject. Rather, he portrays himself as a man who has been cut off from the past and sees no going back, someone who still carries the cultural baggage and knowledge of an elite that perished with the war.

With his claim that *after the catastrophe, nothing was left*, his sorrow for the unfortunate loss of painting knowledge during the war is made clear. Overwhelmed by this feeling of loss, Dai Yiheng claims he set out to reconstruct this cultural good in a fully rhymed treatise with fifteen sections. He hopes that writing this work will help his contemporaries understand and remember the practices of the past. Nevertheless, he seems incredulous that painting in this manner will be restored as an art of self-cultivation that goes beyond the understanding of its practical instructions.

Although he self-deprecatingly belittles the quality of his rhymes, Dai Yiheng infuses his painting instructions with the scholarly ideals he so cherishes. The descriptions value the use of ink gradations and are interspersed with historical information and references to key figures of landscape painting. Furthermore, the treatise describes practical matters that go beyond the history and composition of the landscape painting itself. For example, Dai offers instructions on how to inscribe paintings with poems or personal accounts—a practice historically tied to the scholarly ideals he upheld. He further exhorts students to include in the signature information necessary for a painting to be correctly identified and dated by later connoisseurs. Such concerns were usually not shared by artisans, even those at court; most left their works unsigned and without inscriptions. Dai claims that the calligraphic style of each inscription must match the painting style of the master that is being emulated, a rule his Shanghai colleagues did not

[637] Dai. 1989. *Zuisuzhai huajue*, 529.

[638] Wu discusses rubbings as "leftover things" (*yiwu* 遺物). 2003. "On Rubbings," 59.

follow. After urging students to sign their names, he writes about the visual format of the inscription in unusual detail:

Many highs and lows create an ordinary guise;
to thus lower the brush, painters would despise.
Writing only [heavenly] stem and [earthly] branch[639] is far too broad;
not adding the reign name is awfully odd.
The markers of the sixty-year cycle change every year,
to this system did the Tang, Song, Yuan and Ming adhere.
If inquiring when a person did in fact thrive;
later connoisseurs at faulty conclusions could arrive.

高高低低江湖氣，我輩落筆是大忌。
但寫支幹是何意，不用年號大奇異。
花甲六十歲歲更，唐宋元明一式生。
若問究竟何時人，後之鑑者辨不真。[640]

This discussion of conventions of content and visual composition for painting inscriptions mark Dai's manual as one steeped in a long tradition of scholars' painting, but at the same time clashes with earlier discussions of landscape painting. The fact that he judged it necessary to introduce practices to his students clearly indicates that they were not familiar with the system and did not share his scholarly education and values. He even had to urge students to not to forget that landscape painting was an expressive art: "Imitate the ancients without comprehending their emotions and I fear; there will be serious talk for you to hear!" [641]

As mentioned in the preface, most of his students sought to become professionals in the field, and Dai Yiheng had their expectations in mind when he wrote the treatise. The rhyme, which describes technical matters, conventions and beliefs related do landscape painting, encapsulated an orthodox tradition. It created a textual artifact, or a historical archive, that could be memorized and consulted in the present. Yet, by adding a second temporal layer to his text by means of a preface, Dai could combine the demands of his profession and his personal trauma. The preface makes clear that the mnemonic function of his painting rhymes spoke to the present,

[639] Twelve "earthly branches" and ten "heavenly stems" were used to enumerate the years over the course of the sexagenary cycle.
[640] Dai. 1989. *Zuisuzhai huajue*, 538.
[641] Dai. 1989. *Zuisuzhai huajue*, 538.

while the content relayed memories and experiences from a lost past that was foreign to his audience.

Conclusion

Dai Yiheng kept the traumatic past close at hand in both private and public life. However, he did not do so by altering his style or by adding defiant inscriptions to his works, nor did he engage in escapist dreaming, as was common for victims of traumatic experiences such as dynastic transition.[642] Instead of addressing the events of the war by depicting violence or hardship in his paintings, as his earlier contemporaries Ren Xiong 任熊 (1823-1857) and Su Renshan 蘇仁山 (1814-ca. 1850) had done, Dai adopted the strategy of temporal layering in both paintings and text to cope with the transition and the new challenges it brought.[643]

While the feeling of displacement often manifested itself in the form of satire in the works of other nineteenth-century painters, Dai preferred to infuse his work with moral and upright values.[644] Many painters had been affected by the war and mourned lost ones, which Ren Bonian did through portraits, for example, but this mourning practice was generally regarded as private. [645] In Dai's case, however, the multicultural and commercial environment of Shanghai and its new audiences led him to display his connections to the past and to his painting master publicly. His reconstruction of the past and the codification on his internalized knowledge became a profitable enterprise. Thus, although his style remained conservative, his mindset shows him to be a man who actively engaged affairs of the present.

The unique connection to his martyr uncle Dai Xi and the memories associated with him became manifest whenever Dai Yiheng lowered his brush to the paper. Yet, Dai Yiheng re-conceptualized his memories, which resulted in the historicization of the lived past and a memorialization of painting practices. In the end, his scholarly values could be transmitted to a new generation of painters, but only as an archive—a repository of memory.

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[642] Struve. 2019. *The Dreaming Mind and the End of the Ming World,* chapters 3; 4.
[643] Ren makes reference to the Opium War. Erickson. 2007. "Uncommon Themes and Uncommon Subject Matters," 43-44. Su criticized the martial abilities of officials through painting. Koon. 2014. *A Defiant Brush*, 154-7.
[644] Vinograd. 1998. "Satire and Situation," 124-125.
[645] Wue. 2014. *Art Worlds*, chapter 4.

Fig. 7.1
Album of Landscapes by Dai Xi, Leaf C. 1848. Ink and color on paper. Image provided by The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Public domain.



Fig. 7.2
The Tower of Eight Odes by Dai Yiheng. 1871. Ink and color on paper. Source: Kawai. 1937. 1937. *Shina nanga taisei,* 204. Image source: National Diet Library. Copyright free.

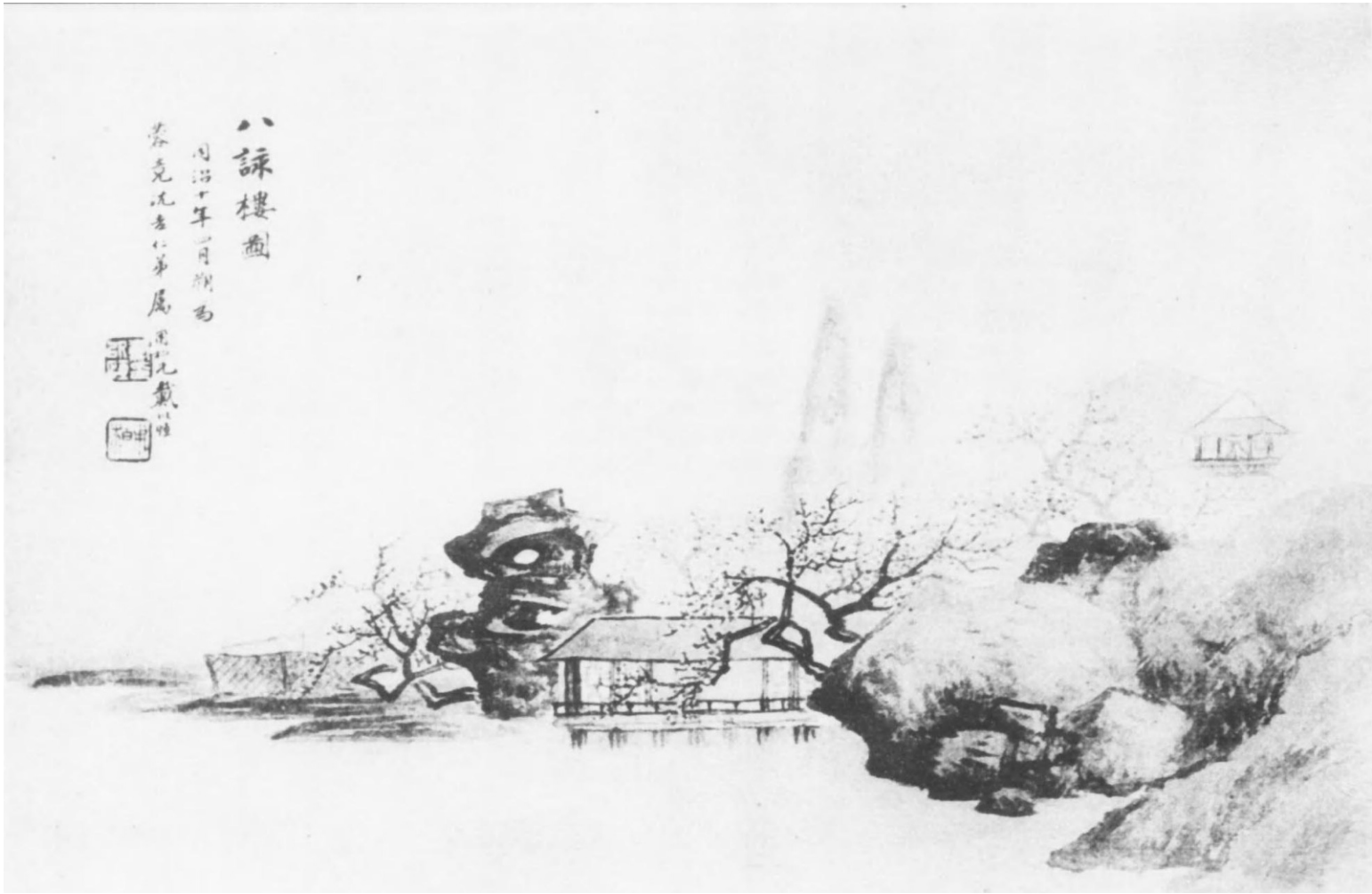




Fig. 7.3 Set of two hanging scrolls of Landscapes after Ancient Masters by Dai Yiheng, dated 1866. Ink and color on paper. The scroll on the left emulates a composition by Wang Wei from memory, with an imprint of Dai's "Blame the empire" seal. Source: Chou. 1998. *Journeys on Paper and Silk,* 164.



Fig. 7.4 Imprint and side of Dai Yiheng's "Blame the empire" (*qiaoguo* 譙國) seal. Source: Xu. 1993. *Xu Sangeng yinpu,* 19.

Conclusion

Memorization played a central role in the transmission of practical knowledge in China. Throughout the imperial period, and especially during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1912) dynasties, mnemonic rhymes and techniques were used, transmitted and adapted. Even as practical knowledge was codified to circulate as text, rhymes and mnemonic allusions gained value instead of being replaced by detailed and objective descriptions in prose. The formal aspects of memory aids for calligraphy and painting were tightly connected to their reception and dissemination in late imperial China. The cases studied here, which deal with processes of remembering and forgetting, show that the transmission of practical and internalized knowledge was intimately connected to social and individual practices of memory. They provide insight into educational practices propagated through print, and into how Chinese mnemonics made use of collective memory to aid the individual memorization process.

Even though practitioners in different fields and social groups developed mnemonic aids that codified knowledge required for specific occupations, they drew on shared knowledge and tackled memorization practices in similar ways. Significant overlaps can be identified in the historical development of mnemonic aids in the fields of calligraphy and painting.

During the Ming dynasty, the development of mnemonics was characterized by acts of forgetting and the valorization of practices. While Gao Song, the author of mnemonic rhymes for both calligraphy and painting, was soon forgotten, the practical knowledge in his treatises continued to be disseminated long after his death. His efforts to codify practical knowledge for circulation in printed media rendered it easy to grasp and objective. Ming encyclopedias show how editors and compilers brought together practical knowledge codified in writing by both the elite and craftsmen. The gradual detachment from the author's identity through the objectification of knowledge in print and the expansion of the commercial printing market both contributed to the broad dissemination and normalization of practical knowledge. Ming authors and editors tapped into existing schemata to make knowledge accessible to broader audiences. It was through the efforts of these individuals to present practical knowledge as self-sustaining, and at the same time as interconnected among fields, that it became valorized and integrated into the broader organization of knowledge.

Between the late Ming and the mid Qing, authors challenged long-standing traditions and drew new parallels to other fields. In terms of presentation, their innovation was to describe coherent systems of knowledge that were easy to remember. The case of the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* shows how appropriations and adaptations of a rhyme for learning cursive script led an anonymous practice-oriented text to be accepted by the elite and by imperial households. The mnemonic rhyme became a new form of canon that relied more on syncretic standards instead of the perpetuation of masters' styles. This shift toward standards is also evident in the approaches to portraiture practices of the mid Qing. As practicing scholars who had become professionals in the field developed their individual approaches to portraiture, their practices were no longer limited to what had been transmitted from the past, such as typologies of facial features. These "new practitioners" adopted methods that relied on their previous experience in other fields. Embodied knowledge, or their "embodied way" acquired through a long course of incorporation that entailed remembrance "in the hands" and muscles,[646] was translated from one field to the next, partly to facilitate communication of techniques to the prospective reader of the treatises. Both the anonymous rhyme and Qing portraiture treatises moved away from individual models and types toward coherent and intelligible standards.

From the mid to the late Qing, the most important development is the rise of the social value of mnemonics. The author's identity, especially shaped by scholarly and blood lineages, becomes a central concern in the transmission of practical knowledge and its mnemonic rendering. For Jiang He, the use and development of the "nine palaces" grid is directly tied to the figures and authority of his father and grandfather. Even Kang Youwei, a defender of educational reforms, makes reference to the nine-palaces grid in a book conceived as a response to the practice-oriented Bao Shichen, the student of the renowned scholar of "metal and stone," Deng Shiru, highlighting a lineage of evidential scholarship. In the case of Dai Yiheng, the practical training he received from his uncle and his memories of the period before the Taiping War are monumentalized in his lengthy rhymed treatise composed for his foreign students. His awareness of the gap between past and present shifts his attention to the historical quality of knowledge. Mnemonic treatises and tools become a means to transmit not only practical content, but also personal history and the author's identity.

[646] Connerton. 2009. *How Societies Remember*, 93.

These cases show that although memorization remained important into the late Qing, the nature of its social value shifted over time. The similarities among these parallel cases are related to changes in society, such as the changing perception of embodied knowledge and oral practices, the dissemination of pedagogical text, and responses to commercialization and professionalization.

Engaging the Reader's Memory

The mnemonic techniques and aids discussed in this study show that memory played a central role in the textual transmission of knowledge for the crafts of calligraphy and painting. These mnemonics relied heavily on repetition, summaries, rhymes and graphs to help the student absorb the content and provided methods that prompted the reader to practice orally. The segmentation of visual elements as well as of movement, the serialization of actions via the creation of steps and the emphasis on standardization over style shaped the content of mnemonics in both fields. They often combined textual instructions with graphs and illustrations so the student could visualize and comprehend the standards that were to be internalized. Along with standards that aimed to produce one desired type of graphic result, visual aids that allowed for generalized use, such as the grid, established standards for both seeing and composing. Thus, mnemonics not only offered useful rules to achieve a specific esthetic output, but also served as guides for gestures and sight. Rhymes were retained in the mind through rote memorization and observation and their content was retained in the muscles through repeated action.

Authors grounded the content of their standards and rhymes in the past, making sure the student did not have to rely on rote memorization alone, but was also able to draw on their cultural background. Although the practices were meant to be repeated and enacted in the present, which can also be deduced from the heavy use of the imperative in the treatises, creators and recyclers of rhymes provided historical context for their memory aids.

Authors often made references to historical figures, such as creators of certain types of script or masters of specific painting motifs. They also discussed earlier versions of mnemonic rhymes or visual aids, anchoring their own instructions in the traditions of the past. By embedding new knowledge in the rhetoric of the past, authors provided familiar forms for readers to

access the new standards in their treatises without threatening cultural cohesion. Dai Yiheng anchored his treatise in his personal past to cope with tension between the demands of his students and his scholarly identity. As Sluiter has argued, references to the historical past were not constraints to innovation, but helped to accommodate new beliefs, concepts, values and ambitions.[647] Through "anchoring," it became possible to introduce innovative features and, at the same time, retain the aura of the past. The past thus functioned as a stable base to present contemporary agendas, as authors consciously took advantage of what the reader already regarded as his own past to engage him in the present.

Several cases discussed here, however, also provide another perspective on how innovation could be introduced to crafts and practices. Gao Song compared calligraphy to weaving, claiming that both practices shared the same constructive principle. Ming editors and scholars who followed him also believed in implicit connections that linked all practical fields. Qing painters continued to explore the mnemonic potential of these connections in their own theories. Gao Song's analogy to weaving can be extended to explain how Chinese mnemonic treatises and rhymes conveyed practical knowledge. Instead of representing a vertical process, such as "anchoring," the codification of knowledge constitutes a horizontal strategy, best described by the image of "weaving." As a connective process that unites warp and weft into a pattern through repetitive movement, "weaving" can effectively describe innovations in practical and embodied knowledge.

"Weaving" facilitated the transfer of practical knowledge across fields. One straightforward example is the internalized process of hand-mnemonics, which spread across several fields. Hand mnemonics provided a basic segmentation of the parts of the hand that relied on the schematic sequence of earthly branches, which can be seen as warp threads. The basic movements of the sequence, once internalized, served as a guide for other practices. The sequence would thus become intertwined with the knowledge that was overlaid, whether this was medical, mathematical or musical knowledge. This constituted the weft, which tied together the two types of practice into a mnemonic pattern.

Qing authors of painting treatises took practical knowledge possessed by the student as a reference. This knowledge represents the warp threads in the loom's harness, giving new theories structure and providing guiding

[647] Sluiter. 2017. "Anchoring Innovation: A Classical Research Agenda," 23; 36.

threads for the student. Innovative features and new practices that are introduced to the student constitute the weft. The weft travels in and out of the warps, connecting them and producing a new pattern. This pattern, which is analogous to the mnemonic treatises and instructions, is grasped and memorized by the student. The student can emulate these patterns and produce his own "cloth of knowledge" through repetitive action.

When authors wove innovative practices into existing practices, they invited students to extend the skills they already possessed to other fields. This approach went beyond engaging the reader's memory in order to imprint rhymes or accommodate novelties in known narratives. The process of "weaving" is especially clear in portraiture treatises, where new practices were introduced by means of preexisting vocabulary and processes taken from other practices. Rules from landscape painting, physiognomy and calligraphy constituted the warp threads, while the new practices related to portraiture functioned as weft. Calligraphy rules to create balance within characters, for example, came to serve as the guiding rules to compose the features of the face. The resulting patterns were the coherent systems described in the treatises, in which practical knowledge of two fields merged.

"Weaving" functions very differently from metonymic reference, which, in Hutton's words, is "an eidetic image of a detail that stands for a complete metaphorical topic." [648] The best-known example for such a reference is Proust's madeleine. Proust's flashback to his youth was triggered by the sight and odor of the cake. His memory came back to him unintended, and the cake functioned as a metonym to his childhood memory. Weaving also functions differently from collective memory formation, which commences with the memories of individuals that become broadly accepted by a group and are eventually formalized, generalized and even ritualized. In the cases discussed here, weaving functions in the context of practice-oriented pedagogy. It accepts parts of collective embodied memory as a premise, but it does not seek to merely trigger the recollection of events or repetition of actions, but rather uses the internalized knowledge as a springboard to introduce new action. "Weaving" is not about the creation of collective memory, but about the use of memory in practice.

Both acts of "weaving" and the creation of connections between specific crafts and broad cosmological schemata that shaped the collective perception of the world introduced new processes for the transmission of

[648] Hutton. 1993. *History as an Art of Memory*, 34.

practical knowledge. Authors of mnemonic treatises presupposed practical knowledge in the reader and derived proper guidelines from it, which allowed them to discuss new approaches. Chinese mnemonics thus bridged the gap between the knowledge shared in the collective memory of certain groups and the new practical standards that still require memorization and internalization by the individual. They function as if Proust's madeleine had been intentionally placed there by his teacher, hoping that it would trigger the memories of his youth, but only so he could better talk about a different and new experience. Collective memory of specific groups and broadly accepted schemata were the basis for new practical procedures.

The Book as a Pedagogical Institution

The maintenance of collective memory is often discussed as taking place within ritualized contexts, such as religious events or national holidays. There is usually an institution behind the organization of such activities, and it designates a group of people to supervise them. This, however, requires the collective participation of individuals in a directed activity, which, at first glance, seems to differ greatly from an individual reading a text. This might, in fact, be true for an individual reading, for example, a newspaper. Even though a columnist might address the reader directly, there is no sense of participation, as the printed opinions presented by the writer will still remain as printed text on the page. Yet, when it comes to the practical manuals discussed here, they seem to retain qualities of personal interaction and of oral culture.

Printed texts are often regarded merely as objects that circulate in a society or among groups. The knowledge that is often said to be "contained" in them is perceived as a good that can be "transferred" between individuals. As Ong argues, however, this is a reduction of texts and knowledge. The printed text, as media, shapes the consciousness of those who make use of it. At the same time, knowledge is more than a commodity, requiring recollection and psychological engagement. Ong argues that all kinds of media are actually more significantly present within the mind than outside of it.[649]

In line with other sociologists, such as Goody, Ong believes that the distance created between the individual and the written text he produced allowed the emergence of new forms of cognition and noetic processes which

[649] Ong. 1977. *Interfaces of the Word*, 45-46.

would not have been possible in oral cultures. Abstraction, such as in the creation of lists and graphs, was one of the most significant intellectual processes enabled by writing, while printed texts allowed knowledge to become sequential and fixed in physical 'places' inside a publication, providing standards for locating knowledge.[650] Yet, Ong holds that while new media did not eliminate the use of earlier forms of communication, the intellectual processes introduced with the new media shaped these earlier forms of communication. His views are supported by the findings of this study of practical manuals. While the majority of materials are in textual and graphic form, the mnemonics target oral performance and vocalization, shaped by textual practices and cognitive processes.

The mnemonic rhymes discussed in the present study were the result of continuous rewriting and editing by various authors. The segmentation of steps they present, the amount of new information they expect the reader to grasp, their calculated structure and rhyming scheme, and even the visual elements they rely on, are not the result of oral composition, but rather of textual composition that aimed at oral recitation. The question then arises why authors sought to maintain residual orality as a feature in their works.

I argue that recitation and constant repetition were central to the establishment of printed manuals as institutions. The concept of institution, originally a noun that described an action or process, is defined by both Marshall and Newman as any arrangement that aims to define and condition future activities or practice. Such arrangements include texts such as those explored here. Institutions are thus not tied to a location, but rather embodied in the set of rules themselves. The concrete text, as an institution, is comprehended as an entity of its own, created to transmit these standards and regulations that transcend their moment of creation.[651] This is in agreement with the idea that texts create distance between the creators and what they describe, as defended by Ong.

As standards for action are established and enshrined in written form, the text itself becomes an institution detached from the author. From the mid Ming dynasty onwards, authors such as Gao Song defended knowledge as a means to develop skills, separated from the goal of self-cultivation, and commercial printers began to appropriate and disseminate practical texts. As

[650] Ong. 1977. *Interfaces of the Word*, 88. See also Goody. 1987. *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral.*

[651] Marshall. 2010. *Vico and the Transformation of Rhetoric in Early Modern Europe*, 236. Newman. "Literary, Social, and Textual Functions," 499-500.

a result, the relationship between teacher and student was no longer as important as the practice itself. What remained was a fictionalized author, which in the case of manuals was the figure of a teacher. Chinese authors were well aware of the power and authority that printed standards could exert. They introduced regulations that became timeless as the practices and bodily experiences were captured in verbal conventions and common allusions on the page. The texts target future action, and the imperative tone demands that the reader act according to the rules and follow the established procedures. The reader who accepts the role of student, fictionalized in the text, is able to internalize these standards by memorizing rhymes through repetitive reading. Thus, oral recitation or silent repetition of rhymes played a crucial role in the pedagogical plan promoted by practical manuals, creating a foundation for further action. Practices were reenacted, or renewed, based on what the student had gathered in his breast and retained through repetitive gestures.

Unlike physical institutions, the printed manuals do not allow for an external control process, as described by Foucault.[652] There is no teacher to correct the student's mistakes along the way. However, the manuals transport the authority of experience into the text, providing negative standards, such as listing what not to do and what kind of behavior to avoid. Upfront disapproval and admonition of behavior commonly observed by the author was elementary for the functioning of manuals as institutions in the absence of a physical person to embody the role of controller. The student is aware of the self-disciplining process and can monitor himself and evaluate his own practice by comparing his movements and practical output to what is prescribed by the text. This constant feedback loop connecting what is contained in one's memory to one's own practice closely resembles Ernst Gombrich's description of the creative act. According to Gombrich, the artist goes back and forth between the visual standards established in his mind and the drawing on the paper, fixing and adjusting as necessary.[653] Yet, while Gombrich referred mainly to the adjustment of what is visible, Chinese mnemonics provided more extensive standards, also including rules for posture, regulated gestures and even state of mind for creative production. Through memorization and practice, they were slowly grasped and internalized.

[652] Foucault. 2019. *Surveiller et Punir,* "Les corps dociles."
[653] Gombrich. 1972. *Art and Illusion,* chapter 2.

The prescriptive content actualized by the student who engages in a form of "self-surveillance," however, is subjected to the student's will. Once the standards are memorized, he is free to introduce changes and develop a personal style as he practices. Calligraphy and painting were, after all, regarded as creative and expressive arts. The case of the *Hundred-Rhyme Song* shows that mnemonics and the standards they promoted could actually be used to challenge existing canons that relied on masters and lineages, granting the student more freedom.

Authors codified the knowledge "contained" in manuals and mnemonic treatises to facilitate the learning process and allow students to learn independently. Manuals target an imaginary audience, which in some cases is based on actual students a teacher had in the past. The key point to understanding such pedagogical texts, however, is that they underwent conscious processes of revision and editing in preparation for print. These procedures affected not only the format in which the information was presented, but also the way in which the learning process was staged within the text. The framework around the information constituted a fictionalized teacher giving direct orders to a fictionalized student. Printed books thus provided new standards, yet the process of instituting them was to be completed as part of an individual, internal process by the reader who accepted the role of student.

Reception of Practical Knowledge and Identity

During the mid Ming, both commercial editors and scholars increasingly began to value texts describing practical knowledge, and it was not important to publishers whether their authors were known. By the mid Qing, however, as the number of learned individuals who turned to professional activities increased dramatically due to a saturated bureaucratic system, practical activities became associated with family traditions and individual identity. The members of the Dai, Jiang and Gao families all perceived their occupations as central to their identity. Concerns with authorship and lineage took center stage when addressing practical knowledge and publicizing one's own skills and techniques.[654]

[654] The importance of "family learning" among painters of the Ming elite, including the role of women in the process of knowledge transmission, has been addressed by Clunas. These sources Clunas discusses, however, do not address concrete practical procedures and specific techniques being transmitted. 2013. "The Family Style." The craftsmen's biographies

When discussing practical knowledge, authors of the Qing shifted away from framing their contributions as part of their identity as officials, coming to value the intimate sphere of casual bonds in the construction of individual and group identity instead. Educated men such as Bao Shichen and Kang Youwei relied on casual social networks that were not based on acquaintances derived from official activities to further their interests in practical skills. Through informal meetings and study groups they established bonds that became essential for Qing individuals in defining their place and sense of self.

The treatises studied here also show that the restructuring of identity during the second half of the Qing was marked by an inward turn toward the family and to blood lineages as anchors for defining the self. Authors of treatises publicly connected their craft and practices to family members in order to describe their social contributions and values. This trend, identified in Qing treatises and compilations, is confirmed by Bauer's study of autobiographical literature in China, reveals that Qing notions of self were often defined through relationships with family members. His analysis, which also included texts authored by commoners, has shown that the mid Qing was marked by an increase of self-reflective writing and concerns with defining the self. What had been a withdrawal and identification with nature in the past, as was advocated by groups as different as Daoists and loyalists, became a withdrawal into the family.[655]

Qing authors highlighted intimate scholarly and familial bonds in their manuals and tied these to the knowledge that was being transmitted. The transmission of practical skills within the context of the family or workshops surely took place much earlier in China, yet it was rarely recorded as something to be divulged as a source of pride. For example, in the well-known anecdote about the Tang official and painter Yan Liben 閻立本 (d. 673), he felt so embarrassed and humiliated by the position in which his fame as painter had put him that he urged his son to never develop similar skills.[656] Dai Yiheng, Ding Yicheng, and Jiang He, on the other hand, made sure to connect their

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Hofmann discusses also highlight the family, yet the transmission of skills is not the focus of the narratives. The writers of biographies usually described the quality of the craftsmen's products instead. Hofmann. 2011. "The Biographer's View of Craftsmanship," 289-290. Schäfer has studied status shifts within craftsmen's families during the Ming dynasty, also addressing the perception of the craft once it had been abandoned by one family. Schäfer. 2012a. "Silken Strands," 71.

[655] Bauer. 1990. *Das Antlitz Chinas,* 495-519.

[656] Acker. 1954. *Some T'ang and pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting,* vol. 2, pt. 1, 214.

skills to their ancestors. Ding even recreated a dialogue between himself and his father, allowing the reader to partake in an intimate conversation.

Processes of internalization and memorization of standards also became increasingly relevant within this intimate context. By the eighteenth century, it had become common for well-educated individuals to engage in crafts as professional activities, and the skills and methods developed in these occupations were often transmitted within the family. As argued by Connerton, groups entrust the values and categories they anxiously hope to conserve to bodily remembering.[657] These values and standards were, as seen in several Qing cases addressed here, not only embodied by the members of families, but also recorded in writing. Halbwachs has argued that family memories and practices can be sustained by bodily or oral transmission for three generations without the aid of text.[658] With textual support, like in the cases of Ding Gao and Jiang He, the manuals show how texts and practices were not only transmitted from grandfather to father to son, but often re-written, expanded and re-conceptualized by consecutive generations.

The inertia of internalized practices should not be underestimated.[659] Those who sought to reform practices and establish new models for calligraphy, such as Bao Shichen, took internalized practices that had been acquired during their youth to address new intellectual positions. Even the reformer Kang Youwei, who relied on scholarly networks instead of family ties to legitimize his views, advocated the use of pedagogical practices in order to bring about social change. Kang himself was most likely aware of the inertia of bodily remembering, and discussed pedagogical practice against the backdrop of a different agenda, adapting it to the new values and perceived needs of society and thus essentially breathing new life into an ancient practice. In the case of Dai Yiheng, the inertia of bodily remembering in combination with his conscious clinging to the figure of a deceased family member had the opposite effect. He rejected new trends on the conservative moral grounds that shaped his identity, and continued to reproduce an orthodox style. The way Dai related his skills to his bond with his family, a connection that was in fact expected by his students, defined his practice as painter. These cases all show that internalized practices and their transmission among members of a family

[657] Connerton. 2009. *How Societies Remember*, 102.
[658] Hutton. 1993. *History as an Art of Memory*, 93. The dynamics of remembering within families is discussed in Halbwachs and Coser. 1992. *On Collective Memory,* 54-83.
[659] Hutton makes frequent use of the term to describe what other scholars define as "marks" left behind by previous generations "on ourselves by systems of ideas and beliefs." Febvre. 1973. *A New Kind of History,* 40.

or group became entangled during a period in which relationships that had relied on officialdom and traditional scholarly circles slowly disintegrated. Mnemonic rhymes no longer transmitted only content, but also relationships and a lost past.

The Importance of Ruminating

Practical knowledge is stored in the human body, and can, to a certain extent, be codified and transmitted. Recipients of this knowledge can "regrow"[660] it through internalization and repetition, a process of "ripening" or familiarization (shu 熟), and mnemonic techniques helped the practitioner through this process of establishing practical skills and reorganizing actions and habits. The role mnemonics played in keeping practical knowledge alive cannot be underestimated.

It is a common claim that knowledge fixed in textual form is "dead." The cases presented here, however, allow us to conclude the opposite. The authors and editors discussed in this study often appropriated and adapted earlier mnemonic rhymes and schemata to address new audiences and contemporary needs. Over time, they reconsidered methods, techniques and values, leading to subtle transformations of how they codified practical knowledge and made it easy to retain. Formal elements of mnemonics that sought to en-skill a new generation were overhauled and reinvented in a process of cultural "rumination." Because of this practice of chewing and re-chewing transmitted knowledge over time, mnemonic aids reflect social changes in imperial China.

Editors, driven by commercial motivations, appropriated rhymes and altered their format to engage new audiences. Authors consciously repeated and premasticated the content in their own manuals, first explaining practices and meanings in prose and then summarizing these in rhymes. This helped the student understand the context of practices and the meaning of actions, and to incorporate these through memorization, providing food for both mind and body. It was up to the student to incorporate this knowledge. The student's cognitive exercise of internalizing mnemonic rhymes is the process that most resembles a cow regurgitating and re-swallowing a mass of grass.

Practices were taken up not only by those who composed treatises but also by many "silent" practitioners and readers of manuals. The residual

[660] Flitsch. 2008. "Knowledge, Embodiment, Skill and Risk," 268.

orality retained in many treatises, as well as the visual aids that prompted students to repeat processes for visualization, allowed students to internalize practices of perceiving and acting. Through vocalized or silent repetition of mnemonics combined with practice and concrete attempts, students could generate the feedback loop that took them back and forth between memorized standards and actualized practice. The process, which involves individual judgment, allowed them to internalize standards without, however, leading to regulated or homogeneous action. Once standards were internalized, a personal style could be developed and textual maxims shed, allowing acts of volition.

"Ruminating," or the physical repetition of mnemonics and of reflexive procedures, is central to the regrowth of practice because the body is the center of action, and practice does not exist outside of performance. To comprehend embodied knowledge, one must understand how codified texts can reflect bodily practices. Bodily practices may be inconceivable to an outsider who does not comprehend how actions and concepts can be interconnected.[661] Historians should thus strive to engage practice-oriented texts beyond their superficial materiality and savor the seemingly repetitively dull nature of mnemonics, for this is, in fact, the feature that brings them closest to the practitioner's body. Even if books constitute objects that circulate in society detached from their authors, with "dead" characters printed inside, their "content" should not be addressed without considering performance and the practices of appropriation that keep embodied knowledge alive.

This study concludes with a summarizing rhyme:

A Rhyme on the Stomach of the Chinese Mind

Relish the summary and delight in each verse;
allow modules and sections to join and converse.
A good "anchor," the palate will please;
a fine "woven cloth," the hunger appease.

[661] Flitsch. 2008. "Knowledge, Embodiment, Skill and Risk," 285.

In the past, tastes have often changed;
standards are altered and rhymes rearranged.
Hungry minds make practices their own;
just remember to keep chewing on!

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