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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 Karlsson 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 陸以湑 (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 Broken*, 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，從今不願到人間。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 (*jìnshi* 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，喜其楷法方正，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* (*Songnan 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），右手把鏡，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 Rongqing 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 村瀬藍水 (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 Weerd. 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 Weerd. 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。居今之世思獲觀前賢手澤憂憂乎難哉！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，未必尚在人間，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 worldly 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 Hangzhou* (*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 hua jue*, 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 hua jue*, 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？

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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。勿以贖物貽笑。則辛甚矣。⁶³⁷

Before signing the preface, Yiheng refers to himself as a “leftover.” The term *sheng* 贖 (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 hua jue*, 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] branch⁶³⁹ 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 hua jue*, 538.

⁶⁴¹ Dai. 1989. *Zuisuzhai hua jue*, 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.

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.

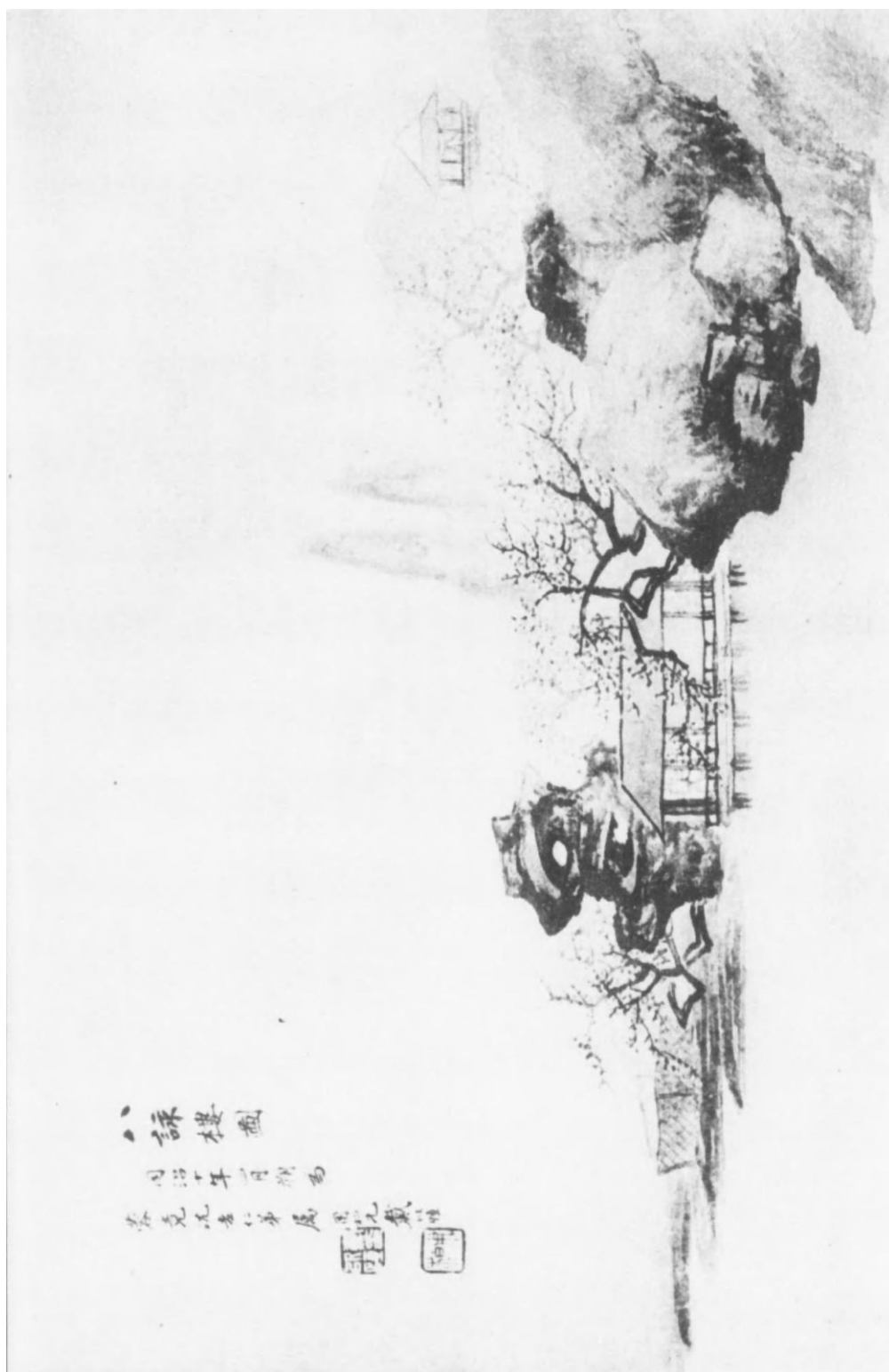




Fig. 7.3 Set of two hanging scrolls of Landscapes after Ancient Masters by Dai Yiheng, dated 1866. Ink and color on paper. The scroll on the left emulates a composition by Wang Wei from memory, with an imprint of Dai's "Blame the empire" seal. Source: Chou. 1998. *Journeys on Paper and Silk*, 164.



Fig. 7.4 Imprint and side of Dai Yiheng's "Blame the empire" (*qiaoguo* 譙國) seal. Source: Xu. 1993. *Xu Sangeng yinpu*, 19.