ART OF THE MING DYNASTY (1368-1644)

Jonathan Hay

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THE MING DYNASTY

The Yuan dynasty formally fell in 1368 to the Anhui peasant leader Zhu Yuanzhang, who founded his own dynasty, the Ming (Bright). His success brought to an end two and a half centuries of partial or complete foreign rule. During the subsequent three centuries of the Ming dynastic cycle, China passed from a rigidly structured society in which the court largely dominated the art of the elite, to a fluid entrepreneurial society with a far broader social base for art. This long-term shift, which not coincidentally accompanied China's entry into a global economic framework, was perhaps even more important in its effects than the founding of the dynasty itself. In the longer view of Chinese history, the first half of the Ming dynasty takes on special significance as the final example of a unified and hegemonic dynastic style, while its decentralized second half is already much closer to modern cultural developments.

FROM HONGWU TO TIANSHUN (1368-1464)

Although there were ten reign periods between 1368 and 1464, the decisive contributions to Ming dynastic art came under three reigns: Hongwu, Yongle and Xuande. The first of these reign periods was as noteworthy for what the court rejected or tolerated in what it inherited as for its innovations. Above all, Zhu Yuanzhang is notorious for his general distrust of intellectuals and particular persecution of literati from the Suzhou region, many of whom had joined the court of his rival, Zhang Shicheng, when Zhang made Suzhou his capital in 1356. In 1368, he banished thousands of them to the harsh environs of his home area in Anhui, where a new capital was then under construction. At the same time, he offered others official positions. By 1374, however, he was persuaded that they represented a dangerous source of opposition; hundreds were executed and imprisoned, then and later. Thus the troubled circumstances in which late Yuan painters were embroiled from the 1350s onwards continued into the early Ming. Yet many of the greatest achievements of Yuan painting belong to the first two decades of the new dynasty. Chen Ruyan (executed) lived until at least 1370, Ni Zan until 1374, Zhao Yuan (executed) until 1376 or later, Xu Ben (died in prison) until 1380, Wang Meng (died in prison) until 1385, and Fang Congyi perhaps

as late as 1393. It is as an embodiment of these artists' responses to their new circumstances that their early Ming works have an essential place in a history of Ming dynasty art.

One reaction, so minimal that one does not naturally relate it to the events of the time, is represented by the astonishing continuity in the works of Ni Zan. Ni, who had earlier refused to be drawn into the cultural world around Zhang Shicheng's court, maintained a similar detachment after Zhu Yuanzhang's victory. In the great Rongxi Studio (**448**), for example, painted in 1372 and reinscribed by the artist in 1374, he holds more tightly than ever to the security of his long-standing, narrow mode of representation, in which the affairs of the world are washed away, leaving a perfect stillness of the self. The implications are of an utter distrust of the possibilities of community except at the zero degree of intimate friendship, where the public person and the private self are not forced into contradiction. In the case of Wang Meng, by contrast, the new situation seems to have brought about a thorough transformation in his work. Although Wang served as an official after 1368, his Ming period paintings document increasingly close ties to Buddhist monks. The Forest Grotto at Juqu (**468**) is one such painting, probably presented to a monk who had reluctantly come to Nanjing, first to preach to the Emperor, and then to become the abbot of one of the monasteries in the capital. All Wang Meng's effort has gone into the depiction of a rigorously inturned world, a world which opens up to the viewer as a like-minded participant but is unambiguously closed to others. The only break in the rock wall, in the top right-hand corner, discloses not sky but water -- therefore, separation -- and is further devalued by the addition of the title, which sends the viewer back into the forest grotto. The seven figures are hard to make out at first, buried as they are in the landscape; so too is the signature which gives the names of the artist and the recipient, and seems almost carved into the rock. Withdrawal, as represented here, is inseparable from concealment. Knowing the violent deaths met by so many intellectuals of the period, including Wang Meng himself who died during his sixth year of imprisonment, it is is hard not to see in this oppressive image a recognition of his dangerous political circumstances.

During these same years, a very different painter from the Suzhou region, Wang Lü (b.1322) left to study medicine far to the west in Shenxi province. He took advantage of this to climb Mt. Hua, the sacred mountain of the west and China's most important Daoist pilgrimage site. In contrast to the mainstream of literati, Wang Lü had studied the painting styles of the Southern Song academic masters Ma Yuan and Xia Gui. It was to their realist pictorial language that he turned in order to document his wonder at the experience of climbing Mt. Hua, in a forty-leaf album which is his only surviving work (**470-71**). Through image after image, we are immersed, through his tiny figures, in the mists, the rocks, the paths, the views, of the mountain. Here the outside world is not banished but simply

forgotten under the spell of what was, in a still pre-tourist age, truly other-worldly. Wang Lü's album became well-known in the Suzhou region after his death, and may have contributed to the more empirical explorations of certain painters in the second half of the fifteenth century and later.

One of Zhu Yuanzhang's first acts in 1368 was to establish the southern city of Yingtian as his Southern Capital, Nanjing, the name which it retains today. The northern capital was to be located at the site of the former Northern Song capital of Bianliang (the modern Kaifeng). In the following year he extended this system to include a Central Capital, to be built at his birthplace in the Huai River region of Anhui, the town of Linhao (the modern Fengyang). While the plans for a northern capital became a dead letter, Zhu Yuanzhang spent seven years on the attempt to create a new capital in Anhui before falling back on the more highly developed and centrally located Nanjing. He expanded the city enormously, accomodating a population perhaps conservatively estimated at 473,000 in 1391. What is known of the first Ming palace complex in Nanjing demonstrates that the Ming founder was willing to devote energies to art when the political gains were clear. The Polar Forbidden City, named after the northern pole star with which the Emperor was identified cosmologically, was undoubtedly an impressive sight both inside and out. Its brightly colored rooves were for the most part covered with yellow and green lead-glazed tiles, but certain important buildings had rooves of porcelain tiles whose moulded dragon and phoenix designs were painted in underglaze copper red. Underglaze red, notoriously difficult to control, is a striking feature of Hongwu ceramics in general (**476**). The association of red with the Ming ruling house through a homophonic correspondence was a symbolic commonplace after the fall of the dynasty. One wonders, therefore, whether the choice of that color at the dynasty's beginning did not also have an emblematic political significance. More obviously political were wall paintings in the palace which depicted the Ming founder's victories, reportedly intended as a reminder and example to his descendants.

At court, the peasant background of Zhu Yuanzhang and his associates, now enfeoffed as dukes and princes, did not prepare them for the subtleties of elite cultural patronage. However, bureaucratic continuity ensured that once the Ming capital was established in the southern city of Nanjing, steps were taken to ensure a supply of necessary objects in conformity with the sumptuary laws proclaimed soon after the Hongwu emperor's accession. A factory (later designated the Imperial Ware Factory during the Yongle reign) was set up in 1369 in the Zhushan area of Jingdezhen where the Yuan imperial factory had previously been located. Although the potters continued to use the decorative vocabulary of the Yuan, they were now more selective and restrained in their choice of motifs, creating a sober and powerful visual effect. The lacquer objects excavated from the tomb of the Prince

of Lu, Zhu Tan (ca. 1390), which are also thought to have been made under imperial direction, show a similar move away from the Yuan interest in lively novelty toward a stricter decorative aesthetic. The recorded anecdotes attesting to Zhu Yuanzhang's puritan distrust of luxury thus seem to find a certain echo in the visual evidence.

Yongle and Xuande. The Yongle period contrasts sharply with Hongwu in the court's artistic achievement. Not only was the Ming now solidly established, but the new ruler, Zhu Di, was ideologically subtle and culturally aware. Under his patronage, Yongle court art saw the revival of Song ideals as a general framework within which Mongolian, Tibetan and even Islamic ideas could find a place as diplomacy required: a grand synthesis through art of imperial history and geography. The emperors immediately following Yongle did not have enough time to make their mark. The Xuande emperor, however, more aesthetically than ideologically inclined, oversaw a change from the relative austerity of Yongle to a rich and colourful version of the same aesthetic appropriate to a more settled period. China's rulers from 1436 to 1464 seem to have followed the Xuande lead on a more frugal basis, no doubt dictated by the economic depression of mid-century.

THE PALACE ENVIRONMENT. The central event in the creation of a Ming dynastic style was the establishment of a new capital in the north, displacing Nanjing as the main seat of government. Since the move by its very nature required a new palace and ritual sites, it lent itself to centralization. As the Prince of Yan, Zhu Di had previously been enfeoffed at the former Yuan capital, Dadu, which provided his power base in the overthrow of Zhu Yuanzhang's designated heir in 1403. Moreover, there were strategic reasons for favoring a capital at this site, which permitted an activist emperor to keep a close watch on China's vulnerable northern borders. Zhu Di was already planning a move northwards early in his reign, and by 1420 the ruined Yuan capital had been rehabilitated for Ming imperial use as the Northern Capital, Beijing.

The primary focus of the construction activity was, naturally, the new palace, here too named the Polar Forbidden City (**472, 474**). Its formal plan, still largely visible today, was developed in response to three different models. Since its site overlapped that of the Yuan palace complex, the basis of a plan already existed, as did building materials which could be re-used or reworked. However, as in the case of the first Ming palace in Nanjing, the planners also looked back to the Song for the idea of a long, impressive extension of the north-south axis of the palace to the south. This made the palace the culmination of a south-north journey, symbolically interpreted as an ascent toward the Son of Heaven. Finally, earth from the construction of a defensive moat around the palace complex (a Yongle innovation) was used to create a hill immediately to the north, as the center of an imperial garden. This placed the Polar Forbiden City in the geomantically protective shadow of a mountain,

thereby reproducing the circumstances of the earlier Nanjing site. To the west of the palace, meanwhile, the Ming planners retained and expanded the huge imperial park centered on two man-made lakes which had first been created by the Jin planners of the twelfth century, when the imperial palace had also been located in Beijing.

The fixed structures of the palace complex were complemented and completed by ephemeral objects to form an all-embracing, 'perfect' environment at the center of imperial power. The fundamental homogeneity of the palace environment was assured by bureaucratic control over what was essentially a question of ritual (**474**). The system that governed the production of decorative objects involved two parallel offices: the governmental Work Project Office (Yingshan suo) under the direction of the Ministry of Works, and the Directorate for Imperial Accoutrements (Yuyong jian) which was a section of the eunuch-staffed palace administration. Nominally, the Work Project Office had jurisdiction over its palace counterpart, but in practice power may have lain more with the Directorate for Imperial Accoutrements, closer to the throne and more directly affected by the decisions that were made. Archaeological and textual evidence confirm the dependence of the imperial kilns at Jingdezhen in Jiangxi on drawings and objects sent from the capital, and some of the more pictorial designs on ceramics owe a clear debt to such court painters as Bian Wenjin and Li Zai (**477**). The existence of some sort of central design office to exercise centralized control over decorative objects would help to explain why the characteristic decorative language of the Yongle and Xuande reigns remained so stable.

Our picture of Ming decorative arts is seriously distorted by the rarity of surviving gold and silver objects. From sumptuary laws we know these to have been in wide circulation as table ware at the highest levels of society, both inside and outside the palace. In addition to the even more fundamental textiles and porcelain, lacquer too was a crucial decorative medium at the Yongle court, joined in the Xuande period if not before by cloisonné. The most reputed lacquer of the late Yuan period and the beginning of the Ming had been made in Jiaxing on the Zhejiang coast, and lacquer-makers from that area were brought to court during the Yongle reign to establish an imperial lacquer factory, which continued operation into the Xuande period and perhaps beyond (**476**). Carving was far and away the most popular technique, used to create dense but lucid surfaces of rich blossoms, or scenes of leisure from the ancient past reminiscent of the works of the court painter, Shi Rui (active ca. 1426-70). The date of the earliest cloisonné for imperial use is still disputed, but there seems at the very least to have been an upsurge of production in the Xuande period, when strong and bright colors were in vogue. Despite the hallowed association with the Jingtai reign consecrated in the Chinese name for cloisonné, Jingtailan, there is more evidence of re-use and adaptation of earlier pieces at that time than of fresh production. This practice of re-use,

also found in ceramics and lacquer, corresponds to the straightened circumstances of the mid-fifteenth century, when orders to the Jingdezhen kilns were also sharply cut back.

PAINTING AT COURT. It is perhaps a reflection of Zhu Di's ideological concerns that he encouraged scholar-official artists at his court. The presence of such artists as the painter Wang Fu (1362-1416) and the calligrapher Shen Du (1357-1434) gave a Confucian air of propriety to a reign founded on the act of regicide. Wang Fu was appointed to the court in 1403 on the basis of his ability as a calligrapher, and served until his death. He accompanied the Emperor on two of the several inspection trips he made to Beijing to study the site of the new capital. In connection with these trips he painted a handscroll of Eight Views of Yanjing (Beijing) in 1414, which served as the catalyst for numerous contemporary colophons by other officials in praise of the new capital site. Abstracted from present time and the urban realities of reconstruction, these views evoke the combined traditions of poetry and painting to confer legitimacy upon the site without making reference to its prior connection with the Yuan dynasty. They also speak to the relationship between intellectuals and the state. The poetic title of the final leaf, Sunset at Golden Tower, identifies the scene as the site, during the Warring States period, of a palace built by King Zhao of Yan for his teacher (**478-79**). Its golden tower symbolized the welcome that the court offered to men of talent. In giving visual expression to this hope for the new Ming court in Beijing, Wang's pictorial language is that of the Yuan literati. But the forceful brushwork, the cropped close-up view, and the dramatic play of light announce the less metaphysical concerns of later fifteenth century painters. The elegant seal-script of the title, meanwhile, has much in common with that of Shen Du, whose calligraphy graced antiques and decorative objects in the palace, and probably provided the model for the rare reign marks found on Yongle porcelain.

In contrast to Wang Fu's scholarly art, the overwhelming majority of paintings at the Yongle and Xuande courts revived the tradition of Song painting: realist, decorative, and just as concerned with figures as with landscape. Although it had gone out of fashion in the fourteenth century, the Song tradition had survived widely into this period both at the former Southern Song capital of Hangzhou, and in such culturally conservative regions as Guangdong and Fujian, and Shanxi. It was above all painters from these areas who now entered the palace to serve the court's vast needs for paintings of all kinds: wall paintings, decorative hanging scrolls, and intimate handscrolls and albums for the Emperor and his favorites. Yet despite the large number of painters employed at court, sometimes over many years, there was no academy as such. Instead, painters were appointed to official positions of diverse kinds. By the Xuande period, most of them nominally served in the Embroidered-uniform guard, and were attached to various palaces.

The great Fujianese artist Bian Wenjin (ca.1354-1428) specialised in the genre of flower and bird painting, creating teeming microcosms of a peaceful, prosperous and stable world (**478**). The counterpoint of richly colored flowers and birds and an ink setting derives from an imperial synthesis of opposing stylistic traditions first achieved in Huizong's academy at the end of the Northern Song. Indeed, the Ming imperial collection of ancient paintings may have played a role in forming Bian Wenjin's mature style. There is a further connection with Huizong's academy in the fact that the Xuande emperor, like Huizong, was himself a painter. In his case, too, it remains to be fully established which of the surviving works of the period bearing his signature come from the imperial hand.

The palace wall paintings of the time are recorded to have treated scenes from history which offered precedents for the self-image of the Ming dynasty. These wall paintings are now entirely lost, but Shang Xi's almost mural-sized depiction of Emperor Xuanzong on a Pleasure Outing allows us to glimpse something of the monumental visual effect they would have offered (**480-81**). On the right, and scattered through the rest of the composition, are birds, animals, flowers and plants which recall Bian Wenjin's iconography of peace and prosperity. The wall in the top right corner signifies an imperial site, most likely the vast imperial hunting park to the south of Beijing. A mounted party of eunuch officials awaits the arrival of the Emperor, seen at the top mounted on a white steed, and hieratically depicted as the largest figure in the painting. The quivers and bowcases identify this as a hunting expedition, in which the Emperor, whose arrows are the only ones visible, will symbolically take possession of his dominion.

That dominion is explicitly shown in several surviving monumental landscapes by another Fujianese artist, Li Zai, active during the Xuande period. Unlike the court artists proper, Li was based in Nanjing, now reduced to the status of a secondary, southern capital. There he was patronized by the Ming hereditary aristocracy, who maintained mansions in the city although their feofdoms were often far-flung. From Nanjing, Li Zai went several times to Beijing to fulfil court commissions, and his influence, like Bian Wenjin's, can be seen in ceramics of the period. Li's landscape vision revives the styles of Guo Xi and Li Tang in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. In bravura performances of brushwork he summons up vast landscapes dominated by great peaks, so close to surviving works by Guo and Li that we must asume that he had access to such early paintings in Nanjing or Beijing (**482**). To describe his art as derivative would miss the point of the allusion, which is twofold: the unity of the Great Ming is shown to have restored what had been lost since the fall of the Northern Song, while conversely the Song past is invoked to legitimize the Ming present.

Following Li Zai, Dai Jin (1388-1462) was the most widely accomplished and inventive painter of his day, master of numerous styles, and entirely catholic in his approach

to the tradition. However, as an artist whose fundamental training was pictorial rather than calligraphic, the roots of his art lay naturally in the Song tradition of painterly illusionism and effects. Even his most 'literati' works establish a convincing atmosphere and push the brushwork in the direction of performance, two aspects of the career painter's craft. Unlike Li Zai, he had no success at court, but made his mark in Nanjing, before returning to his native Hangzhou for the last eighteen years of his life. The range of his painting corresponds to the panoramic, but weighted, survey his oeuvre offers of the society of his time. Dai came into his own during the post-Xuande period of economic depression, and the world he depicted is a sober one: we see farmers, fishermen, women feeding chickens, poor and tired scholars, lone and harried servants, officials in retirement, strong-minded recluses, and men committed to their religion (**482**). Few artists had portrayed the cares of men more sympathetically, but rarely do we see the life of the wealthy, or even a rich man's garden.

The fearful aspects of life in a pre-modern society could also become subjects of painting, even the painting of court artists. It was in this period that the Water and Land Assembly ritual to greet the souls of the dead became a particularly important part of Buddhist temple practice. The ritual required a vast ensemble of paintings exposing the entire pantheon of Buddhist deities, all the way down to the terrifying nature spirits which drew upon the non-Buddhist substratum of animist beliefs, and finally graphic descriptions of the eight sorts of unhappy deaths (**482**). A complete set of paintings of the Water and Land Assembly, presented to Baoning Temple in Shanxi by the court in 1460, was preserved in the temple itself until very recently. Their hierarchically differentiated realism is a survival from Jin and Yuan religious painting, when a close connection had already existed between religious sites in Shanxi and the court in Beijing. It finds a counterpart in sculpture, from this period onwards, in equally exhaustive and realistic sets of lohans, sometimes several hundred in number.

CHINA AND THE WORLD. The Yongle and Xuande courts were particularly sensitive to the geographical symbolism of empire. This found major expression in a second and equally important direction taken by Buddhist art, which was imperially sponsored on a vast scale in this period. During the Yuan dynasty, Lamaist monks from Tibet and Nepal had enjoyed favored status at court, and Lamaist rites had been used to support Mongol rulership. The Yongle emperor maintained these close connections, no doubt partly due to the need to maintain good relations with Tibet in the face of a still dangerous Mongol empire. Among the notable artistic results were: a new printing with illustrations of the Buddhist canon, the Tripitaka; the construction of the Temple of Five Pagodas to the north-west of Beijing, still standing today; the casting during both reigns of large numbers of small gilt bronze icons as gifts to Lamaist leaders (**484**); and the manufacture of ceramics with Sanskrit or Tibetan

inscriptions, for use in Lamaist ceremonies involving the Emperors, or to be offered as diplomatic gifts. The artisans responsible for these various projects uniformly took a Tibetan/Nepalese style as their basis, but gave it a distinctive Chinese inflection. The sinicization can be seen most clearly in the proportions and the balanced order, which are consistent with architecture and decorative arts of the same period.

One celebrated Buddhist monument symbolized international contacts of a different kind. During the Yongle and Xuande reigns, the court sponsored seven maritime expeditions to the West under the command of a eunuch admiral, Zheng He (1371-1433). Zheng's fleets extended the presence of the Ming empire beyond the Indonesian archipelago and the south-east Asian peninsula, to the Indian sub-continent and the Persian Gulf. They are known to have included ships bearing cargoes of porcelain: some of the many early fifteenth century ceramics which have survived in Indian and Middle Eastern collections must derive from these extraordinary missions, though the bulk may simply bear witness to the continuing activity of Middle Eastern merchants in China under the Ming. In 1412, after the successful return of the first three of these great fleets, the Yongle emperor commissioned a commemorative pagoda for the Temple of Precious Benevolence, Bao'en si, in Nanjing. Completed in 1419, it was faced entirely with sculpted porcelain tiles lead-glazed in strong colors, using the cosmopolitan decorative vocabulary of Lamaist art in its Chinese version. Until its destruction in the nineteenth century and the dispersal of its surviving tiles into different collections, the "Porcelain Pagoda" was one of the architectural wonders of China, known as far away as Europe.

Zheng He, however, was himself a Moslem from Yunnan whose father had made the pilgrimage to Mecca. The Chinese court's recognition of Islamic countries in this period, already clear from the successive maritime expeditions, is strikingly attested by porcelain copies of Islamic metalwork (**485**). Chinese archaeologists have suggested that these were intended as diplomatic gifts to the countries which had presented the original metal objects. While the identity of these countries is not certain, it is known that various Central Asian principalities engaged in tribute trade with China, from which they gained porcelain and textiles. To the east, meanwhile, China notably sent textiles and laquers to Japan, and porcelain to Korea.

CHENGHUA TO ZHENGDE (1464-1521)

By the middle of the fifteenth century, the two southern cities of Nanjing and Suzhou had emerged as rivals to Beijing in cultural importance. Their rise to independent prominence

parallels the economic recovery from the mid-century retrenchment that began in the 1460s. In the process, both cities became thriving centers of painting.

Nanjing. By virtue of its strategic commercial importance as the gateway to and from the relatively wealthier south-east, but also its status as the Southern Capital, Nanjing was now China's largest and richest city. Here, when they were not in their feofdoms, congregated many of the princely descendants of the Ming founder and the now aristocratic descendants of his comrades-in-arms. In Nanjing these aristocrats created for themselves a bold and colorful culture that reflected their self-confidence and means. Painters in the Song tradition, following the example of Li Zai and Dai Jin, now flocked to Nanjing as much as to the court: there are several cases of painters preferring to settle in Nanjing and make periodic brief sorties to the court from their southern base. Due to the historical links to Southern Song painting and Dai Jin's Zhejiang origins, the range of stylistic approaches favored in Nanjing and Beijing from the Chenghua through the Zhengde reigns later became known as the Zhe school.

However, in the late fifteenth century the leading artist in Nanjing was a painter from Wuchang in Hubei, Wu Wei (1459-1508). Just as Li Zai and Dai Jin had been connected with the Princes of Qianning, Wu Wei had such aristocratic patrons as the Duke of Chengguo (Zhu Yi, 1427-96). He also spent periods at court during the Chenghua and Hongzhi reigns, and would have done so again during the Zhengde reign as well, had he not died just before he was due to set out. Living in more prosperous times than Dai Jin, his art was also tied up with public pleasures in a new way. Wu was a more spectacular brush technician than his predecessor, and he engaged an audience for whom the public values of performance were central, both in life and in art. He and other artists such as Xu Lin who were working in the same direction, along with some of his patrons, were deeply involved in the world of urban entertainments: banquets, the theater, the pleasure quarters. Not surprisingly, many of the themes of Nanjing painting in the late fifteenth century are drawn from this milieu. The strongly male, even bravura, aspects of their paintings, like the Daoist personae that the artists adopted, have strong links to a culture that orthodox literati disdained as excessive -- altogether too close to the unrestrained behaviour of the urban lower classes. Wu Wei's Lady carrying a Pipa presents us not only with the heroine of a popular play, The Lute Song, but is an image that any one of his contemporaries would have understood as a reference to the singing-girls of his own day (**486**). The brushwork, fluid but strong, perfectly describes -- almost enacts -- a body in movement. If we understand her to be Zhao Wuniang on her way to the capital to find her lover, her steady progress and intentness can be seen as a female equivalent to male bravado; if we bypass this reference, it becomes the stoicism of a working woman, portrayed with evident sympathy.

If this was the mainstream of Nanjing painting, other painters developed a different aspect of Dai Jin's heritage. In the hands of such literati as "the Old Fool", Shi Zhong (1438-ca.1517), the bold effects of brush and ink became self-referential, the lyrical expression of a personal "craziness" that had its own deep roots in the Chinese intellectual tradition (**488**). It represented a private rebellion against the state and its values, one which was not restricted to the literati of Nanjing.

Suzhou. In contrast to Nanjing, which was largely a relay station and center of consumption, Suzhou was at the same time a production center located in a rich farming area. In the second half of the fifteenth century, Suzhou underwent an important social and cultural transformation. The area's old-established landowning families had long been identified with literati culture, but now there were newly successful commercial families who aspired to participation in the same world. At the same time, the landowning families themselves were expanding into commercial activities. This new, more fluid social situation had important effects for painting and calligraphy in the literati mode. Like the rest of traditional literati culture, these arts ceased to be the organic expression of one clearly defined social group, and instead began to become available to whoever had the means to acquire them. As part of the same process, we see artists becoming entrepreneurs, marketing their own literati identity and culture.

This development in painting begins with Shen Zhou (1427-1509): landowner, collector, poet and painter. Shen had a family relationship to Wang Meng, himself the grandson of Zhao Mengfu, and the transmission of the Yuan literati tradition to Shen Zhou passed through members of his own family. Shen's art completes a process visible as early as Wang Fu, in which the styles of different Yuan masters were brought together and synthesized. Walking with a Staff, painted around 1485, fuses Ni Zan's basic river composition with Huang Gongwang's solid construction (**489**). But what makes it so radically different from a Yuan painting is the accessibility of the scene, highlighted by the path that leads in from the lower right corner and, of course, the prominent figure. Echoing these more down-to-earth elements, the mountains beyond also conform to a more intimate scale than Ni Zan would normally have permitted.

The art of Wang Fu (and Wang Li) also offers a precedent for Shen Zhou's parallel interest in informally cropped close-up views, which introduce a surprising realism into the otherwise faux-naif style. This is seen at its best in the album Twelve Views of Tiger Hill which breaks down the experience of a visit to this famous Suzhou site into twelve moments (**488**). Each one is a quiet affirmation of social harmony through the role of landmarks in the community. In the leaf reproduced here, the scene seems at first so natural -- a servant has just drawn water from the well in front of the temple gate, a monk has just come back from

outside -- that all thought of artifice is forgotten. The ordinariness of the scene is reminiscent of the work of Dai Jin, whom Shen Zhou admired. Yet the image gradually reveals an underlying complexity. The monk and the servant are equidistant from the well: surely they have just met, bringing the inner world of the temple and the outer world of the dusty world into brief contact. There are, one also realizes, three domains in the picture: the street, the tree-filled courtyard, and a deeper world behind the inner gate. The monk, at the very center of the image, is on a zig-zag path from outside to inside, from the mundane to the transcendent. But that path is perfectly balanced, visually, by the horizontal zig-zag of the wall that defines the street and perhaps our day-to-day lives. Throughout most of his life, Shen pursued an ideal of receptivity to the world, believing that truths are revealed in the simplest things -- an attitude as characteristic of the Confucian philosophy of his contemporary Chen Xianzhang (1428-1500) as of Daoism or Chan Buddhism. In this respect his relaxed brushwork is of a piece with his casual compositions and unassuming subjects. It is Shen Zhou's great achievement to have practised painting as a private form of self-cultivation leading to enlightenment, and yet to have created in the process the most accessible (and marketable) of visions. For an extension of such empathy into the realm of the darker side of Suzhou's success, however, one has to turn to a rare set of paintings from 1516 by the career painter Zhou Chen (ca. 1455-after 1536), which depict the city's beggars (**490**). Although, as images, these are related to the "Water and Land" depictions of unhappy deaths, they transcend the simple attempt to stimulate our horror. While also succeeding in that goal, the artist insists above all on the essential humanity of the old blind woman, who carries another woman's baby in her arms and is led through the streets by the goat that will provide milk for the baby.

The other two major painters of Zhou Chen's generation in Suzhou, Tang Yin (1470-1523) and Wen Zhengming (1470-1559), are both considered to be students and followers of Shen Zhou, but they developed his heritage in very different ways. Wen Zhengming lived longer and matured later as an artist, and will be discussed in the next section. It was Tang Yin who dominated Suzhou painting in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. Tang Yin also studied with Zhou Chen, whose model partly accounts for Tang's avoidance of Shen's calligraphy-based, faux-naif craft. Zhou's best work always displays careful attention to optical experience, though the brush manner spans a wide range from meticulous academic work to sometimes quite dramatic effects in the Nanjing manner. Tang Yin himself, whose range is even wider, was clearly influenced not only by Zhou Chen but by Nanjing painters as well. Like them, he was committed to optical experience and brush performance, but brought to the use of this craft the deep lyricism and sensualism that was his heritage from Shen Zhou. Whether the harsh and dramatic visions of large landscape hanging scrolls or the

subtle definition of mood and atmosphere in albums and handscrolls, his lyrical effects are carefully measured, and extended by his poems (**490-91**). His social and artistic persona was bohemian -- another connection with Nanjing -- and this has found a place in the popular imagination as the romantic myth of the hedonist Tang Bohu. The bold cursive calligraphy of his friend Zhu Yunming (1461-1527) belongs to the same aesthetic universe, combining casual, uninhibited execution with rich, pictorial structures.

Beijing and the Court. The rise of the southern cities did not eclipse the court, which itself became commercially active under the influence of the Chenghua emperor's favorite concubine, Wan Guifei (1430-87). The court's involvement in commerce was to become a permanent feature of Chinese life from the Zhengde reign onwards. One of its effects, or perhaps causes, was the weakening of the commitment to a ritualized environment at the center of power in favor of the same attention to pleasure that we have seen in Nanjing and Suzhou. In both ceramics and flower and bird painting, this had diverse expressions.

One style of ceramic decoration was tied to the new developments in the southern capital. Through the Nanjing aristocracy and officialdom, the style of painting represented by Wu Wei became popular at court as well, and with it his Daoist, narrative, and theatrical themes. Wu himself was much appreciated by both the Chenghua and Hongzhi emperors: this was a time in which ostentatiously unconventional behaviour could meet with admiration even at court. The free Nanjing style and its more popular themes passed quickly into ceramic decoration. From Chenghua through Zhengde and beyond, they appear on blue and white ceramics (the so-called "windswept" style), on fahua wares enamelled on the biscuit, and in overglaze enamelled decoration (**492**). Polychrome enamels themselves first came to the fore in the Chenghua reign (though they are known as early as Xuande), as if to proclaim the relaxation of austerity through a blaze of color.

If this first style has strong masculine overtones, the other has been thought to be connected to the female patronage of Wan Guifei. The Chenghua period is noted for its important number of extremely fine, delicate objects suited to intimate use, decorated in a style that avoids all forcefulness in favor of a graceful informality. The most famous, perhaps, are the small wine cups with doucai decoration which combines underglaze blue outlines and overglaze enamel pigments, approximating the "double outline" technique of painting (**492**). Another group of objects demonstrate an elegant naturalism: in patterns with fish, waterweeds may be painted as if growing from the line of the base, giving the impression that the fish are seen in water. Yet other objects, including the celebrated "palace bowls" of the period, playfully subvert the normal rules of flower scroll decoration. Leaves extend elegantly into spaces that previously would have been left empty, and such exotic innovations as lilies displace the established vocabulary of flowers.

In court paintings of the "flower and bird" genre, one can also distinguish two separate styles, though one would hesitate to link them directly to what is seen in ceramics. Lin Liang (ca. 1416-80) first made a mark at the capital in the mid-1450s with his paintings of birds in ink alone, which suitably contrasted with the luxury of Bian Wenjin's ink and color style, more apt to the great days of Xuande. During the Chenghua reign, however, his work remained popular as a counterpart in the genre of bird paintings to Wu Wei's figure paintings and landscapes (**493**). In huge hanging scrolls he painted proud eagles as emblems of the imperial might invested in generals; and in handscrolls a profusion of species, one after another, flitting and squawking, in a metaphoric representation of the renewed prosperity of the Chenghua reign. Lin's younger contemporary, Lü Ji (died ca.1505) thoroughly mastered the Cantonese painter's style, but made his own mark through a reworking of the earlier style of Bian Wenjin. Lü Ji's compositions far surpass Bian's in variety, complexity and monumentality; the foreground space is deepened, with suggestions of further recession in a flight of birds, a winding stream, or a bank of mist (**494-95**). Within the limits of a more considered style, moreover, Lü Ji's paintings maintain the dynamism that Lin Liang had introduced into the genre. It is understandable, therefore, that they displaced the older master's style at court during the Hongzhi reign.

JIAJING TO EARLY WANLI (1521-1590)

By the middle years of the sixteenth century, China's material culture was beginning to look very different from that of the first half of the Ming. In part it was simply more elaborate and less functional, the natural result of an explosion of economic growth from the 1520s onwards. But values had also shifted in line with a few decisive sociological changes. Following in Zhengde's footsteps, the Jiajing and Wanli emperors defined their cultural responsibility narrowly in terms of their own living environment. Court art came to reflect their personal beliefs and needs, and largely abandoned its national ambition. The hereditary Ming aristocracy, meanwhile, had grown so large that in 1562 their stipulated state support was formally suspended, after earlier being sharply curtailed. The crisis that they faced may help to explain the end of their activity as major artistic patrons in Nanjing. Conversely, the increasingly trans-regional character of commerce brought to the fore two regional groups: the merchants and bankers of Shanxi in the north, and the merchants of the Huizhou area of southern Anhui in the south. This latter regional group would retain its leading role in southern China until the end of the eighteenth century. The Huizhou merchants initially adopted the already commercialized literati culture of Suzhou as their own, giving expanded significance to what had previously been a local phenomenon. In a parallel development,

objects in ostensibly literati taste, produced by a wide range of regional artisans largely centered in the south-east, started to find a national market. In short, the sixteenth century saw the private values associated with the literati win out over public ones, as cultural initiative passed out of the hands of the state and was taken over by the entrepreneurial culture that had first emerged in the late fifteenth century.

The Art of the Court. The Jiajing reign is notorious for the emperor's neglect of court affairs in favor of a private obsession with Daoism. Encouraged by those around him who hoped to fill the power vacuum he was creating, Jiajing gave himself over to public Daoist ceremonies and the private practices of the adept. Court art was diverted toward the creation of a magically auspicious environment, in which the earlier symbolism of cosmological order was replaced by the imagery of talismans, omens and deities. These are best known from the blue and white ceramics of the period, which display an intense blue and a highly glossy glaze that made them the last Ming ceramics to be widely admired in later times (**496**). On one level, the Daoist art of the Jiajing court was almost populist in character, its iconography overlapping with that of urban popular culture. Cizhou wine jars of this period, for example, similarly depict cranes, immortals and the trigrams, albeit in a rougher style (**497**). The emperor would have approved, too, of the fact that this jar of 1540 was made "on an auspicious day", as its inscription states. The rough, "inspired" style characteristic of much Zhe School painting had also long linked court art to the popular tradition represented here by Cizhou decoration. In this period, the Daoist works of Zheng Wenlin, better known as "Crazy Immortal Zheng", seem to represent a conscious rejection of sophistication. However, as seen in ceramic decoration the Daoist art of the court was highly ordered, and it is on this level that one can see a certain compatibility with the 1530 reworking of the Altar of Heaven, which turned it into a site dense with mystic symbolism (**498**). The decisive change was the addition of a third element to the south of the initial two, which became the new focus of the site. Known as the Circular Mound, it took the form of three concentric terraces within a further circular wall, itself within a square wall (**498**). The number of terraces, posts and flagstones, and the diameter of each terrace: all had numerological symbolism derived from the great tertiary of Heaven, Earth and Man. Distances and proportions were chosen in order to allow different parts of the altar to come into alignment when seen from specific, ritually important, points.

The short Longqing reign was marked by a reaction against Daoism, but under Wanli the religion was restored at court alongside Buddhism and all manner of popular beliefs. A court fashion for the elaborate observance of festivals led to the production of embroidered festival badges, which eunuchs, officials and palace women alike were required to wear at the appropriate moments of the year. The fundamental continuity with the earlier Jiajing

reign can also be seen in the revival and further elaboration of its Daoist decorative vocabulary. The court was by this time less able to attract first-rate painters (though Wu Bin is a notable exception), but it continued to commission ceramics, lacquer, cloisonné and textiles in enormous quantities. It followed the rest of elite society in a demand for luxury, expressed in the decorative arts through intricate workmanship and rich ornamental effects. Thus, the fashion for complex inlaid mother-of-pearl designs on lacquer objects reached its height in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, at least partly under court patronage (**501**). Such intricacy, it is worth noting, lends itself to a more intimate experience of the object. In general, it is difficult to attribute specific luxury developments to court initiative though the the court certainly provided a major market for such objects. While not an index of court patronage per se, the inventory of the property of the immensely powerful minister, Yan Song (1480-1565), made at the time of its confiscation in 1562 following Yan's fall from power, provides astonishing testimony to the extravagance of life in and around the court. Given that it was commissioned by his enemies, however, such listings in the inventory as 121 paintings attributed to Lu Ji almost strain credulity.

Urban Luxury. The growing extravagance of elite life outside the court may similarly be seen through luxury objects. Some were imports, as in the case of Japanese lacquer, which first became well-known in China in this period: it remained widely admired and influential into the nineteenth century. Others were Chinese-made, but nonetheless exotic. One striking group of ceramics, for example, employs the so-called kinrande style of ceramic decoration, in which underglaze blue designs are contrasted with strong-colored enamel areas embellished with delicate gilt patterns (**501**). One common kinrande shape is a tall wine ewer derived from Persian metalwork, and which is also found at this time in precious metals and cloisonné. From court paintings we know this shape to have been current at the Wanli court, but it was also a common export form, sent both west and east, and it has also been found in domestic Chinese burials. In the fifteenth century, such a form would have found its way into general circulation through the court, but in this period the process is more likely to have been reversed.

The city of Suzhou offers us the best opportunity to track the growth of luxury in this period. Its largest and most tangible expression is the Zhuozheng yuan, or Garden of the Politics of an Awkward Man, built by Wang Xianchen, a former Censor who retired to Suzhou around 1513. The garden's name alludes to a poem by the Jin poet Pan Yue, which defines as the politics of an awkward man: "to cultivate one's garden to meet one's daily needs." Despite its name, the garden was a vast affair. Its construction probably began as early as the 1510s, but must have taken many years to complete. The garden was located in the middle of the city, among streets and canals: there were no possibilities of "borrowed

views" which would incorporate some scene beyond the walls into the garden. On the contrary, the whole challenge of the garden was to create a world of such internal complexity that the city would be forgotten (**500**). By offering choices of path at frequent intervals, and by artfully disclosing only part of the view beyond any of the scenes (jing) that make up the whole, a garden could become inexhaustible -- as big, in fact, as one made it by one's wanderings. In this respect, the Zhuozheng yuan is among the most ambitious and successful of the hundreds of traditional city gardens to have survived. Much of its success derives from the extensive use of water to create, not only ponds and a "lake", but also a "river" which, of course, seems endless. As in other Suzhou gardens before and after, the rocks in the Zhuozheng yuan -- microcosmic mountains -- are primarily eroded limestone rocks in organic forms from nearby Lake Tai.

Luxury of a different kind is represented by the paintings of the Suzhou artist Qiu Ying (d.1552) who, like Tang Yin, studied with Zhou Chen. Prior to this, however, he is said to have served an apprenticeship as an architectural painter: this craft background may account in part for a level of meticulous craftsmanship in painting that had not been seen since the Song dynasty. Active during the period of a burgeoning antique market, Qiu Ying took the connoisseur's sense of contact with the past through objects as the basis for his own imaginary reconstructions of the past (**502**). The past as he imagined it, more often than not, was a romantic anticipation of the wealthy world to which he catered. It is altogether logical therefore that his closest relationship with a customer should have been with Xiang Yuanbian (1525-90), whose business activities, including ownership of a pawnshop, dovetailed perfectly with a passion for collecting ancient and modern paintings. This has naturally given ample room for the assumption that craftsmanship and unabashed commercialism had to mean a lack of intellectual content. Yet Qiu Ying was widely admired by his literati peers in Suzhou, who often collaborated with him, supplying in colophons the literary and calligraphic components of complex, collaborative works of art. From these colophons one sees that once a certain level of excellence was reached, the artisan was considered to transcend his craft, which was then judged in the terms of self-cultivation that the literati normally reserved for their own artistic practice. Xiang Yuanbian himself, it should be noted, was from a noted Zhejiang family and painted competently in a scholarly style. For a literati counterpart to Qiu Ying's luxury, we can turn to the flower paintings of Chen Shun (1483-1544). Although Chen studied with Wen Zhengming, his warm and easy style, heavily reliant on the wash effects of the "boneless" technique, has little in common with Wen's highly intellectualized and linear approach (**502**). It comes much closer to the sensuous art of Tang Yin. Chen enriched the iconography of flower painting immeasurably to give yet another optimistic form to urban prosperity, this time as summer profusion.

The growth of luxury was not an isolated development. Even at this early date it was accompanied by a new attention to the domestic environment. One expression of this was the shift in this period from lacquer to hardwood furniture. Hardwood offered the advantage of flexibility. Being cheaper than lacquering, it lent itself more easily to experimentation; it was also intrinsically better suited to carved decoration. Covered with the brightly covered textiles that often accompanied furniture in the Ming, particularly on formal occasions, it offered a strikingly different background. Alternatively, left plain, it invited close attention to the grain of the wood or the carving and created the restrained effect familiar from modern museum reconstructions of Chinese interiors (**503**). From its beginnings in Suzhou, the fashion for hardwood was soon generalized throughout China.

A second type of object familiar to a Western audience can also be traced back to the changes in Suzhou interiors in this period. Ceramics had been made in the characteristic reddish stoneware of Yixing for centuries. By the sixteenth century, however, Yixing potters had come to specialize in teapots, the best of which were luxury items, signed by master artisans. This could not have happened without the upsurge of tea-drinking during the sixteenth century, documented in countless paintings. Earlier in the Ming tea-drinking as a self-conscious practice had been largely a solitary affair, associated with meditation and other practices of self-cultivation. But now it consecrated an informal etiquette of visiting, in which display and contemplation of the teapot had a role to play. The evidence of paintings by Tang Yin, Wen Zhengming, Qiu Ying and others suggests that this was part of a larger change. The inner, private spaces of the house were becoming more accessible than before to visitors: the domestic realm was becoming, to some extent, public (**504-05**). This may help to explain why so much of the art of display from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has an intimate character, requiring close observation and contemplation.

Finally, the emergence of an entrepreneurial culture implied equally significant changes at a lower level of urban society. As cities expanded and prosperity continued, a thriving popular culture developed. Its material forms are easily overlooked today because so many of them -- festival decorations, shrines, toys, lanterns, shop signs -- were ephemeral. One of its few surviving traces is ceramics from a vastly expanded Jingdezhen and other southern kilns. These we know well today only because so many were exported from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. In their new foreign homes in South and South-East Asia, the Near East, Africa and Europe, even ordinary items of Chinese crockery were rare, exotic items, and were often carefully preserved (**505**). Although these porcelains are usually termed export wares, they made so few aesthetic concessions to their intended markets that in most cases they can equally well represent urban popular taste in China. The decoration bursts with life, the desire for worldly success endlessly reaffirmed in auspicious symbols.

Related depictions of leisure in city suburbs (the ancestor of the "willow pattern"), rivers busy with traffic, and ocean-going galleons reflect remarkably accurately the economic upsurge of their time.

New Explorations in Painting. If Chen Shun's and Qiu Ying's paintings suggest an age of optimism and advance, the work of other artists reveals unsuspected social tensions. The major figure of the period from the late 1520s to 1560 was the long-lived Wen Zhengming. Born into an old-established Suzhou family, his nine attempts to pass the official examinations were unsuccessful, but when he did through other channels gain the opportunity to serve in the Hanlin Academy in 1523, he resigned gratefully after five uncomfortable years. Unlike his boyhood friend Tang Yin, Wen did not have an obvious natural aptitude for painting. His mastery came slowly and painfully on the basis of calligraphic skill and art historical erudition, and his art is easily but inadequately understood in those terms: as an erudite, backward-looking art of self-expression, in which Wen legitimizes his own position and voice by establishing an art historical context in his paintings. Increasingly as he grew older, his was an art of extreme structural tensions. The figures in his paintings come to occupy spaces which are often claustrophobic or disturbingly ambiguous (**504, 505**). The landscape around them threatens either to implode or to come apart. As in the philosophy of his contemporary, Luo Qinshun (1465-1547), the very coherence of the world is in question. Since landscape was, in Wen Zhengming's tradition, a social metaphor, we need not doubt the social significance of such tensions in his art. But it remains to be established whether their social reference is to the growing divide between intellectuals and the state, or to the uncomfortable position of intellectuals in the entrepreneurial culture of which he had become a very successful part. Wen Zhengming's painting and calligraphy circulated throughout China, and were widely forged, within his own lifetime. He also founded a small dynasty of painters, calligraphers and connoisseurs who successfully marketed their skills well into the seventeenth century.

One nephew, Wen Boren (1502-75), was among the most important painters of the second half of the sixteenth century. In certain works he pushed the structural tensions of his uncle's work to even greater extremes, though in a different spirit. The extraordinary set of "Ten Thousands" -- trees, waves, rocks, clouds -- tests the limits of the representational system of "distances" which had come down to Ming painters from the Song. Elsewhere he builds on Tang Yin's attention to optical experience in almost realist essays (**506**). And in yet other works he creates willfully strange visions that give the imagination free reign. Wen Zhengming's preoccupation with the historical, metaphysical and social place of the individual seems to have left Wen Boren untouched; the younger man was more fascinated

with pictorial language as a way of apprehending the physical world. In this respect he announces one of the major tendencies of late Ming painting.

A quite different direction -- painting as improvisation -- was pursued by the Shaoxing artist Xu Wei (1521-93), building on the art of Chen Shun. Xu is also a major figure in the histories of poetry and drama, where he engaged popular romantic forms and themes, pushing them beyond their normal bounds. His later paintings consistently raise the spectre of incoherence, even madness (**507**). This may, however, largely be an assumed persona in the line of such Nanjing "fools" as Shi Zhong, and referable through his subjects -- flowers, fruit, vegetables -- to the "mad Chan" tradition. It permitted him to work transgressively, breaking down taboos: his inscriptions have strong sexual overtones, and simply in visual terms his paintings retain their power to shock today. In sixteenth century terms, the significance of Xu Wei's art may lie in its extreme public exposure of the private realm. As such, it can be related to the new accessibility of inner architectural spaces, and to other developments such as the emergence of women painters. Entrepreneurial culture allowed a courtesan such as Ma Shouzhen (1548-1604) to market her female identity through recognizable differences of style and iconography -- a particular fragility, the orchid as self-image (**507**). Both as a painter and in her life as a Nanjing celebrity, she eroded the barriers between the closeted space of women and the outer public space of men.

LATE WANLI TO CHONGZHEN (1590-1644)

By the 1590s at latest one can speak of a new stage of development. One change is quantifiable: many more places were involved in the production of art objects, giving rise to greater variety. Another change involved a shift of attitudes or mentality -- an increasing self-consciousness of which irony became one of the principal expressions. A third change was sociological. The art of the court was becoming more and more difficult to distinguish from that of the rest of the elite society. From its role as the dominant art patron of the fifteenth century, the court was now reduced to little more than another, albeit special market.

The Spread of Luxury. Although literati art had already emerged earlier in the sixteenth century as a central component of entrepreneurial culture, it was only in this late Ming period that it took a leading role in decorative arts through the phenomenon known today as "scholar's taste". Objects for the scholar's studio, for contemplation or use in conjunction with writing and reading, enjoyed a relatively stable and conservative history from the Song to the early Ming, when they epitomized a restrained literati aesthetic. But as they became divorced from their original social context, and at the same time took on a

function of informal decorative display, such objects became the locus of feats of ingenuity, elaborate workmanship and wit which have little to do with the studio in its original usage.

Before continuing further with the visual expressions of luxury, however, we can give them a broader context by briefly addressing the tradition of small-scale vernacular sculpture, which had survived from the pre-Ming period much like the realist traditions of Water and Land paintings and Lohan sculptures, as another pervasive (but underestimated) part of the visual culture of Ming China. One of its main forms was tomb sculpture. Ming dynasty tombs, unlike those of the Yuan, rarely had wall paintings. Instead, they normally included a set of freestanding sculptures representing the household of the deceased: the servants, the carriages, entire ensembles of furniture, even clothes (**508**). The sets sometimes ran to hundreds of pieces, and could be made of clay, wood or stone. It is difficult to know if they were accurate in recording a particular household's means, but they were certainly meant to be realistic. As had been true since the Tang dynasty, realism in the tomb context had a magic function, amking the representation more efficacious in ensuring that the deceased would be properly accompanied in the next world. In the Ming this meant a lively representation, often slightly caricatural. Meanwhile, another pre-Ming tradition of relief sculptures of theatrical scenes incorporated into the architectural structure of the tomb continued under the Ming in architectural decoration, notably carved wood panels and brick lintels, where they had a similarly auspicious function.

The rich tradition of vernacular sculpture in tombs and architecture was found throughout China. By contrast, most of the production centers for "scholar's taste" objects were located in the south-east, above all in the provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang. In Yixing, potters specializing in teapots proliferated, and expanded their range of products to include brushwashers, water pots and copies of archaistic bronze vessels to be used as incense burners and flower vases. A teapot by Shi Dabin takes the form of a textile-wrapped seal of office (**509**), an example of which is included in a design of six seals of state from the Wisteria Studio Album of Stationery Decorated with Ancient and Modern Designs, published in Nanjing ca. 1626 (**508**). The aesthetic point of the teapot, so to speak, lies in the mutual incompatibility of the two ideas it embodies: the informal teapot and the ultra-formal seal. The tension between function and representation is here pushed to the point where only an ironic sensibility can encompass the two. The letter paper design is no less sophisticated. Anticipating the metonymic procedures of Japanese surimono of the late eighteenth century, the six seals of ofice allude to a specific historical figure, a wandering statesman of the Warring States period, Su Qin. Along with the more famous Ten Bamboo Studio Manual of Painting and Calligraphy (ca.1627), also a Nanjing product, this album of stationery designs demonstrates the strides that been made in color printing (made possible by the use of

multiple blocks) since its invention at the beginning of the century. Nanjing was also one center of bamboo carving, known for its shallow-carved designs on brushpots; a deep-carved style was practised in Jiading (**510**). Surprisingly, given its function, the brush pot became one of the main decorative formats for narrative representations drawn from printed illustrations to plays and novels (the literary world in which Xu Wei was deeply involved). Objects of all these kinds and many others were signed by their makers, initially with just a brief inscription, but later with a seal as well on the model of painting. The names of the most famous artisans of this period, such as the Songjiang bronzemaker Hu Wenming, the Suzhou jadecarver Lu Zigang, or the Yangzhou lacqerer Jiang Qianli, in time became trademarks. In their own day, however, these men were pioneers in raising the status of artisans. The entry of artisans into the elite was a development much remarked at the time, all the more so because, along with peasants and soldiers, they belonged to one of the three classes of hereditary families instituted by the Hongwu emperor, and had originally been tied to the state by heavy requirements of corvée labor. The re-alignment of social boundaries is equally visible in the increasing number of designs and inscriptions contributed by literati to commercial artisanal projects, from Yixing teapots to illustrated books.

Given the social and economic importance of Huizhou merchants, it is not surprising that the Huizhou area itself became a production center of unusual importance. It was known above all for two art forms, the ink cake and woodblock illustration. While Huizhou inks in general were meant to be used, the ink cakes in question were elaborate decorative objects, non-functional signs of literati culture. Their extraordinarily varied moulded designs are known today principally through two illustrated books which collect those asociated with the famous inkmakers Fang Yulu (Fangshi mopu, ca.1589) and Cheng Dayue (Chengshi moyuan, ca.1606). In the latter, which has a few leaves printed in color, we may be surprised by the inclusion of designs copied from European images, but there was now a Jesuit mission in Nanjing, and such images were even available at Beijing's principal temple market of antiques and crafts (**511**). If the books of ink cake designs were obviously luxury objects, so too were illustrated books in general in Huizhou (and in Nanjing and Hangzhou, where Huizhou families were also active in printing). Novels, plays and moralistic tracts all had the right to illustrations in varying numbers, and the names of designers and carvers alike were noted in the illustrations. Outside Huizhou, not only bamboo carvers but also potters and lacquerers drew heavily on the resulting fund of designs. A third essential component of Huizhou's material culture may be seen from the mansions of its leading clans, a number of which still survive. Their builders were highly inventive in exploring the possibilities of combination offered by two-storey and/or single storey buildings around a central or frontal courtyard (**510**). All the possibilities of decoration were exploited as well: painting on the

ceilings, carving in the exposed beams and upper storey balconies, lattice designs in the courtyard-facing windows at both levels, and painting or carved brickwork above the outside doorway. The rather baroque carving of the balconies is often reminiscent of furniture carving, condemned by Suzhou purists.

It is indicative of the changed times that in early seventeenth century Hangzhou a virtuoso career painter like Lan Ying (1585-1664 or later) should have chosen to specialize in the landscape genre, adopting at the same time the conventions of art historical art (**512**). His paintings were consistently in the style of one early master or another; however, by transforming these styles into externalized modes of formal construction and brush diplay, he gave the allusions a very different significance from the one they have in the self-referential art of a Shen Zhou or a Wen Zhengming. Lan Ying's mature style allies lucid, almost analytic structures with decorative color effects, a description that could equally well be applied to, for example, the archaistic bronzes of Hu Wenming, all the more so when they were used as flower vases.

Caught in the conjunction of the generalization of "scholar's taste" and the dismal decline of imperial fortunes, the kilns of Jingdezhen took a new direction after the death of the Wanli emperor in 1620. With the imperial requirement of technical perfection laid aside, potters were free to experiment, as indeed they had to do to ensure compensating markets. Ceramics took on an air of freedom and spontaneity, and there was a proliferation of new forms implying highly differentiated patterns of use. Equally striking is the displacement of the auspicious imagery of the sixteenth century in favor of genres of decoration derived from painting and book illustration (**514**). We now see informal flower and bird compositions, landscapes in recognizable painting styles of the time, images illustrating inscribed poems, and identifiable narrative scenes. Such objects, which were much cheaper than those mentioned earlier, imply an extension of "scholar's taste" downwards into the lower level of urban culture: restaurants, inns, and ordinary homes. Conversely, the sophistication of the new decoration probably also contributed to a loosening of taste at a higher level. The ceramics of the final decades of the Ming and the first decades of the Qing have only recently come to be appreciated in the West for their extraordinary inventiveness, not only in the range of decorative genres, but also in their innovative combinations of motifs, colors and patterns. Yet their historical importance is enormous. It is not too much to say that they made the later diversity of Qing ceramics possible, while outside China they were powerful catalysts for European, Middle Eastern, and Japanese potters.

Intellectual Stances. An entirely new configuration of intellectual stances emerged in the late Ming period. In the face of political disintegration, some sought in art the order that escaped them in political life. Others rejected abstract concerns in favor of a radical

commitment to naturalism. Yet others allowed an unprecedented authority to the imagination, introducing unprecedented distortions into pictorial representation.

One of the changes accompanying the decline of the hereditary Ming aristocracy in the mid-sixteenth century had been the rise of scholar-officials to new prominence. But as the state's internal problems accumulated, fierce factionalism developed, from which no clear direction emerged. It was perhaps their intense consciousness of their futile situation, as well as of the commercial possibilities available outside government, that led so many scholar-officials in this period to turn to calligraphy and painting. There they created a world of stark and clear moral choices. The most important of these calligrapher-painters was Dong Qichang (1555-1636), whose obsession with order in art and art history influenced the history of painting into the nineteenth century, and art historical writing into our own day. From the first, Dong rejected the painterly attempt to explore the texture of experience, preferring to focus on brush and ink, and the underlying ideographic structures of pictorial language (**516**). His painting represents, in fact, a self-conscious restoration of the values of Yuan literati painting, and it is clear that he took the monumentality and coherence of their work as a standard for his own. On the other hand, given the age of disorder in which he lived, and his post-Wen Zhengming historical position, it is understandable that the road to such monumentality and coherence passed through structural tensions. In his finest works, he wrests order from fragmentation, as he aspired vainly to do in his role as a government official.

Dong legitimized his practice as a painter by establishing a polemical art historical opposition of lineages on the model of Chan sects. This set a "Northern" tradition of painterly craft (the slow path to enlightenment) against a "Southern" tradition of calligraphic craft in painting (the path of sudden enlightenment) anticipating his own. The social prejudice implied in this unequal opposition between so-called "professionals" and "amateurs" subsequently passed into orthodox thinking, and came to obscure the ecumenical relationship between different craft traditions, and painters of different social origins, that existed in practice. Dong himself not only was commercially successful, but was closely associated with artists whom his own theoretical framework would place in the "Northern" camp. The fact that some of the latter acted as ghost painters for Dong has provided a convenient way of explaining away the association, but it is by no means certain that the relationship was purely hierarchical, even in such collaborations. Dong was deeply influenced by the art of his Songjiang contemporary, the career painter Zhao Zuo, and wrote admiring inscriptions for works by Dai Jin and Qiu Ying, for example, whom his theory implicitly criticized.

In the wake of Dong Qichang, calligrapher painters were widely active in the Songjiang area and at the two capitals. The most original of them was the central government

official Wang Duo (1592-1652), represented here by his calligraphy. Dong had pursued a classicizing path as a calligrapher, following the example of Mi Fu. Clearly separated columns, distinctions between script types, and consistent self-restraint are characteristic of his work. Wang Duo, on the other hand, was drawn to "wild cursive" script and would even slip characters of that type into calligraphies of other kinds (**518**). Following Zhu Yunming, he pushed calligraphy further in a pictorial direction, notably deconstructing ideograms in order to reconstitute them as new and unexpected patterns of energy.

The late Ming was equally a period of scientific curiosity and engagement with the material world. Even within Dong Qichang's immediate world, painters contributed to this new exploration of experience. The vivid immediacy achieved by Zhao Zuo (ca.1570-ca.1633) and Shen Shichong (active ca. 1602-ca.1641) in their landscape paintings partly derives from a complex play of light on surfaces. However, it also owes much to meandering and destabilized compositions which create an effect analogous to that of a hand-held camera. In Suzhou, Zhang Hong (1577-after 1652) continued Wen Boren's testing of representational conventions against optical experience. Unlike Wen Boren, however, he did not refer his experiments only to the inherited conventions of the painting tradition, but was just as likely to explore the conventions of Chinese or even European topographic depiction (**518-19**). Although the resulting naturalisms in his work are extraordinarily diverse, they tend to have in common an all-over focus which makes the viewing experience an inexhaustible journey of the eye. This trust in the capacity of the eye to register differentiation links Zhang Hong to the contemporary Gongan school of literary theorists, for whom authenticity lay in a radical receptivity to sensual experience. Elsewhere, particularly in Nanjing, painters came close to Gongan theory in a different way, using the same visual empiricism to create a modern version of the Southern Song genre of illustrations to Tang poems. Sheng Maoye (active ca.1594-ca.1640) is the best-known exponent of this approach, which focused attention on specific moments defined visually by their atmosphere, and made resonant by the poetic narrative and associations. Multiple short brushstrokes break up the surfaces, creating a viewing experience akin to a lingering gaze.

It is a measure of the transformation of Chinese thinking over the seven centuries from the Five Dynasties to the end of the Ming that order and experience were now entirely uncoupled, whereas in the work of the early landscape masters from Jing Hao to Guo Xi they had been fused in metaphoric visions of social and cosmic harmony. When Yuan literati artists created a new synthesis in the fourteenth century, they did so self-consciously, affirming as myth the harmony that had once been taken for granted. And when Shen Zhou and Dai Jin, in less troubled times, sought a synthesis again in the fifteenth century, it entailed a clear narrowing of scope from the national to the local landscape. In this long

process of change we can see the gradual loss of authority of the state's hierarchical order among intellectuals. By the early seventeenth century some, like Dong Qichang, were attempting to reassert that authority self-consciously while others like Zhang Hong sought a different, non-hierarchical order in empirical experience.

For many other artists, however, (and even for the same artists on another level), neither intellectualized order nor empirical experience provided an adequate framework for self-definition in painting. Instead, they made a radical commitment to the imagination, in the name of a concept, qi, which could mean "strange", "extraordinary", "original" or "exotic" according to context. To seize the significance of this alternative aesthetic world, one has to bear in mind that the concept of qi was to prove central to Chinese culture throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The willful distortions of Dong Qichang's Qingbian Mountains or Wang Duo's grass script characters, Zhao Zuo's heaving compositions, and Zhang Hong's surprising viewpoints -- all of them moments where the imagination comes strikingly into play -- fall equally within the compass of the late Ming aesthetic of qi. So, too, do Cheng Junfang's inkcake designs based on European engravings, which involved an imaginative leap of another kind, as did the lacquered furniture imported from Japan. Qi was an umbrella concept which integrated several "modern" notions: cosmopolitanism, the desire for novelty, as well as the willingness to treat imaginative experience as authentic.

While few artists could be entirely defined by their engagement with issues of qi, Wu Bin (active ca.1568-1626) explored it in more ways than most. Prior to around 1600, he appears to have acted as a court painter based in Nanjing, but perhaps only on an occasional and perhaps even commercial basis. Most of his paintings, however, postdate that period. His work draws on many different sources: ornamental rocks, prized for their strange forms and textures, such as those collected by his friend and patron Mi Wanzhong; Five Dynasties and Northern Song monumental landscapes and what passed for them among his collector acquaintances; the old, often anonymous religious paintings handed down in the Buddhist temples which he frequented; and the -- to the Chinese -- otherworldly visions of European engravings, which had found their way to China through the Jesuit missions that first arrived in Nanjing at the very end of the sixteenth century. In the undated Landscape with Palaces, a man stands at the mouth of a cave, at the foot of a flight of stairs (**521**). From a distance another man, hesitant, torn between advancing and leaving, watches him. Only we can see the extraordinary world that lies within the cave, and which is, on another level, simply the world of the imagination to which Wu Bin, himself unhesitant, has committed himself.

No less uncompromising is Chen Hongshou's (1598-1652) The Artist with His Nephew, painted in 1635 (**520**). Chen was a much younger man than Wu Bin, and would live on beyond the fall of the Ming. As a boy in Hangzhou, he had studied with Lan Ying, but

also had ambitions for an official career, ambitions that were never realized. Offered a position as court painter, he refused to countenance it. Chen addresses us from within the world of the imagination, and does not try to challenge and seduce us with its wonders; on the contrary, he exposes it to us like the physical evidence of a disease with which he is afflicted. The landscape behind him is a barren lake strewn with rocky islands; the trees in whose shadow he stands have welded together oppressively, and are watched mistrustfully by his nephew. Chen himself is an uncomfortable fusion of frontal and three-quarter views; his left eye, set lower than his right, creates a gaze of utter separation -- from his surroundings, from us. He inhabits some painful limbo of futility, momentarily suspended between the utter strangeness of his landscape, and the unattainable rationality of our gaze. The inscription, which speaks ostentatiously of the pursuit of pleasure, serves only to intensify our sense of his harsh self-awareness.

ART OF THE QING DYNASTY (1644-1911)

Jonathan Hay

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THE QING DYNASTY

The collapse of the Ming and the Manchu invasion in 1644 threw China into what came to be known as "the Great Chaos". In its wake, however, the claim of the Qing (Pure) dynasty of the Manchus withstood the test of decades of resistance. As China slowly recovered from the trauma of those events and came to terms with the new, alien dynasty, entrepreneurial society gradually recovered its late Ming momentum. Unlike their Ming predecessors, the first Manchu rulers proved to be excellent managers, and made a virtue of the association of state and commerce. State priorities began to shift, however, following the accession of the Qianlong emperor in 1736 who diverted cultural policy from an ideal of efficiency toward the pursuit of absolute ideological control. This entailed enormous expense, which sapped the resources both of the state and of traditional entrepreneurial society. Even at the height of the Qianlong reign, however, there existed a vast alternative world of cultural networks and microcultures which escaped state control and expressed vastly different values. In the early nineteenth century, the ports of international trade began to surpass in importance the traditional urban centers of the south-east, effectively creating a division between two worlds. Whereas most of the country still belonged to a hinterland culture tied to the state, there now came into being an alternative culture which declared its independence in favor of direct links with the outside world and an engagement with modernity.

SHUNZHI TO EARLY KANGXI (1644-1680)

The beginning of the Qing dynasty is now conventionally dated to 1644, when the Chongzhen emperor hanged himself on top of the hill which overlooked the northern gate of the palace. From the Manchu point of view, however, the dynasty had already begun in 1636, when Abahai changed the name of the Later Jin dynasty (the Manchus were descendants of the Jurchens) to "Great Qing". Nor did everyone at the time accept that the Ming dynasty had ended in 1644. While Manchu armies quickly went on to put most of China under Qing control, active resistance in the Ming name continued for almost twenty years. As late as the 1670s, the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories came close to bringing down the new dynasty. These first troubled decades of the Qing dynasty prior to 1680 have a distinct character. The country was plunged into economic depression, the court had not yet developed a distinctive

policy for the arts, and intellectual responses to the trauma of the Manchu conquest were at their strongest. Artistically, this period appears very much as the aftermath of the Ming.

The Qing took over the Ming palace complexes in Beijing and Nanjing, leaving them essentially unchanged at first, except in the names and functions of buildings. Their previous palace in Shenyang, the Qing capital from 1625 to 1644, had been modelled on the palaces that were now their own. A portrait of the Kangxi emperor from the 1670s belongs in a sense to the late Ming world (**522**): grasping a mother-of-pearl inlaid brush, as if to write one of the large character calligraphies for which he is known, he sits at an ornate lacquer table, its decoration incised and then filled in with gilding. Judging by later Kangxi documents, such objects may have found their way to the court on an ad hoc basis, sent in as tribute (though they were probably purchased, at least in part) by local government officials. In the case of ceramics, orders did go out to Jingdezhen from the beginning of the dynasty, but on a limited scale. As late as the early 1670s a distinct group of wares marked for use in the Hall of Central Harmony in the palace, employed the decorative vocabulary of late Ming ceramics drawn from painting and book illustration. In fact, pre-1680 ceramics are so close in character to those of the Tianqi and Chongzhen reigns that the sixty years from ca. 1620 to ca. 1680 are treated in Western literature on Chinese ceramics as a single "Transitional" period between two longer periods of strong state involvement.

There were a number of significant artists among the scholar-officials who served the Manchus at this early date, including Wang Duo who served as President of the Board of Rites. But one who found his artistic direction in these particular circumstances was Cheng Zhengkui (1604-76), a protegé of Dong Qichang. Cheng is best known today for a series of numbered landscape handscrolls, entitled "dream journeys", which eventually ran into the hundreds (**524-25**). He began the series in 1649, shortly after returning to government in Beijing under the Manchus, and continued with it after his retirement in 1657. According to one of his own inscriptions, he initially intended the scrolls for fellow southerners serving at the capital, which at this point was culturally rather barren. Visually they refer to the landscape of south China as formulated by the masters of Dong Qichang's "Southern" tradition. On one level they articulate an experience of exile, but on another they may be read metaphorically as a defense of the decision to collaborate. They speak of cultural continuity in the name of orthodoxy, their infinite permutations of structure bringing the world into a reasuringly stable order.

It was another protegé of Dong Qichang, however, who created a more viable pictorial language of cultural continuity. Wang Shimin (1592-1680) was a major landowner in the Taicang area of Jiangsu who, like his father and grandfather before him, had served in the Ming central government. After the fall of the Ming he avoided taking office again, and

together with his own protegé Wang Jian (1598-1677), from another prominent Taicang family, devoted himself to collecting and painting. The two men shared Cheng Zhengkui's commitment to formalist explorations of the "Southern" tradition, but were more rigorous in replacing illusion by stylistic allusion. They also specialized in hanging scrolls, a format which lent itself better than the handscroll to images of hierarchical order (**526**). Their paintings aspire to be apolitical, appealing to a concept of culture transcending dynastic boundaries. After 1680, however, when the Kangxi court came to align itself with Chinese cultural tradition, this style of painting was to become one of the principal expressions of that Qing policy.

Most reactions in painting to the Manchu conquest sought less to neutralize the trauma than to bear witness to it. For an artist like Chen Hongshou, for example, who had been and continued to be deeply involved with self-consciousness and luxury, there were strong feelings of guilt. In such post-Ming works as Sixteen Episodes from a Hermit's Life, the ironic self-presentation familiar from his earlier work has shifted in meaning (**524**). Our very knowledge of the intervening events has altered the significance of the irony, pushing it toward self-accusation. This is one of a series of paintings from the last few years of his life, in which Chen Hongshou catalogues the models and personae of the literati in his generation and world, as if to expose the emptiness of the ideal.

Another common reaction was to register the sense of loss which the fall of the Ming dynasty had thrust into the center of national consciousness. For this, painting offered several directions. In Hangzhou, Yun Shouping (1633-90) employed the language of flowers to evoke the lost glories of the Ming, in vividly sensual images that take their cue from Southern Song album leafs and fans, and the "boneless" flower studies of Chen Daofu. No painter would be more influential on eighteenth century flower painting, but the lingering Ming resonances were there forgotten. In Nanjing, Fan Qi (1616-ca.1695) created colorful landscape worlds pervaded by a strange, other-worldly tranquility for which the model was the hidden utopian land of the Peach-blossom Spring -- a subject which he and many others in this period loved to paint. Like the land of the Peach-blossom Spring, Fan Qi's landscapes in general represent a world irretrievable except in memory.

In the process of mourning for the fallen dynasty -- the national family -- the counterpart of loss was survival. The emblematic motifs of pine, bamboo, orchid and plum blossom had already been adapted to the specific circumstances of foreign conquest under the Yuan dynasty, and were widely revived in this period. Rather more specific to the early Qing was the landscape language of the wilderness. The wilderness, ye, in contra-distinction to the world of examinations and official service, chao, had long been the metaphoric environment of those in exile, withdrawal or retirement. Now, it came to evoke the

displacement of the yimin, the "left-over subject" or "remnant", who defined his identity in terms of the Ming, while living under the Qing. The Huizhou painter Hongren (1610-64), one of many such artists who took Buddhist orders, depicted the wilderness through the cold sensuality of Ni Zan's ascetic style, which had originally been popular in Huizhou as a sign of literati sophistication but now was evocative of an earlier period of foreign occupation (**527**). On this austere basis he turned the mountains and pines of nearby Mt. Huang into emblems of national identity, defining a barren but protective world of refuge. The Huizhou area harbored many loyalists, from whom came a whole school of wilderness painting of which Hongren was the leading light.

Another rallying point for yimin painters was Nanjing, site of the former Ming palace and the tomb of the Ming founder. Among the numerous painters who found a home in and around the temples of its southern suburbs was the monk Kuncan (1612-ca.74), a close friend of Cheng Zhengkui who lived at Bao'en Temple in the shadow of Yongle's "Porcelain Pagoda". A devoted and learned Buddhist (unlike Hongren), Kuncan created some of the most distinctive and powerful images of the wilderness to emerge from this Nanjing world. As it happens, a number of these depict Mt. Huang, which he visited in 1659-60 (**528**). The contrast between these tangled, vibrant landscapes and Hongren's lucid emblems could not be greater. What seems at first sight to be a monumental mountainscape turns out to be devoid of monumentality. Meandering paths divest the mountain image of hierarchical power, while slightly oversize trees and figures deny it its proper scale: the mountain, traditional symbol of the Emperor and the state, is here recuperated for a private community of survivors in the wilderness. In the 1670s, a second Nanjing painter, Gong Xian (1619-89), created frankly disturbing images of social and psychological dislocation (**530**). His dark landscapes promise a coherence which becomes more and more doubtful as one looks. Paths which should lead from and to a given point do not; seemingly straightforward compositions turn out to impose different and contradictory viewpoints. The sky -- Heaven, in Chinese -- is never shown, and the only human presence is hinted at by the sometimes face-like structures of the seemingly empty houses.

MID- KANGXI TO YONGZHENG (1680-1735)

Reconstruction and Prosperity. After the final suppression of the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories in 1681, the new dynasty could no longer be denied, and in the course of the 1680s the court took the initiative. It was now, with the Kangxi emperor firmly in control of government, that a coherent policy on court art was developed. Unlike the early Ming rulers, the Kangxi and Yongzheng emperors did not seek to restrict the circulation of

symbols and establish a ritual language. If the Manchu conquest was now a fact for the Chinese, China's entrepreneurial society was no less a fact for the Manchus. Faced with an overwhelming diversity of commodities, and needing the prosperity that this implied, they largely left the question of symbolism aside and concentrated their attention instead on technology and production. In art as in other domains, it was by their managerial efficiency that they legitimized their place as rulers. In this early Qing world, political goals could be achieved through, and not despite, the engagement with materialism and pleasure.

Characteristically, the Qing emperors devoted little energy to purely ritual architecture, other than to repair and maintain the buildings of the Polar Forbidden City with typical efficiency, and to build tombs on the Ming model. They did, however, pay a great deal of attention to gardens and summer palaces. To the west of the Forbidden City, Kangxi began the remodelling and expansion of the Western Park, which was built around a lake and divided into Northern, Central and Southern Seas. To the north-west of the city, meanwhile, some twelve miles from the Forbidden City, he set aside a vast terrain for new summer palaces. His own building activities centered on the construction of the Garden of Glorious Spring; however, the much smaller Garden of Perfect Brightness intended for his son, the future Yongzheng emperor, eventually proved more important. Strikingly, Kangxi on occasion held audiences there in a pavilion, the Peony Terrace, which as its name implies gave on to a court filled with peonies. After his accession to the throne, Yongzheng expanded the garden enormously and used it not only for pleasure, but as the seat of government during the summer months. Much further from Beijing and closer to the Manchu homeland, in Jehol, Kangxi constructed an imperial hunting park with the name of the Park of Ten Thousand Trees. Adapted to the life of the steppes, it served both as a pleasurable location for diplomatic relations with other Inner Asian groups, and as a bulwark against the sinicization of the Manchu aristocracy. Adjoining the park, however, he also began the construction in 1703 of a garden estate in southern Chinese style (**530**). In all these enterprises, Kangxi drew upon the expertise of the Lei family of architects, pioneers of the scale model, who assured a continuity in palace architecture into the nineteenth century.

The merger of politics and pleasure that characterized the palace macrocosm was no less typical of the microcosm of the object. In 1680, Kangxi dispatched a central government official from the Board of Works to re-establish state control over ceramic production at Jingdezhen and organize production for the court. No imperial kilns were set up: instead, a practice of the late Ming was regularized whereby official wares for court use were fired for the government by private kilns. The official wares from the imperial factory were given the best place in the kilns, whose owners had to stand any losses. Yet the system was also advantageous to the kiln owners, since it gave them access to the new shapes, decorative

designs and technology that were demanded by the court, and which in this way passed quickly into more general circulation.

We are fortunate in possessing an eye-witness description of Jingdezhen workshop practice in the year 1712 by a French Jesuit missionary, Father d'Entrecolles. He describes in minute detail the extraordinary division of labor that made efficiency and precision possible without a multitude of master artisans. The most complex pieces, he reports, might go through the hands of up to seventy workmen. From our modern vantage-point, Father d'Entrecolles' account reveals that the Chinese ceramic industry was now industrialized, indeed in the forefront of world industrial development. But the priest himself, knowing only the pre-industrial practices of contemporary Europe, saw the lack of master artisans as the expression of an inferior culture. In fact, modern assessments of Jingdezhen products of this period have often applied similarly inappropriate criteria. It is a commonplace that Qing ceramics, said to be standardized, mechanical and lifeless, represent an aesthetic decline. However, the point of reference for this judgment is the pre-industrial ceramics of the Ming period and earlier, whose decoration tended to come from a single, highly accomplished hand. Judged as the industrial objects they are, ceramics of the period ca. 1680-1740 appear in a different light: it is the high standards of quality in a context of mass production that is striking.

These remarks apply not only to highly decorated wares but also to the color glazed porcelains of the same period (**532**). Color glazes place a premium on the technological control of materials and process that makes a specific color possible. Under the Ming, this had led to a strictly limited range of colors, and eventually, as economic control slipped away from the court, to a relative disinterest in color glazes. Under Kangxi, however, not only were they revived, but the range was vastly expanded and in the early eighteenth century came to include a vast number of polychrome effects created by controlled accident. These stand as superb demonstrations of the technological superiority of early Qing ceramics over early Ming porcelains and Song stonewares. But from the names of the various effects one can see that they were also highly evocative: moonlight, robin's egg, sacrificial red, tea-dust, snakeskin green, eelskin yellow. Color glazes direct attention to the form of the object, and the innovations of shape in these wares reveal changes of thinking and custom. The proportion of flower vases, for example, is extremely high and seems to reflect a particular predilection of the Manchu aristocracy. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the preferred forms of flower vase had tended to be archaistic, based, whatever their medium, on archaic bronzes. They thus remained within the boundaries of "scholar's taste", gaining much of their interest from the historical resonances of the form. By contrast, the shapes of the color-glazed vases that became popular at the end of the seventeenth century can often be

traced to Buddhist metalwork when they are not purely modern innovations. They imply a conception of decoration and contemplation free of literati baggage.

Even further removed from Chinese tradition were the "extraordinary objects", qiqi, in an Europeanizing style which were one of the main products of the workshops in the palace. After 1680 Kangxi vastly expanded the operations of the workshop organization [Zaobanchu], each workshop [zuo] specializing in a different technique: enamels, lacqering, jade-carving, glass-making, etc. During the Yongzheng reign, the Emperor's brother, Prince Yi, managed both the Zaobanchu in the Forbidden City and a second one established at the Garden of Perfect Brightness. Of the two emperors, Kangxi was the one most deeply fascinated by Western technology and ideas, and it was under his impetus that technically and artistically skilled missionaries and secular artisans were brought into the palace workshops. Through the Jesuit missions, moreover, Kangxi received many European objects as diplomatic gifts. Kangxi appears to have seen the workshops as a means of demonstrating symbolically his dynasty's technological superiority, not only in relation to earlier Chinese dynasties, but also in relation to the rest of the contemporary world. He used their products as political gifts in both domestic and diplomatic contexts. The desire to match wits with Europe, as much as the presence of European artisans, may explain the initial development of a Europeanizing or sino-European style. Enamelling seems to have played a key role, perhaps because it could be used on objects of different materials: metals, glass and porcelain (**532**). The enamel workshops may also have benefited from the fact that the outstanding missionary artist, Giuseppe Castiglione, worked there in both the Kangxi and Yongzheng periods. In time, the sino-European style became an important court fashion, perhaps attractive to the Manchus for its very difference from Chinese taste.

As might be expected in such a culturally active period, an enormous number of painters were active at court, though there was not yet a formal painting academy. An early breakthrough came in 1690, with the arrival in the capital of the other two of the "Four Wangs", Wang Yuanqi (1642-1715) and Wang Hui (1632-1717). Wang Hui was a career painter of extraordinary talent, who pursued a life-long project of a "great synthesis" of what might crudely be called the Song illusionistic and Yuan expressionistic traditions. His encyclopaedic mastery of traditional pictorial craft, which owed much to his access to the collections of Wang Shimin and others, was perfectly in tune with Kangxi's technical bent. He had been invited to Beijing to take charge of the project of documenting the Emperor's triumphant southern tour of inspection in 1689, an event which consecrated Kangxi's success (**534-35**). The success of this painting commission -- twelve huge handscrolls on silk, completed over a period of seven years, by a team of several painters -- in turn consecrated Wang Hui in the eyes of official culture as China's greatest painter. Wang Yuanqi came to

the capital in very different circumstances. The grandson and protegé of Wang Shimin, he was also a high official. After 1690, he spent the next twenty-five years in Beijing as the part-time advisor in painting to Kangxi, and it was through his influence that the pictorial language of cultural continuity came to take its place as the literati expression of Qing dynasty orthodoxy. His own version of that abstract and intellectualized style was deeply subtle: his landscapes are flexible structures which incorporate disjunctions without ever risking instability (**535**). Given Wang Yuanqi's political career and his close ties to the Emperor -- many of his works were painted in the imperial gardens -- one is justified in noting the analogy his landscapes offer to Kangxi's cultural policy.

Father d'Entrecolles, writing of porcelain decoration at Jingdezhen, was able to say: "All the skill of these painters and in general for all of the Chinese painters, is not founded on any principle, and only consists in a certain routine helped by a limited turn of imagination. They don't know any of the beautiful rules of this art". In fact, as we have seen, Chinese painters had been aware of those "beautiful rules" since the end of the sixteenth century, and had used them selectively throughout the seventeenth. In the special circumstances of the Kangxi and Yongzheng courts, however, it was possible for painters to learn directly from missionary-artists, as was the case for two Shandong artists, Jiao Bingzhen (active ca.1680-1720) and his follower Leng Mei (active ca.1677-1742 or later). Characteristic of their exploitation of perspective drawing within a Chinese framework, and of a whole class of expressly political paintings, are Jiao's "Illustrations of Agriculture and Weaving", later reworked by Leng Mei and by countless other artists at a lower level. The original 1696 illustrations by Jiao Bingzhen became the basis not only for the 1712 color-printed version reproduced here (**536**), but also for decoration on ink-cakes, jade table screens and even porcelain. In Confucian ideology, (male) agriculture and (female) weaving were the symbolic basis of the state, and did indeed in their contemporary forms receive intense attention from Kangxi. As a pictorial project, such paintings clearly allude to the propagandistic paintings of dynastic revival sponsored by the Emperor Gaozong at the beginning of the Southern Song. But it is entirely characteristic of Kangxi's patronage that they have been brought up to date by a technological innovation.

The missionary-artists, meanwhile, hoping as always to find favor and influence with China's rulers, developed their own version of a Sino-European style,. The man responsible was Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766), known in China as Lang Shining, who had joined the Society of Jesus as a fully-trained painter, and had come to China in that same capacity in 1715. Although he was initially employed in the palace as an enameller, Castiglione (perhaps following the lead of prior missionary artists such as Giovanni Gherardini who left China in 1704) must have already been adapting his painting to Chinese taste under Kangxi. His first

paintings for the Yongzheng Emperor in 1723 display a fully achieved synthesis of methods (**538**). Unlike Jiao Bingzhen and Leng Mei, he gave his paintings a rigorous perspectival armature: during the 1720s he collaborated on the translation of Andrea Pozzo's Perspective Pictorum et Architectorum, printed in successive editions in 1729 and 1735. He also created an intense luminosity, using observed light effects. At the same time he found ways of avoiding the weightiness of oil painting, by using a modified version of Chinese pigments, for example, and by adopting plain or landscape backgrounds in a concession to Chinese practice.

Outside the court, the major center of consumption was the city of Yangzhou, dominated by Huizhou families active in the exploitation of the nearby salt fields. These families had been dominant in Yangzhou since the early seventeenth century, when they had gained control of the management of the salt monopoly. Even before their recovery from the economic depression of the first forty years of the Qing, they took the lead in the reconstruction of the city, largely destroyed by Manchu armies at the fall of the Ming. From the 1690s to the 1720s, they transformed Yangzhou through philanthrophic and private building into a city of mansions, gardens, temples and parks, an essential stop for any tourist of the day. We can glimpse something of the glories of early eighteenth century Yangzhou, the second city of the empire, through the elaborate pictorial fantasies of the Yuan family workshop, suppliers of decorative screens and hanging scrolls to the Yangzhou commercial elite, and portraitists of their newly-built gardens.

Unlike the Huizhou mansions with their tight structures of interlocking spaces around a small courtyard, Yangzhou mansions of this period were a more standard mixture of one and two storey buildings in Jiangnan style which opened on to large gardens. The walls were whitewashed, and the darker pillars and lattice work completed the highly decorative effect. The gardens soon rivalled those of Suzhou; but whereas Suzhou gardens were best known for their individual rocks, often from nearby Lake Tai, the gardens of Yangzhou were celebrated for their garden mountains, artfully constructed from innumerable small rocks. The materials were brought back from the interior by the boats used to export Yangzhou's salt. In the paintings of Yuan Jiang (active ca. 1680s-?1730s) and Yuan Yao (active ca. ?1690s-?1740s), virtuoso decorative brushwork elides the traces of construction to create organic, wave-like forms (**539**). Often, too, the microcosmic garden mountains are transformed in the painting into a full mountainscape, a representational move that privileges the imaginative idea underlying the garden over its outer appearance, hemmed in by walls and city streets. This is characteristic of both Ming and Qing paintings of urban experience which, with certain documentary exceptions, tend to privilege private spaces over public ones, and psychological experience over accurate visual record. Inside Yangzhou's mansions, such large-scale

decorative screens were joined by other local products: Zhou-style lacquered furniture, inlaid with hardstones and other materials; mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquer objects for the table in the style of the late Ming artisan, Jiang Qianli; and the enamels of Wang Shixiong, known in Beijing as "the king of enamels". Yangzhou can stand here for the renewal of late Ming traditions of luxury craftsmanship, which was in fact general throughout the south-east.

If Yangzhou was now the great city of traditional entrepreneurial culture in the south-east, in faraway Guangdong province the city of Guangzhou (Canton) was already rising to prominence on a quite different foundation. In 1684, the ban on overseas trading was lifted, and Guangzhou quickly established itself as Europe's main doorway to China. This allowed it to control the market of luxury commodities in both directions, and additionally to make its own versions of the new objects that were arriving. In trade with the Europeans, Guangzhou merchants procured what they could locally, but otherwise acted as middlemen, most importantly in relation to the porcelain produced at Jingdezhen. It was through them that the Jingdezhen kilns became familiar with the new shapes that were in demand from around 1700. The time when Chinese ceramics of traditional form were recuperated for European exoticism by incorporation into vast decorative set-pieces was drawing to an end. Instead, specific shapes and sets of shapes were wanted for mantelpieces, fireplaces (in summer), and furniture (**540**). European consumers were also becoming demanding as regards decorative patterns, for which they sent engravings, book illustrations, European ceramics, or working drawings, adding a new chapter to China's long familiarity with "those beautiful rules". The circle was closed by Chinese complicity in the European fashion for Chinoiserie, which can already be seen under Kangxi and Yongzheng in ivory fans, and lacquered objects in the Japanese style of gold lacquer on a black ground, both of these Guangdong specialties.

In a purely local perspective, European style was easily integrated into the traditional Guangdong taste for intricate designs, openwork, and bright colors. Thus, at the same time that a Sino-European taste was developing at the Qing court with a twin emphasis on techonological innovations and rococo style, a parallel development was taking place in Guangzhou. Indeed, the court fed off the southern port, which not only sent in models as purchased "tribute", but provided them with artisans who were influential in the palace workshops for enamels, glass, clocks, ivory, lacquer and furniture among others. From the late seventeenth century onwards, the sino-European style linking port and court became the Chinese equivalent of Chinoiserie -- Euroiserie, one might say (**542**). These contemporary developments at either end of the globe, each a distorting mirror to the other, remind us that the world was rapidly becoming smaller and more unified.

The Memory of Disaster. In 1679, with the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories already clearly doomed, Kangxi held a special examination directed at worthies in the

"wilderness", to be nominated by local oficials. The Emperor's first southern tour of inspection followed in 1684; when he reached Nanjing he was careful to make sacrifices at the tomb of the first Ming emperor. By the time he made his second and more elaborate southern tour in 1689, he had demonstrated his conciliatory attitude toward yimin Chinese intellectuals in numerous ways, and the relatively enthusiastic reception he received from the urban population only marginalized the loyalists further. It is understandable, therefore, that "wilderness" painting gradually softened through the 1680s and 1690s as the painters found a place for themselves on the margins of normal life. The art that they created in these finally peaceful circumstances, until the last of them died in the 1700s, constitutes one of the outstanding achievements of the history of Chinese painting. Together with their predecessors of the pre-1680 period such as Hongren and Kuncan, they were a diverse group, encompassing a wide range of political positions, personalities and stylistic approaches. Western art historians have given such yimin artists the name of Individualists, but in early Qing terms they were "extraordinary gentlemen", qishi -- a very different conception of the extraordinary from the one that held in Kangxi's court.

Here, three painters will have to stand for many. Gong Xian is one such painter who, as we have seen, had already achieved a fully-developed style in the 1670s. Having come to painting through a displaced need for political expression, it was only much later that he gradually confronted the complex heritage of the tradition. Part of the context for this was publication in 1679 of The Mustardseed Garden Manual of Painting, designed by another Nanjing painter, Wang Gai, which was the most ambitious and systematic painting manual ever produced (it would be expanded with two more volumes in the 1700s (**545**). The result of Gong Xian's engagement with the tradition, worked out not only in paintings but in voluminous theoretical writings, was an extraordinary synthesis in this age of syntheses. The physical character of Chinese painting, always a matter of doing as much as making, made the brushstroke highly self-referential, in contrast to illusion, by its nature tied to the world. It was therefore through the fundamental relationship between the material presence of ink (and color) on paper or silk and the illusionistic presence of, say, a landscape, that painters had always reconciled the subjective and objective poles of experience. Northern Song and Yuan painting represented two ideal forms of balance between the two, and under the Ming there was an attempt to recover such a balance in the generation of Dai Jin and Shen Zhou. After the fifteenth century, however, few painters even made the attempt. One tendency was to subjectivize painting by exploiting illusion as an expressive structure, as in Wen Zhengming and Dong Qichang: Gong Xian's own early work was built on this basis. The other tendency, found among career painters, was to objectivize the act of painting. This was done either by turning brushwork into performance as we have seen in the work of Wu Wei and Lan Ying,

or by subordinating it to the needs of illusion, as Qiu Ying or Zhang Hong did in their different ways. Gong Xian's ambition and achievement in his late work was to reconcile these two tendencies on a basis of equality. In 1689, the year of Kangxi's second visit to the Ming tombs in Nanjing and his own death, Gong looked back to the origins of the landscape tradition to paint a mountainscape in the manner of tenth century masters (**544**). In line with this reference, it has the monumentality and scale of a national landscape. At the same time, there are reasons to think that it specifically represents the tomb of Zhu Yuanzhang, nestled in a grove of pines on Zhongshan; in its shadow, a house of three bare rooms surely refers to Gong Xian himself. Paradoxically, only the fall of the Ming dynasty made possible a vision of its greatness through the filter of loss; only the Manchu conquest made possible a grand synthesis of traditions in the Ming name.

It was during the early 1680s that the Jiangxi painter, Bada shanren (1626-1705), left the Chan church in which he had spent the last thirty years as a priest, and established himself as a painter in his native Nanchang. Although he cloaked his life in such secrecy that we still cannot be sure of his real name, we do know that Bada shanren was a descendant of the Yiyang Ming princes, enfeoffed in Nanchang. The concealment of his identity sprang from real danger, and it found an aesthetic counterpart in a hermetic iconography which has only recently come to be understood, partially, as a language of private mistrust of, and resistance to, the Manchus (**546**). The structures of his paintings are no less difficult of access. The ambiguities and disjunctions that characterize them surely draw on Chan attitudes to language, but more deeply, perhaps, they reflect his bitter personal experience of the impossibility of normal communication after the fall of the Ming. In this sense, the strangeness of his paintings bears witness in art to the lost value of ordinary language as the guarantee of community, just as the madness and dumbness he sometimes feigned bore witness to it in life. It was their personal embodiment of the memory of disaster that accounted for the high status that such "extraordinary gentlemen" enjoyed at a time of national reconstruction.

If Bada shanren resisted reintegration into normal life, a second great Ming prince-painter, Shitao (1642-1707), was more ambivalent. He was a descendant of the Jinjiang princes enfeoffed in the southern province of Guangxi. Orphaned in the chaos of Ming resistance to the Qing, he spent the first fifty years of his life in the Chan Buddhist church, as the follower of a loyalist monk who had been willing to accept imperial appointment under the Shunzhi emperor, himself a devout Buddhist. In 1689, Shitao sought and received a brief audience with Kangxi during the latter's Southern Tour, but was disappointed in his ambition to echo his teacher's success at court. This marked a turning point in his life. Within a few years he had left the Buddhist church, and he spent the years from 1697 to his death in 1707

as a painter in Yangzhou, where his major patrons were drawn from the Huizhou merchant families. At the end of his life, he became increasingly open about his princely identity as Zhu Ruoji, and settled into the role of a living symbol of the Ming.

As a monk-painter, Shitao took advantage of both the late Ming respect for imaginative experience and the post-Ming tolerance of extreme self-expression to exploit his own gifts as a protean image-maker. Out of this process came the most diverse experiments of any early Qing artist, and such memorable images as those in the Album for Daoist Yu, ca. 1686-87, where the forms are generated organically in a process of such intensity that we seem to recover some primordial level of experience. After his reintegration into Yangzhou society as a professional painter, however, Shitao took market competition as a challenge to his own powers as a painter. Like Gong Xian and even Bada shanren in his last years, he came to terms with the normality of Qing society partly through a reconciliation with the continuity of the painting tradition. In his homage to Guo Xi, The Waterfall at Mt. Lu, he explores effects of light and substance that he could not have achieved even a few years earlier (**546**). The mountain structure manages to be at once monumental and contained within the compass of, if not the vision then at least the awareness, of the single gazing figure representing Shitao himself. This ambitious reconciliation between a sovereign self and the world found its theoretical form in an extraordinary treatise on the practice of painting, the Huayu lu, one of the few systematic treatises on painting ever written in China.

QIANLONG TO JIAQING (1736-1820)

Prosperity and Its Limits. The accession of Qianlong brought to the throne a ruler whose cultural priorities diverged increasingly from those of his two predecessors. Whereas Kangxi and Yongzheng had used the visual arts to demonstrate their efficiency, Qianlong saw them as a means of demonstrating the exhaustive, all-embracing nature of imperial power. He outdid his predecessors through new standards of technical complexity and through the transformation of the palace workshops into an industrial-scale operation. At the same time, court art had to demonstrate the absolute reality of the Emperor's numerous personae, no matter how implausible they might be or how contradictory.

Typical of Qianlong's approach were the successive changes made to the area of the summer palaces, some ten kilometers to the north-west of Beijing. The Garden of Perfect Brightness, Yuanming yuan, reached the highpoint of its importance during his reign (**548**). In a first stage, during the later 1730s and 1740s, Qianlong vastly enlarged Yongzheng's still modest garden, following the original style. Then, in 1747, inspired by a European representation of a water fountain, he commanded from the Jesuit missionaries at his court a

set of sino-European palace buildings with accompanying gardens. This group of buildings, oriented north-south, was completed in 1751. In the same year, Qianlong made his first southern tour of inspection in emulation of Kangxi, during which he was housed in splendid mansions in the great cities of the south. Deeply marked by the experience, which he was to repeat several times, he initiated in 1751 a new garden to the south-east of the Yuanming yuan, in which copies of famous gardens of the south were constructed. This, the Garden of Everlasting Spring, replaced the Yuanming yuan as Qianlong's summer seat of government. At the same time, the success of the first buildings in European style led to the addition of a more ambitious extension to the east, built during the years from 1756 to 1759. Finally, probably in 1768, after the Jesuits made a gift of six Beauvais tapestries based on designs by Boucher, a last sino-European building was added to house them (**548**). (The entire complex, in fact, served to house Qianlong's European and sino-European objects). The Observatory of the Distant Waters stood behind the Great Fountain that marked the center of the east-west extension, and which Qianlong contemplated from his rococo throne. The European Palaces, as the complex was known, also had their Chinese elements, such as the red of the plaster-coated walls, the white marble used for such elements as stairways, and the bright colors of the glazed tile rooves. They were a theatrical affair, an illusionistic exercise in which illusion itself provided one of the pleasures: on its eastern side, the Hill of Perspective offered a view over a lake toward a part architectural, part mural painted vision of a country town, the Perspective Painting East of the Lake.

The result of all these expansions was that the European Palaces integrated the Yuanming yuan with Kangxi's original Garden of Glorious Spring to the east. The latter garden now adjoined the Garden of Everlasting Spring to the south, which itself stretched almost as far to the south-west as another summer retreat built by Kangxi; this in turn came very close on its western side to the place where Qianlong had excavated a lake to create Clear Ripple Garden. The European-style buildings in the Yuanming yuan were therefore only one part of the larger project of a vast complex of summer palaces near the capital.

Following Yongzheng precedent, Qianlong split his time between the Forbidden City and the summer palaces, in his case leaving Beijing in the third month and returning in the eighth. Consequently, the Palace Workshops continued to maintain operations in both places as they had during the previous reign. This was also the case for the Painting Academy, which came into being under Qianlong on the basis of Prince Yi's more informal organization of painters under Yongzheng. Finally, certain privileged bureaux/workshops existed in both the Forbidden City and the Yuanming yuan where painters and outstanding artisans could be found together, and which were easily accessible to the Emperor. These

latter workshops were one of the main ways in which Qianlong's personal taste was disseminated throughout the workshops and studios of the palace organization.

The sheer scale of palace operations in decorative arts and painting is astonishing. To some degree, it is explained by the construction of new palace buildings. To the building activity already mentioned, one has to add: the transformation of the summer retreat at Jehol into the largest of all the imperial gardens (including a dozen temples in Lamaist style, one of which is a replica on a smaller scale of the Potala palace in Lhasa); the many new gardens within the Western Park next to the Forbidden City; and new buildings in the Forbidden City itself. This was furthermore a period of lavish political gifts. However, commands did not necessarily respond to a functional need. Conforming instead to a special form of conspicuous consumption and display of power, the possibilities offered by the workshops existed in order to be exploited, even if only on a whim. Qianlong's requirements, moreover, outstripped the resources of even his expanded palace workshops, so that specific projects had to be delegated in whole or in part to private contractors in the south. One, admittedly special, example of this was the carving of "jade mountains" from the enormous quarried boulders that became available following the successful Xinjiang campaigns of the later 1750s. This was undertaken for the court by workshops in Yangzhou.

In these new circumstances, criteria of quality necessarily changed. In decorative arts, for example, the Qing palace workshops had originally been an enclave of the highest possible workmanship in the late Ming sense of a master artisan's handiwork. But the onset of mass production under Qianlong displaced attention from the traces of an individual mind to the decorative system that the object embodied. Creative innovation gave way to a systematic exploitation of all the possibilities of combination and substitution (**550**). The results may frequently be incongruous, even absurd or grotesque, but they are in their own terms perfectly logical. On this level, the decorative arts of the palace workshops and the architectural program of the summer palaces may be seen as microcosmic and macrocosmic expressions of the same totalizing phenomenon. A further example is the innumerable portraits of Qianlong, where he was as liable to appear in the guise of Guanyin bodhisattva as in the role of a European monarch, a mounted Manchu general, a scholar in his garden, or a Tibetan living Buddha (**552**). In the imperial cosmology of the Qianlong reign -- the Emperor as universal ruler -- each manifestation of imperial presence and control was equally valid, valuable and real.

It was no less essential to present each of these realities as unblemished and absolute. The pictorial technology of European realism was particularly useful in this regard, providing as it did an almost documentary proof. It reached its highest level at the Chinese court in the work of Castiglione, whose architectural skills are in evidence in the European Palaces, as

are those of his Jesuit followers, Brother Jean Denis Attiret (1702-68) and Father Ignaz Sichelbarth (1708-80). In 1765, for example, Qianlong turned to Castiglione and his colleagues for the first instalment of a series of sixteen compositions recording the victories of the Manchu armies in Xinjiang between 1755 and 1759. He then commissioned copperplate engravings of the series from France, through the successive intermediaries of Guangzhou merchants and the Compagnie française des Indes (**554-55**). The project was eventually undertaken under French royal auspices by Cochin, with superb results. Other representational rhetorics, however, could be equally convincing. Tibetan Lamaist art, long familiar to the peoples of the steppes, was revived in this period as the expression of imperially sponsored Buddhism, both for diplomatic reasons and as a conscious echo of Yuan and early Ming practice. Its rigorous iconometrics were no less absolute and precise than the "beautiful rules" of European painting. When the same requirements were made of the Chinese pictorial tradition, on the other hand, the results were deeply destructive. To suppress the traces of an individual mind in the pictorial craft was to negate the very purpose of painting. The results, as seen in the art of Ding Guanpeng or any number of artists in the Academy, are eerily reflective of their world -- a reality without real foundation.

While the court art machine continued to function into the first two decades of the nineteenth century, it was already visibly slowing down as early as the 1770s. After around 1775, Qianlong initiated relatively few construction projects, and he also seems to have lost interest in the Painting Academy. It was only the production of decorative arts that continued to hold his attention after that date. Following Qianlong's death in 1799, Jiaqing initiated a policy of austerity without compensating innovations, and his reign saw court art become more stereotyped and routine.

Cultural Networks and Microcultures. Despite the universalist ambitions of the Qianlong court, eighteenth century China was a tapestry of diverse cultures which escaped court control. One of the richest of these was to be found in Yangzhou. The welcome offered to Qianlong during his southern tours by the Huizhou salt merchants of Yangzhou, his major commercial partners in the south-east, far outstripped in luxury the already lavish arrangements for Kangxi. The vast pageant of the imperial entourage was matched by the temporary transformation of the city into a vast pleasure site, appropriate to the rituals of pleasure-viewing and gift-giving in both directions. Indeed, it was through their respective displays of wealth through luxury that the merchants and the court symbolically played out their commercial rivalry. The Yangzhou merchant elite continued to redevelop their city. It was during the Qianlong period (1765) that the semi-public park in the north-western suburbs around the "Slender West Lake" reached its full complement of twenty-four "views". It is

hard to know whether Yangzhou was copying the summer palaces of the court, or vice versa; more likely, the two developments fed off each other.

The large decorative paintings for which Yangzhou became known in this period point to a highly sophisticated public, far removed from the traditional caricature of salt merchants as vulgar nouveaux-riches. The pictorial representations of prosperity tended to be indirect: for example, the bird and animal compositions of the versatile painter Hua Yan (1682-1756). With subtle brushwork and inventive compositions, he created a world of constant movement and energy which surely struck a responsive chord in the dynamic commercial world of Yangzhou (**556**). Like many of his contemporaries, Hua saturated his paintings with light, an innovation so general in this period that one must wonder if it is not linked to the increased presence of European paintings and engravings after 1700. Certainly, Yangzhou painters would have been aware of developments at court. Hua Yan sought his fortune in Beijing as a young man, and the local painter Li Shan (1686-1756 or later) served in the Imperial Study as secretary and painter during the final years of the Kangxi reign. In the Yongzheng period he returned to Yangzhou where he joined the circle of the then salt commissioner, Lü Jianzeng, and turned to calligraphy and painting to earn a living. In the early Qianlong reign he served for a few years as a provincial official, before establishing himself definitively as a professional painter in Yangzhou in the early 1740s. Li took a common style of decorative painting on silk, which combined freely painted ink rocks and trees with brightly colored flowers and birds, and completely changed its character. In place of rich and expensive silk he used paper, and employed deliberately rough brushwork to set off the almost gaudy color, giving the motifs, what is more, almost caricatural form (**558**). The result was as shocking as the original style had been innocuous. It demanded of the viewer an ability to recognize the style that had been rejected, and a willingness to accept a concept of prosperity rather than a literal representation: it implied, in other words, a degree of detachment from the materialism of Yangzhou life. The inscriptions to certain works, moreover, suggest a conscious parody of the immaculate visions of court painting. Hua Yan, too, was not averse to satire: many of his works depict a merciless struggle for survival within a gorgeous garden world.

Hua Yan and Li Shan belonged to a larger group of painters active in Yangzhou at mid-century whose works associated commercial appeal and disabused commentary, and who were later dubbed the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou. Their presence in the city was one result of the economic hardship faced by intellectuals in this period; others are vividly described in Wu Jingzi's satirical Unofficial History of the Scholars, written ca. 1740-50 but not published until 1768. Their numbers had increased rapidly in line with the rest of the population, while opportunities to serve in administration remained hard to find and hard to

keep. The fact that such unorthodox and dissenting artists, some of them former officials, were supported directly by merchant patrons further attests to the sophistication of at least one segment of the Yangzhou merchant community.

In contrast to the "wilderness" painters of the late seventeenth century, they rarely appealed to a high-minded ideal or loyalty. Since state ideology vaunted the perfect success of the reign, to affirm the gap from mundane realities or simply to refuse to take the perfection seriously was already a political gesture. The canonical political theme of The Eight Steeds evoked the military and diplomatic power of the empire, and was a favorite subject of Castiglione at court. Yet as conceived by a third artist of the Yangzhou group, Jin Nong (1687-1763), the horses contort themselves into ridiculous positions which parody the unreal naturalism of the Italian's animals (**557**). What is more, they seem to be aware of what they are doing -- there is perhaps a reference here to the other symbolism of horses as loyal officials -- and obviously do not take themselves seriously. As it happens, Jin, who was not a trained painter, may not have painted this complex image himself. In what was itself a parody of contemporary workshop practice, he established a cottage industry of painting with the help of two or three students who could turn out paintings to his specifications, often in multiple versions, which he then signed as his own. Another group of paintings from Jin's "workshop" consists of reconstructions of antique paintings that he had once owned or seen, but were now in the hands of some rich or powerful person -- sometimes the Emperor is mentioned -- and so were inaccessible. The group constitutes an imaginary painting collection, the poor artist's answer to, and satire of, Qianlong's unprecedented concentration of early masterpieces.

The youngest of the Yangzhou artists, Luo Ping (1733-99), extended this dissenting tradition into the late eighteenth century, most of which he spent in Beijing. Luo was a graduate of Jin Nong's painting workshop; he was as versatile a painter as Jin was limited, one reason for thinking that he may be responsible for some paintings that bear Jin Nong's signature. A deeply religious man, he claimed to be able to see ghosts. A handscroll of sketches recording his observations was one of the most famous paintings of the time, attracting poems and other commentaries from leading intellectuals of the day over a period of forty years, most of them appended to the scroll itself. The handscroll version reproduced here was painted at the end of his life for an admirer of the original scroll (**560**). There were many reasons for the popularity of his ghost paintings: although the images had a precedent in the details of Buddhist Water and Land Assembly paintings, they were still astonishingly original; ghost stories were in fashion; and some saw in the images a veiled critique of the powerful. But their deepest appeal, along with other paintings by him of dreams and the vanished past, may have lain in Luo Ping's displacement of reality to a space outside

Qianlong's idealized cosmology, as Cao Xueqin (1715?-1763) had done too in his great novel of life in an aristocratic mansion, The Dream of the Red Chamber.

In Beijing, Luo Ping was most closely involved with scholar-officials serving in the Hanlin Academy. Publicly, these men were committed to implementing Qianlong's literary policy, which allowed not a breath of opposition to the Manchus, to the point of having books proscribed. Privately, however, they were deeply engaged in an alternative culture of empirical historical inquiry that sought to establish the reality of the distant cultural past on new, more secure foundations. On the safe ground of remote history, they were able to create an intellectual world from which ideology was banished by the cult of evidence. At the centre of this intellectual movement was jinshixue, the collection and study of ancient inscriptions, inscribed on archaic bronzes or engraved on stelae, which provided a body of archaeological evidence only partially exploited by earlier scholars. This provided the context for a renewal of calligraphy itself based on familiarity with these examples of ancient script types. In fact, jinshixue had already had an effect on calligraphy and the related art of seal-carving as early as the late seventeenth century. Both Bada shanren and Shitao experimented widely in the 1690s and 1700s; more important, however, was the Nanjing calligrapher Zheng Fu (1622-93). Zheng's style of clerical script based on Eastern Han rubbings influenced Shitao, and later Gao Fenghan (1683-1748) and Zheng Xie (1693-1765) in Yangzhou. Jin Nong, meanwhile, approximated the styles of both stone inscriptions (as in his inscription to the horse painting) and lacquer-inscribed bamboo strips. But it took the special pressures of the late eighteenth century to popularize this shift from the historical transmission of the tradition toward the archaeological approach. Deng Shiru (1743-1805) based his seal script style on rubbings taken from Han tomb inscriptions. The severity of the script, a standard feature of jinshixue calligraphy, is mitigated by the relaxed execution and the constant surprises which he introduces; the detour of primitivism turns out to be the means to authenticity. That authentic self-expression was indeed the issue was made more explicit in the work of Yi Bingshou (1754-1815), whose structural experiments differ more obviously from his models in order to attain highly personal and daring images (**560**).

The jinshixue movement in calligraphy was pursued through a nationwide network of officials and the local scholars whom they encouraged. By contrast, the networks of women artists were necessarily localized. Several interlocking developments had transformed women's engagement in cultural life in the eighteenth century. All over China, poetry societies were set up by and for women, and prominent male poets such as Yuan Mei often took on female students. Women now commonly taught painting to the children of the extended family, male and female. Li Shan was only one of a number of eighteenth century male artists who had his first instruction in painting from a woman. Finally, the idea of the

artistic couple, epitomized by Luo Ping and Fang Wanyi (1732-79), but best known through Shen Fu's early nineteenth century autobiographical novel Six Chapters from a Fugitive Life, had firmly taken hold. It was against this background that painting by women became a significant commercial phenomenon. In addition to women's self-affirmation, however, the growing inability of educated men to ensure the livelihood of their families must also have stimulated the entry of women into the painting market. On this level, women's painting can be seen as a modernization of the ancient practice of selling woven and embroidered textiles to make ends meet. There are, in fact, strong stylistic connections between the work of certain women painters and textiles. The paintings of Ma Quan (active ca.1706-62), for example, avoid the kinesthetic effects canonically defined as essential to good painting; instead, she has laid the motifs carefully into place, fixing them with slow outlines and unambiguous colors (**560**). Like so many of her colleagues in the microculture of women, she pursued an effect of sensuality drained of eroticism.

Finally, in Guangzhou, sustained contact with Europe within the framework of a changing economic relationship was creating a new culture in which Chinese identity itself was implicated. Yangzhou's economic decline, paralleling that of the court, had already begun by the 1770s; it was precisely around this time, however, that Guangzhou's economy came to the fore. The merchants of the port city were protected from the decline of the court as a market for Guangzhou "tribute" by the trade with Europe, which the Qing government had restricted to Guangzhou alone in 1729. One of the direct effects which this had in the visual arts was a proliferation of decorative workshops in Guangzhou itself. Some of these specialized in the enamel decoration of porcelain, acquired in undecorated or semi-decorated form from Jingdezhen. Enamels had now displaced underglaze blue as the preferred form of decoration of European customers, and the presence of the porcelain decorators in the port allowed them to maintain tighter control over their commissions. It was not until the early nineteenth century that an industrialized European ceramic industry permitted them to dispense with Chinese ceramics altogether. The Qianlong and Jiaqing periods, consequently, were the heyday of decoration copying European designs, with armorial bearings and popular prints leading the way (**562**). On the basis of this familiarity with European conventions, a second type of workshop emerged which specialized in watercolor paintings, produced by a semi-industrial process from templates designed by the master of the workshop (**561**). By the late eighteenth century, the major genres of these often enormous sets had an anthropological character. They satisfied a Western curiosity about life in China: its social structure, its environment as known to Western visitors, the processes by which imports from China -- including ceramics and workshop paintings -- were produced. Their rhetoric of objectivity, as much as their intended market, made the conventions of European realism a necessary

component of the style. Marginal as they certainly were in the traditional hierarchy of Chinese painting, such "export paintings" were nonetheless a highly significant development. For the first but not the last time, Chinese painters were looking at themselves from a point outside the bounds of their own traditional culture.

DAOGUANG TO GUANGXU (1821-1911)

At the elite level, the major artistic achievements of the last ninety years of the Qing dynasty engaged, or avoided, two central issues: the validity of traditional culture, and China's place within a context of global modernity. Before turning to those questions, however, this is a convenient point to address, briefly, art of a quite different type. The nineteenth century is the earliest period from which folk art has survived on a large scale, though we know it to have existed throughout the Ming and Qing periods. It was, in fact, to some degree an archaic survival, for it tapped a level of religious belief deeper than any of the organized religions, which one might loosely describe as a form of animism. In this respect, folk art has a distant connection with the apotropaic images of Tang imperial tombs and, more remotely, with Shang bronze decoration. Its imagery, tied to the cycle of the lunar calendar and the geography of the house, was rigorously functional. Above all, it protected the house against the powers of malevolence, and invoked the aid of well-disposed gods to bring about the family's success. For all its ancient roots, however, folk art as we see it in the nineteenth century was very much a Qing dynasty development. Its major form was the color woodblock prints known as New Year's prints because so many were used during that month-long festival. After its invention in the early seventeenth century, color woodblock printing had a quite restricted history at the elite level: in folk art, on the other hand, the technique became widespread, though the need to keep costs low ensured a very limited range of colors. Other Qing dynasty developments were the proliferation of gods of wealth, which now found their way even into the images of quite different gods, and the emergence of 'luxury' New Year's prints, produced in Tianjin and Suzhou.

The most fundamental images of the New Year's festival were, and are, those of the stove god and door gods. The stove god icon was pasted on the wall above the stove, and thus occupied a place at the very center of the house (**564**). He watched over the house all year, noting bad deeds and good, and at the end of the year made his report to the Supreme Deity. On the twenty-third day of the twelfth month, the first day of the New Year's festival, the previous year's image was taken down and ceremonially burnt, fire being the means by which the god passed from this world to Heaven. He is usually shown twice, once at the center in his impassive role as judge of the house's affairs, and a second time up above riding

a horse or dragon up to Heaven. On the table in front of him, two jars, marked "good" and "evil", hold the slips that note the household's different acts; and in the foreground two helpers pour money into a brazier, symbolizing his ability to bring good fortune to the house. Door gods were more diverse in form and iconography, partly because different gods were used for the main gate, the inner gate, the doors of the different rooms around the courtyard, and even the stable (**565**). Best known, however, are those in the form of generals, one kindly and one fearsome, which were affixed to the doors of the main gate on the first day of the first month, and which derive ultimately from the guardians and Heavenly kings in Tang temples and tombs.

Conservative Responses. If folk art was as strong as ever, the higher levels of traditional culture were being put in question by the traumatic events of the period. In the face of diplomatic overtures from England in 1793, Qianlong had refused to countenance a relationship with the West except at the level of a luxury trade devoid of supporting diplomatic relations. By the Daoguang reign, half a century of Western trading of opium gave rise to a Chinese backlash, but the need to maintain access to China's vast domestic consumer market led the European powers to impose their commerce by military means. The Opium War of 1839-42 brought about the establishment of so-called treaty ports where land was leased to different European nations. Subsequent conflicts led to ever more concessions until not only Western nations but also Japan held leases in some twenty Chinese ports. Domestically, meanwhile, the large-scale peasant rebellions that had first broken out in the late eighteenth century now became increasingly threatening. In the 1850s the Taiping Rebellion engulfed the entire south and south-east, causing deaths estimated at between twenty and thirty million. Although the Manchu state survived temporarily, one unforeseen result of the Taiping Rebellion was to drive the newly created commercial elite of the Zhejiang coast toward nearby Shanghai, where they took refuge in the foreign concessions. By 1890, Shanghai had a population of around half a million, and had displaced Guangzhou as the leading center of westernized culture. The Sino-Japanese war of 1895 and the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 revealed the final bankruptcy of Qing government, and allowed the proponents of westernized culture to establish a Republic in 1911.

One of the most striking responses in art to these events was a willful introversion: an appeal to traditional models. The painter Dai Xi (1801-60), for example, turned to the art historical language of continuity initiated by Wang Shimin at the beginning of the dynasty (**562-23**). His was not exactly a revival, since the style had had its proponents throughout the eighteenth century, but rather a logical extension of its original principles. Whereas the Four Wangs had taken Yuan painting as their reference point, now Dai Xi raised the Four Wangs themselves to canonical status. While this might hardly seem a promising direction to take, in

his hands it gave rise to abstract structures of extraordinary discipline and clarity. The context for such uncompromising classicism may partly be inferred from the fact that the work illustrated here, a wall-like vision of the mountainous heartland of north China, was painted for the man responsible for China's coastal defenses against the British at the beginning of the 1840s. It further deepens our understanding of Dai's conservatism to know that when the Taiping forces entered his native city of Hangzhou, he refused to give himself up, preferring to commit suicide.

In that same year, the combined forces of the allied powers reached Beijing and destroyed the complex of summer palaces outside the city, reducing the already long neglected sino-European buildings in the Yuanming yuan to ruins. A year later, imperial power came into the the hands of the Empress Dowager Cixi, mother of the child emperor Tongzhi, who managed to retain that power (with only a brief interruption in 1898) until 1908 (**566**). Her astonishing response to the destruction of the summer palaces came somewhat later, in 1887, when she proposed refurbishing Clear Ripple Garden, the most outlying site in Qianlong's complex of summer palaces, as the training ground for a new naval fleet. Having acquired the funds, however, she used them to restore and transform the garden over a period of eight years into a final enormous summer palace (**568**). Given the name of the Garden of Harmonious Unity, it became her home and an important seat of government. It was there that she studied painting with the Yunnanese woman artist, Miao Jiahui (active late 19th-early 20th century), who was no doubt responsible for a series of superb formal paintings signed by Cixi, of branches emerging from clouds in a gesture of imperial largesse.

In contrast to such extreme conservative responses, much of nineteenth century culture involved a painful process of adapting traditional ideas to new ones, and vice versa. It was in this way that an entirely new type of scholar-artist appeared in the second half of the century, equally adept at seal-carving, calligraphy and painting. These artists, of whom Zhao Zhiqian (1829-84) was the pioneer, created an aesthetic based on the fusion of different principles from the three arts. In his case, a supple architectonics came from Northern Wei-inspired calligraphy, immediate visual impact from the blunt images of seal-carving in Qin-Han style, and lushness from ink-wash flower painting (**570-71**). It is this fusion which differentiates Zhao from his predecessors, and defines his relative modernity. By daring to summarize the literati aesthetic in a single, essential visual form, he revealed his disengagement from the tradition and ability to conceive it, so to speak, from the outside. He also made it viable in a now thoroughly commercialized world, since he turned to bright, flat colors that were not only powerfully expressive but also highly decorative.

Zhao came from the city of Shaoxing on the northern coast of Zhejiang, the very part of the country that had gained most in commercial terms from the encroachments of foreign powers. From this area came the bankers and the English-speaking compradores of Shanghai who acted as middlemen between Western merchants and their Chinese suppliers and buyers. Zhao provided the model for other northern Zhejiang artists such as Pu Hua (1834-1911) and Wu Changshi (1844-1927), active in Shanghai in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and popular with Zhejiang businessmen there. Through these artists, the new language he created became central to modern Chinese painting.

Modernity Embraced. The initiatives just discussed came from within traditional elite culture, and demonstrate greater powers of resistance and adaptation than it is often given credit for. Nonetheless, the most active artistic response to changing times came out of a very different world located along China's southern and eastern coast and in the treaty port cities. Aggressive commercialization, popular culture and progressive politics created an unprecedented cultural mix which found its most vital expressions in painting and illustration.

The earliest signs of a modern visual culture in the making appeared in Guangzhou. Su Liupeng (c.1796-1862) not only came from a relatively poor background, but seems to have been largely self-taught as a painter. He probably moved to Guangzhou in the 1830s, after he had achieved a certain level and reputation in his home area near the Luofu Mountains. Many of his paintings depict historical, theatrical, religious or literary stories and figures that had popular currency and so were easily recognized. Other paintings told their own story: they were observations of village and urban life, rather like lyrical cartoons. This range of subjects is anticipated in the work of two eighteenth century Fujianese artists, Shangguan Zhou (1665-ca.1750) and his more famous follower, Huang Shen (1687-1772). Given the traditional cultural and economic connections between the adjoining provinces of Guangdong and Fujian, it seems likely that Su Liupeng was working from a regional tradition. His style was also distinctively regional. The brushwork displays the deliberate coarseness and delight in blotched, scribbled and smeared effects that were found all along the Guangdong and Fujian coasts and in Taiwan during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This can in turn be traced back to the work of Zhe school painters from the region, a Ming connection which has parallels in the political realm. It was in Guangdong that the Taiping Rebellion began, drawing upon a submerged popular tradition of hostility toward the Manchus dating back to the Ming resistance of the late seventeenth century. Although there is no evidence that Su Liupeng was involved in the Rebellion, his paintings address similar issues, representing the disenfranchised without any hint of condescension. On the contrary: on a painting of blind men in a fight, he writes; "These two blind men are not able to see each

other, yet they are fighting so fiercely. What a world it is! Not only the blind, but also the learned scorn one another."

We can be more certain of the anti-Manchu and regionalist feelings of Su Liupeng's younger contemporary, Su Renshan (c.1814-1850), which may have been partly responsible for his imprisonment by his own clan during the last three years of his short life. His painting was in keeping with the violent iconoclasm of his intellectual views; indeed it is through his painting inscriptions that we know of his opposition to Confucian morality and such moribund state institutions as the examination essay. Breaking entirely with the canons of the Chinese painting tradition, he adopted a purely linear style based partly on woodblock illustrations, particularly painting manuals. While his earliest landscapes are already full of disjunctures, many later examples seem to take contradictions and incoherence as their very theme, and Su himself relates his work to that of Wen Zhengming. But the same landscape structures closely resemble those found in Cantonese export wallpapers, and his figure paintings, too, draw upon this or a related workshop tradition (**572**). Leading the Phoenixes by Playing the Flute assaults propriety at every turn. The calligraphy is a parody of jinshixue styles, as a long commentary makes even more clear. It also eats up all the available space, while the signature in the top right is a travesty of the expected self-restraint. Yet in purely graphic terms each inscription has its logical place, creating a powerfully interlocking design.

No less original than Su Renshan was his contemporary from northern Zhejiang, Ren Xiong (1823-57). Ren was, moreover, an immensely versatile painter, just as capable of designing woodblock illustrations in the manner of Chen Hongshou which was his local heritage, as he was of painting from life in the manner of Hua Yan, or drawing upon the viewpoints of export paintings for landscapes. His work was, in fact, restlessly experimental, and expanded the boundaries of representational awareness more than any other painter of the nineteenth century (**573**. Ren Xiong probably painted his astonishing Self-Portrait during or shortly after the time he served on the staff of Xiang Rong, the Qing general charged with containing the Taiping forces in Nanjing from 1854 to 1856. His inscription, while difficult to understand fully, reveals the painting to be a self-examination in which he confronts his relationship to the confused experience of living in chaotic modern times. There are no more heroes, he asserts, and at one point he echoes Su Renshan: "the path of officialdom is that of contempt and decadence". His gown, pulled away but not discarded, provides the tension -- even the anxiety -- of the image, as the man beneath exposes his own situation.

Throughout the period of Su Liupeng, Su Renshan and Ren Xiong, the production of export paintings continued in Guangzhou and spread to other port cities. Two Guangzhou painters, Ju Chao (1811-65) and Ju Lian (1828-1904), extensively integrated elements of that visual culture into the emerging modern painting. Their stimulus did not lie in the figure

compositions discussed earlier, but in export studies of flowers, plants and insects. With an almost botanical precision that brought new colors into Chinese painting, the two brothers pursued an unsentimental naturalism (**576**). Flowers, often drawn from outside the canonical range, are shown broken, blown into disarray, while cut-off compositions suggest a scene suddenly glimpsed. This move in the direction of a new immediacy had a different expression in the new fashion in Hong Kong and Guangzhou from the mid-nineteenth century onwards for photographic portraits, among the very compradore elite who were customers of the Ju brothers. From other nineteenth-century photographs we can see that the changes extended into the urban environment, which in Guangzhou included many Western buildings.

Shanghai, too, had many portrait photographers from the 1870s onwards, and many more Western buildings than Guangzhou. It also had, after 1884, a weekly picture magazine, Dianshi zhai huabao, produced by the photolithographic technique. Through its thousands of images a Chinese public hungry for information and fantasy was introduced to Western civilization, and was offered unexpected visions of its own (**574**). The awkward but lively visual language of these illustrations owes an obvious debt to the export paintings which China had been sending West since the late eighteenth century. Now, however, their conventions were being incorporated into a burgeoning industry of photolithographic illustration for magazines and books to become fully part of China's own visual culture.

Shanghai also had a vast market for decorative paintings, functional in much the same way as the larger works by Su Liupeng and the Ju brothers in Guangzhou or, at an earlier date, those of Hua Yan and Li Shan in Yangzhou. Of the painters who flocked to Shanghai to serve that market, one in particular stands out. Ren Yi (1840-1896) came from the same Zhejiang town of Shaoxing as Ren Xiong, to whom he was probably very distantly related. The son of a local rice merchant and sometime portrait painter, he was eventually apprenticed to Ren Xiong's brother, Ren Xun, who brought him to Suzhou. Within a few years he had left for Shanghai, where he quickly made an impact, painting decorative works in the mannered Chen Hongshou style associated with his native Shaoxing and with the Ren brothers. By this time, however, other painters were developing a more dynamic style, more specific to Shanghai, which combined odd but vivid viewpoints with spontaneous execution. Ren Yi, inspired by the work of Bada shanren, transformed this into the means to a visually exciting and psychologically ambiguous vision, evoking a lovely but harsh world where one had to be constantly on one's guard (**577**). While these sophisticated decorative works always remained the basis of his commercial success, Ren Yi was also the outstanding portraitist of the nineteenth century. Several of his surviving portraits depict his friend and student in painting, Wu Changshi, who would eventually develop Zhao Zhiqian's heritage in a more

dynamic direction on the basis of what he learned from Ren (**575**). The portrait reproduced here, A Miserable and Shabby Official, dates from 1888, when Wu was briefly serving in local government, and had to wear full regalia even in the heat of the summer. The implied groundplane, and the figure's distance from the viewer, one notes, are those of portrait photography of the time. Another portrait painted in 1886 bore the equally sardonic title Hungry and Looking to Heaven, in return for which Wu, then a leading seal-carver, presented Ren Yi with a seal reading "slave of painting" (**574**). The complicity between the two men is that of two members of Shanghai's heteregenous middle class, a highly politicized social world in which reformist and even Republican ideas were prevalent. Ren Bonian himself became an activist through paintings which show rebellions being plotted, evoke the world of secret societies, and commemorate the the Ming dynasty which the secret societies aimed to restore. It would take another generation for an explicitly Republican painting to develop, but Ren Yi's art already anticipates the 1911 Revolution which brought to an end, not only the dynasty of the Manchus, but the imperial dynastic system itself.