

SHITAO

Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China

Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China examines the work of one of the most famous of all Chinese artists. In this study, the first wide-ranging art-historical reevaluation of Shitao (1642–1707) in almost thirty years, Jonathan Hay undertakes a social history of the artist's achievement as a painter and theorist of painting. By focusing on different social, political, biographical, economic, religious, and philosophical issues, the author reveals the full complexity of Shitao's pictorial practice. Throughout this study, Hay also argues for the modernity of Shitao's painting, showing how his work is embedded in the socioeconomic context of the seventeenth century and how it involves a redefinition of subjectivity in terms of self-consciousness, doubt, and an aspiration to autonomy.

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CHAPTER

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

The history of the United States is a story of growth and change. It begins with the first settlers who came to the continent in search of a new life. They found a land of opportunity, but also a land of challenge. The early years were marked by conflict and struggle, as the colonies fought for their independence from Britain. The American Revolution was a turning point in the nation's history, leading to the birth of a new republic. The years following the Revolution were a time of rapid expansion and development. The United States grew from a small collection of colonies to a vast, powerful nation. The Civil War was a defining moment in the nation's history, as it fought to preserve the Union and end slavery. The Reconstruction era followed, a time of rebuilding and reform. The United States emerged from the Civil War as a more unified and powerful nation. The years following the Civil War were a time of rapid growth and development. The United States became a world power, and its influence spread across the globe. The American West was a land of opportunity and challenge, and it played a major role in the nation's history. The American West was a land of discovery and exploration, and it led to the expansion of the United States. The American West was a land of opportunity and challenge, and it played a major role in the nation's history. The American West was a land of discovery and exploration, and it led to the expansion of the United States.

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, VIC 3166, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
<http://www.cup.org>

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First published 2001

Printed in the United States of America

Typeface Sabon 10/12.5 pt. System QuarkXPress® [MG]

A catalog record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Hay, Jonathan, 1956-

Shitao: painting and modernity in early Qing China / Jonathan Hay.

p. cm. - (RES monographs in anthropology and aesthetics)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-521-39342-6 (hb)

1. Shih-t'ao, 17th/18th cent. - Aesthetics. 2. Shih-t'ao, 17th/18th cent. - Sources. I. Title. II. Series.

ND1040.S4563 H39 2001

759.951 - dc21

00-027757

ISBN 0 521 39342 6 hardback

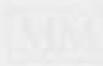
Publication of this book has been supported by a grant from the
Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange.

Publication of this book has been aided by a grant from the
Millard Meiss Publication Fund of the College Art Association.



To my teachers,
Bo Songnian and Richard M. Barnhart,
and my parents,
James Hay (1926–2000) and Moyra Hay,
freethinkers all

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Preface

This is a book with two, hopefully complementary, aspects. It is intended, on the one hand, prosaically as a practical guide to one of the great individual achievements in the history of Chinese painting, incorporating systematic reconstructions of the main aspects of Shitao's life, art, and practical circumstances. At the same time, more ambitiously it articulates a historical interpretation of the artist's work in light of the question of modernity. The book's structure corresponds to its function as guide, with the resulting inconvenience that the argument on historical interpretation is not continuously developed but instead surfaces periodically over the ten chapters. The guide and the argument on modernity contribute equally to the larger project that has shaped this book, that of writing a social history of Shitao's painting. I break, here, as others have recently done, with the fusion of intellectual and cultural history that has dominated the modern study of Chinese painting. The undeniable gains of that approach have been accomplished at the price of certain blind spots: the mundane economic context for painting, the artist's engagement with his contemporary circumstances, the question of painting's public and private space, the private as a social phenomenon, the sociology of landscape representation. Naturally, by reorienting attention toward such issues, I am correspondingly downplaying other issues that would normally be thought important, even primordial.

The association of social art history with the format of the artist monograph may seem an odd one. The monographic study of an artist passes today for a conservative if not retrograde enterprise, condemned by its nature to celebrate its subject, indeed to celebrate *the* subject, illusory maker of history. The corrosive result of this viewpoint within art history has been the abandonment of the terrain of the artist monograph to the discipline's more conservative practitioners, whose work is then taken to demonstrate the lack of interest of the enterprise. But the arid dream of an art history without artists' lives – artists replaced by “agency” – diminishes the very project of art history, proceeding as if an understanding of the social nature of artistic practice can dispense with the complexity of lived stories in which any artistic achievement is imbricated. This book has been written against that view, though not in the name of any return to a romantic view of the artist. It takes as its subject an artist who in the twentieth century has been considered the most completely “individualist” and the most richly complex of a school of late-seventeenth-century Chinese artists collectively known as the Individualists. If this terminology is alien to early Qing China, the appellation of “strange gentlemen” or “originals” (*qishi*) that was applied to the artists in their own time and place is evocative of a recognized claim to difference inseparable from the associated claim that their art in some sense embodied them personally. These two

claims require our continued attention to the specifics of Shitao's life and reveal an opportunity for social art history in Shitao's status as possibly the single most intensely scrutinized artist of the Chinese past.

Shitao was born in 1642 – on the eve of the fall of the Ming dynasty and the invasion of China by the Manchu Qing dynasty (1644–1911) – into a princely branch of the Ming imperial family in, or near, the city of Guilin, in the southwestern province of Guangxi. Saved from the massacre of his family in 1644 by a retainer who smuggled him to safety, he was brought up as a Buddhist monk during the turbulent years of the southern Ming resistance. He later pursued a career within the Buddhist hierarchy that took him to several parts of China, including the capital, Beijing, while simultaneously working as an artist. Finally, after some fifty-five years of displacements, in the 1690s he left the Buddhist monastic community, the *sangha*. Taking on a new religious identity as a Daoist, he simultaneously became a full-time professional artist in the major southeastern city of Yangzhou, working there until his death in 1707 at the age of sixty-six. Having lived through the national trauma of dynastic fall and invasion as a child, at his death that trauma was still central to his intellectual and emotional world; but his art speaks equally to many other aspects of his life, including his professional experiences as artist and as Buddhist monk, and his creative identity, which merged the lyrical, the philosophical, and the religious within a deep commitment to painting and calligraphy.

The main focus in this book is the final years in Yangzhou, from 1697 to 1707, when the vast majority of his surviving paintings were executed. In the cultural history of early modern China (c. 1500–1850), the city of Yangzhou, despite having emerged as a major city as early as the late sixteenth century, has come to be associated above all with the second and third quarters of the eighteenth century, the high point of its commercial importance. However, here we shall be concerned with an earlier, perhaps less spectacular but equally important *floruit* that began around the mid-1680s and lasted through the first quarter of the eighteenth century. During this period, the Kangxi emperor (r. 1662–1722) made six celebrated visits to Yangzhou. His trusted official, Cao Yin, established an imperial printing concern in the city that was responsible for such famous and massive projects as *Complete Poetry of the Tang*. There were also important private publishers, of whom one should particularly mention Zhang Chao, whose many publications include the two great compendia of contemporary essays, *Tanji congshu* and *Zhaodai congshu*. It was during this same mid-Kangxi period that one of the great schools of Chinese decorative painting came

into being in the city in the hands of Li Yin, Yuan Jiang, and others, complemented by the flourishing of garden building and decorative arts, especially lacquer and furniture. Also, Yangzhou continued to support, as it had by then already been doing for some decades, a large community of literati writers and artists, many of them loyalists of the vanquished Ming dynasty. Shitao, often judged the preeminent painter of the late seventeenth century, was based in and around the city for all but three of the years between 1687 and 1707, and he established a settled home there from 1697 onward. His presence in Yangzhou is not the least of the claims to significance that one can make for this temporal and spatial site in Chinese cultural history. Conversely, the range of contemporaries for whom Shitao worked and with whom he collaborated, the multiple discourses with which his work engages, and the exceptional intensity of his art combine to make his work particularly revealing of the cultural imaginary of Yangzhou at that time.

This, however, is a secondary concern, my main purpose in this book being to provide a social history of the artist's painting (both act and product, the practice of painting and the surviving oeuvre), with particular attention to the Yangzhou years. (Unfortunately, I am not able to do justice in the present volume to Shitao's parallel practice of calligraphy – here subordinated to the painting – which deserves close study in its own right). The social history I have in mind must answer two questions. One of these may seem unexpected in the context of a social history and yet is central to it: How did Shitao and his public construe the value of his painting as *painting*? The answers I am seeking are at once historical and social, since the criteria of value evolved in specific lived circumstances. Though the enterprise may appear contradictory in its nature, to me it seems important to define those circumstances not only in the micro-historical terms of biography but also in the macro-historical terms of long-term social change. For this reason the issue of value cannot even be properly approached without first addressing the other question I see as being fundamental to a social history of the artist's work: Where, in the work, do the person and the social process meet?

In this question, the “person” is itself an issue, one that crystallizes around the historical status of the individual, identity, and the self. Today, these are informed by enormous reflexivity, there being widespread awareness of their constructedness. This reflexivity, however, has its own long history, and recent studies by Anne Burkus-Chasson (1986), John Hay (1992), Richard Vinograd (1992a), and others have made it clear that, within the

history of Chinese painting, it went back some way beyond Shitao's time. There is every reason, therefore, for us not to take at face value a characteristically fierce declaration by Shitao such as this, from his treatise on painting: "I exist by and of myself. The whiskers and eyebrows of the Ancients cannot grow on my face, nor can their entrails exist in my stomach. I have my own entrails, and my own whiskers and eyebrows." A central part of the purpose of this book, then, must be to expose a reflexivity – or rhetorical positioning – that is not evident at first sight here, and then somehow account for it; it is necessary, in other words, both to reconstruct and to deconstruct what was involved in Shitao's stance. My "deconstruction," of a social rather than philosophical kind, assumes a concept of the individual much as defined by Michel de Certeau: "Analysis shows that a relation (always social) determines its [the individual's] terms, and not the reverse, and that each individual is a locus in which an incoherent (and often contradictory) plurality of such relational determinations interact" (1984: xi). Shitao, I shall argue, was himself aware – to a degree far greater than has been realized – of the plurality of social relations that converged in his practice. At the same time, no one was more deeply attached than he to what T. J. Clark in a very different context has termed the lyric dimension of painting: "the illusion in an art work of a singular voice or viewpoint, uninterrupted, absolute, laying claim to a world of its own," and again, "those metaphors of agency, mastery, and self-centeredness that enforce our acceptance of the work as the expression of a single subject" (1994: 48). This comes very close, as a formal description, to Shitao's construction of artistic value, but context is all – bringing us back to the historical and social question of lived circumstances.

To evoke a discussion of abstract expressionism as I have just done is less out of place in this context than it might seem, since it is a historiographical fact that the currently dominant view of Individualist painting in general, and of Shitao's work in particular, owes a great deal to the influential criticism of abstract expressionism by Clement Greenberg. However, my invocation of modernity in the subtitle of this book does not refer to such historiographic convergences, indirectly revealing as they may be, but has a larger context. Until recently, most scholars of China associated modernity with a future-oriented paradigm of progress that originated in the eighteenth-century European world and reached China only in the nineteenth century, in the wake of Western imperialism. Ironically, at the very moment when historians are moving away from this paradigm, it is being given new life by those contemporary Chinese cultural theorists, such as Xudong Zhang (1997), who

use it as the point of reference for their own arguments for the possibility of an "alternative modernity" in China. Whether in its more conventional historical form or its current reinvention within the framework of post-colonial and cultural studies, modernity has been equated with modernism – a position that has come to seem increasingly untenable in the wake of recent historical work on the Ming–Qing period that has dispelled the myth of China during that time as a tradition-bound society. The new historical work is uniformly inspired by the emergence in the West of a redefinition of modernity as a social condition within which modernism represents one highly particular response, characterized by intense reflexivity and tied to a particular historical moment.

One by-product of this in Euro-American historical studies is the concept of an "early modern" period preceding the modern period proper. Sinological responses to this rethinking of the question are by no means all of a piece, however. For example, the argument has been made by some that contacts in the late Ming led to an opening that had many modern characteristics but was followed by the closure of the Manchu conquest and the temporary, though not total, suppression of an emergent early modernity. Others, meanwhile, have argued that there is a distinctively Chinese modernity with its own history, and that this history was continuous even across the traumatic boundary of the Manchu conquest. One of the most prominent of the latter scholars, however, the historian William Rowe (1990, 1992), has suggested that this was a development of Ming–Qing material life not fully paralleled at the level of social consciousness.

My own position lies firmly on the side of a differentiation of modernity from modernism, and of the validity of the concept of an early modern period for China. I am not convinced by the argument for an early Qing closure, first because its negative view of the Qing seems to me to owe much to the demonization of the Manchus in early-twentieth-century Chinese nationalism, and second because it assumes a restrictive interpretation of modernity that happens to fit the conditions of the late Ming period but not those that followed on the Qing reorientation of Chinese society. I would also go further than Rowe in that I believe the evidence is fully there for modernity as a phenomenon of consciousness in Ming–Qing China. (If it is not that, then what is it?) The danger, of course, is that the very use of the concept of modernity may lead to a kind of back-door Eurocentrism. Sinologists especially are likely to be skeptical and will justifiably want to see from the outset a clear definition of Chinese modernity in Shitao's time and on Chinese terms. The working definition I offer in this book is at once narratological and topological.

Modernity as a macrohistorical frame of reference implies a specific narrative viewpoint: a view backward in time toward the genesis of the modern (Chinese) present. It contrasts sharply in this respect with the two competing frames of reference given by belatedness and dynasticism. Belatedness, institutionalized in the post-war macrohistorical narratives of “late imperial China” and “later Chinese painting,” always assumes a view forward in time from a moment earlier in history (variously located in the Tang, Song, or Yuan dynasty). Dynasticism, meanwhile, whose importance for historical and art-historical studies is enshrined in dynastic periodization, narrates the cyclical substitution of dynasties from a viewpoint outside history proper corresponding to the ideal point of the Mandate of Heaven. I make no claim that the historical narrative of modernity, which resonates with a particular sense that people had of the unarguable difference (for better or worse) of their contemporary circumstances, *invalidates* narratives of belatedness or dynasticism, both of which correspond to forms of temporal awareness equally current in the Chinese past. On the other hand, for the period after about 1500, it does have the capacity to take into account and contextualize the other narratives (something I doubt it could do for the Song, Yuan, and early Ming dynasties). The significance of this lies in the fact that, for the period after about 1500, the “later Chinese painting” narrative is unable to do the same for modernity, at best recognizing the “early modern” as an alternative way of looking at the past. (A similarly asymmetric relationship could be argued to exist between the narratives of dynasticism and belatedness for the period after c. 1050).

Modernity can also be defined topologically. I map out over the course of this book a sprawling cluster of thematic concerns and unexamined assumptions at work in Shitao’s painting, as these topologies interact loosely to form a single heterogeneous but ultimately coherent field of social consciousness and subjectivity. In this part of the analysis I treat social practices and historical events not as texts, which would be abusive (as pointed out by Roger Chartier 1998: 96), but as having an internal logic to which cultural products (artworks and literary texts) can sometimes suggest a key, a direction for (semiotic and thematic) interpretation. If the value of this sort of interpretation – a poetics of history – is measured by its capacity to make sense of the “facts,” then I should probably underline my convictions that the “facts” have to be established separately and empirically, and that the “facts” exceed any such poetics. With these caveats, the multiple topologies of modernity in Shitao’s work constellate in three overlapping nexuses. The first is an aspiration to *autonomy* in relation to the state, the market, and the community,

often qualified by the desire for acceptance and legitimation. The second is one of social and historical *self-consciousness*, or reflexivity. Finally, the third is the betrayal of *doubt* with regard to established, conventional social discourses. At issue in all this is subjectivity, central for painters like Shitao who were working out of a literati tradition of self-representation. If subjectivity always involves a constant negotiation of different frames of reference (ideological, social, cultural, and historical), and is in this sense fluctuating and hybrid, in Shitao’s case the negotiation was specified by the combination of autonomy, self-consciousness, and doubt.

I am now in a position to come back to the question with which I started: How, in his painting and theory, did Shitao and his public construe the value of painting as painting? The question is a necessary one, since the historical significance of Shitao’s painting, as well as its immense influence on later pictorial practice, obviously cannot ultimately be explained in terms that leave aside the specificity of painting as a cultural practice. The answer I offer in this book is a double one. On the one hand, value was construed as an engagement with painting as a specialized tradition and project, in which the effect of intense lyric presence for which Shitao has always been celebrated was framed in relation to a wide range of available discourses – economic, moral, religious, philosophical, art historical, and aesthetic. On the other, Shitao drew on these discourses in different ways in order to elaborate a claim to universality for his art, a claim that evolved over time until it became an implicit claim for the autonomy of art as a Way [*dao*] in its own right and no longer a “minor skill” as classical aesthetic theory decreed it to be. Shitao’s engagement with painting and claim to its universality jointly define a concept, or practice, of artistic value that is itself part of the modernity of his practice, as defined by autonomy, self-consciousness, and doubt. Accordingly, I map it out here as part of the same topologies, giving it particular attention in Chapters 8 and 9.

A more detailed exposition of this topological approach to modernity in the Ming–Qing Chinese context can be found at the end of Chapter 1, but I cannot stress too much that the argument in its favor is developed over the full course of this study, most obviously in a series of general discussions easily identifiable by the lack of accompanying illustrations. To avoid misunderstanding, two final points should be made. First, since the objection is frequently made that the features identified (topologically, in my terms) as modern for the post-1500 period are often anticipated much earlier, and particularly under the Song dynasty (960–1279), I should make clear that I am not claiming they did not appear until the sixteenth century. Taking modernity as a narrative

viewpoint, there is nothing to stop us from analyzing the Song and even much earlier periods in these terms. One may wonder, however, whether one could identify among the people of those earlier periods an equally confident assumption of their historical difference as something other than belatedness? And would a topological analysis demonstrate a field of social consciousness and subjectivity that was as complex and fractured? Though I have my own doubts on this point, it is obviously not possible to settle the question here. Let me instead emphasize simply that if the periodizing term “early modern” is taken here to become relevant post-1500, I intend this as the recognition of a shift of emphasis through the gradually accumulated weight of certain diagnostic features rather than a new beginning.

Second, taking the position that modern culture is globally heterogeneous – not only in its present-day forms but also in its historical origins – and that one of its diverse beginnings lay in the local culture of late Ming Jiangnan and related areas, I am not discouraged in my use of the concept of modernity by the fact that Shitao was not among those painters who demonstrate by their intercultural borrowings that modern culture worldwide has historically registered in increasingly pronounced ways the encroachment of globality. On the contrary, as the story of modernity in art is pruned away from its present reduction to a certain Western history, it is the now-unrecognizable modernity of artists such as Shitao that will most radically change our understanding of that story. Indeed, I hope that this book will nudge along a much-needed geocultural expansion of the debate on artistic modernity, which at the moment proceeds all too often on the assumption that modernity was invented only once, taking no account of the possibility of other modern art histories elsewhere in the world that would not be derivative of the Euro-American one to which it is attuned.

As noted above, the book’s structure has largely been determined by my interest in providing a kind of practical guide. This lends itself to a thematically organized discussion, which is also well suited to the exploration of the questions to which I am trying to find answers: Where in the work do the person and the social process meet, and how was the value of painting construed by Shitao and his public? However, because Shitao’s biography does not begin to concern me in any detail until nearly the middle of the book, some readers may feel a lack of chronological bearings. The inclusion as Appendix 1 of a chronology of Shitao’s life is intended to mitigate the disorienting effects of a thematic approach. Readers coming from art history in particular may also

like to know that the more obviously art-historical part of this study comes in its second (more heavily illustrated) half, the first half of the book being on the whole more historical.

Chapter 1, “Shitao, Yangzhou, and Modernity,” sets the scene, sketching portraits of Shitao and the city in which he lived and worked, then arguing in more detail for the relevance of modernity as an analytic frame of reference. Chapter 2, “The Conspicuous Consumption of Time,” analyzes the social space of Shitao’s landscape painting from an ideological standpoint, arguing that it gives visual form to a discourse of leisure that recuperated gentry values for the purposes of a heterogeneous, local, often urban-based elite. The more narrowly focused and complementary Chapter 3, “The Common Claim on Dynastic Narrative,” devoted to a small group of topographic landscape paintings, examines their contestation, in the name of the above-mentioned elite, of the state’s claims on political memory through history fifty years after the fall of the Ming. Chapter 4, “Zhu Ruoji’s Destinies,” turns to Shitao himself and examines his engagement with his political and kinship status as a descendant of the Ming imperial family, articulated through successive strategic narratives of his own destiny. This chapter takes the story up through 1692; continuing the story up to his death in 1707, Chapter 5, “The Acknowledgment of Origins,” explores the different ways in which Shitao in late life, living out his final self-created narrative of destiny, came to terms privately and publicly with his long-suppressed identity as an imperial kinsman. Chapter 6, “The Artist-Entrepreneur,” shifts the focus from political to economic identity, beginning with a reconstruction of Shitao’s Dadi Tang painting business and his role as a full-time professional painter. Developing this theme further, Chapter 7, “Paintings as Commodities,” briefly analyzes the commercial categories of his artistic output, and Chapter 8, “The Painter’s Craft,” examines the self-conscious discourse of professionalism with which he framed his engagement in commerce. Chapter 9, “Painting as Praxis,” then turns to Shitao’s practice as a religious teacher whose mode of teaching was painting; the principal theme of his teachings on painting as praxis, I argue, was the achievement of self-realization through a metaphysics of independence that can easily be linked to other aspects of his life. Finally, bringing the study to a close, Chapter 10, “The Private Horizon,” returns to the initial question of social space, this time examining, from the point of view of the psychology of the urban consumer-producer, a private horizon of psychic autonomy in Shitao’s painting. Throughout the book, the intrusion of contemporary voices will regularly displace the focus from Shitao himself.

If only this thematic exploration could have been developed in simple tandem with the presentation of Shitao's paintings! Unfortunately, one of the disadvantages of a "kaleidoscopic" study of a kaleidoscopic artist is that this becomes impossible. It is thus only fair to warn the reader that the text-image relationship in this book is somewhat idiosyncratic by normal standards. This derives from two practical problems, of which the more minor is the extremes that had to be accommodated. While there are certainly parts of the argument that lend themselves to a comfortable balance of text and image, others require many illustrations, or only one for several pages of manuscript, whereas several more historical or theoretical sections need no illustration at all. Knowing that some readers may find this unevenness uncomfortable, I have nonetheless not sought to compensate in any way, and even dare to hope that the diversity will prove stimulating. The more important problem is posed by my wish to see what patterns could be revealed by the discussion, at certain points, of a large number of works together. It has proved possible to include such discussions, but only by having the vast majority of the illustrations in the book do double, triple, or sometimes even quadruple service. Moreover, the illustrations have had to be selected for their aptness to this purpose, which has led to something other than a simple "greatest hits" selection including, inevitably, certain surprising omissions. At these points of general discussion, most of the artworks discussed are necessarily illustrated elsewhere in the book, necessitating the kind of flipping back and forth guaranteed to try any reader's patience. I can only hope that the reader will be willing to consider this an extra, interactive dimension of the book (facilitated by the List of Illustrations), offering rewards that could not otherwise have been made available. Certainly the inclusion of such sections is essential to the book's basic aim of providing an account that is comprehensive in range (though obviously not in detail).

The question of illustrations is closely related to that of connoisseurship, which, while not a focus of this book, is ever relevant. As all scholars of Chinese painting know, the connoisseurship of Shitao's work has its own complex history, only very imperfectly reflected in published interventions such as those associated with the 1967 exhibition *The Painting of Tao-chi* (Edwards 1967, 1968). Our understanding of the connoisseurship issues has progressed through a growing number of scattered exhibition catalog entries, a few monographic articles published in Japan, and, crucially, Shen Fu and Marilyn Wong Gleysteen's meticulous *Studies in Connoisseurship* (Fu and Fu 1973), which had a partial catalogue raisonné at its heart. Despite some opposition at the time (Chou 1979), the authors' judgments, as much

with regard to comparative material as to works in the Sackler Collection, have stood the test of time well. Only their opinion that collaborative and ghostpainted workshop production can be ruled out due to insufficient demand for the artist's work now seems hard to sustain. The fact remains, however, that in the face of the vast body of Shitao attributions, the published literature of connoisseurship remains highly limited. An important, if by no means definitive, contribution has been made in the People's Republic of China by the government-sponsored Chinese Painting and Calligraphy Authentication Group, comprising leading elder connoisseurs, which in the course of its work from 1983 onward ratified numerous works attributed to Shitao in Chinese public collections (*Zhongguo gudai shuhua tumu*, fifteen volumes to date). Moreover, the past few decades have seen the emergence of an implicit consensus on the authenticity of certain works, gradually achieved through their repeated publication in scholarly studies (although the case of *Ten Thousand Ugly Inkblots* (1685), rejected by Kohara Hironobu (1992), demonstrates that consensus is not the same as unanimity). The paintings reproduced in the present book, together with those cited in the notes, have been selected on the basis of long-standing if clearly not exhaustive study of Shitao's painting at first hand, and they are not restricted to works that fall into the above categories. Though I rarely argue the case for the authenticity of the paintings chosen (a separate book would be required), I would draw the reader's attention to my reconstruction of patterns in Shitao's use of signatures and seals. This reconstruction, by establishing a degree of preliminary plausibility or implausibility, has been one factor in my judgments of authenticity and, for undated works, of date. Beyond this, the only relevant point is the place that each work finds in my overall presentation of the artist's production – but here we have already stepped outside the realm of connoisseurship, narrowly defined. For the record, I illustrate 135 pictorial works that I consider to be by the artist (or, in a small number of cases, more likely to be studio work), and make reference to a further 70. Of these 205 works, however, the 57 multileaf albums include some 550 separate paintings, which means that the number of individual images that I am effectively proposing as a basis for an expanded view of Shitao's painting is in the order of around 700. In the author's opinion, this still falls far short of the full surviving oeuvre of paintings, whose numbers I have not tried to determine exactly but can safely be considered to be somewhere upward of a thousand images.

Finally, the place given in this study to theory requires a word of explanation. Though the book has been long

in the writing, the intellectual and scholarly conjuncture (whether art-historical or sinological) in which it was originally conceived to intervene has not fundamentally changed. Theoretical abstraction continues largely to be pursued today at the expense (to a greater or lesser degree) of empirical historical research, and vice versa. With a few shining exceptions, the tendency on both sides is all too often to do and to tolerate only as much of the other as is strictly necessary. Here I take up a contrary position, in favor of a willed tension between theoretical abstraction and empirical historical research, in the sense of an equal and concurrent commitment to both. I am well aware that factors of temperament and personal history have played a part in this choice – certainly I do not propose it as a model in itself; but I know of no better way of arguing the case that more important than either theoretical abstraction or empirical research are the relationships between the two, and the links among those relationships. If this book manages to expand at all the means available for the study of such relationships as they operate in the history of Chinese painting and culture more generally, it will have achieved its larger purpose.

TECHNICAL POINTS

- 1 Ages are given, following Chinese custom, in *sui*. Since an individual is considered to be one *sui* at birth, this adds one year to the Western reckoning.
- 2 Years, although identified according to the Roman calendar, here refer to Chinese lunar years, which begin and end slightly later; within this system, I refer to months in the Chinese manner, by number. Some readers will find this cumbersome, but I prefer to retain a sense of the difference of Chinese temporality.
- 3 On the vexed and confusing question of names, most readers will need some clarification. Shitao used many different names in the course of his life, of which four are particularly important. The artist's secular birth name was Zhu Ruoji. His for-

mal Buddhist name was Yuanji Shitao, of which "Yuanji" was his *ming* and "Shitao" the more informal *zi*. Finally, during the years 1697–1707 he was widely known as Dadizi. The modern scholarly literature refers to him by all of these names, as well as a fifth, Daoji. Although this last name was an eighteenth-century art historian's error for Yuanji (Zhang Geng, *Guochao huazheng lu*, c. 1735), and although the mistake was pointed out as early as 1818 (Zhang Chao, Yang Fuji, and Shen Maohui, eds. 1990: 1123), the name Daoji has nonetheless gained wide currency, especially in postwar American historiography. Of the four genuine names, meanwhile, Shitao is the only one he used consistently throughout his life; consequently, it is the one I have chosen to use here.

- 4 The *pinyin* transliteration system in this book represents the sounds of the modern standard dialect (often called Mandarin). Although most *pinyin* is pronounced as it looks, exceptions are some initial consonants, listed below.

<i>Pinyin</i>	<i>Sound value</i>
q	<i>ch</i> sound in "cheat"
x	<i>sh</i> sound in "she"
zh	<i>j</i> sound in "job"
z	<i>dz</i> sound in "adz"
c	<i>ts</i> sound in "its"

- 5 The *pinyin* romanization used here has been modified from standard practice in one important respect: In the interests of readability, for names of architectural sites and for sobriquets that appear in the English text, the first letter of both words is capitalized. Thus, for instance, we have Dadi Tang (instead of Dadi tang) and Bada Shanren (instead of Bada shanren). Standard usage is retained for Chinese book titles in the References.
- 6 Following convention, I refer in the text to the city of Jiangning (as it was officially known under the Qing) under its modern (and also Ming dynasty) name of Nanjing. On the three maps it is marked as "Jiangning (Nanjing)."
- 7 Translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

Acknowledgments

Over the years this project has accumulated financial support to the point where it now seems to me a small miracle that such generosity was forthcoming; and yet it was, at the writing stage through Whiting and East Asia Prize Fellowships at Yale University, a Paul Mellon Fellowship at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a Presidential Fellowship at New York University, and the privileged research leave policy of the Institute of Fine Arts. At the publication stage, I was the fortunate beneficiary of grants from the Millard Meiss Fund of the College Art Association, the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation, and the Henry Luce Foundation, whose particular generosity made possible an unusually large program of illustrations. Among the many people who made such support possible, I especially want to thank Jonathan Spence and H. Christopher Luce for the personal interest they took in the project at different moments.

The study of Shitao's art has been the central element in my scholarly life through three successive professional affiliations: with the Department of the History of Art at Yale University, where I was a Ph.D. student; the Department of Fine Arts, New York University, where I began my teaching career; and the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, my current professional home, where this book was written. I am only too conscious of the patience and indulgence demonstrated by my colleagues at the three institutions at crucial moments, and hope that they will feel repaid by the result. I am partic-

ularly grateful to the director of the Institute, James McCredie, a truly enlightened colleague and administrator.

The illustrations in this volume reproduce works from some fifty different collections. Over the years I have had to disturb many museum curators, librarians, collectors, and art dealers, as well as the specialist staff of Sotheby's and Christie's New York, in order to see paintings at first hand or, later, to acquire photographs. To all the very many people who have helped me, I am deeply grateful. Among those on whose help I called particularly shamelessly are the following: the staffs of the Palace Museum, Beijing, the Shanghai Museum, the National Palace Museum, Taipei, the Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises in Paris, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Professor Kohara Hiro-nobu, who opened many doors for me in the Kansai area of Japan; my friend Professor Higashiyama Kengo, who did the same in Tokyo; Professor Wen Fong, who facilitated my research in Taiwan and Hong Kong; Professor James Cahill, who made available all of his patiently accumulated visual documentation; and Peter Lam of the Art Museum, Chinese University of Hong Kong. Without the efficient help of the three student assistants – Philip Hu, Nixi Cura, and Yeewan Koon – who handled most of the thankless process of acquiring permissions and photographs, I might never have published this book at all. The fine maps were prepared with great patience and skill by Guenter Vollarth.

Francesco Pellizzi, as editor of the Res Monograph series, did me the honor back in 1989 of inviting this then-unwritten book into that distinguished company. In the ensuing decade, he has shown enormous forbearance, never faltering in his support; all authors should be so fortunate. Beatrice Rehl, my editor at Cambridge University Press, accepted the project, stayed behind it when it was long overdue, and brought a necessary realism to its realization. I am grateful to her, to the designer Alan Gold, and to the sharp-eyed Michael Gnat, whose editing and layout skills are matched only his efficiency.

Among the numerous intellectual and scholarly debts I have incurred, many are to my predecessors and colleagues in "Shitao studies" – a long tradition that extends from Wang Yichen in the early eighteenth century through Fu Baoshi to those of my own day, especially James Cahill, Joseph Chang (Zhang Zining), Chou Ju-hsi, Richard Edwards, Wen Fong, Fu Shen, Han Linde, Jiang Yihan, Kohara Hironobu, Mingfu, Pierre Ryckmans, Shindo Takehiro, Wang Fang-yu, Wang Shiqing, Marilyn Wong Gleysteen (formerly Marilyn Fu), Richard Vinograd, and Zheng Zhuolu. Any advance that the present book represents in our understanding of the artist has been made possible by their scholarly work, not to mention the personal assistance and encouragement that I have received from many of these other students of Shitao. To no one do I owe more than Wang Shiqing, who has selflessly placed his vast documentary knowledge of Shitao's life at the disposition of all students of Shitao. Xu Bangda, one of my teachers in connoisseurship, patiently answered my questions, and I also benefited greatly from discussions with Xie Zhiliu, Harold Wong (Huang Zhongfang), and Arnold Chang (Zhang Hong). Conversations with several painters (including the above connoisseurs) threw light on questions of technique and visual aesthetics; among the most memorable were with C. C. Wang and the late Zhu Zhaonian (who painted in Shitao's style).

I have had the good fortune to be able to try out my ideas repeatedly in the classroom with marvelously engaged students, both undergraduates at Yale University and New York University and graduate students at the Institute of Fine Arts. Among them all I particularly want to mention the late Alice Yang, author of a characteristically subtle and beautiful essay on one of Shitao's finest albums, who was part of this process as an undergraduate and later as a graduate student, and whose reaction to this book was among those to which I was most looking forward. Certain parts of the argument were fruitfully rehearsed and defended before lecture and conference audiences at New York University, Yale University, the University of Chicago, Harvard University, and the University of California, Santa Cruz. Stephen Owen helped me in my first attempt to wrestle with Shitao's treatise on painting. Richard Barnhart gave a crucial detailed reading to part of what later became Chapter 6. John Hay and Jonathan Spence provided very helpful readings of my earlier dissertation on the same subject. Ann Burkus-Chasson, Craig Clunas, Isabelle Duchesne, Tobie Meyer-Fong, Joanna Waley-Cohen, and an anonymous reader for the Press found the time to read the entire manuscript, saved me from many errors, and helped make the argument and presentation better than they would otherwise have been. My thanks to all these audiences and individuals, and to Emily Cheng, who was by far the most effective of the many friends nudging me to get the manuscript to press.

I also gained much from conversations (which, no doubt, only I remember) with my friends and colleagues Pierre-Henri Durand, Sarah E. Fraser, Alain Thote, Wu Hung, Judith Zeitlin, and the late Richard Pommer, whose unqualified encouragement meant much more to me than he could have realized. But my deepest gratitude is to Isabelle, who for a very long time had to share her life with Shitao too.



Plate 1. Shitao (and unidentified portraitist?), *Master Shi Planting Pines*, dated 1674, handscroll (detail), ink and color on paper, 40.2 x 170.4 cm. Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taiwan, Republic of China. Gift of Mrs. Luo Zhixi.



Plate 2. *Calligraphies and Sketches by Qingxiang*, dated 1696, handscroll (detail of final section), ink and color on paper, 25.7 x 421.2 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.



Plate 3. *Qingxiang Dadizi's Reminiscence of the Thirty-six Peaks*, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 208.8 x 78cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Douglas Dillon, 1976 (1976.1.1). Photograph ©1980 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Plate 4. "Fisherman Stringing Up a Fish," *Landscapes, Figures, and Flowers*, dated 1699, album of 12 leaves, ink or ink and color on paper, each leaf 24.5 x 38 cm, leaf 8, ink on paper. Shanghai Museum.

Plate 5 (facing). *Drunk in Autumn Woods*, hanging scroll (detail), ink and color on paper, 160.5 x 70.2 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of John M. Crawford, Jr., 1987 (1987.202). Photograph ©1983 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.





Plate 6. Dadizi's Portrait of Himself Asleep on an Ox, handscroll, ink on paper, 23 x 47.2 cm. Shanghai Museum.

Plate 7 (facing). "Riverbank of Peach Blossoms," Wilderness Colors, album of 12 leaves, ink and color on paper, each leaf 27.6 x 21.5 cm, leaf 3. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Sackler Fund, 1972 (1972.122). Photograph ©1983 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

煙開蘭葉香風暖
岸夾桃花錦浪生

李青蓮鸚鵡洲句
清湘老人濟時亦拓出引興





Plate 8. *Visit to Master Zhang's Grotto*, handscroll (detail), ink and color on paper, 46.8 x 286 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1982 (1982.126). Photograph ©1995 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

郭外荒丘
一古堂至
今傳說雨
花來風吹
大壑孤煙
起鳥帶
危橋片席
迴顏寺有
鐘晨冥冥
清猿無夢
夜啼哀浮
雲轉時樽
前散何事
仙源問劫
雨花臺子
居家秦淮
時每夕陽
人散多登
此堂吟罷
時更歸之
清湘陳人
大禱子濟

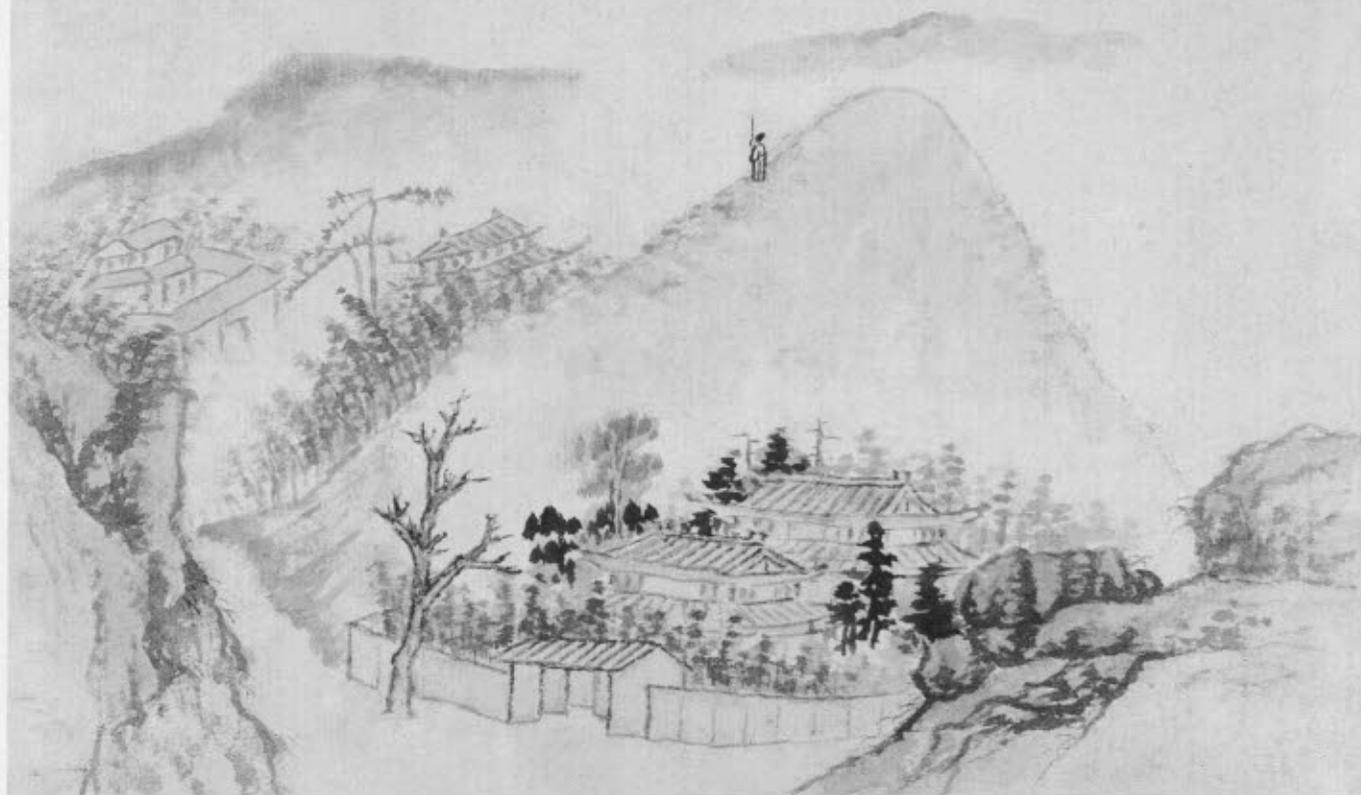
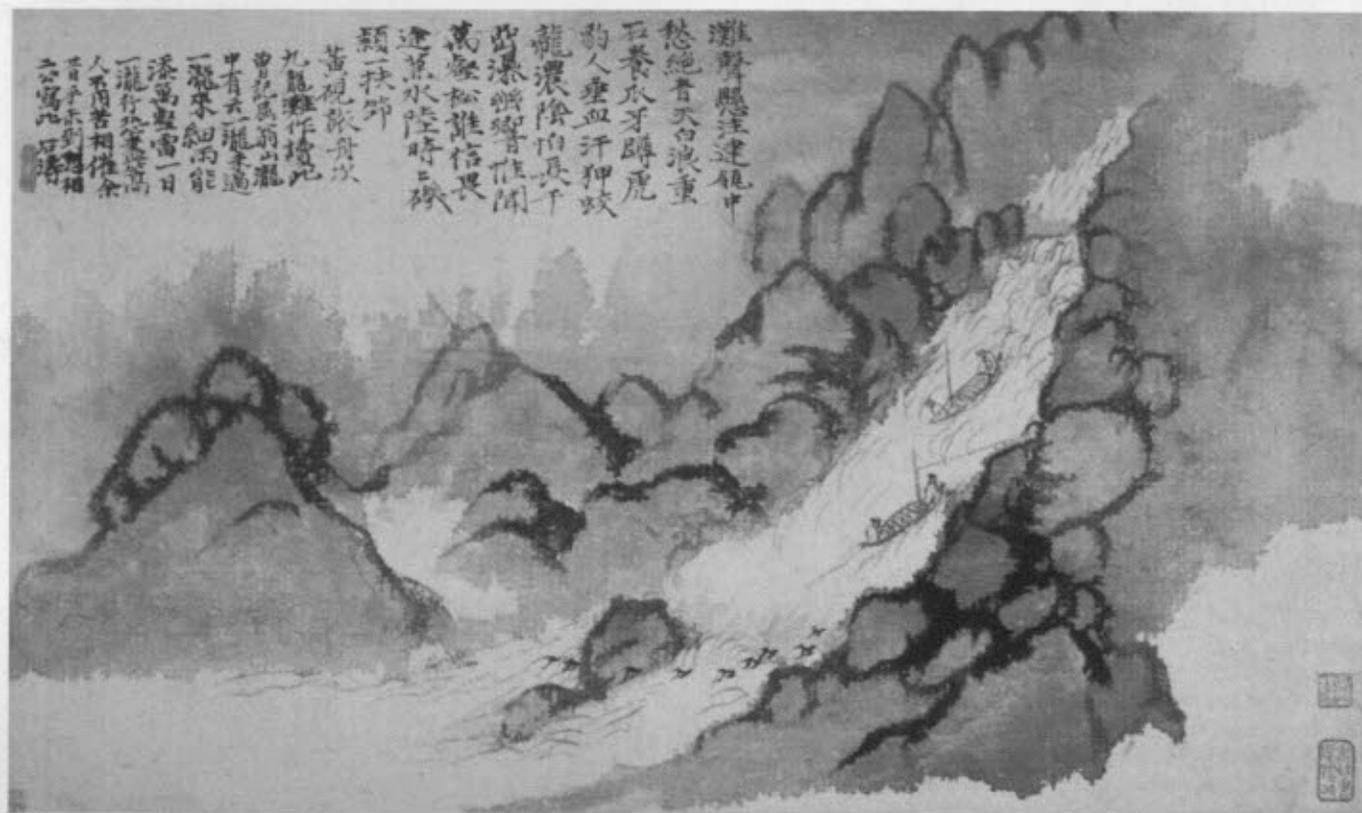


Plate 9 (above). "Flower-Rain Terrace," *Eight Views of the South*, album of 8 leaves, ink and light color on paper, each leaf 20.3 x 27.5 cm, leaf 6. British Museum, London.

Plate 10 (below). "Nine Dragon Rapids," *Illustrations to the Poems of Huang Yanlü*, dated 1701-2, album of 22 paintings, ink and color on paper, each leaf 20.5 x 34 cm, leaf 10. Zhile Lou Collection, Hong Kong.



灘聲懸注建龍中
愁絕青天白浪重
三峽爪牙躡虎
豹人垂血汗狎蛟
龍濃陰怕長干
出瀑巒響誰能聞
萬壑松蘿信長
途兼水陸時
類一扶節
黃視旅舟次
九龍難作境此
曹公氣弱山龍
中有六龍乘過
一龍來劍雨能
添萬壑雷一日
一龍行空雲霧
人角苦相催余
苦手未到相
云寫此



Plate 11 (above). *Walking toward a Mountain Retreat*, dated 1703, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 28.8 x 274.5 cm. Keith McLeod Fund. Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Plate 12 (right). *The Waterfall at Mount Lu*, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 209.7 x 62.2 cm. Sen-Oku Hakkokan, Sumitomo Collection.



石頭先生耽清幽標心
 取意風雅流萬里洪濤
 洗胸臆滿天水露眩雙
 眸架上奇書五千軸
 甕頭美酒三百斛一
 讀一卷傾一巵紫裘
 笑倚梅花屋急霰飛
 已無斷時凍波滾逸
 嶽滾寒涯枯禪我欲
 掃文字卻爲高懷漫
 賦詩冬日者
 石頭先生年道長并
 清湘陳人阿長

Plate 13. "Liu Shitou at Home," *Landscapes for Liu Xiaoshan*, dated 1703, album of 12 leaves, ink or ink and color on paper, each leaf 57.8 x 35.6 cm, leaf 12, ink and color on paper. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. (Purchase: Acquired through the generosity of the Hall Family Foundation.)

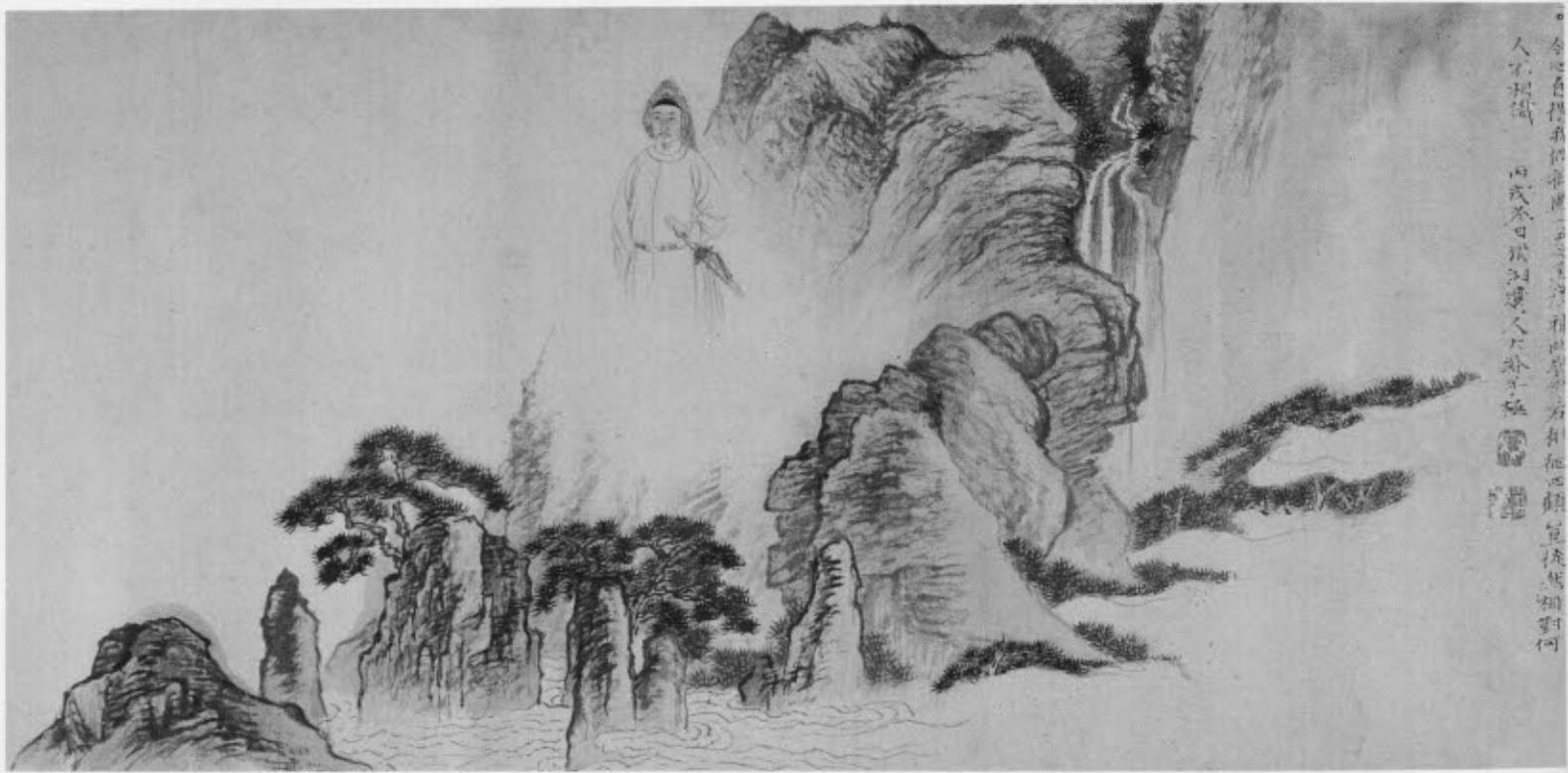


Plate 14. Shitao and Jiang Heng (?), *Portrait of Hong Zhengzhi*, dated 1706, handscroll (detail), ink and color on paper, 36 x 175.8 cm. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation (S87.0205).

Plate 15 (facing). *The Terrace of the Yellow Emperor*, hanging scroll, ink and color on paper, 96 x 52 cm. Tianjin Municipal Art Museum.

黃澗軒輓臺

軒皇登且道與湖書東觀千
載渺難追俄此訪遺踪巖
壑峻已曠古日蔚蒼松浴罷
丹砂泉過宿軒輓宮栴栴
臥煙霞攝衣問鴻源人生匪全
石西日不復東嘉登黃澗期
百歲有然始能著蠶漫紫雲
威風游蒼宇託迹既以邁
知繼安所從所以青雲士長嘯
出樊籠

東翁老年臺先生今初度請
湘大源子招來進膳博歡
十月望日大本堂





Plate 16 (above). "Hibiscus," *Flowers*, album of 9 leaves, ink and color on paper, each leaf 25.6 x 34.5 cm, leaf 7. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation.

Plate 17 (below). "Bamboo and Narcissus Bulbs," *Flowers*, album of 9 leaves, ink and color on paper, each leaf 25.6 x 34.5 cm, leaf 3. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation.





Plate 18. "Caltrops and 'Chicken Heads,'" *Flowers, Vegetables, and Fruit*, ink and color on paper, each leaf 47.5 x 31.2 cm. Collection of the Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.



Plate 19. "Lotus Roots and Pods," *Flowers, Vegetables, and Fruit*, ink and color on paper, each leaf 47.5 x 31.2 cm. Collection of the Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.



Plate 20. "Loquats," *Flowers, Vegetables, and Fruit*, ink and color on paper, each leaf 47.5 x 31.2 cm. Collection of the Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.



Plate 21. "Melons and Vegetable," *Flowers, Vegetables, and Fruit*, ink and color on paper, each leaf 47.5 x 31.2 cm. Collection of the Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.



Plate 22. *Lotuses in a Vase*, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 38.9 x 23.2 cm. Shanghai Museum.

CHAPTER ONE

Shitao, Yangzhou, and Modernity



This book focuses on a period of little more than a decade in the life of the painter Shitao – his final years, from the time he took up residence in his own home in the city of Yangzhou in 1697 until his death in 1707. Prior to this, he had spent his life as a Buddhist monk under the names Yuanji and Shitao, Yuanji being his formal name (*ming*), and Shitao, roughly translatable as “Stone Wave,” the less formal *zi*. After 1696, however, he no longer considered himself a monk, and the act of acquiring a house in Yangzhou can properly be described as marking a new beginning in his life. Shitao was a prolific artist, but especially so after he settled in this southern city: The vast majority of the surviving paintings signed by him date from the years 1697 to 1707. In these years painting and calligraphy became his sole livelihood, the means to an independent existence in the home that he called the Great Cleansing Hall (Dadi Tang). On one level, then, a book devoted to this period of his life must be a study of the reentry into secular life of a monk-painter turned artist-entrepreneur; but there are other elements of Shitao’s story that complicate his reentry and extend its significance. Among these is the fact that from 1697 onward, Shitao presented himself publicly not as Zhu Ruoji – his birth name – but as the Daoist Dadizi, after the name he had chosen for his home. As with his prior engagement as a Buddhist monk, the degree to which his Daoist identity in these final years corresponds to a true

religious commitment has long been a matter of controversy.

Another complicating element is the fact that Shitao belonged to the final generation of Chinese born under the Ming dynasty, which had fallen to Manchu invaders half a century earlier, in 1644. Although during most of his life he did not define himself as a loyalist, his situation was if anything even more difficult, for he was a descendant of one of the princely lineages of the Ming. If loyalists considered it their responsibility to choose the wilderness of withdrawal from public life, Shitao was in theory condemned to embrace it. After half a century, however, in the 1690s the legitimacy of the Qing dynasty of the Manchus was now generally accepted by the Chinese population. From this point of view, Shitao’s reentry might also be seen as a return from the political margins into the fold of Qing authority, yet this would drastically oversimplify Shitao’s case: During a period of several years in midlife, he had in fact rejected the withdrawal expected of a Ming imperial family member living under the alien Qing dynasty by using his painting to seek Qing imperial sponsorship for a career in the Buddhist church. Paradoxically, Shitao’s reentry into secular life under Qing authority coincided with his decision to abandon this pursuit of Qing imperial sponsorship and return to the orbit of Ming loyalism. After 1692 he gradually acknowledged his princely identity much more openly, profiting from the period of relative

tolerance on the part of the Manchu government that had begun with Kangxi's assumption of the reins of power in 1669 but that would not outlast Shitao's death by many years.¹ There is a seeming contradiction here between Shitao's reentry into Qing secular, commercial society and his return to the Ming loyalist fold, but this was effectively abolished by the phenomenon he embodied of the prince-painter as celebrity. In line with this, Shitao's professions of Ming loyalism in these last Yangzhou years did not lead him to burn his bridges with Qing officials or Manchu aristocrats. On the contrary, for these men he continued willingly to execute paintings inscribed with unembarrassed acknowledgments of Qing authority.

To establish a stable architecture of identity for this later Shitao is a vain hope, as Zheng Xie (1693–1765), writing some decades later, was the first to point out:²

Shitao excelled in ten thousand sorts of painting; his orchids and bamboo were just an afterthought. I specialize in orchids and bamboo; these fifty years past, I haven't painted anything else. He sought to be comprehensive, I seek to specialize. How can my specialization not be considered inferior to his comprehensive mastery? Shitao's methods of painting have a thousand transformations and ten thousand changes; he could be extraordinarily strange and hoarily ancient, and then delicately elegant and proper. Compared to Bada Shanren, he certainly went further; there was nothing he couldn't do. Yet Bada's reputation fills the world, while Shitao's is restricted to Yangzhou.³ Why? Bada only used a shorthand method, whereas Shitao's methods are intricate and luxuriant. What is more, Bada had only that one name, which makes him easy to remember, but Shitao's names are endless: He was known as Qingxiang Daoren, Kugua Heshang, Dadizi, and Xiazunzhe. As for his *hao*, there are too many of them: It's just confusing. Bada is only Bada, and Banqiao [Zheng Xie] is only Banqiao. I can't follow Master Shi's example!

As he so often does, Zheng Xie smuggles in profundity of insight under the disguise of self-mockery. The contrast he makes with Bada Shanren is not innocent: Shitao and Bada Shanren were the two great painters of Ming imperial descent. The contrast between them sets in opposition two possible relations to an unnamed and, for Shitao and Bada Shanren themselves, not openly nameable origin. Thus, through the two dead painters, Zheng obliquely evokes a mid-eighteenth-century crisis of political origins among educated Chinese living under the Manchu Qing dynasty.⁴ While this may be the hidden theme of Zheng's text, it is his insights into Bada and Shitao that matter here. The issue is one of names, both the real names that identify artists and the methods (*fa*) of painting that name them in a different way. Bada, the one who remained near his home and who knew

his parents, was secure in a princely identity that he affirmed in everything he did. Although he transposed the name of his imperial Ming family into countless other forms, these could always be read back to his origins. Even when his texts and images are at their most hermetic, their "secret" is never in doubt.⁵ Not so the orphan Shitao, who led a nomadic existence, rendering himself chameleonic by the multiplication of names and methods. Shitao was never securely in any one place: He was always on the verge of slipping into another name, another method, another social role. Though he came close to naming himself openly as Zhu Ruoji at the end of his life, he never quite did, and there were those who doubted his claim to princely status. As obsessive as he was in his self-reference – no other painter had ever said "I" to quite this degree, with quite this consistency or outsider's need – the self-reference nonetheless was always mobile. If his identity has to be characterized, one could say that it was incompatible with a stable architecture, because it was nomadic.

SHITAO: A PORTRAIT

Pursuing Shitao through his many manifestations can be a dizzying experience. All the more reason, then, at the beginning of this decentered study to sketch a portrait of the man. Physically, he was apparently of average height,⁶ and at the time of his 1674 and 1690 portraits was a thin man with a modest moustache and beard (see Plate 1; Figures 53, 61). During the years that concern us, from his midfifties to his midsixties, he represented himself consistently as well-fed and richly hirsute, but this says more about his vanity than his physical appearance, since one poem by a friend describes him c. 1697 as being "thin as a crane."⁷ The evidence of his paintings that during his years as a monk he wore a plain white robe, and sometimes a black head-covering that came down over his shoulders, hiding his tonsured head, is confirmed by another poetic portrait from the mid-1690s.⁸ Once he moved into the Dadi Tang, however, he took to wearing recognizably Daoist costume (probably the hat of a Daoist priest), which in addition to publicizing his shift of religious allegiance had one other advantage: It allowed him to let his hair grow long, avoiding the Qing subject's obligation to shave his forehead and plait his hair in the Manchu-style pigtail. Having spent his earliest years in the far southwestern province of Guangxi and the rest of his childhood in Hubei Province in south-central China, it is likely that he spoke with an accent rather different from the local northern Jiangsu or foreign Anhui, Shanxi, and Shenxi accents that were most commonly heard in Yangzhou. He was

neither a strong nor a well man, having suffered since the 1670s from periodic bouts of illness that became increasingly frequent in the last decade of his life.⁹ The illness is nowhere precisely specified; he uses the term *yaobing*, which could refer to an illness of either the stomach or the kidneys. He particularly suffered from the heat of the Yangzhou summers and early autumn.¹⁰ Nonetheless, he was far from ascetic: He had a lively interest in food, and though he was no longer a strict vegetarian, vegetables and fruit were clearly still a source of great pleasure, not to say an obsession. Shitao maintained a flower garden, in part, perhaps, out of professional necessity: Flower paintings were an important part of his output. One year he also created a vegetable plot near his house "in a secluded spot, hidden away beside the city wall"; again, he executed many paintings of fruits and vegetables.¹¹ Moreover, he seems to have been a frequent wine drinker; since he owned a snuffbox, he may have taken snuff as well. In two surviving letters he speaks of medicines in a way suggesting that they too were something of an obsession.¹² There is also ample evidence in paintings and poems that sexual desire was a consistent preoccupation, even if we do not know how he satisfied it. Neither he nor any of his friends ever makes mention of a wife; he does, on the other hand, refer in one late Yangzhou letter to his *jia* – a word that can be translated alternatively as "family" or "household," mentioning that the members of his *jia* whom he had to support were numerous. It would be perilous, however, to infer from this slender evidence that he married or acquired a concubine, far less that he fathered or adopted any children. Though none of the above possibilities is out of the question, he may simply have been referring to household servants and studio assistants.

There is no reason to think that Shitao's renunciation of monastic orders after 1696 entailed a rejection of Buddhist faith. He continued to spend time with Buddhist monks, pay his respects at the altars of Buddhist temples, and use his old seals with his Buddhist names. At the same time, however, he presented himself publicly as a Daoist adept, not only dressing as a Daoist but naming his house after the celebrated Great Cleansing Grotto at Yuhang outside the city of Hangzhou. As we shall see, this new persona was immediately recognized and accepted by his contemporaries. One letter addressed to a Daoist priest hints at involvement with a particular monastery, perhaps as a member of a benevolent association connected with the monastery; and in a rare image of Daoist religious practice, he represented himself in the act of meditation (see Figure 181). To his contemporaries, however, his religious orientation, like his family ancestry, was simply one facet of his larger so-

cial profile; for Shitao was, in educated circles, a famous man, a cultural celebrity, known above all as one of the great nonconformist artists of his day. In this respect, his strangeness or originality (*qi*) was as much a source of wonder and fascination as his incomparable technical skill with the brush.

Much, if not most, of Shitao's time must have been taken up with painting and calligraphy; in fact, he seems to have worked constantly, even during illness (see Figures 17, 137, 139, 205). This passion and self-discipline was accompanied by what could be called professional pride: He cared deeply about the materials that he used, the different kinds of paper, ink, pigments, and brushes; and though many of the works that left his studio were of inferior quality, either because he painted them under pressure or because they were ghostpainted by his assistants, this was an aspect of his professional life that clearly troubled him. Maintaining a supply of good materials would have involved a certain amount of running around, but the commercial aspects of his business must have been even more time-consuming. Customers had to be entertained, or sometimes visited, and it is not unlikely that he had to correspond with customers on a daily basis. Some time also went to teaching, and it was during these late years that he wrote his extraordinary treatise on the practice of painting, commonly (but probably erroneously) known today under the title of the *Huayu lu* (Recorded Remarks on Painting).

Shitao's art did not make him rich. In one letter he speaks of his home and his illness as requiring him to work professionally, and indeed the operating costs of running a home-based business with a certain staff, together with the need to purchase medicines on an ongoing basis, may well have drained his resources. There are scattered indications of material generosity – paintings sent as presents to distant friends, a painting donated to be sold to support the printing of his biographer's book, another bequeathed at his death to the same man – but far more evidence of a preoccupation with money, perhaps not unexpected in someone who had spent most of his life without much of it, and who on current evidence had no family to support him in his old age.¹³ Of his possessions, apart from the house, we know very little: Among the most substantial may have been a plot of land for his grave.¹⁴ The snuffbox he owned, made from a Tibetan skull, later came into the hands of his student Cheng Ming; other possessions included a ritual vessel presented to him by the same student, rubbings of early calligraphy, a Ming blue-and-white porcelain-handled writing brush of the Wanli period given to him by a monk, and at least two paintings by Bada Shanren.¹⁵ Presumably there were many more such objects, and books besides.

"I have a difficult temperament," wrote Shitao in 1694. His biographers confirm that he was a difficult person, impatient of conventions he considered useless, prone to sudden accesses of anger, and at other times haughty, perhaps due to pride in his aristocratic ancestry. He was not erudite or even highly educated in the conventional literati sense, having acquired his education in an unsystematic and unorthodox manner. "When I was young I did not read books but liked to write calligraphy and paint. As an adult, I didn't understand [Confucian] virtue but was good at discussing poetry and Chan."¹⁶ When the publisher Zhang Chao approached him with a request to publish some of his poetry, he declined:

I have always been clumsy with words and poetry. It's only the *jinti* poetic form that I have perhaps been able to master. As for the other forms, I don't practice any of them. Nor would I dare to publish [my poems] and have them be subject to the ridicule of others. Please forgive me. (Appendix 2: letter 2)

The mixture of insecurity and lucidity seen here is characteristic of his relationship to mainstream literati culture with its bookish bias. "In my life I have not been a reader of books; my character is straightforward and I have no use for ornamentation."¹⁷ Cultural expectations aside, he was sensitive to slights and did not allow himself to be taken for granted. One biographer, Li Lin, hints that he did not have much of a sense of humor. His ill health can not have made his character any easier: "being old and weak I find it hard to mix with people around the city."¹⁸ On the other hand, he was not without a convivial side to his nature. He joined friends on outings and made visits to friends and acquaintances, sometimes staying with them for a while. A letter invites a customer and friend to "come by for poetry in time for the evening breeze"; a poem by Li Lin thanks Shitao for a banquet; a painting inscription describes the pleasures of a day when children picked the vegetables from his vegetable garden for him, culminating in a meal at his house (see Figure 189).¹⁹ Shitao even put guests up when necessary;²⁰ in fact, his home would often have been a lively place, with visits from friends, customers, and students. Here his more forbidding characteristics must often have given way to the intensity and warmth familiar from his paintings and poems. Li Lin reports various pithy and memorable statements, including accounts of dreams, which suggest a desire to entertain and impress. This may also have been a factor in his willingness to paint in front of others (see Figures 102, 103). When alone, meanwhile, he could be extremely emotional; some of his most private writing shows him utterly joyful, while other texts show him prone to

bouts of self-pity. There were sometimes regrets that his long years of travel were over: After 1695 he left the Yangzhou area only once, for a visit to nearby Nanjing. Loneliness constantly threatened. With (apparently) no family to turn to, he invested much in friendship and wrote often – in inscriptions, poems, and letters – of friends old and young whom he missed.

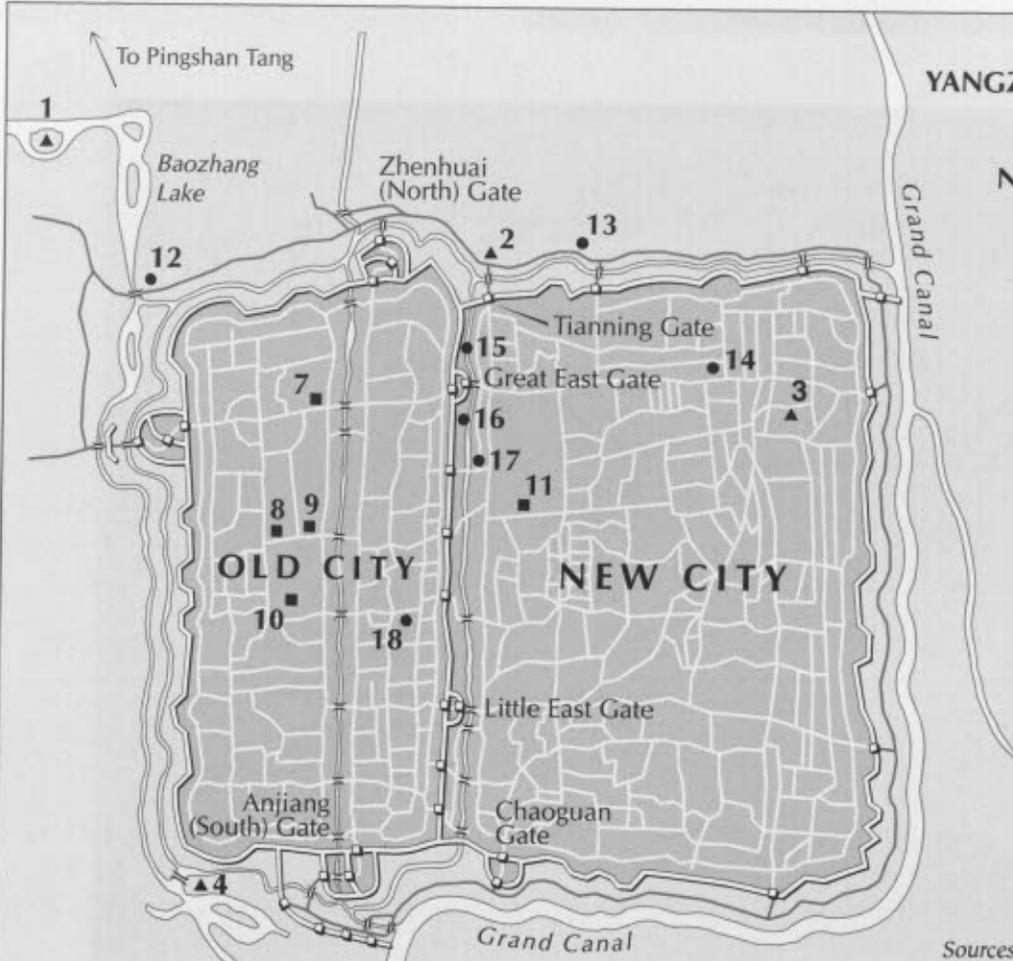
YANGZHOU CIRCA 1700

During his first lengthy sojourn in Yangzhou from 1687 to 1689, and again during the years following his return from Beijing in 1692, Shitao appears to have found lodgings at the Jinghui Monastery, located just outside the southern city wall (Map 1). It is generally assumed that a studio much used by him in the late 1680s and early 1690s, the Hall of the Great Tree, was located there.²¹ Jinghui Monastery was closely associated with Shitao's immediate Chan lineage (it was the site of the funerary stupa of his dharma "grandfather," Muchen Daomin), and his acquaintance with it extended at least as far back as a 1673 visit to Yangzhou.

In late 1696 or at the very beginning of 1697 he finally moved inside the city walls, into a city of narrow streets and canals, of one- and two-story houses; a city without hills, where the roofs of the more important temples and official buildings and of the gates in the city walls provided landmarks. A population of perhaps two or three hundred thousand people inhabited the approximately four square kilometers enclosed by the irregular rectangle of the crenellated city wall, which was oriented roughly according to the cardinal axes.²² Yangzhou was both a commercial and an administrative city. Its canals, both inside and around the city, were working waterways, chockablock with junks and barges, constant reminders that the city stood on the north bank of the Yangzi River, less than a day's journey from the river's edge at Guazhou, and that the Grand Canal – the major communication artery linking south and north China – skirted the city. The city's visible prosperity was based partly on this strategic location in relation to transportation networks but, above all, on the salt fields to the east (Figure 1): It was in Yangzhou that both the salt merchants and the central government administration of the Liang-Huai salt monopoly made their headquarters, although the salt transport boats probably bypassed Yangzhou itself; the boats to be seen in the city serviced the consumer city, its markets, shops, restaurants, and leisure activities. The Liang-Huai salt administration was only one of several layers of local administration that the city supported, the others being responsible for Yangzhou Prefecture and, at the county

Map 1.

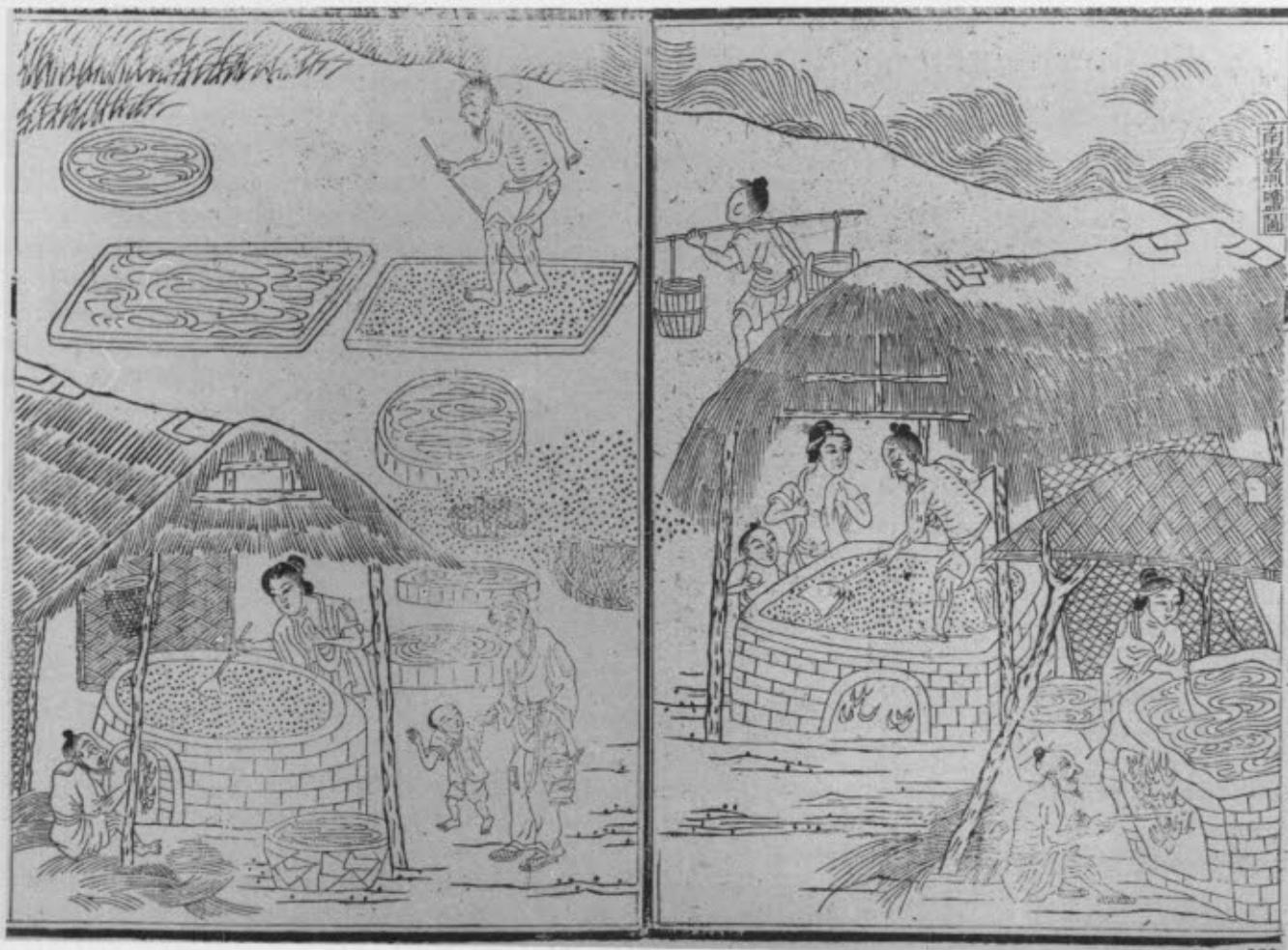
**YANGZHOU IN THE EARLY QING DYNASTY
WITH INSET MAP OF
NORTHERN JIANGSU (JIANGBEI)**



- 1. Fahai Temple
 - 2. Tianning Monastery
 - 3. Fanli Monastery
 - 4. Jinghui Monastery
 - 5. Literary Peak Pagoda
 - 6. Gaomin Temple
-
- 7. Prefectural school
 - 8. Jiangdu County yamen
 - 9. County school
 - 10. Yangzhou Prefecture yamen
 - 11. Liang Huai Salt Administration yamen
-
- 12. Red Bridge
 - 13. Plum Blossom Ridge
 - 14. Anding Academy
 - 15. Dadi Tang (alternative 1)
 - 16. Dadi Tang (alternative 2)
 - 17. Shrine of Master Dong
 - 18. Wenxuan Lou

Sources: Based on Xie, Liu, et al. 1884; Finnane 1993.





1. Unidentified artist, *Boiling Salt in the South Salt-field*, woodblock illustration from *Liang-Huai yanfa zhi*, 1693.

level, Jiangdu *xian*. Yangzhou was also one of the designated provincial centers for the second-level examinations that were the gateway to the *jinshi* examination in the capital. As Jonathan Spence long ago pointed out, Shitao “must have been aware of the huge influx of students every three years, as they crammed the city to compete for the *juren* degree.”²³

The city was divided into western and eastern halves, known by Shitao’s day as the Old City and New City, respectively. Expansion to the east had in 1556 led to the new and more commercial area being walled in to create the New City, but the eastern wall of the Old City with its two great gates remained, and the old exterior canal skirting that wall had now become a north-south thoroughfare just inside the New City.²⁴ Prefectural (Yangzhou) and county (Jiangdu) government offices were located in the Old City; the Liang-Huai salt administration was based in the New. It is possibly a view of the Old City from the south that Shitao had in mind when he painted an album leaf that he entitled “Wu-

cheng” (Overgrown City), a common name for Yangzhou, inscribing on the painting the following poem (Figure 2):

I fly in on the back of a crane, in the evening’s
clearing light,
Within the painting, smoke from the fires of ten
thousand homes is drifting.
Since I hurriedly brought my robe and cap south,
I have depended on a reputation established in this
city.

From an area of trees mixed with buildings where stands a pagoda (perhaps Literary Peak Pagoda), we look across the busy water thoroughfare of the Grand Canal and a built-up area of wharves and buildings toward a gate (perhaps River Pacification Gate, the south gate of the Old City); roofs beyond indicate that we are looking into the city itself.

Conversely, it is a moonlit view looking north from just inside the northern wall of the Old City that Shitao offers us in the handscroll *West of the Bamboos* (Figure

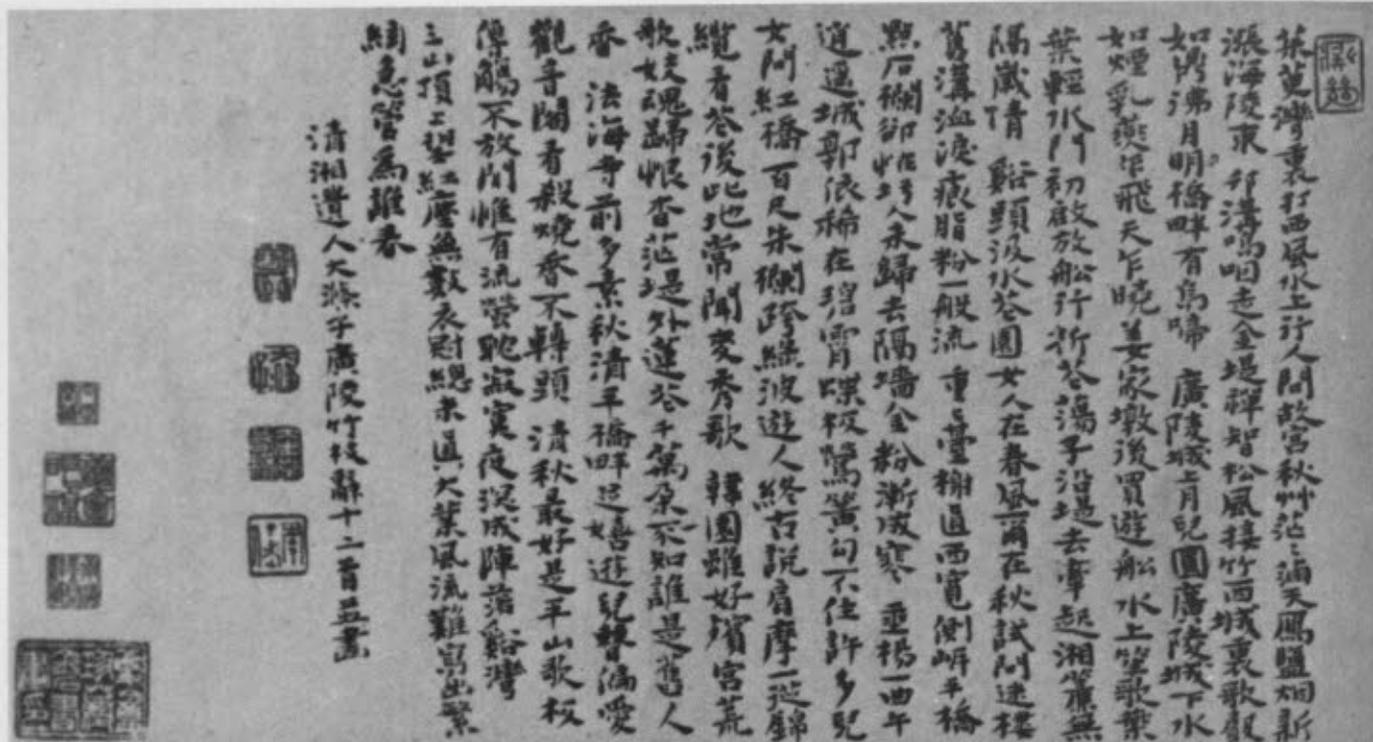
2 (facing). “Wucheng,” *Landscapes*, album of 8 leaves, ink and color on paper, leaf 4. Private collection, USA.



兼城
鷗背飛來照晚晴
萬家煙火畫中行
夕南渡
衣冠後一任閒名
挂此城
大滌子

畫

畫



3), beginning (at the far right) in the east with the water gate located between Tianning Gate and the point in the wall where the Old and New cities met. Neither the Old nor the New City walls was straight at this point, with the result that the gate occupied something of a crook in the overall city perimeter. Once through the gate, boats from the north-south canal of the New City could join those on the canal that ran alongside the northern wall. The eastern extension of this east-west canal is indicated by the watercourse that breaks the top edge of the painting just to the left of the water gate, and the New City itself can be imagined to lie above the water gate as it is shown. The Old City, meanwhile, should lie below the painting's bottom edge (as indicated by the top of a wall), and beyond its right-hand edge. To judge by the bridge in front of it, the imposing building toward the left end of the wall as shown corresponds to the gate tower above Zhenhuai Gate (the north gate of the Old City), which was located a few hundred meters along the wall west of the water gate.²⁵

In the 1690s Yangzhou was gradually recovering from the economic depression into which it had been plunged by the fall of the Ming and the pre-1684 Qing ban on maritime trade, its full recovery hampered by a succession of serious floods in northern Jiangsu during the several years either side of 1700. In the admittedly more prosperous 1720s, a much-impressed Jesuit visitor noted: "there is such a Multitude of People in the Streets, and the Canals are so crowded with Barks, that there is but just Room enough to pass."²⁶ Antonia Finnane's account of eighteenth-century Yangzhou is probably al-

so valid for Shitao's time: "The main trading district hugged the wall separating the Old City from the New, trailing the length of the city from north to south but busiest in the south-west corner, whence it extended marginally into the south-east of the Old City." The north-south canal on the New City side was lined on both sides "with houses of entertainment . . . here local prostitutes vied with competitors from Suzhou."²⁷ The concentration of brothels, teahouses, wineshops, and restaurants along the canal brought to mind Nanjing's Qin-Huai entertainment area, with the result that the canal came to be known as Little Qin-Huai.

Like everyone else, Shitao used the "barks" as taxis:

At the crack of dawn I make the effort to find a
small boat

Rather than wait for the sun to rise and the summer
heat to descend.

A giant of the writing brush is on an imperial
mission,

Staying among the stars on Guangling's
waterfront.²⁸

This poem excerpt, with its rare glimpse of Shitao's passage through the urban landscape, describes a visit to see a Hanlin academician, Di Yi, who had arrived from Beijing on government business and was staying in the Literary Star Pavilion – presumably a hostelry of some kind beside the Grand Canal.²⁹ Shitao set out on this 1697 visit from the two-story house into which he had recently moved, situated in the cramped, low-class area outside the Great East Gate (the northern gate of the east-



ern Old City wall) squeezed in between the wall and the canal. This area, which did not clearly belong to either the Old or the New City, is vividly described in Li Dou's exhaustive evocation of Yangzhou in its mid-eighteenth-century heyday, *Chronicle of the Painted Boats of Yangzhou*:³⁰

Outside the Great East Gate in the shadow of the [Old] City wall, the bank of the canal is completely built up with houses. A street runs along the side of the wall, [only] three to five chi wide, which the locals call Block-the-Wall Alley, and which [then] turns east, giving access to the canal bank. The alley used to have many weird occurrences. Every evening there would appear a man around four chi tall wearing emerald green clothes. When he saw people he would strip off their clothes in search of raw meat, but if he encountered a lighted lantern, then he would slink off. The residents of the area experiencing this as an affliction, a Daoist priest asked to help, saying that this kind of weird occurrence was easy to exorcise, and ordered them to set up a Mount Tai rock in order to show that they accepted. [Then,] on the last night of the year he carried out a sacrifice using three pieces of raw meat, using [religious] methods to establish the rock in place. With this, the weird occurrences came to an end. The canal bank below the wall in the area outside the Great East Gate is half occupied by the back walls of residential houses, and half occupied by streets that run along the bank. There are no houses built out over the canal [on piles] except for Wang Tianfu's brothel.

Shitao's house stood on one of the canal-side streets, West Island Street, probably facing east with a view over

3. *West of the Bamboos* (begins on p. 11).

the street onto the canal and the New City beyond; it is not clear, however, whether his house lay north or south of the Great East Gate.³¹ From his bed Shitao could hear the footsteps of passers-by.³² The house was not very large: just three or four rooms, according to Li Lin. When Bada Shanren sent Shitao a hanging scroll for his new house, the walls were not high enough to hold it; his studio no doubt had his own work everywhere. Li Lin includes in his *Dadizi zhuan* (Biography of Dadizi) an anecdote about another part of the house: One day Shitao painted a branch of bamboo in his reception room, apparently directly on the wall, and then inscribed a quatrain beside it. In the poem he mythologizes himself as an orphaned descendant of the Ming imperial family:³³

I have never permitted myself to cultivate this [plant]
lightly,
Icy clouds accompanying torn-up roots.
If, following the thunderclaps, you should take a
look
Its offspring will be growing in the wall's ruins.

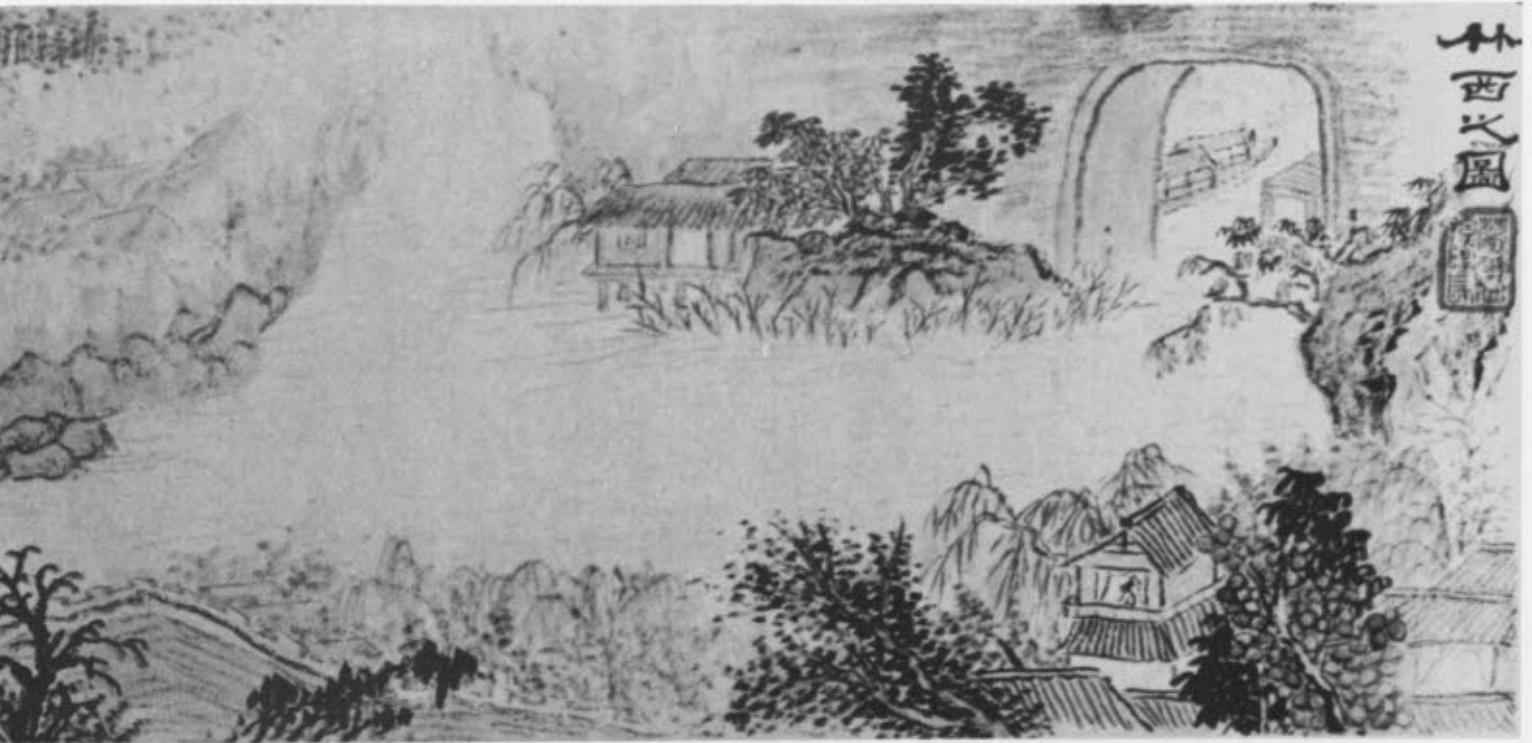
Despite the modesty of the neighborhood and the proximity of the city's hedonic district the length of the Little Qin-Huai Canal, the site of his Dadi Tang would have been attractive to Shitao for several reasons. The area was presumably relatively inexpensive and yet was centrally located. It placed him on the edge of the New City, where his wealthy merchant patrons lived, and



within striking distance of both of the city's busiest shopping areas, in the southwestern corner of the New City. In the area just across the canal from Shitao's house, meanwhile, stood the Shrine of Master Dong (Figure 4), commemorating the Confucian politician and philosopher Dong Zhongshu (c. 179–c. 104 B.C.E.). Established in the early sixteenth century in a former academy across the street from the salt commissioner's yamen, the shrine had benefited from Kangxi's promotion of Confucian orthodoxy. Intriguingly, in *Chronicle of the Painted Boats of Yangzhou* there are indications that the shrine was, at least later in the century, a center of cultural activities. There was, for example, a theater specializing in the *pinghua* storytelling for which Yangzhou was famous; a leading *qin*-player and actor then lived in the shrine itself; and, most important, one of the city's leading mounting shops for paintings and calligraphies stood next to it.³⁴ Shitao would no doubt also have appreciated the fact that Yangzhou's best-known Daoist establishment, Fanli Monastery (which was popularly known as Hortensia Monastery), was located on the main street running due east from the Great East Gate through the New City (Figure 5). Also within striking distance was the great Tianning Monastery, standing immediately to the north of the city facing the New City's Tianning Gate; its West Garden, pictured by Shitao in a 1693 album leaf (Figure 6), was a favorite place for artists and literati to meet and sojourn. Other works, painted by Shitao in different parts of the monastery in

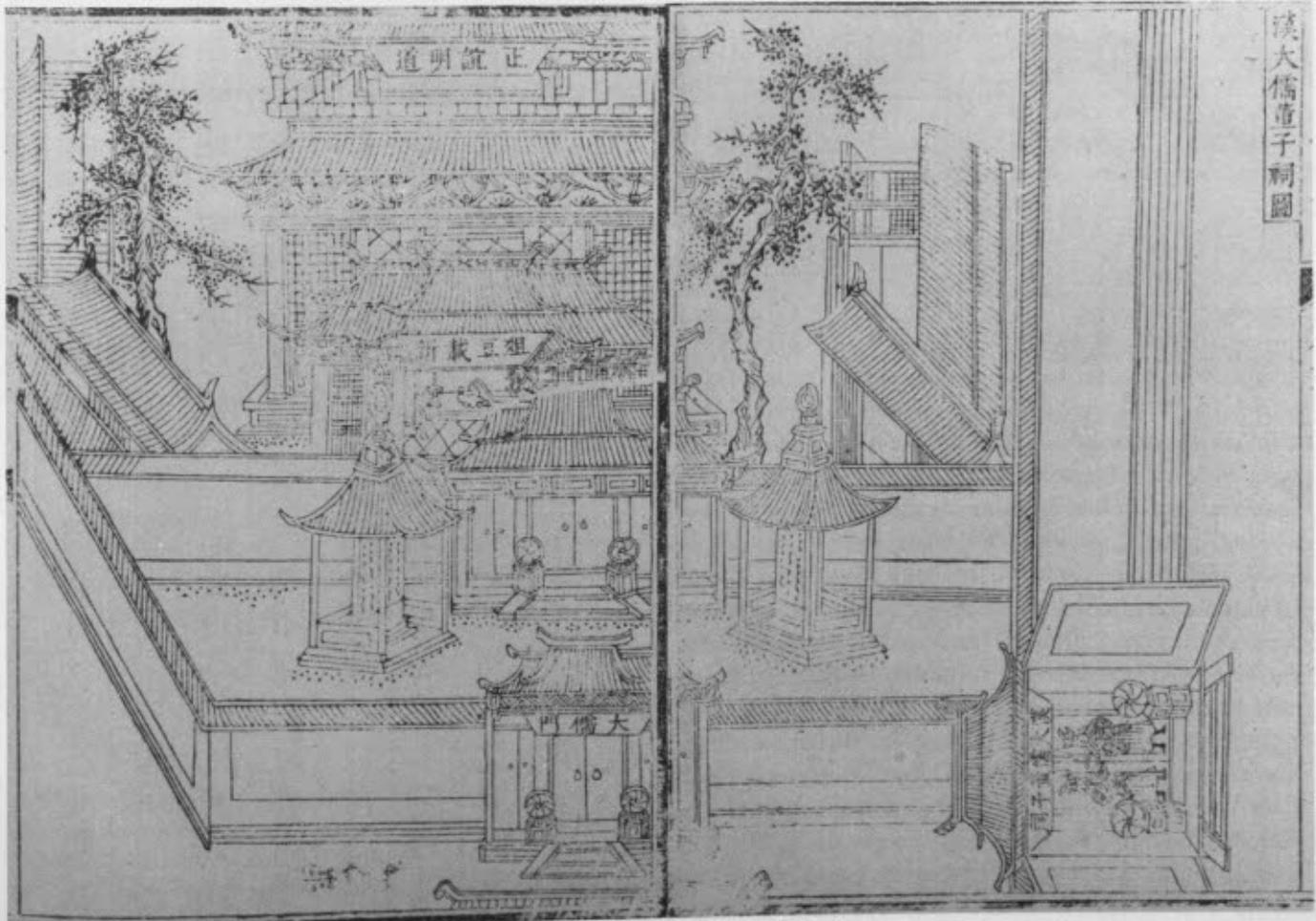
1687 and 1701, respectively, confirm his personal connection with cultural activities there over a long period of time.³⁵ Indeed it is likely to have lasted until the end of his life: When in 1705–6 Cao Yin, as the Liang–Huai Salt Commissioner, set up an editorial office in Yangzhou to take responsibility for an imperial edition of the *Complete Poetry of the Tang*, he located it in the monastery. This project entered Shitao's immediate world, since on one occasion he exchanged poems with Cao Yin and one of the Hanlin academicians who made up the editorial team.³⁶ Finally, with Shitao's house standing so near to the Little Qin–Huai Canal, he could easily take advantage of water transportation to reach more inaccessible points, such as the scenic northern outskirts or even nearby towns such as Yizheng and Shaobo (see Map 1, inset).

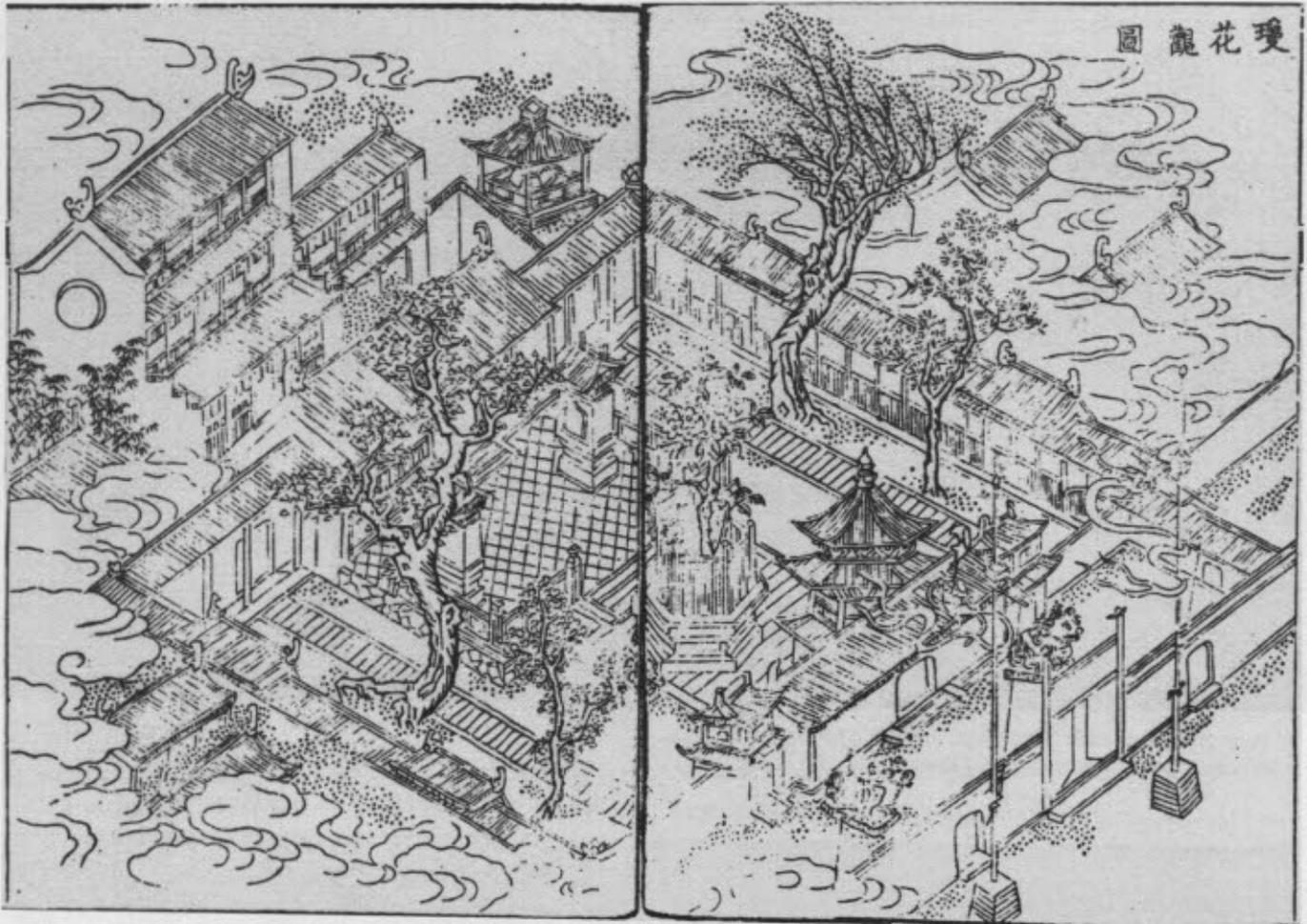
The sense one gets from du Halde and many contemporary Chinese writers of a crowded city, dense with buildings no less than people, is rarely visible in Yangzhou paintings of the time – perhaps logically enough: One of the traditional roles of paintings (and of gardens) was to serve as an antidote to the constraints of urbanism by opening up a space of nature and free movement. Only in a rare and highly original image – such as Xiao Chen's (active c. 1671–97) cropped and flattened view over a waterway into the covered corridors, courtyards, and open rooms of a wealthy household from which most of the space seems to have been squeezed out (Figure 7) – suggests something of the psychological expe-



3. *West of the Bamboos*, handscroll, ink and color on paper, 22.2 x 180 cm. Private collection, Hong Kong.

4. Unidentified artist, *The Shrine of Dong Zhongshu, Yangzhou*, illustration from *Liang-Huai yanfa zhi*, 1693.





5. Unidentified artist, *Fanli Monastery, Yangzhou*, woodblock illustration from *Yangzhou fuzhi*, 1733.

rience of Yangzhou urban space. Scattered throughout Yangzhou, particularly in and around the Old City, were houses of this kind with private gardens, some built by officials who had retired to Yangzhou but the majority by merchants. The local garden builders excelled in the artful construction of miniature mountains covered with paths and riddled with caves. These, together with the mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquers associated with the name of Jiang Qianli, hardwood furniture and objects richly inlaid with hardstones and colored ivory, and Yuan Jiang's equally artful decorative paintings, defined turn-of-the-century Yangzhou as a center of baroque elegance (Figure 8). The distinctive artificiality of the mountain forms in the paintings of the Yuan workshop and of other Yangzhou decorators of the time can be understood, from one point of view, as a transposition into painting of the aesthetic of the miniature garden mountain.

The extravagance was perhaps most obviously visible in clothing. Among a number of accounts, the most helpful here is one from the 1690s written by a local

Ming loyalist, Li Gan (a relative of Li Lin).³⁷ His discussion of Yangzhou dress, written from the perspective of someone who personally refused to respect Qing regulations, takes us directly into Shitao's world, though the moralistic sense of outrage is alien to Shitao himself:

There are certainly contemporary regulations on dress, but they were not established for my generation in the wilderness. . . . In all the Empire, it is only in the city and prefecture of Yangzhou that clothes and accessories have to follow the times. As soon as people learn to walk, they are only afraid of having something that doesn't fit in; and if they see anything that is slightly different, they are bound to follow the person, pointing and offering reproaches; if they do not laugh at him, they will jostle him. Not that the authorities have ever given them a merit banner for upholding the law! Alas, how superficial people are. The decline of customs reaches its nadir in Yangzhou Prefecture. To be born in this era, and in this place – what is to be done? If children were expected not to wear fur and silks, this was the old way of teaching them to stay simple. But today the custom is for young people to wear expensive clothes from childhood onward. Moreover, they soon add a bamboo or a cloth hat, just like adults. Yi! If fathers and elder brothers teach their sons and younger brothers in this way, how can they expect them not to lose touch with their childlike heart

when they grow up? It is to the point where concubines leaving their wealthy homes to go out wrap themselves in *yu* silk, protect their calves with brocaded and embroidered silk, and [in their palanquins rest on] silk-covered cushions and seats. Nor is this the only prefecture like this. How lamentable!

In the eighteenth century, most merchants lived in the New City, and it seems likely that this would have been true in Shitao's time, too.³⁸ Some of the most extravagant merchant mansions and elaborately planned gardens lay outside the city proper, however, several of them on the opposite bank of the canal that skirted the northern wall of the Old City. A view of this area takes up the central section of *West of the Bamboos*, following the canal until it intersects Baozhang Lake (later known as Slender West Lake), which, from the north-west corner of the city, meandered out into the countryside to the northwest. The lake area is little more than suggested in the painting by the willow-lined banks and

6. "West Garden," *Landscapes for Yao Man*, dated 1693, album of 8 leaves, ink or ink and color on paper, each leaf 38 x 24.5 cm, leaf 7, ink and color on paper. Guangzhou Art Gallery.



7. Xiao Chen (active c. 1671–97), *Awaiting Guests*, hanging scroll, ink and color on paper, 119 x 66cm. Kailodo Limited, New York.

distant hills that close out the composition (see Figure 3). Pleasure-boats (the titular “painted boats of Yangzhou” of Li Dou’s later chronicle), here shown moored for the night, can elsewhere in Shitao’s paintings be seen in use: for example, in a 1702 album leaf (Figure 9). The boats were hired by customers at the eastern end of the canal; after traveling the length of the city wall, they turned north at the western end of the canal to pass beneath the lacquered Red Bridge that marked the beginning of the lake. The banks of the lake, planted with willow trees, were dotted with pavilions and private (but not necessarily inaccessible) gardens, flower nurseries and restaurants, temples and cemeteries (Figure 10). The most important of the temples was Fahai Temple, which

stood on an island near the end of the lake. For early Qing literati, as for the *pinghua* storytellers, the area surrounding the lake was densely resonant, this being believed to be where the Sui dynasty emperor Yangdi (r. 604–18) built his fabulous pleasure palaces during a brief and disastrous attachment to Yangzhou's southern charms that ended in his murder. Still further to the northwest, beyond the lake itself, one arrived at a small hill where the Song dynasty literatus and official Ouyang Xiu (1007–72) had built a home, long since destroyed, for his moments of leisure. During the Kangxi period, Pingshan Tang was restored and became one of the city's main tourist sites; the emperor himself stayed there in 1689 (see Figure 58). It afforded a fine view south toward the Yangzi; to the north could be surveyed the area where Yangdi's tomb was reputed to lie (see Figure 29). East of Baozhang Lake, meanwhile, lay the site of the long-destroyed Zhuxi Ting, or Pavilion West of the Bamboos, known to every educated person through a celebrated poem by the Tang poet Du Mu (803–52). Shitao's similarly named handscroll (see Figure 3) shows that area, another popular destination for outings, lying among the distant mists behind the clustered buildings of the central section. The lost pavilion takes form again in an album leaf by Shitao where mist blurs not only the view but the centuries as well (Figure 11). From the canal to Red Bridge and the lake, and from Pingshan Tang back to Zhuxi Ting, this scenic section of the city's northern outskirts constituted a vast park of sorts that in autumn attracted the poets and, in spring, the crowds:

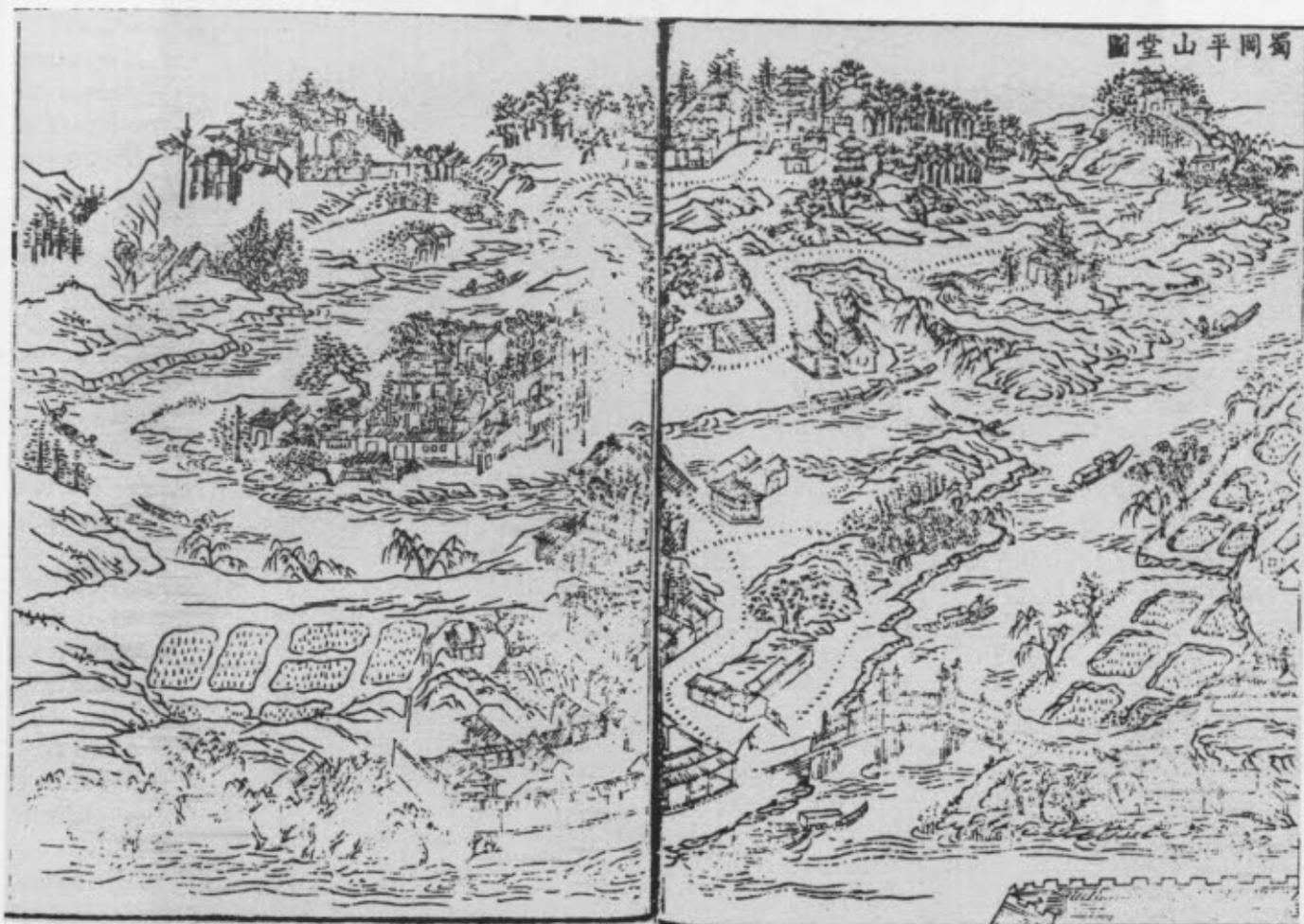
A hundred feet of vermilion palings straddle the
green waves,
The visitors talk endlessly about how crowded it is.
Once they start looking at the flowers behind silk
ropes
One is forever hearing popular songs.



8. Yuan Jiang (active c. 1681–1724 or later), *Landscape with Villa*, dated 1711, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, dimensions unavailable. Gift of Edward Jackson Holmes. Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



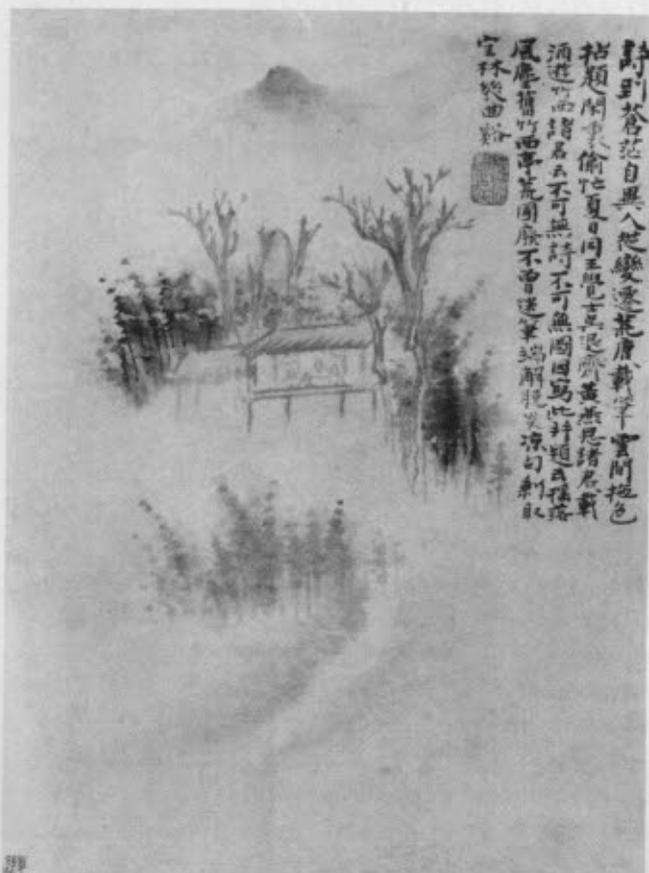
9. "Boating in the Outskirts of Yangzhou," *Landscapes Painted at Wanglù Tang*, dated 1702, album of 8 leaves, ink and ink and color on paper, each leaf 18.6 x 29.5 cm, leaf 8, ink and color on paper. Östasiatiska Museet, Stockholm.



10 (above). Unidentified artist, *Baozhang Lake*, woodblock illustration from *Yangzhou fuzhi*, 1733.

11 (right). *The Pavilion West of the Bamboos*, album leaf mounted as a hanging scroll, ink and colors on paper 32.5 x 24 cm. Formerly Christie's New York.

This poem is one of a set of “bamboo-branch songs” (*zhuzhi ci*) describing contemporary Yangzhou that Shitao inscribed at the end of *West of the Bamboos*. He also illustrated them separately in other paintings, such as the album leaf shown in Figure 9, where the inscribed poem (the first in the set, which overall takes us on a journey from east to west through Yangzhou’s northern outskirts) describes a boat trip in the area to the north-east of the city and, in a pungent juxtaposition, evokes not only the lost palaces of the Sui but also the salt-laden mists still further to the east.³⁹ Another of the poems is inscribed on a fine lotus painting, where the artist first evokes the image of singing girls returning to the city as darkness falls, through a part of the Baozhang Lake area where a commercial pleasure garden adjoined a derelict temple (Figure 12). He then imagines the innumerable lotuses of that area as reincarnations of singing girls of the past, and wonders “which one bears the fragrance of a former acquaintance?”





韓國雖好梵宮荒歌妓游歸恨
香溢堤外蓮花千萬朵不知誰是
舊人香
大滌子和上林寫

The cemeteries in the northwest, meanwhile, as Shitao and other poets noted elsewhere, brought to mind a Yangzhou very different from the prosperous consumer city of the period around 1700. The Manchu siege of Yangzhou in 1645 and the five-day massacre (at least partly carried out by Han Chinese soldiers under Qing command) that brought it to an end were still within living memory. Few Yangzhou families can have escaped entirely and many were decimated, as corpses and severed body parts clogged the canals and littered the streets, and homes were reduced to terrified and bloody silence.⁴⁰ When Wang Shizhen (1634–1711), later to become one of the most influential poets of the Kangxi period, organized as a Qing official in Yangzhou a huge gathering of poets at Red Bridge barely a decade later in 1662, his initiative met with an immediate enthusiastic response that would be wholly surprising were it not so obvious that the event was felt in some sense to mark the symbolic rebirth of the city. If the massacre was not part of Shitao's Yangzhou directly, it was in fact at the heart of the Yangzhou of some of his closest friends. For them, this dangerous memory was often displaced into a coded poetic discourse on the fall of another dynasty – the Sui, whose last emperor (the aforementioned Yangdi) had been murdered in Yangzhou – but it was also commemorated in sites such as Plum Blossom Mound, located just east of Tianning Monastery. There, survivors buried the clothes of the defending Ming official Shi Kefa, whose loyalist martyrdom was seen as legitimizing the intransigence without which there might have been no massacre. Plum blossom, as a symbol of survival and remembrance, was the preeminent emblem of “wilderness” Yangzhou (Figure 13). In his paintings of this theme, often accompanied by poems evoking local sites and the fall of the Ming, Shitao regu-



13. *Plum Blossoms*, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 51.5 x 35.2 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

larly acknowledged his Yangzhou friends' remembrance of the city's recent tragic past.

It was forty years before a Qing emperor came to the South, and to Yangzhou, in person. From 1684 onward, however, Kangxi made the city a regular part of his periodic inspection tours of the South, and each imperial visit inscribed the city with further signs of Qing power. Temples were honored with new names; calligraphed titles and poems from the imperial hand were carved in wood and stone to grace more and more of the city's public buildings; the city's merchants eventually (1705) built a temporary palace south of the city, next to Gao-

12 (facing). *Lotus Pond*, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 93 x 50.2 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

min Temple at Precious Pagoda Wharf, for the emperor to use during his visits; a government printing operation was established to carry out appropriately impressive imperial publishing projects; and Kangxi multiplied his gifts to leading Yangzhou citizens and to the city. Shitao, who in 1689 had sought and been granted a brief audience with the emperor during the second visit, had long since given up his ambitions at the capital by the time of the third imperial visit in 1699, and by the time of the fifth and sixth visits in 1705 and 1707 he had more or less openly assumed the identity of a Ming imperial family member; yet his responses to the Manchu emperor's presence in Yangzhou were anything but hostile. He came closest to criticism in 1705, when he commented indirectly on that year's Southern Tour in a painting of the summer's terrible floods in the Yangzhou area (see Figure 41). The emperor's personal inspection of the hydraulic system was one of the principal goals of the Southern Tours: Not only did natural disasters threaten social and economic stability, but they were also, symbolically, the most inauspicious of signs as regards the dynasty's claim to the Mandate of Heaven. In the long inscription to his view from Yangzhou over the flooded area to the north of the city, Shitao links the floods directly to the Mandate. However, his meditation on the rise and fall of dynasties reveals not secret Ming loyalist hopes but a fear of renewed disruption through an unsuitable heir apparent. Like the pragmatic salt merchants of Yangzhou, Shitao had much invested in the Qing restoration of order.

My description of Yangzhou as it appeared at the time, so to speak, is liable to leave it remote, exotic; but this would be profoundly misleading. Beneath its unfamiliar surface Yangzhou was in many ways a modern city. It was linked to large parts of China (just how much is not crucial here) by a mail service, a transportation network that permitted safe travel, a banking system that made it unnecessary to carry large amounts of money, and a network of interregional trade without which Yangzhou shops and stalls would have been unrecognizable and a prosperity based on salt and related commerces such as dried fish would have been impossible.⁴¹ All of this was underpinned by the use of silver as a nationwide standard currency. The social, economic, and cultural character of the city was as a result defined not by localized relationships inherent to that place and space but instead, to a large degree, by its relationship to other places widely separated from it in space – as Shitao's own painting business, with its geographically scattered customer base, demonstrates. Yangzhou was thus marked by two of the interlocking features that the sociologist Anthony Giddens has associated with the concept of modernity: trust in abstract systems (e.g., a

mail service and the banking system) and the dissociation of space from place.⁴²

Also important are two ways in which the city embodied a series of structural modifications to the hierarchical administrative relationships between capital and locality, between the state and the people. First, Yangzhou was not simply a local administrative center with Beijing-empowered responsibility for a locally circumscribed hinterland, in parallel with its role as an economic center concentrating the resources of that hinterland. As the administrative base of the Liang-Huai salt administration, it also served as a functionally specialized center of economic administration for a vast and culturally diverse region in which there were several other major cities. In this latter role, the cooperation of the merchant community was essential.⁴³ Second, in the assumption of civic responsibilities, a partnership effectively existed between the state and wealthy local residents, the latter actively contributing to such enterprises as famine and flood relief (crucial in flood-prone northern Jiangsu), orphanages, provisions for the burial of the indigent, lifeboats on the Yangzi, road repair, temple restoration, and the reception of the emperor. In this respect, administration was only formally the responsibility of the state alone.⁴⁴ The city thus had a complex and contradictory profile as an administrative center, which institutionalized the ongoing process of negotiation between state and local power that is one of the features of Chinese modernity.

Finally, Yangzhou's institutions of social differentiation can be interpreted in modern terms. William Rowe observes of early modern China that, "[t]o a different extent from city to city, but to some extent in all, a system of household-scale production was being gradually supplanted by large-scale enterprises utilizing propertyless wage labor – in other words, a preindustrial urban proletariat."⁴⁵ The specific case of Yangzhou awaits specialized study, but it is not unreasonable to speculate that its economy would have been partly dependent on a supply of wage labor for such activities as transportation, building construction, and domestic service. If, on the other hand, indentured service and even slavery was certainly not absent from Yangzhou's social landscape, the general increase in bondservants in China in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was itself a response to economic restructuring, and not some archaic holdover from the past.⁴⁶ At a higher social level, meanwhile, Yangzhou's elite largely consisted of participants in the city's "expert systems," to borrow another of Giddens's diagnostic features of modernity, which he defines as "systems of technical accomplishment or professional expertise that organize large areas of the material or social environment."⁴⁷ This seems to apply rather well to

the city's merchants (with their different subspecialties), bankers, builders, publishers, doctors, writers, and artists, all of whom by this period had developed a certain professional pride that was one of the factors uniting them as a social elite. At the same time, this horizontal commonality was riven by basic vertical distinctions of naked economic power. The distinction within the elite between the smaller number of *furen* (the wealthy, the rich) and the majority of others (including Shitao) might be said to separate out dominant and dominated class fractions, in a manner very roughly analogous to the Western division of bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie.⁴⁸

It would obviously be misleading to reduce the institutional underpinnings of Shitao's Yangzhou to these various features alone. No doubt the artist thought of his city sometimes as equivalent to great cities of the Chinese past, just as he sometimes conceived of himself simply as inhabiting a late moment in history; but there were certainly many other moments when his immediate concern was with the fluidity, dynamism, and efficiency of the urban world around him, and it is with those moments in mind that I have underlined the city's more modern characteristics. Since these characteristics were not unique to this one city, this raises the question of the historical status of the material and visual culture – especially painting – that was produced, not just in Yangzhou but throughout the economic macroregion of Jiangnan within which Yangzhou was located.

PAINTING AND MODERNITY IN JIANGNAN

My emphasis on modernity allies this study with the work of a number of social and cultural historians who have begun to employ the concept in an expanded sense, attributing to it a differentiated history extending back in time beyond the nineteenth century, as far back as the sixteenth.⁴⁹ These scholars are arguing, as I take it, that the sixteenth century saw the emergence, principally in the lower Yangzi valley (Jiangnan), of a new social condition organically related to the modern Chinese experience of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In order to differentiate this earlier period from the more recent period of rapid industrialization, they have introduced the periodizing term “early modern,” making possible my own description of Individualist painting as a key moment in China's early modern painting. I want to take advantage of their work here to outline some of the more concrete material and institutional features of late Ming–early Qing modernity that bear directly upon painting in the Jiangnan region.

One historian has succinctly defined the early modern period as “that era between the wave of intensified com-

mercialization, monetization, and urbanization of the late sixteenth–early seventeenth centuries, and the rapid industrialization of the late nineteenth–early twentieth centuries.”⁵⁰ This argument is a socioeconomic one focused on cities, based on the similarities between Chinese developments and those in early modern Europe (c. 1500–1800). It speaks to “the quantum increase in long-distance trade of items of daily mass consumption – notably staple foodstuffs, fibers, and textiles” and to regional specialization in “production of certain goods to meet the demands of distant markets – the handicraft textile industries of the Low Countries and of Kiangnan being the most celebrated, but hardly the only, example.” These new developments were accompanied by rapid population growth, “most pronounced in political and commercial metropolises.” Moreover, “major transformations in the relationships of production and the organization of work were under way. Strictly monetary relations were coming to govern not only the marketplace but the workplace as well.” Underlying this tangled web of changes – I described some of them above in relation to Yangzhou – was the massive influx of New World silver which made possible the monetization of silver in the domestic economy.⁵¹

The most important attempt so far to extend the early modern hypothesis into the realm of material culture has been Craig Clunas's study of late Ming manuals of taste.⁵² The core of his argument concerns the significance of what he calls (perhaps overdramatically given earlier manifestations of aestheticism) “the invention of taste” in the commodity economy that emerged in the lower Yangzi region during the sixteenth century, which he sees as broadly analogous to the commodity economy of early modern Europe. For Clunas, in China as in Europe, in a context of economic threat to traditional social hierarchy, “taste comes into play, as an essential legitimator of consumption and an ordering principle which prevents the otherwise inevitable-seeming triumph of market forces.”⁵³ The tastemaker, in other words, recreated social distinctions favorable to the educated gentry elite on the new basis of cultural judgment. This argument may take the literati rhetoric of the manuals too much at face value; it underestimates the degree to which the educated gentry elite was itself in a process of dissolution and mutation, and blurs the distinction between the two overlapping social categories of the gentry and the literati (the social position of the latter often being far less secure). The literati tastemaker's role, as I would prefer to define it, was to reposition certain traditional cultural skills within a new, commercially oriented elite context in which all means of finding a secure place were valid. However, a disagreement on this point does not touch the more fundamental issue of an

analogy between early modern Europe and Jiangnan China from the point of view of consumption patterns, among which Clunas highlights the following: "the creation of new types of luxury goods and their wide circulation, the idea of culture itself as a commodity, the degree of attention given to the specifics of luxury consumption over a broad range of writers, the decline of state sumptuary control, and the idea that there is positive benefit in such luxury consumption."⁵⁴

The argument from consumption for China's emergent modernity in the late Ming can be extended to painting most easily through a consideration of the art market and the painting profession. By 1600, the Ming painting academy was a shadow of its former self; the court, meanwhile, was reduced to the status of one market among others, less important than the expanding cities of Jiangnan – Hangzhou, Suzhou, Songjiang, Nanjing, and Yangzhou – where painters were most likely to base themselves. Indeed, the emergence of a regionally diversified commodity society in which luxury products played a major role transformed the art market as a whole. In decorative arts the list of regional specialties is long: Suzhou jade carving, Jiading lacquer and bamboo carving, Songjiang metalwork, Yangzhou inlaid lacquer and furniture, Nanjing bamboo carving and letter papers, Huizhou inkcakes and brushes, Jingdezhen decorated porcelain, Yixing stoneware teapots, and so on; nor, as products such as Fujian white porcelain demonstrate, were the production sites restricted to Jiangnan. The local schools of painting, which first multiplied in the late Ming, had a similar character as special regional products, of Wu (Suzhou), Su-Song (Suzhou-Songjiang), Huating (Songjiang), Yunjian (Songjiang), Nanjing, Zhe (Hangzhou), and so on. As these lists suggest, southeast China dominated an unprecedented market for luxury goods that was itself at its strongest in Jiangnan.

Shan Guoqiang has shown that the institutional structure of the painting profession was transformed in line with market changes.⁵⁵ The ranks of professional painters in the late Ming included an increasing number of literati on both a full-time and part-time basis alongside the lifelong career painters who had previously dominated the profession. Conversely, the latter found economic success to be the means to upward social mobility. Like other artisan-entrepreneurs of the day, they were able to use their artistic and commercial skills to enter an urban elite that was itself changing character, accommodating literati, gentry, officials, merchants, and artisans alike. There is increasing evidence that the most successful lifelong career painters of the late Ming, conventionally viewed as socially disenfranchised, in fact moved in elite social circles.⁵⁶ In the case of the most successful artists, whether career painters or literati professionals, person-

al styles effectively became brand names, leading both to the painters' establishment of studios/workshops to satisfy the demand for their work through ghostpainting, and to the widespread production of counterfeits.

The institutional transformation of the art world was echoed by a shift in the aesthetics of painting toward the affirmation of difference through distinctive visualities and subjects. In the late Ming, there were more customers, more painters, more paintings – and greater diversity of each. Visual difference could be a matter of regional resonances such as "southern" styles, or Jiangnan landscape or flora. Equally, however, it could be specific to an urban locality – the mannered Wen family style was indissociable from Suzhou, Xu Wei's crabs and wine were specific to Shaoxing. Then again, it was sometimes social differentiation that could be read in visualities and subjects, as was the case for Dong Qichang's art-historically allusionistic landscapes, which display an austerity appropriate only to the gentry, or even the scholar-official. By contrast, it would have been clear to any customer of Lan Ying (1585–1664 or later), Ding Yunpeng (1547–1628), Wu Bin (active c. 1568–1626), or Chen Hongshou (1598–1652) in the early seventeenth century that these artists were furnishing a level of craft that in earlier times would have been appropriated by the court.⁵⁷

The commodification of literati culture also had profound ideological implications. By placing on the market skills and knowledge that had originally evolved to suit a private humanistic culture, literati professionals lost some of their control over the authenticating discourses that had served to realize in practice the ideological exclusivity of the *shi*, or "scholars," as a class. The traditional social boundaries enshrined in the four hierarchically ordered categories of occupation – scholar, farmer, artisan, and merchant (in some ways closer to nonhereditary castes than classes) – were now disaligned from social realities again, as they had once been during the commercial boom of the Song, before the Mongols restored a centralized hierarchical order that was inherited by the Ming at its beginnings. On the one hand, with the population expanding and recruitment for the civil service increasingly restrictive, scholars, gentry, and aristocrats turned to commerce; on the other, successful merchants, artisans, and even bondservants, by asserting themselves socially, redefined the nature of the elite, which took on an increasingly heterogeneous character. This late Ming disalignment of the orthodox representation of class structure from the relative anarchy of social practice was, not surprisingly, registered as "dis-order" by orthodox commentators. The appearance, as part of this process, of literati in the marketplace coincided with a transformation in urban taste.

Whereas urban culture previously had followed the lead of court taste, in the course of the sixteenth century literati taste also became broadly influential in Jiangnan cities, in part because that elite, as we have seen, was changing its character, incorporating merchants and artisans, for whom the acquirable signs of educated culture were extremely attractive.⁵⁸ These new members of the elite affirmed themselves socially by their wealth – sometimes buying into the gentry – at the same time as their ability to ensure education for their sons produced literati in the family, further blurring social boundaries. The combined result of these two developments was that the authenticating discourses of literati culture floated free, much like the discourse of the gentleman in eighteenth-century England.⁵⁹ In their new, marketable form these literati discourses came to crystallize contrary ideological effects: anxiety for those gentry and literati who had a vested interest in the old order, and empowerment for merchants and artisans. Between these two poles lay such distinctive late Ming developments as the emergence of literati tastemakers, discussed by Clunas, and the invention of “literati painting” (*wenren hua*) as fiercely defended commercial territory.

No less than the institutional changes in the late Ming art world, these ideological complications have their visible counterpart in the aesthetics of painting. Considered in hermeneutic terms, the encounter between artwork and viewer in late Ming painting emerges as one of unprecedented difficulty. It is not too much to speak of challenge, or even confrontation: in Xu Wei’s (1521–93) barely coherent performances in ink and language, in Dong Qichang’s theatrical manipulation of history, in Wu Bin’s unveilings of an insistently inaccessible beyond, in Chen Hongshou’s disabused subversions of the conventions of cultural sophistication, in Zhang Hong’s (1577–c. 1652) coupling of a seeming transparency of vision with a refusal to provide meaning. Each of these very different artists eschews the appeal to a common ground of conventional communication through painting. What is missing here, an absence that can perhaps be traced back to the late works of Wen Zhengming (1470–1559), is the visual security – implicitly social and ideological in character – that painting had offered to the initiated alongside its exclusion of those not in the know. The major late Ming painters seem to start instead from the assumption of a lack of common ground, assuming an alienated distance between artist and viewer that they might be said to collapse in utopian fashion through their diverse strategies of confrontation.⁶⁰

The fact that Shitao and other *qishi* painters were born into, or in the shadow of, this late Ming emergence of an early modern culture in the Jiangnan region is already suggestive for the study of their art. The idea of

qi – strangeness or originality – with which they were associated involves an affirmation of difference that has its economic context in a Jiangnan market that was the direct heir of the late Ming socioeconomic world; and ideologically, their paintings cede nothing to those of their late Ming predecessors in the complexity and instability of the spaces of artwork–viewer encounter that they construct. Is this just an isolated example of the late Ming cultural orientation described above surviving the catastrophe of the fall of the dynasty? John Hay, in the context of a rather different kind of argument, has speculated that the cultural changes of the late Ming were moving toward an epistemic shift that might have led China in a different direction if the Manchus had not invaded China and restored “order.” The late Ming opening was followed by the Qing closure; the “modernity” of late Ming experiments survived under the Manchus only in isolated pockets. By emphasizing Manchu repression and cultural closure, this interpretation assumes that late Ming changes were incompatible with Qing state values;⁶¹ yet in the socioeconomic realm there was apparently not the same incompatibility. As Rowe puts it, the “major process of socioeconomic transformation [that] began in the mid sixteenth century . . . continued to unfold despite recession, rebellion, invasion, and dynastic change through the mid eighteenth century.”⁶² To what extent were the processes of change stifled in the realm of material culture?

Certainly, the events of the 1640s took a heavy toll on what had been a booming luxury economy. They disrupted the country’s entire trade network, with which the luxury-goods market was interconnected, through the 1670s. Many families lost a large proportion of their resources, and Yangzhou was one important center of luxury production and consumption that suffered major damage at the hands of the invading Qing forces. The situation was further exacerbated by the new government’s ban on maritime trade, which was not lifted until 1684. Although the ban was never entirely observed or enforced, nonetheless it effectively cut the flow of silver into China, which had been one of the motors of the late Ming entrepreneurial economy, and contributed to the so-called Kangxi depression that lasted through the early 1680s.⁶³ Also an important factor, on another level, was the transformation of the moral climate in the wake of the fall of the Ming. In retrospect the perception of a connection between the late Ming economic boom and the nation’s extreme political and military weakness was inescapable, and a widely held view of recent history assumed a direct link between the two. Thus decadence joined factionalism and corruption in the list of features defining life at the end of the Ming and, therefore, was held partly responsible for the fall of the dynasty and

loss of the nation. Luxury became an object of suspicion for many, a shift that corresponds to the relative frugality of Kangxi's reign through the 1680s. Although Kangxi undertook tours of Jiangnan in 1684 and 1689, it was not until the third tour in 1699 that such events became the vast symbolic contests of exchanges of largesse and hospitality that Qianlong was later to revive on an even grander scale.

On the other hand, while there can be no doubt that there was an immediate change of circumstances under the Qing, it is also true that reconstruction began within a few years of the Qing conquest and, from the start, acted as a spur to consumption. Here we must take into account the Qing formalization of the state's diminished power of control over commerce, which had emerged as a *de facto* reality in the late Ming. With the reemergence of a revitalized political center in the form of a state generally content with exploiting a regulatory fiscal role, a competitive but stable *modus vivendi* (taxes versus profits) emerged as the norm in the economic relationship between the state and the cities. The commodity culture of the early Qing evolved within the parameters of this divided economic interest.⁶⁴ Although the market did not regain its former vigor until the early eighteenth century, it was well on its way to a new high point in Jiangnan by the turn of the century. The late-seventeenth-century Jiangnan commodity culture revived many of the products that had been popular before 1644: Local craft specialties reemerged, with much of the same emphasis on difference, novelty, and originality as before. The case of the ceramic industry at Jingdezhen is instructive, for by 1690 at the latest it had returned to or surpassed late Ming levels of production and diversity, in response to active Qing imperial interest and the ever-present foreign demand for porcelain products.⁶⁵ The rise of new commercial cities, most notably the non-Jiangnan port city of Guangzhou, also stimulated the appearance of distinctive new products. Guangzhou, as the leading port engaged in foreign trade, became the entry point for European artistic ideas, giving rise to a culture of exotic hybrids. Here were developed the buds of what, in the next century, would become a full-blown "Euroiserie" mirroring Europe's *chinoiserie*, parallel to (and linked to) that of the court.

Painting was fully incorporated into the Qing recovery. All the late Ming schools of painting survived into the late seventeenth century, to be joined then by new ones such as the Loudong, Anhui (Huizhou), Nanjing, and Yangzhou schools. The court once again became a force in patronage.⁶⁶ Of particular importance here is the influx of Jiangnan literati into the painting profession after 1644. Certainly, this had its origins to a large extent in political contingencies – rejection of public life

under the Manchus, reduced opportunities to enter the bureaucracy, straitened circumstances – but it must also be concluded that there was from the very beginning a market to support such artists, albeit at a relatively low level of income. In a longer historical optic, these painters continued and reinforced the earlier development of an integration of literati into the painting profession. It is not surprising, in light of these multiple continuities, that what I described above as the affirmation of difference through distinctive visualities and subjects was, if anything, intensified in the late seventeenth century, with *qishi* painting only the most striking example. The argument for Qing closure, then, may be overstated; indeed I will later argue that the epistemic shift begun in the late Ming actually became definitive under the Qing in a reoriented, less obvious, and modified form.⁶⁷

Under the name of Individualism, the *qishi* movement has often been described in terms of the chronic quarrel between Ancients (*guren*) and Moderns (*jinren*) – the Moderns' invention of the Ancients to legitimate themselves – but this is not the same story at every point in history, even if there are connections that open the door to the theory of modernity as an isomorphically recurrent pattern.⁶⁸ John Hay is, I take it, working within this latter frame of reference when he makes his argument for a Qing closure, concluding that "Tung Ch'i-ch'ang was thus destined to reappear in the late twentieth century as one of the most modern of Chinese artists from any period."⁶⁹ However, my own argument on Shitao is of a different kind, approaching modernity not as a moment but as a *longue-durée* condition. In Shitao it is indissociable from the affirmation of self-reliance and the right to difference: "The whiskers and eyebrows of the Ancients cannot grow on my face, nor can their entrails exist in my stomach." To be sure, similarly iconoclastic declarations had been made long before, by the calligrapher Wang Yi in the fourth century, for example, or by the Tang painter Zhang Cao.⁷⁰ And when Shitao flings out his boast, "I have been taught by Heaven itself; how could I return to the Ancients without transforming them?"⁷¹ it is sure that we are on the familiar terrain of a rupture in the tradition concealing itself as a return to origins. The paradigm of tradition – renewable or, eventually, not – is certainly seductive and moreover has the explanatory power proper to a founding cultural myth. However, it reaches the limits of its explanatory potential where it is necessary to recognize that there is a level on which Shitao's claim to difference has more in common with that of independent artist-entrepreneurs at the European end of the seventeenth-century world than with that of the early Chinese writers and artists whose declarations he echoes. In China as in Europe (in a pattern of parallel invention rather than variation), it was

during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that an aggressively individualist "I" for the first time took possession of pictorial sites, forms, and styles, imposing both its authority and its neuroses.⁷²

TOPOLOGIES OF MODERNITY

There survive, today, well over a thousand images, ranging from individual album leaves to large-scale hanging scrolls, painted in Yangzhou during the eleven years 1697–1707 by Shitao (and his assistants). Each painting is embedded within larger patterns of social practice and consciousness whose complexity largely escapes us today. Moreover, between the paintings and these larger patterns lies the intervening figure of the individual artist, who took on his identity through the configuring and reconfiguring activity of utterly specific and often lost practices. Across the chasm that separates this body of images from the late-twentieth-century viewer in a different culture, what kinds of bridge can one hope to build? In reply, a brief theoretical argument is necessary.

The contextual modernities for Shitao's work that I have outlined in this chapter – the urban environment of Yangzhou, consumerism in Jiangnan – while throwing a certain light on the conditions of Shitao's practice leave untouched what are, for literati painting, the central issues of subjectivity and value. Ultimately the usefulness of modernity as an analytic frame of reference here stands or falls on the contribution it makes to our understanding of these issues in Shitao's work. Conversely, the contribution of an artist monograph to the understanding of China's early modernity lies in the degree to which the artist's work can be shown to embody distinctively modern structures of subjectivity and value. The issue of *subjectivity*, however, can be understood in different ways. Within the culture, as well as in much modern sinological writing, it has been identified with a concept of the literati subject as the unified agent whose existence can be inferred from the cultural traces he authors. My use of the term is entirely different, in line with contemporary "poststructuralist" theories of cultural production. Subjectivity, as I shall employ the term, presents itself as a negotiation between two forces or processes: on the one hand, the interaction at the level of the individual human site of different patterns of social consciousness, and on the other, the individual impulse to seek a unity and coherence of self. The issue of artistic *value*, meanwhile, is contingent on other discourses of value, principally economic and moral, but crystallizes in a double ambition that is implicit in each artwork. The artwork, first, embodies a self-conscious

engagement with painting as a specialized tradition and cultural project and, second, makes a particular claim to universality.⁷³

In chapters to come I explore this central problem topologically, that is, I approach the structures of subjectivity and artistic value in his work as topologies, or patterns, of visual and textual discourse (and also disruptions of discourse) that can be mapped out as they interact to form a larger field. The field, though heterogeneous, can nonetheless be shown to be coherent in its own terms. Since I have not wanted to impose a gridlike model on the material, but prefer any model to be generated from "thick description," the mapping process itself proceeds in ad hoc fashion. It may therefore be helpful to conclude this introductory chapter with a schematic outline of the discursive field whose existence and relevance I seek to demonstrate over the course of the book.

First of all, Shitao's painting at various points participates in a discursive space of "opinion," or societal debate, at the boundary of what the modern West calls public and private. The contours of this space can be traced out not only through the ways in which Shitao was able, through his resources of visual rhetoric, to frame his subjects, but also through the patterns of textual intervention associated with specific artworks: inscriptions by the artist and colophons by others. The issue of such opinion most obviously concerns works that engage with political themes, notably the dynastic narrative in which Shitao felt himself to have a personal stake, and local government, but it is equally relevant to his many other paintings that speak to issues of social morality. Sociopolitical opinion in his work extended across a wide range from symbolic political resistance to a sense of civic responsibility. The prevalence in Shitao's immediate world of functionalist discourses that placed a premium on the primacy of functional role over orthodox social hierarchy, on individual self-reliance, and on professionalism, provide the corresponding economic dimension of opinion. Finally, its cultural aspect is to be seen in the artist's commitment to a late Ming discourse of *qing*, broadly translatable as "subjective response" but covering a wide range of emotional positions (passion, feeling, desire), which locates him at the "liberal" pole of elite culture. Thus, at the same time that Shitao was a living symbol of dynastic identity, fluent in the evocation of nostalgia for traditional public values, he was also the limner of a changing social and economic landscape, an imager of urban and civic symbolic identity, and a theoretician of a functionalist ethic of painting; not to mention that he was a fundamentally lyric painter, exploring the emotional landscape of *qing*. One important aspect of Shitao's participation in a discursive

space of public-private opinion was as a way of balancing the need for integration into the community against the aspiration to independence from normative institutions. From this point of view, for all his pragmatism and even (at times) opportunism, Shitao's art speaks for an ultimate autonomy from the state, market, and (in his case, Buddhist) family. It does so most fundamentally through the intensely personal, individualistic, and often eccentric engagement with painting that informed his approach to every pictorial subject, an engagement he discussed in numerous painting inscriptions and eventually in a separate treatise. In four decades of writings he repeatedly articulated in philosophical-religious terms a claim to the universality of his particular pursuit of autonomy through the personal engagement with painting; but the metaphysical terms of the claim conceal the ways in which it is grounded in complex social experience. Though the formula is too simple, his claim might be said to universalize the particular experience of an educated man in early Qing China engaging with the potential and insecurities of a precarious situation within the urban elite.

Second, Shitao's aggressive involvement with self-fashioning – both the artist's own and his patrons' – speaks vividly to his self-conscious awareness of the multiplicity of available roles and personae. Simply to list the social roles in which he had a stake is already to glimpse the problem, for he was not only a *shi* (scholar) but also a *wenren* (man of culture), *yeren* (man of the wilderness), *yimin* (remnant subject), *wangsun* (princely descendant), *qishi* (extraordinary gentleman), and *huashi* (painter). The theatricality of literati cultural production – its staging of literati life, its self-conscious performance of the literati role – extends this self-fashioning into every corner of the aesthetic realm. A related and no less important phenomenon is the rhetorical exploitation of ideology within Shitao's world. The state's promotion of an ideology of orthodoxy, which he notably came up against at one crucial moment in his life in Beijing, is a textbook example, since it was in such obvious contradiction with the immanent values of state practice in many areas of government. Shitao for his part made himself the exponent of an equally rhetorical exploitation of gentry values to represent the interests of a diverse customer base in which the gentry were in fact feebly represented. At issue in all of this is an unavoidable social and historical condition of reflexive consciousness caused as much by the commodification of elite culture as by the experience of cultural belatedness. To this condition, the artist could only adapt himself. Anxiety on the one hand, elusiveness on the other, pervade his discursive responses to the double march of the market and history. Moreover, this reflexivity is equally

fundamental to the issue of painting's intrinsic value, and is visible in the extreme self-consciousness both of his engagement with painting as a tradition and craft and of his metaphysical claims for painting as praxis.

Third, in certain of Shitao's most interesting works, what the paintings purport to say (or more precisely, show) is undermined by the presence of contradictory or seemingly alien elements. More is at stake here than simply the reflexivity of self-consciousness. The internal disjunctiveness of these paintings obeys a quite different logic, one that has more to do with the surfacing of what might be called a "social unconscious." These surfacings, which take form as fissures within the work, are visible to a symptomatic interpretation as denials, silences, displacements, or moments of excess. Such fissures – exposed cleavages between intention and awareness – are crucial to his achievement, for they represent the points at which Shitao becomes vaguely aware of his entrapment in (internalized) power relations, be they of the market or of social hierarchy. Through either conspicuous avoidance of the obvious or, on the contrary, a sort of obsessive worrying at his dissatisfaction, he in effect opens up a different space of consciousness, one instance of which is the private horizon of intimacy and interiority discussed in Chapter 10. In such instances, doubt (to give it a name) complicates the very structure of subjectivity in Shitao's painting – a lyrical structure – in all its facets, just as it complicates the question of painting's intrinsic value. Here, it is no longer a matter of tracing out topologies of discourse but one of identifying the topological breaks where discourse fails.

The concept of "individualism" is an artifact of the cultural history of the subject that sinologists have elaborated over the past several decades within the analytic frame of reference of "late imperial China." Within that historical paradigm, individualism denotes a terrain roughly equivalent to the one I have mapped out here. My interest here, however, is not in painting's relationship to a history of the subject – in this case, the literati subject, itself an artifact of positivist psychology and philosophy in interaction with Chinese literati theory – but in painting's relationship to a history of subjectivity, understood as a reflexive relation to self. Shitao's subjectivity, in constant flux, is produced by the fluctuating interplay between the aspiration to independence, adaptation to self-consciousness, and betrayal of doubt – all of them in highly specific forms particular to him. It is, to borrow a formal description from cultural studies (and thus from the study of the contemporary world), a hybrid subjectivity, in the sense that it is not homogeneous, stable, and unitary, but instead heterogeneous, provisional, and divided. This, to my thinking, takes us closer to the historical realities of Shitao's situation. His

hybridity has everything to do with the fact that Shitao was an urban artist: a painter in Yangzhou, yes, but also at other points in his life a painter in Wuchang, Xuancheng, Shexian, Nanjing, and Beijing. He lived in or around the city, and he sold in the city to customers who themselves either lived in the city or had business interests there. It is not in the countryside, therefore, that we should be looking if we want to understand his paintings, even when the countryside is what he represents visually (and, in any event, the countryside was not as neatly opposed to the city as paintings might make us think).⁷⁴ Was the broader field of consciousness within which Shitao operated, then, the "urban mentality" (*shimin sixiang*) for which mainland Chinese historians have argued? This concept seems misleading in that it marginalizes local developments beyond the city level. On the other hand, the notion proposed by American historians of a "public sphere" on the model of European civil society, is equally unsatisfactory. Given that the state, through Confucianism, actively laid claim to the definition of public values, how can one claim the term "public" for a nonstate sphere? Moreover, there is reason to believe that the Chinese pattern was to define public *through* rather than *against* private, and vice versa, which throws into question the whole notion of a public or private sphere in the Euro-American sense. Nonetheless, each of these concepts has more than a grain of truth; by softening and combining their implicit claims, a more accurate description can be made. It

does seem clear that this modern field of consciousness crystallized most intensely in the cities, and also that it affirmed a certain autonomy relative to the state by means of an independent claim on public values; but it was neither restricted to the cities, nor was it opposed in any simple way to the state-sponsored ideology. It was fundamentally local in character but also hybrid and disjunctive. These latter characteristics, as I have been arguing, can be seen in its incorporation of competing frames of reference (crudely, the hierarchical, centralized, and political as against the antihierarchical, localized, and commercial) that mediated claims to power and, more broadly, to elite status. Early Qing cities, Yangzhou as much and perhaps more than any, were engaged in the *longue-durée* process through which this new social condition emerged. Modernity in the Chinese context, as I have begun to suggest, was in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as it is today, a local, hybrid and disjunctive condition: Geographically restricted within the vast Chinese land mass, it has never constituted a self-contained system isolated from the dynastic cosmology (still presently operative), or from the non-Chinese world.

Lest this summary be suspected to announce a celebratory account, let me stress once more that the emergence of a modern field of consciousness articulated and embodied not only new possibilities but also dehumanizing insecurities and pressures, both of which were vividly explored by Shitao in his painting.

CHAPTER TWO

The Conspicuous Consumption of Time



The differentiated space of Shitao's painting has had many latter-day surveyors. We are increasingly well-informed on its geographic references, coordinates of memory, intertextual fabric, and thematic topography. Only when it comes to the social space of his work do we completely lose our bearings. The numerous human figures in his landscape paintings, for example: Leaving aside those that signify Shitao himself, who are they, and how do his representations of them relate to early Qing society? Research by Wang Shiqing and others into his real-life friendships has provided some answers, but only for specific cases. We are not much better informed as to the social structuring of Shitao's pictorial space. What were the symbolic practices and representations that ordered his world? Did something of this ordering not carry over into his paintings?

These questions are not intractable on the condition of making an effort to come to terms with the language of social distinction in early Qing China.¹ Nor are the figures in Shitao's landscape paintings so vaguely defined or so randomly chosen that a broadly sociological approach will not throw light on them and their pictorial environment. The first part of this chapter, therefore, pursues the internal logic of Shitao's landscape space through a description of its inhabitants, its social geography, and its ideological silences. This preliminary discussion aims to establish the central importance of leisure as a marker of class identity in Shitao's landscape

world. The rest of the chapter looks more deeply into the varied constructions of leisure in Shitao's paintings, with particular attention to their social and political implications.

FIGURES IN LANDSCAPE

The figures who *dominate* Shitao's landscapes often denote the artist himself, his friends, and customers, but even when they have no such specific reference, the figures can usually be read as having belonged to the elite; as we shall see, one can narrow this down further to an urbanized elite (i.e., one that lived within the cultural orbit of the cities without necessarily being city dwellers). If the status of the elite figures is to be fully understood, however, it is necessary to take into account as well the many other conspicuously nonelite figures in his paintings. These latter appear in two recurrent roles: either as domestic servants or as the boat haulers, boatmen, muleteers, guides, and bearers who made travel and transportation possible in late-seventeenth-century China.² Characteristic is the figure on foot who accompanies a mounted traveler in several images; while there may be no way of knowing whether he is servant, muleteer, guide, hired bearer, or which combination of the above, the one thing that is sure is his lowly status, which functions to signify the traveler's relative privi-

lege (Figure 14). Still, this solitary certainty need not prevent further questions; most obviously, one might want to know to what social class servants and transportation workers belonged.

The question, however, needs to be reformulated, since the crude but helpfully neutral distinction between elite and nonelite is alien to Shitao's world. The early Qing language of class made use of castelike categories that prescriptively defined social groups in terms of privileges, rights, and obligations. Thus if we ask what the status of servants and transportation workers was, the most salient point is that it varied crucially between the two categories of free and unfree laborers. The former were considered by the state to belong to the lowest category of commoners, whereas the latter were stigmatized as "base people" or "pariahs" [*jianmin*], a vast caste grouping here defined by Susan Mann:³

They included slaves,⁴ persons engaged in what were considered polluting or degrading occupations (butchers, yamen runners, actors), and certain local outcast groups. Though the criteria defining these groups varied, all were subject to the same constraints in the early Qing period under laws inherited from Ming times: first, no descendants in the male line could sit for the civil service examinations or purchase a degree; second, no pariah male could marry a "respectable" [*liang*] woman.

Quite certainly free laborers are the barge haulers on the Grand Canal whom Shitao depicted in his 1696 painting of *Linqing in Shandong* (see Figure 72, sect. 2), and whose work songs at Gucheng inspired him to write:

On the storied boat the painted drum is beaten fast
as a weaver's shuttle,
Pulling colored towropes the haulers approach,
grunting with every inch.
As the returning empty grain boats block out the
horizon,
The singing rings in the air, echoed by the blue
clouds.⁵

In most cases, however, it is quite impossible to be so clear. The vast majority of nonelite figures in Shitao's



14. "Illustration of a Quatrain by Kong Wenzhong of the Song." *Illustrations to Song and Yuan Poems*, album of 12 leaves, ink and color on paper, each leaf 23 x 18 cm, leaf 12. Xubai Zhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, Hong Kong Museum of Art.

landscapes are servants, and servants could be either commoners or pariahs. Shitao's own household servants in Yangzhou, represented in *Repotting Chrysanthemums* (see Figure 23), may have been free laborers, but his many patrons from Huizhou families had their ancestral home in an area where their tenants and household servants were often hereditary bondservants.⁶

The early Qing legal code, following that of the Ming, differentiated punishments by social category. The code ranked the population hierarchically in six social categories, from the emperor and the imperial family down to the pariahs. Below the imperial family were the titled officials, then degree-holding scholars without official titles, followed by ordinary commoners, lowly common-

ers, and finally pariahs. The core of the system was the ordinary commoner category, including as it did peasants, artisans, merchants, and scholars without a degree. The fact that any scholar with a degree was extruded upward into a special elite group helps to explain why the examination system absorbed so much familial and personal energy and financial resources in early modern China, since it was a door to social security. At the low end, meanwhile, long-term, independent hired laborers were extruded downward into a tier of lowly commoners, just above the pariahs. In practice, this proximity to pariahdom made the status of hired laborer dangerously insecure, a problem that would later be addressed by the Qing state in a series of statutes aimed at abolishing the hired-laborer category and sharpening the distinction between commoner and pariah.⁷ Shitao's painting, by its reductive differentiation of nonlaboring from laboring classes – leaving no doubt about the artist's own position – in effect betrays his need to distance himself from the zone of social insecurity. However, the paintings also efface the hierarchical distinction between ordinary and elite commoners: Officials and degree holders are visually indistinguishable from non-degree holders, not to mention merchants. In this way, Shitao manages to deny the real-life hierarchical limitations of his social position.

It was possible for Shitao to efface the difference between ordinary and elite commoners in his art because painting, like other forms of cultural expression, generally worked with symbolic rather than legal definitions of social hierarchy. Specifically, it employed a social classification ultimately derived from the early Chinese classics. This symbolic discourse, which construed society very differently from the penal code, was principally concerned with defining the respectable social core of the Chinese population. For this it used the idea of "four categories of (free) commoners" (*simin*). Hierarchically differentiated in this four-part classification were "scholars" (*shi*), peasants (*nong*), artisans and laborers (*gong*), and merchants (*shang*). To each (again) castelike category corresponded a sociomoral status; that is to say, differentiation lay not only in the occupational basis of each division but in the moral basis of each occupation.⁸ The scholar and peasant categories, considered morally admirable, were symbiotically related in their common opposition to artisan/laborer and merchant status: The occupational basis of the latter categories – respectively, manufacture or labor and commerce – were classically (i.e., in Song neo-Confucian terms) decreed to be devoid of possibilities for the accumulation of moral capital.

In this selective and normative *representation* of Chinese society, the *shi* at the top of the hierarchy became what he was not so much by the fact of engaging in

scholarly practices and accumulating the symbolic capital of education and culture (still less by participating in the civil service competition, or even actively governing), as by his use of all or any of this as the basis for a claim to a specifically moral capital of virtue. In classical terms, the *shi* category included gentry landowners, scholar-officials, degree holders, and literati without degrees whose status as *shi* depended on the symbolic capital of their cultural accomplishments. In Shitao's painting generally, *shi* are overwhelmingly the main actors, with the artist himself in a starring role. They are often identifiable by their long white robes but also by their visible detachment from any apparent labor; a servant, too, is often on hand. Of course, *shi* were not the only ones to wear long robes and have leisure time, far less have servants. Thus, although there is no ambiguity between the markers of social status and what they conventionally signify (*shi* status), on the other hand there is certainly ambiguity between those markers and their real-life referents. That Shitao wanted to keep this latter ambiguity is clear from the fact that one looks in vain for any evidence of, say, business concerns despite all the artist's merchant connections. Shitao's major southern patrons are thus almost invisible in their occupational role as merchants. One exception proves the rule: In the corner of one painting, an innkeeper (perhaps) awaits arriving customers at the window of his wineshop (see Figure 29). It is also striking that he never represented officials visually in that role (though he did so identify them in the inscriptions). Moreover, for all that he was surrounded by artisans – including masons, carpenters, garden builders, painting mounters, scribes, musicians, actors – I have not been able to find a single painting by Shitao in which a figure is identified visually as an artisan. Instead, the *gong* category is represented, massively, by laboring people. Since Shitao himself is identified in his paintings as a *shi*, this effectively serves to counter the possibility that his own practice of painting would be associated with artisan work.

In much the same way, peasants are notably rare in Shitao's work – so rare, in fact, that the few instances reproduced here are worth noting: Herdboys lead home their water buffalo through a rainstorm (see Figure 42), a wild-eyed fisherman strings up the fish he has just caught (see Plate 4), three tired fisherman return to their village (see Figure 21), and the peasants of the fabled village of the Peach Blossom Spring go to meet the errant fisherman from the outside world (see Figure 32). Very occasionally, something happened that forced peasants into the frame of his poetic vision (and painting inscriptions) as well. In the late summer of 1693, for example, it was his experience of seeing the effects of two solid months of drought on the agricultural population in the

vicinity of his summer lodgings near Yangzhou (Figure 15):

Inside the city walls there are a hundred thousand wealthy families

When rice is dear they have the money: why should they lament? The sobbing peasants weep in each other's arms;

Saying, when they meet, "Only linseed [which they will have to eat to avoid starvation] can be expected this autumn"

No peasants, however, are to be seen in the picture, which depicts instead an educated man lost in reflection at the sight of the humid atmosphere without the needed rain. The reality was that Shitao was an urban artist, who had little experience of agricultural life. He was, in fact, infinitely more likely to represent what might be called "pretend peasants," that is, the hermits and recluses of the *shi* class who had renounced the world to live in the mountains or on the land. A rare juxtaposition of the two appears in a memorable self-portrait, probably painted between 1704 and 1706 (see Plate 6). Although there is no formal documentary likeness in the face, in other respects the painting is much like the handscroll portraits of others on which Shitao collaborated: He has given himself a flattering disguise, added an explanatory commentary, and formally titled the whole thing *Dadizi's Portrait of Himself Asleep on an Ox*. The last part of the inscription explains what gave him the idea for the picture:

A village elder – a flower grower – invited me to drink from pottery jars. I am ashamed that because I have spent little time with people from the forests I did not consider him worth frequenting. And so he had me taken home, sleeping, on an ox. I was overcome by embarrassment, so I painted this picture *Asleep on an Ox* to show what I looked like in this life and the traces of my descent into the world. In the Cottage for Cultivating the Heart, mocking myself.

The painting began, then, as a kind of *mea culpa*. Drunk on the farmer's wine but bound by the conventions of



15. "Rain after Drought," *Landscapes for Yao Man*, dated 1693, album of 8 leaves, ink or ink and color on paper, each leaf 38 x 24.5 cm, leaf 8, ink and color on paper. Guangzhou Art Gallery.

his class, Shitao felt unable to accept the man's invitation to stay the night. Within his own social world, to incur such a debt of hospitality signified the initiation of a relationship with mutual obligations. He did not want to become the friend of a farmer; but the flower grower's generosity in having him taken home, on an ox – which normally only a peasant would have ridden – made him realize that the rules of his world did not apply here. The experience of riding on an ox also brought

to his mind the hermits and sages of the remote past who *had* frequented people from the forests and ridden oxen. How better to expose the distance between that ideal and the banality of his elite urban reactions than by contrasting the story of his visit to the countryside with an image of himself as Daoist hermit and sage?⁹ Although the painting has other complexities to which I shall return, its self-consciously ironic juxtaposition of urban cultural persona and real-life countryside social actor is notable here as an acknowledgment of the sociological editing normally operated by his paintings.

Thus a first analysis of the inhabitants of Shitao's landscapes reveals a striking pattern: To an almost astonishing degree, they signify only two social roles – the *shi* in literati and gentry guise providing the main figures, and the *gong* as laborers (but not artisans) furnishing the subordinate ones. A complex class/caste structure is thus reduced to a single hierarchical opposition between the *shi* and nonpeasant laborers, the latter encompassing a partly pariah reality. Although the history of class formulations of landscape painting in China remains to be written, the simple hierarchical opposition of *shi* to non-*shi* is certainly not particular to Shitao or his period. More specific is the importance of laboring *gong* relative to peasants in his work. This was a time when landed gentry were rapidly moving to the cities and becoming absentee landlords, losing their original close connection with the peasantry.¹⁰ Conversely, it was in the early modern period that peasants began to leave the land in increasing numbers, in most cases finding work “in the expanding transport sector, as boatmen, interlocal carters and animal-drivers, and intralocal porters, longshoremen, nightsoil- and water-carriers, [and] sedan-chair bearers.”¹¹ It was also a time when the gentry public for literati painting was being displaced by a heterogeneous urban elite that had little connection to peasant life.

This demographic description would be incomplete if it did not also note the glaring omission of women – a fact no less significant for being unremarkable in its own context. The patriarchal ideology of the urban elite defined the space of elite women as an interior, domestic one, retaining for men the exterior world with its possibilities of movement (though, as Susan Mann points out, elite women did travel discreetly).¹² Landscape in the literati tradition was correspondingly constructed as a male space; travel and outdoors leisure were pictorially defined as male activities from which women were debarred.¹³ It should be noted that women were not always excluded or objectified in Chinese painting: Working women (both peasants and pariahs) have a prominent place in Ming dynasty Zhe School landscapes, for example. In Shitao's own time and place, the populism

of Zhe School painting was inherited by his Yangzhou contemporaries and competitors Li Yin (active c. 1679–1702) and Yuan Jiang (active c. 1681–1724 or later). It was also a point of reference for a younger contemporary, Gao Qipei (1660–1734), who, like Shitao, was to be a major influence on eighteenth-century painting. Gao's sketch from 1708 of a woman with an unruly child, in an album commission for which one of Shitao's patrons was the intermediary, would have been unthinkable for the older artist.¹⁴ The fate of women in Shitao's painting, and in literati painting of the late seventeenth century generally, was instead to be objectified in metaphor as ephemeral, fragile, and desirable flowers – a metaphor female painters turned to their own purposes.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHIC REFERENCE

Shitao himself did not fit neatly into any of the four normative categories. He made his way through early Qing society as a Buddhist monk until he finally left the *sangha* in 1696. As a social position, the role of religious figure did not easily fit into the secular hierarchies I have sketched out, a fact recognized in the general term for religious professionals, *fangwai*, literally “one outside the square.” They stood, that is, outside the ordered realm of normal social relationships and such worldly concerns as property. In ideal moral terms, it was the purity of their efforts to accumulate a capital of spirituality that removed religious professionals from the parameters of the “four categories.” In his post-1696 identity as Dadizi, Shitao retained his rights on a position “outside the square,” though now on Daoist rather than Buddhist grounds; yet it was only rarely that Shitao the painter appealed to his professional religious status to opt out in any way from the hierarchies of the world “within the square” to which his landscapes normally referred themselves. Like his teacher, Lü'an Benyue, and his teacher's teacher Muchen Daomin before him, he originally belonged to the intellectual elite of Buddhist religious professionals, men who were on a certain level literati in Buddhist robes.¹⁵ As they did in his life, monks in his paintings freely interact with other members of the urban elite and are subsumed there under the *shi* formula, to the point often of being indistinguishable from other *shi*, even in their dress. Periodically throughout his life, however, Shitao confronted his viewers unambiguously with the monk who has “left the world.” He is the ostentatiously tonsured figure leaning on a tree branch who looks defiantly out at us from one of his twelve 1671 hanging scrolls for the Huizhou prefect, Cao Dingwang (see Figure 159), and who recurs many years later with the coda: “When still beguiled the teach-

ings of the three vehicles are necessary, but once realization dawns you will know that there are no words.”¹⁶ He is the young monk who gazes purposefully from his 1674 landscape self-portrait (see Plate 1) and the disappointed, arhat-like figure in a copy of a 1690 portrait (see Figure 61), as well as the arhat meditating within a tree trunk in a painting from the summer of 1696, symbolizing the destiny on which Shitao was then turning his back (see Plate 2). He is also, however, the wild-eyed Chan figure at the center of his 1667 painting of Huangshan (see Figure 158), who becomes many years later the self-identified “Guest of Hinayana, Bitter Melon” of a mid-1690s album leaf (see Figure 65), before finally being reborn as the Daoist looking out from *Qingxiang Dadizi’s Reminiscence of the Thirty-six Peaks* (see Plate 3).

It cannot be forgotten either that Shitao was potentially exempted from the “four categories” framework by the fact that he was descended from a Ming princely lineage, “tenth-generation descendant of [Zhu] Zanyi.” The emperor as heaven’s representative, and imperial family members to a lesser but still tangible degree, benefited from a store of “pure” moral capital by birthright, independent of any efforts of accumulation. In this lay the basis of imperial charisma and the widespread fetishization in the early Qing of the physical traces of the imperial body (both Ming and Qing), calligraphy by emperors being a common case in point. Even the Ming loyalist, by his assumption of the role of a bondservant of the Ming imperial body, tapped into this moral capital; how much more so, then, Shitao – Zhu Ruoji by birth. It was not until very late in his life, however, that he openly projected this identity into his paintings, and when he did so it was often by emblematic means – the symbolism of the orchid, of the flowering plum (genus *Prunus*), of bamboo. By contrast, the imperial family member is never explicitly an inhabitant of his landscapes: We see instead a particular kind of *shi*, a remnant subject (*yimin*) of the Ming, and – alerted by a seal, a line of poetry, or prior knowledge – realize that this is not a remnant subject like the others.

LEISURE AND ITS SILENCES

Thus, despite the exits from the sociomoral hierarchy that religious and imperial identity offered Shitao, the *shi*-laborer opposition holds good as the general rule of social structure in his landscapes. It corresponds in turn to a social geography that comprises several distinct zones, which underwent only one major change from one end of his career as a landscape painter to the other (as we shall soon see). The first of its zones – I shall call

it the “leisure zone” – is an inhabited realm that is neither town nor country in any real sense, where villages, monasteries, and mansions exist in a picturesque landscape with neither cultivated land nor city walls in sight. This took various forms in his work: from imaginary landscapes that evoke the rural gentry ideal (see Plate 11), to paintings of specific rural locations, often in Anhui (see Figures 25, 26), to its suburban form as scenic and touristic city outskirts, literally transitional between town and country (see Figure 29). The Qin–Huai River area to the south of Nanjing and the area around Baozhang Lake to the northwest of Yangzhou (the latter introduced in Chapter 1) are the two locales of the latter kind that Shitao repeatedly represented.¹⁷ In all its variants this zone takes form in Shitao’s painting as a landscape of leisurely living and outings, though in many cases we are meant to understand this as the enforced leisure of political withdrawal or exile.

A second zone lies further afield, in the wilds, beyond agriculture; this is the realm of the strange or the extraordinary (*qi*) and is above all a mountain landscape of surprising sights and deep seclusion. At one pole, this can be a landscape of tourism such as one sees in certain of Shitao’s reminiscences of his own early journeys on foot (see Figure 107), or in a 1699 Huangshan handscroll whose sedan-chair traveler is just past the midpoint of the composition (Figure 16). In the latter case the traveler, carried by two bearers and accompanied by two servants, represents the intended recipient of the painting: a wealthy merchant living in Yizheng, near Yangzhou, who had ascended the mountain during a recent return visit to his ancestral home of Huizhou.¹⁸ At its other pole, as in *Qingxiang Dadizi’s Reminiscence of the Thirty-six Peaks* (see Plate 3), the landscape of the strange constitutes a realm of solitary wandering and reclusion, where the individual declares his alienation from the state. The two orientations were, in fact, far less incompatible than might be thought. Huangshan itself was both tourist destination and symbol of political withdrawal, the one interest reinforcing the other. Shitao’s albums representing Huang You’s travels in south China, discussed in Chapter 3, hold the balance between the two interests throughout.

A third zone is the no-man’s-land of roads and canals, rivers and lakes, river ferries and mountain passes, that lead from one place to another – a landscape of passage and transportation in which human figures rarely appear without donkeys, horses, or boats. One need only compare Shitao’s paintings with those of his Yangzhou contemporaries Li Yin (see Figure 128) and Yuan Jiang (see Figure 20), with their merchant travelers, to realize to what degree his images create a transportation landscape in specifically *shi* terms. There are no wagons in



Shitao's paintings, nor mule trains, still less camels. There are, to be sure, goods-transport boats and ferry-boats, but these are almost always reduced to the metonymic form of a sail, the boat itself obscured by mist, as the *shi* gaze does its ruthless work of aestheticization. Instead, new friendships are struck up at Botou on a Grand Canal journey (see Figure 72, section 1). A becalmed ferry blocks travelers at Jinsha on the north side of Lake Chao in Anhui, and Shitao is lodged by a villager at the price of a poem (see Figure 92). The recurrent figure of the donkey rider accompanied by his animal driver-cum-bearer sets out from the inn in the cold of the small hours, makes his way up into the mountains, is joined by fellow travelers, and struggles his way to shelter at the end of the day (Figure 17).

It was only at the end of Shitao's career, once he was actually living and working in the city of Yangzhou, that the urban landscape of cities and towns entered his landscape painting as a subject in its own right, constituting its own distinct sociogeographic zone within his landscape vision. However, the urban landscape takes visual form as what we



17. *Landscapes Painted during Leisure from Illness*, dated 1701, album of 10 leaves, ink and color on paper, each leaf 24.2 x 18.7 cm, leaf G. The Art Museum, Princeton University. Museum purchase, gift of the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation.



16. *Landscape of Mount Huang*, dated 1699, handscroll, ink and light color on paper, 28.7 x 182.1 cm. Sen-Oku Hakkokan, Sumitomo Collection.



18. "Approaching Changshan," *Illustrations to the Poems of Huang Yanlü*, dated 1701-2, album of 22 leaves, ink and color on paper, each leaf 20.5 x 34 cm, leaf 14. Zhile Lou Collection, Hong Kong.

might call a suspended reality. The town of Changshan in Zhejiang is reduced to a lyrical, floating mirage of pagodas and gates (Figure 18). Xinfan in Sichuan defers to the stillness of the graveyard beyond its walls (see Figure 32). Junks glide, dreamlike, through an unidentified city on the Grand Canal (Figure 19). Yangzhou we have seen as roofs, gates, and boats glimpsed through swaths of mist and smoke from evening fires (see Figure 2). We have also seen it bathed silently in moonlight as a literati witness looks on, though the inscribed poems describe

a pleasure-boat outing on Baozhang Lake among the city crowds (see Figure 3). The social dynamism of streets and canals, markets and waterfront was, it seems, unrepresentable in Shitao's painting, the full human element at best being displaced to the inscribed poems,



19. *Junks on a Canal*, album leaf mounted as a hanging scroll, ink and light color on paper, 23.5 x 36.8 cm. Private collection, on extended loan to the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum.

preserving in the painting proper the idealized detachment of the *shi* gaze.

Together, these four zones configure the dominant social geography of Shitao's painting during the Dadi Tang years, within which a generalized elite on the *shi* model coexists harmoniously with those who serve it, and leisure is neatly opposed to labor. To what does this intersection of geography and hierarchy add up? Perhaps one should first turn the question around: What is left out or downplayed?

Relevant here is the understated way in which Shitao made visual reference to commerce in his landscapes. Li Yin and Yuan Jiang made a specialty of pictures depicting wagon trains struggling through northern loess landscapes (Figure 20) and travelers gathering at isolated inns (see Figure 128), and of cargo boats braving the dangers of river gorges. In the context of a city whose wealth – and art market – was founded on the profits of interregional trade, the contemporary reference is unmistakable. At the other extreme, these artists complemented the space of the commercial transportation landscape with fantasies that, in effect, transformed the

merchant mansions of Yangzhou's New City with their cramped gardens into Tang dynasty country palaces or simply into vast country villas: Ostentation here signifies commerce as clearly as any oxcart (see Figure 8). The law of consumption, in fact, undergirds the whole range of their landscape painting, in which the northern and western geographical references were surely connected to the Shanxi and Shenxi origins of an important section of the city's merchant and banking families. In Shitao's painting, by contrast, commerce is most commonly signified in a discreetly emblematic fashion through the motif of distant sails, though the boats, as we have seen, sometimes make their way into the foreground. Similarly, when he had mansions to represent, Shitao transformed them into modest thatched cottages hidden in bamboo groves that speak to the moral and not the material worth of the owner (see Figure 153).

To Shitao's downplaying of commerce can be added a parallel disinterest in visualizing the agricultural landscape, though here there are important exceptions. In 1699, for example, shortly before Kangxi's third Southern Tour, he painted a complex album that, to judge by a leaf depicting horses bathing under the eye of a watchful groom (a metaphoric allusion to respite from government service), was intended for a serving official (see Figure 43). Among the other leaves are two of his rare



20. Yuan Jiang (active c. 1681–1724 or later), *Pulling Carts over a Mountain Pass*, in the Manner of Guo Xi, dated 1707, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 178.2cm. x 74.9 cm. Östasiatiska Museet, Stockholm.

depictions of peasants: One of a fisherman has already been introduced (see Plate 4); in another herdboys lead water buffalo home in a rainstorm, a scene described in a poem that begins, “White rain gives the South-East a welcome soaking,” thereby invoking the age-old association of timely rain with good government (see Figure 42). Shitao returned to the theme of water and government in a recently discovered album leaf painted c. 1701 for another official, Shitao’s Manchu student Tu Qingge, that depicts a town in the highly vulnerable area of northern Jiangsu, which after flooding had been rebuilt under Tu’s direction (see Figure 44). Rain is once more the theme in the hanging scroll that Shitao painted in the autumn of 1705 to commemorate that summer’s atrocious floods in the Yangzhou area, which had followed closely on Kangxi’s fifth visit to Yangzhou in the spring (see Figure 41). In the 1705 painting, the city is pushed into a corner, as if to suggest its insignificance in the face of nature’s forces; a long inscription above records the floods and meditates on the rise and fall of dynasties. The landscape discourse of these atypical paintings, on which I shall have more to say in Chapter 3, is underpinned by a social geography in which peasants and agriculture have a central place, corresponding to the Confucian political ideology that held agriculture (rather than manufacture and commerce) to be the basis of the state. This is an essentially static geography, in which cities are at once parasitic growths on the body of the land and, more positively, outposts of the imperial state, administrative islands in a sea of agriculture of which the local gentry were the overseers. Agriculture does make periodic appearances in Shitao’s painting throughout his career, sometimes through the figure of the peasant (Figure 21) and sometimes through the image of cultivated fields; but overall it is as marginal within his represented landscape as it was dominant in the rural reality he knew. For the agricultural landscape of Yangzhou, one has to look elsewhere, notably to the work of Xiao Chen.¹⁹

Thus, by contrast with these other possibilities, Shitao’s usual landscape space, with its four *shi*-dominated domains of the leisure zone, the far-flung realm of the strange, the no-man’s-land of interurban travel, and the dreamlike city, appears to escape – or, we might better say, deny – both the law of the market and the law of the state. It is doubtful that any one term can bear the full weight of this apparent denial, but if there were to be a candidate for such a word, it would certainly be *xian*, leisure. For the dominant human actors in this landscape space, any kind of labor or regular duty is taboo; the only activities in which they participate are those that place the passage of time on display. It is not



21. "Returning Fishermen," *Landscapes for Liu Shitao*, dated 1703, album of 12 leaves, ink and ink and color on paper, each leaf 47.5 x 31.3cm, leaf 3, ink and color on paper. William Francis Warren Fund. Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

too much to say that the condition of this space is the conspicuous consumption of time, available in limitless quantities; and that since time is the currency of labor, this is the core of its ideological affirmation of social privilege.²⁰ However, the same condition would hold for the very different landscapes of, say, Taicang and Changshu painting from Wang Shimin (1592–1680) to

Wu Li (1632–1718), where leisure obliquely signifies implied opposites of examination study, official service, and gentry estate management (Figure 22). In itself, therefore, the conspicuous consumption of time may be a more general rhetorical feature of literati painting, whose meaning depends heavily on context. In Shitao's case the context was obviously very different from that of these classicizing artists. He was a busy man, and had to be to survive; time was precisely what he did not have, as he turned out paintings as fast as health and time allowed.²¹ He thus exposes the ideological economy of his own landscape painting when he laments, in a famous and bitter painting inscription of 1701, that "only the wealthy can practice literature, calligraphy, and painting for leisure alone."²² Denying his own socioeconomic circumstances, the artist produced landscapes that displaced the market law of consumption onto a symbolic level, at which they could be read as visualizations of one form of profit – time – and thus become meaningful for "the wealthy" as well as for literati like Shitao himself, both of whom were ambiguously figured as *shi*. It was only on this basis that a fundamentally self-referential (and often highly political) form of painting could survive commercially in the marketplace. Shitao's denial of the market is therefore ultimately only apparent.

One starts to see here that though the "language" of this space is that of hierarchical stratification, what the space "writes" has to be read across the grain of this stratification, in its exclusions, in its carefully protected ambiguities, and in the ubiquity of the self-affirming individual. This should become clearer as I turn now from the sociology of landscape's social space to its poetics; that is, the symbolic patterns associated with that space. Leisure could be inflected in very different ways: political, social, and cultural. I begin by relating Shitao's painting to the practice of political mourning among literati after the fall of the Ming and to the metaphorical environment of the wilderness that accommodated this mourning in all its



22. Wu Li (1632–1718), *Whiling away the Summer*, handscroll (detail), ink on paper, 36.4 x 268.4 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Douglas Dillon Gift, 1977 (1977.81).

forms. The subsequent section of the discussion attends to the ambiguities of the landscape of leisure, particularly as these involve the so-called gentry-merchant milieu that was Shitao's main market in Yangzhou. Finally, I return to the literati and try to say something about the theatrical staging of literati life in Shitao's painting, its mechanisms and significance. In each of these three discussions, I hope to show that beyond the hierarchical stratification of Shitao's painting it is possible to glimpse a quite different kind of social definition, in which it is professional function that differentiates.²³

THE INTERDYNASTIC WILDERNESS

I have not so far mentioned what is, perhaps, the single most pervasive social marker within Shitao's landscape space, one which is both ethnic and political and is narrowly bound up with the trauma of the loss of the Ming Chinese nation to foreign invaders. The imposition of Qing subjecthood was accompanied by the imposition

of visible marks of that subjecthood. The entire Chinese population was ordered, on pain of punishment, to adopt Manchu dress, and worse – because it marked the body itself – to conform to the shaved forehead and pig-tail of Manchu custom. For men of the elite, who in the late Ming had devoted unusually great attention to their long hair and saw the preservation of hair as a filial act, this was a humiliation that led many individuals to refuse, commit suicide, or take the tonsure as Buddhist monks; in some areas it caused uprisings.²⁴ It is against this background that one has to consider the dress and hairstyles of the figures in Shitao's paintings. To my knowledge, out of all the surviving images there is not a single one in which contemporary Qing dress can be identified with certainty. In one portrait – the figure in which is from the hand of a specialist portraitist collaborator – a man wears a light summer robe that may be contemporary (see Figure 28). Yet the collar and the buttons down the chest are unusual, and in other portraits by Shitao the figures wear Tang dynasty costume (see Figures 27, 33). The rule in Shitao's art is of a visibly Han Chinese space that, quite simply, no longer existed. This becomes less astonishing when one realizes that Shitao was far from alone in this symbolic resistance, and indeed that it was standard practice in his world of

remnant-subject painters (where the problem could also be avoided by eliminating figures from the landscape altogether) and beyond. There is some evidence, for example, that some individuals continued to wear Ming dress in defiance of the new regulations, and were tolerated by the local authorities.²⁵ The broader context also includes the representational space of porcelain decoration and of the theater stage, where many elements of Ming dress were retained, as can be seen to this day.

The political inflection of Shitao's landscape space, however, was a much more complex affair than simply the introduction of ethnic markers of difference. It may be helpful here to look more closely at two very different paintings, *Repotting Chrysanthemums* (Figure 23) and *Qingxiang Dadizi's Reminiscence of the Thirty-six Peaks* (see Plate 3). The focus of *Repotting Chrysanthemums* is Shitao's engrossed contemplation of the newly repotted flowers in his upstairs room. The inscription functions almost like a cartoonist's bubble, making us privy to his thoughts:

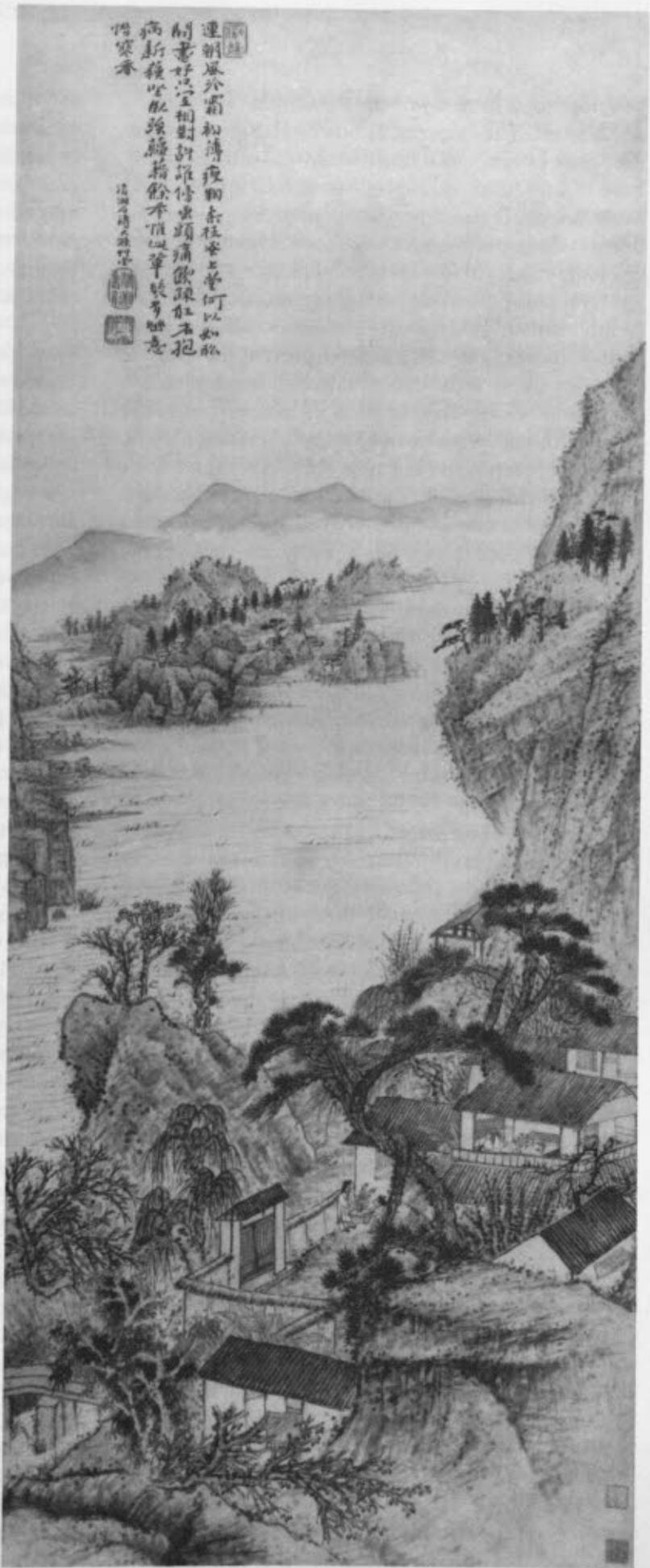
For a few mornings now the wind has been cold,
and the first thin frost has appeared.
I have the thin weak-stemmed chrysanthemums
moved upstairs.
Why should I treat them so solicitously? Would it
not be better just to let them bloom?
We are perfectly suited to looking at each other
with no one else around.
My head bowed, I drink painfully, just a little
craziness left.
Overtaken by illness, barely awake, it's hard to sit
or even lie down.
For the true refinements of old age, there is only
our generation,
With what quiet reflection we pity the Winter
Fragrance.

Without saying so in so many words – he hardly needs to be explicit – Shitao has taken over the chrysanthemum (“winter fragrance”) as an emblem of survival, the survival of his generation of the last remaining remnant subjects of the Ming. The “thin, weak-stemmed” nature of the late-autumn flowers mirrors his own illness, increasingly a part of his life and eventually to cause his death. The pleasure of replanting chrysanthemums is inseparable from this mixture of reflection and latent sorrow, and the sense of belonging to a generation that understood the meaning of time's passing. When, at his own death, Shitao bequeathed an album to his biographer Li Lin, it contained only paintings of chrysanthemums.²⁶

Buried within the poem is an evocation of madness – “just a little craziness left” – echoed in the harsh rocks, twisting pines, and unexpected red dotting that trouble

the surface of the country calm. In *Qingxiang Dadizi's Reminiscence of the Thirty-six Peaks*, however, the madness takes over entirely, spreading from the strange figure to the entire landscape (see Plate 3). The painting has, in fact, a double focus in the figure of Dadizi and the equally strange building above him, with its halo of bamboos; the strangeness extends into the relationship to the painting that is thereby set up for the viewer. Because the two main rock formations in the lower half of the painting are spatially ambiguous, and because equal weight is given to elements near and far, the two main motifs are situated in a deformed and compressed zone of transition between foreground and background. These spatial contradictions discomfit the viewer less than they reflect back on the figure and the building, contributing to the metaphorical image of the Dadizi figure as someone free of the coordinates of normal life. As such, this is recognizably an image of the *kuangren* or madman, a persona with a long history in Shitao's work. (The title refers us back to the period of the late 1660s and early 1670s). Indeed, in somatic terms, one could say that the landscape evokes madness through the suggestion of a loss of bodily control.

With different relative emphasis, both paintings conjoin memory and madness in an affirmation of Shitao's status as a remnant subject of the Ming, inscribing the paintings within a context of political mourning, a practice that was itself part of a larger social mechanism. One of the most striking features of the Ming–Qing dynastic transition is the familiar character of so many of the literati responses to the fall of their dynasty. At the two poles of loyalism and collaboration, the responses conform to historically established patterns whose existence and authority over a vast time span imply an underlying social mechanism of ritual responsibilities. The political anthropologist George Balandier has demonstrated the richness of the ritual mechanisms that societies develop to ensure that inevitable moments of societal crisis, such as the death of a ruler, do not prompt the destruction of the community. Fundamental to Balandier's analysis is the concept that ritually sanctioned action in such moments of crisis can be extreme, including the inversion of normal social expectations, the breaking of taboos, and violence; the fulfilment of these ritual responsibilities symbolically creates the *tabula rasa* necessary to the authority of the new ruler.²⁷ In the post-1644 situation in China, one can identify on the Ming loyalist side a graduated series of sanctioned responses to the fall of the dynasty that share this character of symbolic transgression: suicide, feigned madness, the refusal to speak, renunciation of the world as a monk, refusal to pursue a political career, a life in retirement. All of these and other loyalist responses can



運朝風外霜初薄
瘦柳未生華
上華何以如秋
開畫好共相對
許誰伴出頭
痛飲誰在把
病新種
坐臥強
歸餘不
惟以筆
數句
惜
寒
者

清
朝
詩
人
孫
景
印

23. *Repotting Chrysanthemums*, hanging scroll, ink and color on paper, 99.7 x 40.2 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

be understood in terms of the paradigms furnished by death ritual. The emperor, as Son of Heaven, was also the father of the people; the dynasty did not fall, as we have it, but "died" (*wang*). In some cases, most obviously suicide, the ancient practice of accompanying-in-death is the implicit model. Best known from the tombs of Shang rulers, it was an active practice at the imperial level under the Ming until the second half of the fifteenth century, inflicted on palace concubines, and its formal abolition in 1464 did not prevent the practice from continuing at the level of enfeoffed Ming princes.²⁸ At the other end of the spectrum, withdrawal from public life, although readable as a symbolic self-immolation, was often practiced on the model of mourning for one's parents, which was of limited duration.²⁹ Against the background of failed or doomed resistance, the loyalist took on the burden of grief, expressing a symbolic refusal of the new dynasty.

In contrast to the much-admired loyalists, the literati representatives of the restoration of continuity, those Chinese officials who joined the Qing government, inevitably appear today in a bad light; yet, while it is easy to see their collaboration in purely pragmatic or opportunistic terms – the basis of their historical image – this underestimates the sense of moral purpose to which many collaborationists laid claim, and which also took its logic from death ritual. Their actions privileged the need to restore peace over loyalty to their own dynasty; and, as had been the case under the Yuan, this was overlaid by a commitment to the continuity of the Chinese cultural tradition as a civilizing influence at the center of power, at the seeming expense of loyalty to one's own people. Theirs was a state (rather than dynastic) definition of political subjecthood: The Mandate of Heaven and the state apparatus traversed the dynastic transformation. On this basis, they curtailed the mourning period, if only by giving it a literal reading. Beyond this, however, we betray the literati's highly developed sense of history if we do not take into account the collaborationists' awareness of sacrificing their reputation, their name – no small matter in a society where the reputation of ancestors had multiple ramifications for descendants. The literati who entered Qing government in its first decades were, like their loyalist counterparts, engaged in a symbolic self-sacrifice; to accompanying-in-death, however, they preferred voluntary servitude.³⁰

The alternative paradigms furnished by the double imperative of mourning and self-sacrifice functioned symbiotically to maintain social equilibrium in the face of disaster, a phenomenon confirmed by the relative lack of antagonism between proponents of the two positions (outside the context of active resistance).³¹ Literati en-

agement in the dynastic transition emerges as a play of competing temporalities.³² The enterprise of continuity in which the Chinese official in Qing service was engaged, made possible by a restriction of the length of the mourning period, maintained the cyclical flow of dynastic time. Conversely, the loyalist can be said to have extended the symbolic three years of mourning of the eldest son to cover his entire lifetime, or to have accompanied – in a symbolic substitute for death – his deceased lord. Taking his cue from the calculated rupture with the normal socialized time of community life or public life that mourning represented, he located himself within the disruption. He thus operated a suspension of dynastic time, inhabiting and incarnating a limbo that one might call interdynastic in the sense that it was neither clearly Ming nor clearly Qing.³³

In one case operating a continuity of dynastic time, in the other its suspension, the two mechanisms in effect jointly contributed to the naturalization of the dynastic changeover, operating as one of the multiple means of reproduction of the dynastic system.³⁴ Through the play of temporalities associated with different ritualized political options, the dynastic transition was structured as a ritual narrative, in which both loyalists and collaborators were necessary, and in which the plot, like that of a Chinese play, had the seeming inexorability of destiny. His voluntary servitude notwithstanding, the collaborator alone did not possess the moral authority to create the symbolic tabula rasa without which the new dynasty could not pass from imposed authority to legitimacy. This is where loyalist culture, with its preexclusion or deferral of direct political action, came in. Although the loyalist's refusal to recognize the Qing is usually seen admiringly as an attempt to prevent the new dynasty from acquiring authority, and was undoubtedly so perceived by loyalists, the fact that the refusal occurred within the context of the displacement of action into mourning functioned as an implicit acknowledgment of the fact of dynastic death. Despite its negative character, this acknowledgment was crucial because its moral authority could not be challenged: In Huang Zongxi's (1610–95) words, "The remnant subjects are the primordial energy of Heaven and Earth."³⁵ It is little wonder, then, that the Qing state in this period treated the remnant subjects with careful respect.

As is almost always the case for representations of political mourning, *Repotting Chrysanthemums* and *Qingxiang Dadizi's Reminiscence of the Thirty-six Peaks* locate their subjects within the metaphorical environment of the wilderness (*ye*). In the terms of the imperial cosmos, the wilderness was a marginal site, taking meaning from its opposition to the court (*chao*), which designat-

ed the entire orbit of central power in all its tentacular manifestations. The age-old function of the wilderness was as a space of displacement, where the displacement referred to the particular subjecthood of exile or withdrawal. As a space of exile, the wilderness has two defining characteristics. First, as its opposition to the court implies, it was inherently political and thus a natural home for the symbolic self-sacrifice of the remnant subjects. Second, although the displacement could be physical and geographic (as in the case of banishment or flight), it was more fundamentally a displacement of consciousness; the most general role of physical, geographic displacement was in representation, as metaphor. For this reason, it may be appropriate to define the wilderness as a space of interior exile.³⁶

The wilderness takes very different forms in the two paintings. In *Repotting Chrysanthemums*, the gentle landscape environment in which Shitao has set his home has its real-life referent in the suburban wilderness of city outskirts. The image in effect relocates Shitao's house beyond Yangzhou's city walls, in the surrounding countryside. Yangzhou's rural outskirts had no shortage of painters to depict them, but those who gave them a wilderness form in the full metaphoric sense of the term were far fewer. The local artist Xiao Chen was one, and his paintings provide a number of precedents for *Repotting Chrysanthemums*, especially in the use of a cut-off mountain to frame a foreground house, the contrast of the owner (inside) and the servants (outside), and the disjunction between a dense foreground scene and an open lake vista behind.³⁷ This kind of suburban area transitional between town and country – the landscape to the south of Nanjing probably being the most commonly represented – was one of the major referents for remnant-subject paintings of the wilderness. It recurs in dozens of other images by Shitao from the 1690s and 1700s, some topographically unspecific but others with a precise topographic reference to Nanjing's southern outskirts or to one of the sites in the area of Baozhang Lake, which snaked through the nearby countryside to the northwest of Yangzhou. For a full understanding of this strain of wilderness representation, attention must be paid to the underlying accompanying-in-death metaphor of remnant-subject painting; specifically, it is the analogy between the painter's suspension of dynastic time and the suspension of mortal time in the afterlife that is in play. What we see here and in so many other analogous paintings is an idealized, peaceable continuity of the Ming – we could call it the dynastic afterlife – that replicates the representational principle of the idealized environment of the tomb as the residence of the *po* soul. In these paintings, as in tombs, the full force

of illusion is brought to bear to make the afterlife tangible.

The model of the “sedentary” *po* soul can hardly be relevant to the many remnant-subject representations – *Qingxiang Dadizi's Reminiscence of the Thirty-six Peaks* is one – of fantastic or strange landscapes, whether of the mind or based on real travels, that invoke the idea of wandering or displacement. Still, here too the metaphor of accompanying-in-death is helpful, since the *po* soul was doubled by the wandering, unhappy *hun* soul roaming the dangerous cosmos in search of paradise. The wild landscape of *Dadizi's Reminiscence*, an evocation of his years of wandering the world, depicts the “true” wilderness of Mount Huang, near She-xian. Clearly labeled as such, it invokes the previous half-century's thousands and thousands of Huangshan paintings, so many of which were in the hands of the Huizhou merchants who dominated the Yangzhou economy. Huangshan's mythical role as the home of the Yellow Emperor turned it into a potential emblem of legitimate rule, and its claim to wilderness status was strengthened by the illusion that it served as a refuge for loyalist exiles. In reality, few of even Huizhou painters had done more than to visit it for brief periods; Shitao himself was proud of having climbed it three times, and of having spent more than a month there on one of those occasions. No less than the Yangzhou outskirts, in Shitao's work and that of others it attained wilderness status through a metaphoric transformation that typically pushed it toward desolation or, as here, wildness.

Behind the term *yimin* (remnant subject) lies the homophonous word *yimin*, literally “a subject who has fled,” or more simply a hermit. A definition of the latter *yimin*, attributed to Chen Jiru's (1558–1639) *History of Hermits (Yimin shi)*, suggests something of the complicity between the two terms: “Hermits are like the roots that survive after wilderness grass has been burnt to ashes.”³⁸ Remnant subjects were a particular kind of hermit, but any Ming-born hermit of the post-1644 period could be seen as a remnant subject. The resulting ambiguity turned the *yimin* semantic field into a rhetorical battleground corresponding to the wilderness' loose accommodation of almost any form of morally alibied exclusion or alienation. It was in the wilderness, for example, that diehard loyalists discovered their commonality with scholars discouraged by lack of success in the civil service competition, and even with Qing officials in their private moments of leisure. However, the normative dynastic terms of reference on which I have drawn up to this point do not exhaust the meaning of the wilderness, which appears in a very different light when it is considered from the viewpoint of urban culture. In

these alternative terms, one could define the wilderness – imperfectly, but nonetheless accurately – as the entrepreneurial space of independent literati making a living from the sale of their cultural skills. With this term “wilderness,” they dignified and alibied their effective repudiation of a social frame of reference that was incapable of providing them with a viable economic role. Exile here takes on a socioeconomic rather than political meaning, putting literati engagement in the dynastic transition in a rather different light. From this point of view, one of the differences between the collaborationist and loyalist poles involves strategies of investment. Whereas the Chinese official in Qing service invested in political capital with its direct economic dividend, the remnant subject’s investment was almost entirely in symbolic, moral capital, which could only pay off economically through the indirect mediation of cultural production.³⁹

Shitao’s home, presented in *Repotting Chrysanthemums* as a place of leisure, was also a site of production – a workshop – and a place of business. However, the house was, strictly speaking, unrepresentable in these economic roles. Even when it might seem to be implied, as in an album leaf that shows Shitao painting before a window, the accompanying poem makes clear that we are seeing Shitao the creator, not Shitao the producer (Figure 24). A second painting that shows Shitao brush in hand, *Clearing Mist in Wild Ravines*, is similarly glossed with a poem that evokes the creative process in semimystical terms (see Figure 102).⁴⁰ That the recipient of the scroll, Wang Zhongru, and his brother look on as Shitao paints does not mean that the artist has represented a commercial transaction. Commerce is always elided in favor of friendship as the representable mode of social interaction: here, friendship between a painter (the brush, the paper for the hanging scroll laid out ready to paint) and a poet-calligrapher (the piles of books on the table behind that also indicate the fictional site to be Wang Zhongru’s home).

My concern for socioeconomic issues is not the interjection of a modern perspective irrelevant to Shitao’s time. The figure of the “recluse” forced to support himself by the sale of writing, calligraphy, or painting is one of the most common biographical tropes of the late seventeenth century, and is found, for example, in Li Lin’s biography of Shitao.⁴¹ Thus it seems fair to say that the socioeconomic character of the wilderness is present in such paintings as a repressed element, as the unspoken or undepicted. Confirmation can be found in the way that Shitao himself made explicit elsewhere what he typically omitted from his paintings and their inscriptions. The obvious economic consequences of illness, for ex-

ample, are passed over in the poem inscribed on *Repotting Chrysanthemums*. By contrast, in his business correspondence Shitao did not hesitate to cite ill health as a reason for selling paintings (medical expenses), or to explain late delivery as the result of illness, or to juxtapose announcements of commissions completed with requests for medicine, as here:

I completed the screen long ago and dare not hold on to it too long – I fear you must be thinking about it more and more each day. I am sending someone to deliver it. If you have any medicine, my servant will bring it back. When the weather improves I will come to thank you in person.⁴²

We must assume, I think, that the silence, in painting, on the socioeconomic character of the wilderness was conventional. Though there was clearly a question of decorum, the explanation lies on a different level, in the paradox of the literati entrepreneur’s situation that what he was selling was, at one level, the myth of a “pure,” disinterested culture, incarnated in his person. Taking this into account, it is not hard to see that the remnant-subject role in fact provided literati with a social profile that lent itself to economic exploitation. Through paintings, calligraphies, poems, and prose texts, moral capital was regularly translated into economic profit. While this remnant-subject professionalism was bemoaned as an enforced compromise in troubled times, the reality is that it was equally a new variant on the well-established literati professionalism of the pre-1644 period. *Repotting Chrysanthemums* and *Qingxiang Dadizi’s Reminiscence of the Thirty-six Peaks* are products of this situation, their wilderness formulation of landscapes of leisure contributing to their salability in a commercial context that is reconstructed in Chapters 6 and 7.

THE AMBIGUOUS SHI

It is a very different vision of the wilderness that Shitao shows us in *The Blue-Green Screen of the Southern Mountains*, his painting of an existing country estate (Figure 25). This huge work, perhaps originally a decorative screen to judge by its size, proportions, and battered surface, represents the Wu family lands south of the Fenge River in Shexian in Huizhou, with the mountains of Huangshan looming in the background. Together with an eight-leaf album finished a month later, it was part of a double commission for the twenty-one-year-old Wu Yuqiao, a young member of a wealthy Huizhou family with which Shitao had long been friendly.⁴³ In the album Shitao fulfilled Wu’s request to illustrate a set of eight poems written in praise of the family lands a cen-



24. "Painting at the Studio Window," *Landscapes and Poems*, leaf 1, ink and color on paper, each leaf 27 x 21 cm. Private collection.

tury and a half earlier by a celebrated visitor from Suzhou, the calligrapher and poet Zhu Yunming (1461–1527). The paintings evoke an idyllic domain, lush and rich, dotted with the elaborate but compact houses for which Huizhou was famous and peopled by wealthy men and scholars at leisure (Figure 26). The hanging scroll interprets one of the eight poetic views on a monumental scale, employing to striking effect a naturalist rhetoric of veracity borrowed from contemporary Yangzhou decorative painters.⁴⁴ Distance is a key idea here, combining with enormous height to generate a vast space. The deep recession establishes a supremely stable ground plane, from which the peaks rise strictly vertically, like towers. Mist everywhere, obscuring the lower part of the mountains and much of the receding lowlands, concentrates the viewer's eye on the indices of distance, height, and stability. In the right foreground amid an impressive cluster of domestic buildings, Wu Yuqiao can be seen on a balcony in conversation with Shitao.

Behind the Wu family house, the Huangshan peaks – which in reality were not adjoining at all and, moreover, would have been almost out of sight – form a protective backdrop, “a floating green curtain.” While the artist wears the black head covering of a hermit, Wu is shown wearing an official's cap. Books, paintings, and brushes in the background indicate his education and culture. From Zhu Yunming's rather conventional poem inscribed on the painting, the two figures can be glossed as a latter-day Tao Qian (Shitao) and Yi Yin (Wu Yuqiao), Tao being the Six Dynasties poet and Yi a recluse of the Shang dynasty who was courted by the emperor and eventually agreed to serve as a minister. The key to the painting, however, lies in Wu's sobriquet, Nangao or “southern loftiness,” translated into visual terms in the southern mountains that form a “blue-green screen” in the distance.⁴⁵

Finally, near the center of the painting, standing some way off from the Wu family house in the middle distance, is a large formal building. Not identified in the poem, it might be taken for a Buddhist or Daoist temple and passed over as a picturesque landscape detail, whereas its identity is almost certainly highly specific



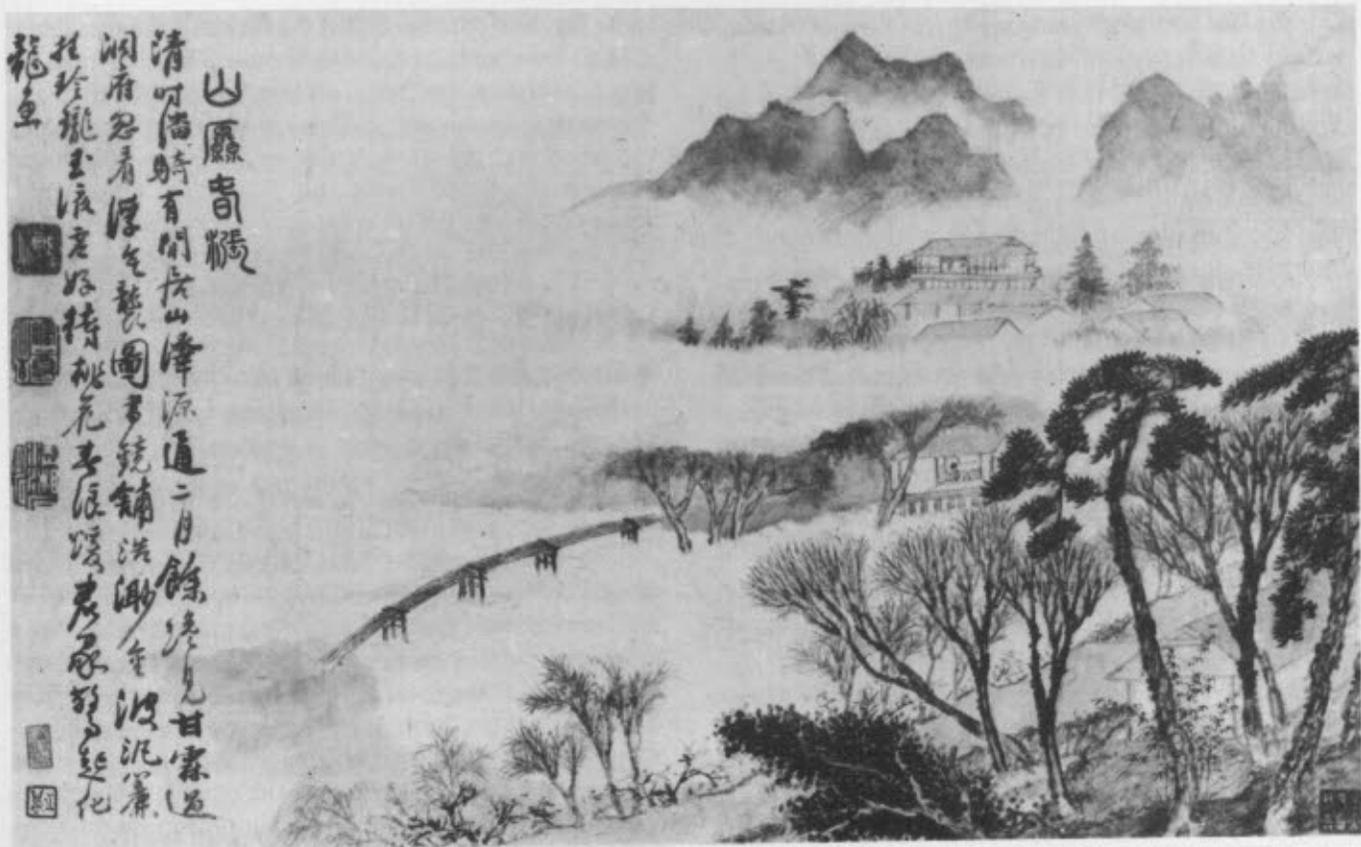
南山翠屏

結廬當面玉周遊登眺何
 須著屐勞節彼瞻如太師
 尹悠然見似隱君陶子巖
 雨過浮青陰萬木蒼溪滾
 翠澗柱頰朝未得新句稜
 上蘊色與相高

擬周玉人以酒用紙此亦
 畫定又信清和之調也
 用文徵明先生詩而加一
 以二詩神韻等語此亦其
 意也

萬曆二十二年清湘陳人瑞書於此

25. The Blue-Green Screen of the Southern Mountains, dated 1699, hanging scroll, ink and color on paper, 234 x 182.5 cm. Tokyo National Museum.



26. "The Stream Waters Rise in Spring," *Eight Views of Xi'nan*, dated 1700, album of 8 leaves, ink or ink and color on paper, each leaf 31.5 x 51.8 cm, leaf 1, ink and color on paper. Shanghai Museum.

and tied into the theme of family property and history. The rather densely inhabited area south of the Fengle River was notable not for its Buddhist or Daoist establishments but for its shrines, including two ancestral shrines of the Wu family built under the Ming.⁴⁶ One is the subject of another of Zhu Yunming's poems; Shitao represented it in his album as a secret, walled domain, using the barrier of the overgrown wall to accentuate its spiritual and ideological power.⁴⁷ Represented once again in the hanging scroll as the almost hidden center of the Xi'nan landscape, it sums up in one potent visual symbol the intersection of lineage, place, and property.

At every step, or so it would seem, this painting puts gentry values on display, yet to probe its circumstances is to see those values transmute into something quite different. The Wus of Xi'nan had been a leading Huizhou merchant family for centuries; the second of their ancestral shrines, in fact, was dedicated to a Southern Song merchant ancestor, one of many "shrines to merchant sages" built in Huizhou during the Ming dynasty.⁴⁸ Although individual members of the Wu family may have been able to claim gentry status through examination success or degree purchase, nonetheless it was as a merchant family that the Wus were famous, just as Shitao

would have been known to them on one level as a professional artist from whom different family members had commissioned works over a period of three decades and more. Wu Yuqiao lived in Yangzhou, where his extended family had major commercial interests in the salt trade. His father had hoped that Wu Yuqiao, being the eldest son, would study for the examinations and eventually attend the national university in Beijing in preparation for the national-level *jinsi* degree. However, the father's death in 1691 had imposed different priorities; if, at the age of twenty, the son still entertained hopes of pursuing his studies, these were soon to evaporate when, at his mother's insistence, he took responsibility for the immediate family by going into business. It has to be borne in mind that, had it not been for his father's early death, advanced studies would not have taken on the character of an unaffordable luxury for the family: Huizhou merchant families often encouraged one son to pursue a government career as a strategy to consolidate the family's position.⁴⁹

The scenic beauty of the Xi'nan area, meanwhile, was intimately tied to merchant wealth. The early-sixteenth-century poems of Zhu Yunming, which in Shitao's time served to dispel any air of the parvenu, were written in praise of a landscape that had recently been transformed by the Wu family's construction of large-scale gardens.⁵⁰ (By 1700 Huizhou merchants were more likely to build gardens in the Yangzhou area). Zhu's own association

with the Wu family was another by-product of its commercial success, typical of sixteenth-century Huizhou merchant patronage that brought leading cultural figures to Huizhou, almost as trophies, from central Jiangnan, particularly from Suzhou. None of this is to say that the family was not an extremely cultivated one, nor that Zhu Yunming or, later, Shitao were not friends of the family, nor that Zhu and Shitao were not "scholars." In this sense Shitao's painting, with its ostentatious cameo of artist-patron friendship, is entirely true to the social relationship for which it was produced – indeed, its sincerity is part of what makes it work; but by multiplying the signs of refinement (*ya*), Shitao draws a discreet veil over the merchant wealth of the family, his own professionalism, and the painting's status as a commodity in an implicit disavowal of the supposed vulgarity (*su*) of commerce. As Joseph Esherick and Mary Rankin have written, "Gentry were the keepers of a particular set of cultural symbols that defined refinement."⁵¹

How can one explain the invocation of the gentry ideal in *The Blue-Green Screen of the Southern Mountains*? Does it translate the desire for a different status? Or had the ideal entered the public domain, so to speak, to be manipulated for different purposes? Here we need an insider's perspective. For a sense of how merchants thought about the *shi* role, we can draw upon an analysis of social history by an early Qing writer of Huizhou origin:⁵²

Emperor Taizong of the Song [r. 976–84] concentrated all the profit and power of the empire in the hands of officials, from which point the scholar-officials were obliged to engage in agriculture as well if they were going to establish their families. This was in every way different from ancient times. Not only did those who held office compete for profit with the common people, but those who sought to hold office first had to engage in agriculture in order to get the regular income necessary to concentrate on the examinations. Then commercial activity became even more intense, and the power of merchants became even greater; unless the father or elder brother had built a business in advance, the son or younger brother had no reason to study and thereby achieve individual glory. In this way, whereas in ancient times the "four categories" were kept separate, in later times they were not. In ancient times the sons of *shi* continued to be *shi*, but in later times the sons of merchants became able to become *shi*: This is one great change in the transformations of the period from the Song through the Ming dynasty. With the *shi* of the world mostly coming from merchant [backgrounds], elegant style became ever more important [among the *shi*]; on the other hand, the custom of friendly solicitude became hard to find among the scholar-officials, appearing instead among the merchants. Why? Since the power of the world tended to be

in the hands of merchants, the outstanding and intelligent people tended to come from their ranks. Their occupation being commerce, and being outstanding people, they displayed their outstanding qualities in understanding things and emotions, and so were able to do things that others were not capable of doing, and did not put up with the things that others put up with. In this way, those who are *shi* have become increasingly elegant, while those who work as merchants have become honest and trustworthy. This is another great change in social customs.

In many ways, this a text about the changing meaning of the term *shi*. Peter Bol, discussing an earlier period, has succinctly defined what is involved:⁵³

"*Shi*" was a concept used to think about the sociopolitical order; at the same time, it referred to an element in that society. "*Shi*" as a concept was a socially constructed idea that those who called themselves *shi* held. The transformation of the *shi* thus can analytically be separated into changes in the way *shi* conceived of being a *shi* and shifts in the social makeup of the men who called themselves *shi*. As a concept, being a *shi* meant possessing qualities thought appropriate to membership in the sociopolitical elite. The concept changed when the qualities thought to make men *shi* changed, through addition and subtraction, through redefinition of a particular quality, or through a shift in the relative value of constituent qualities.

In the opening section of his text (not cited), the early Qing writer describes a historical process from the Wei-Jin period to the Song that Bol has summarized as "the transformations of the *shi* from aristocrats to civil bureaucrats to local elites."⁵⁴ The Song was the period when "the scholar-officials were obliged to engage in agriculture as well if they were going to establish their families" – the period, that is, of a local gentry elite. By the Ming, however, the *shi* were in transformation again as "commercial activity became even more intense." Although his account is not without its contradictions, our pro-merchant author apparently perceives the gentry as having been co-opted and displaced by the merchants, though a pro-gentry writer might well have seen a gentry elite co-opting successful merchants and diversifying into commerce itself. As Esherick and Rankin note, there was "frequent overlap of merchant and gentry resources and strategies." Extending Bol's account, these may be two aspects of a single phenomenon: what might be described as the (contested) transformation of the *shi* concept to encompass a heterogeneous elite that was as much socioeconomic as sociopolitical, and as likely to be city-based as country-based.

However, this elite could hardly be defined in *shi* terms alone.⁵⁵ Indeed, there were many attempts to re-define the four social roles as equally necessary special-

izations, to the benefit of artisans and, above all, merchants.⁵⁶ The dehierarchization was symptomatic of a deeper reinterpretation, in which the criterion of worth was shifted off its original ground of preordained moral value onto the new terrain of the autonomous individual. This is well illustrated in the merchant biographies of the 1693 edition of the officially sponsored and Yangzhou-produced gazeteer of the the Liang-Huai salt monopoly, the *Liang-Huai yanfa zhi*, where the claim made in the above text that merchants “were able to do things that others were not capable of doing” is a common refrain, used especially to characterize philanthropic works for the public good, ranging from the establishment of orphanages and schools to road repair.⁵⁷ At the collective level, too, the merchants demanded credit for the fact that their businesses provided work to all the salt workers, boatmen, porters, and so on who were dependent upon them, as well as for their contributions to state enterprises.⁵⁸ At the same time, however – as the text also makes clear by its claim that “the *shi* of the world mostly com[e] from merchant backgrounds,” and as we have seen in the *The Blue-Green Screen of the Southern Mountains* – the commercial classes were not willing to leave the *shi* ideal to the old-style gentry. From investment in education, degree purchase, and marriage alliances there emerged a milieu of highly cultured merchant families sometimes called *shenshang*, “gentry merchants.” A number of Shitao’s patrons from Shexian families either entered local government service or had the qualifications to do so.⁵⁹

The disabused analysis of the Huizhou writer and his ability to distinguish appearances from practice, indeed his delight in doing so, coincide with the disalignment of appearances from social realities in *The Blue-Green Screen of the Southern Mountains*. We can, therefore, reasonably take this to be part of the context for the painting and suspect that Shitao was consciously appealing to the sophistication of an urban public used to recognizing the manipulation of the signs of class status. To explore this possibility further, I turn first to a more straightforward example of such manipulation: the semiotics of clothes. Under the Ming, clothes had placed sociomoral status on display in line with sumptuary regulations, but in Qing times they signified social differences very differently. On this shift, in the absence of an equivalently explicit account from Yangzhou, we have the testimony of a gentry writer from the Shanghai area, Yao Tinglin. Born sixteen years before the fall of the Ming, Yao kept a diary during most of his life until, around 1697, he finally briefly reflected on the changes that had taken place during his lifetime. On male clothing, he had this to say in part:⁶⁰

As for dress in Ming times, everything was according to status. Gentry, provincial examination graduates [*juren*], tribute students [*gongsheng*], and local examination graduates [*xiucaï*] all wore a cloth cap [*jin*], whereas commoners wore hats. In winter these were made of wool; in the summer they were made of animal hair. There were also first-rank scholar-officials who wore the “floating cap,” with a loose piece at the front and the back, or the “Chunyang cap,” which had a cloud design front and back. No matter how rich a commoner was, he could not wear a cap. Today everyone wears red-tasseled hats – sable, polecat, or fox – with no distinction of status. From servants and hired laborers to officials on post, everybody wears what he wants: There are no more status distinctions at all. As for the system of clothes, it was set out in the regulations of the [*Da Ming*] *huidian* [Collected Statutes of the Great Ming]. When officials were on post in Ming times, they used a cloud-pattern roundel. There were also some scholar-officials who wore a cloud-pattern robe at home. The sons, students, and the like were restricted to wearing satin and gauze. Today, without mentioning the lower classes, anyone with money puts on a display of clothes, and cloud-embroidered outer robes are worn absolutely anywhere.

Yao Tinglin’s memories of the Ming, more than half a century after its fall, are probably not entirely dependable. Moreover, he lived in an area likely to have been very much more conservative than Yangzhou at any point of the seventeenth century. Nonetheless, his account documents a breakdown of codified status distinctions in dress that can only have been more visible, and at an earlier date, in a commercial and cosmopolitan city like Yangzhou.

Another Shanghai-area gentry writer, Ye Mengzhu, also writing in the 1690s, has left a more detailed discussion of the customs of dress from the Ming through the 1690s.⁶¹ From his account, it can be seen that the initial Qing sumptuary regulations, by stressing uniformity, dealt a mortal blow to the prior distinctions between *shi* and commoner dress. Moreover, the nature of Manchu clothing was such that opportunities for the exploitation of color and pattern that had previously been restricted to the *shi* were now opened up to everybody, creating the possibility of a new semiotics of social distinction on a nonsumptuary basis. Belatedly realizing this, the Qing government attempted to reinstate many of the earlier social distinctions at the beginning of the 1670s. When the measure soon proved too difficult to enforce, however, it was abandoned and “then extravagance in clothing returned.” As noted in Chapter 1, in an essay published in 1697 the Yangzhou writer Li Gan also noted this extravagance in clothing in his area, in his case commenting on its contribution to the break-

down in visual distinctions between children and adults, and between purchased concubines and respectable women. "The decline of customs reaches its nadir in Yangzhou prefecture."⁶²

The law of the new situation was fashion, which is to say, consumption. "As soon as people learn to walk," writes Li Gan again about Yangzhou, "they are only afraid of having something that doesn't fit in." With codified forms of dress no longer available to provide fixed and dependable meanings, the market's need for novelty put a premium on the transgression of old taboos. The purchased concubine was recognizable as such because no respectable woman would show herself in public in such finery; her invocation of the signs of respectability was less an attempt to deceive than a ludic and self-affirmatory act. As Yao Tinglin writes, "Today, without mentioning the lower classes, anyone with money puts on a display of clothes, and cloud-embroidered outer robes are worn absolutely anywhere." Ye Mengzhu gives a better sense of the fashion possibilities that were opened up. Although he is speaking of the robes of officials, gentry, and examination candidates, in a situation where anyone with money could put on a display of clothes, his description has far broader social relevance: "At the beginning [of the dynasty] patterned silks [for men's robes] employed Manchu-style dragon roundels. After these were banned [c. 1671], they changed to large or small cloud designs, and today they use large or small floral roundels, or flying birds, or landscape scenes."⁶³

How does this shed light on painting? The interest of urban fashion at the end of the seventeenth century for my argument is that it encouraged a kind of "cross-dressing" across class and other social lines. This idea can be extended to painting most obviously in the case of portraiture. The upsurge of informal portraiture in the early Qing soon turned into an orgy of dressing up. Sometimes this literally involved an element of fancy dress, but more often it was metaphorical, as the artist elaborated visually the persona chosen by the sitter. In Shitao's time, the leading master of such stage-managed portraiture was Yu Zhiding (1647-c. 1716). Originally from the Yangzhou area and active there through the 1670s, before moving to Beijing to become a court painter (by 1681 at latest), Yu often painted several portraits of the same individual. Three of his series have survived, each involving a prominent scholar-official: Wang Shizhen (1634-1711), Wang Yuanqi, and Qiao Lai (1642-94).⁶⁴ In a long series of handscrolls, Wang Shizhen is shown in such situations as supervising the release of a silver pheasant and playing the zither in a bamboo grove. Wang Yuanqi is first the chrysanthemum lover, then the Buddhist layman. In a single album, Qiao

Lai is successively a hermit turning his back on the world (but incongruously wearing the newly fashionable patterned robe), a collector of antiques, and a solitary man of the wilderness.

Shitao's collaborative portraits with specialist portraitists involve the same kind of playacting. Thus Huang You, an inveterate traveler from another famous Huizhou family, the Huangs of Tandu, is imagined as a knight-errant crossing the pass into Guangdong Province (see Figure 33). Shitao's artifice reaches still greater heights in the portrait of another scion of a prominent Huizhou family, Hong Zhengzhi (Figure 27). In reference as much to the formal rank of an admired official among his ancestors as to the young man's own brave spirit, Shitao's collaborator (probably Jiang Heng) depicted him in military dress, a sword at his side; but Shitao's own landscape contribution leaves the figure floating, dreamlike, above the pine-covered mountains of Huangshan, emblem of his ancestral home – or is it simply a miniature garden mountain of the kind that his Yangzhou residence no doubt possessed? Then there is Jiang Heng's 1698 portrait of the twenty-year-old Wu Yuqiao, again stage-managed by Shitao (Figure 28). The artists situate the young man in the obligatory leisure context, attributing to him the persona of the Daoist fisherman whose "line and rod are set up but . . . is not fishing and does not care" in order to suggest his relaxed detachment from worldly concerns.⁶⁵ Two intertwined trees at his back signify his dead parents, whom he later evoked in a colophon to the scroll.

We might note that the plain costumes generally favored in Shitao's paintings represent a self-conscious opting out from the fashion game, not only on Shitao's part but also, at least for the purposes of a painting, of any friends or patrons he represented. Since this implied a decision on moral grounds, the plainness of costume also involved a certain claim to *shi* status. Thus, Wu Yuqiao's physical appearance was just as meaningful in social terms as the painting's pictorial conceit and the formal inscription added by Shitao to explain it. Bare-headed and soberly dressed in a plain white robe with a contrasting collar, he was visibly not one of those wealthy youths in fine silks and fashionable hats so deplored by local gentry writers. His outfit makes a statement of simplicity similar to the front-buttoned coat over trousers sported by the famous official and connoisseur Gao Shiqi in Yu Zhiding's 1696 portrait. Although Yu's later sitters were scholar-officials, whereas Shitao's were men from merchant families, there is no appreciable difference in purpose between the two kinds of portrait.⁶⁶ We can say that Shitao is helping his sitters to invent themselves as *shi* and, by that token, participates in the redefinition of what the *shi* was. From the



27. Shitao and Jiang Heng (?), *Portrait of Hong Zhengzhi*, dated 1706, handscroll, ink and color on paper, 36 x 175.8 cm. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation (S87.0205).

28. Shitao and Jiang Heng, *Portrait of Wu Yuqiao*, dated in colophon to 1698, handscroll, ink and color on paper, 33 x 54.2 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.



爽氣飄然凝神怡悅領長松之飛簾臨秋水之清冽軒窗倚白眠之高人懷抱具
 湖海之野志浩乎手繪筆已拂非樂莫而不屑涉之芳熟讓古人而自優步
 意志已清意已潔高山流水情難竭賞今貴古何分別哉知者希宜敢決言行
 藏非可等閑記日月易送正當澄徹人生行樂休言虛設
 南高李世兄道引嘆正 酒湘大滌子濟

Portrait of Wu Yuqiao to the "sobriquet picture" (*biehao tu*) *The Blue-Green Screen of the Southern Mountains* is only a short step, in which dress as frame for, and expression of, the body gives way to landscape, with its enormous potential to present social relations as immanent in the natural order. The Huizhou/Huangshan landscape frames Wu Yuqiao in the logic of the lineage; but at the same time, to the degree that it is a landscape on which he has a personal claim, it also expresses who he is. In the shift from dress to landscape, the *shi* discourse remains intact but is specified differently, as the gentry rather than the literati ideal.

If this was the "game" that was being played, however, there was more to it than its rules. The reinterpretations of the "four categories" construct did not eliminate the orthodox one, even among merchants. Though the "four categories" hierarchy was an ancient formula, its contemporary relevance in the early modern period was guaranteed by the legal weight that it was given under the Ming dynasty and to a lesser extent under the Qing. In the form of sumptuary regulations, corvée requirements, and tax responsibilities, to mention only a few of its legal expressions, it entered everyone's life at one level or another, even if it no longer carried the weight it once had. In the more amorphous realm of social consciousness, throughout the early modern period it played a major role as the repository of anxieties and prejudices, reinforced by orthodox prescriptions.⁶⁷ For those perceived as artisans or merchants, the existence of *shi* could be used by the state and by those who aligned themselves with its orthodox ideologists to shut the door on complete social acceptance. Early modern attempts to use the language of the "four categories" to redefine commerce as an activity with moral possibilities could in this sense never be more than partially successful, in that the language itself guaranteed the elevated status of the *shi* as a social position. Moral capital being granted as the issue, the scholar as the moral specialist was bound to win out; yet for those perceived in orthodox terms as *shi*, there were anxieties too, as gentry, scholar-officials, and literati alike moved increasingly into commercial activities. The status of an artisan or merchant took form as a feared fate, and nostalgia attached itself to a way of life now lost. These diverse anxieties attendant upon the "four categories" representation of society suggest that Shitao's invocation of the gentry ideal also offered his customers a way of denying the gap between what their lives made them (artisans/laborers, merchants, entrepreneurs) and what they felt they ought to be ("pure" gentry).

Thus one may read *The Blue-Green Screen of the Southern Mountains* in two contradictory ways: positively, so to speak, for its cool manipulation of the signs

of social position, and negatively or symptomatically, for its response to social anxieties. One reading directs us to the functionalist ethos of Jiangnan cities, the other back to the dynastic cosmos. The power of the landscape of leisure is that it could accommodate both of these opposed frames of reference simultaneously.

THE STAGING OF LITERATI LIFE

For a final approach to the poetics of social space in Shitao's painting, I want to turn to another view of countryside, *Drunk in Autumn Woods*, roughly datable to the years between 1699 and 1703 (Figure 29; see Plate 5).⁶⁸ This exuberant painting, like the others I have considered so far, is a large hanging scroll, with display one part of its purpose. To this end, it combines the anecdotal narrative details of *Repotting Chrysanthemums* with the performance aesthetic of *Qingxiang Dadizi's Reminiscence of the Thirty-six Peaks*. It also has something in common with *The Blue-Green Screen of the Southern Mountains* since, like that imaginary view of a Huizhou estate, it has a topographical dimension, representing in this case an area in the northern outskirts of Yangzhou that Shitao knew well. At the end of his first inscription, Shitao explains how he came to paint the painting:

Last year Su Yimen [Su Pi], Xiao Zhengyi [Xiao Cuo] and I went up to Baocheng to look at all the red leaves. We got roaring drunk, and then came back. At the time, I wrote this poem [printed below], but didn't do a painting like this. This autumn I paid a visit on Mr. Songgao. While I was looking at a handscroll of Zhuxi [another site in Yangzhou's northern suburbs, but also a way of referring generally to Yangzhou] that I had painted for him in the past, he said: "I dearly wish, sir, that you would paint a picture for me on the theme 'drunk in autumn woods,' with reckless daubs and smears and thousands of crimson and vermilion dots. Would you be prepared to do it?" I said: "Three days and you shall have it!" I went back home, and in a burst of complete madness turned this out.⁶⁹

Baocheng lay a few miles to the northwest of the city, separated from it by an area of temples, restaurants, flower nurseries, and a few scattered mansions, through the southern part of which snaked Baozhang Lake. Pingshan Tang, where the Kangxi emperor had lodged in 1689, drew city promenaders and tourists even further away from the city than the lake with its "painted boats" and hawkers. Looking out to the northwest from the heights of Pingshan Tang, one could survey Baocheng below. Physically, it was, until very recently, little more than a stretch of flattish country, marshy in parts, but otherwise cultivated. Baocheng could be written two ways: as the "Encircled City" or the "Precious City."

29. *Drunk in Autumn Woods*, hanging scroll, ink and color on paper, 160.5 x 70.2 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of John M. Crawford, Jr., 1987 (1987.202).



The area had indeed been a city site at one time, and to this day one can make out modifications of the landscape that speak for the now-buried traces of construction. According to Ruan Yuan (1764–1849), a keen historian of Yangzhou, the area's name must originally have derived from that of the northernmost of the three linked cities that made up Song dynasty Yangzhou: Bao-you Cheng.⁷⁰ Still, if Kangxi-period literati knew that this was the site of the Song city (and the Tang city before it), the knowledge did not generally inspire them to write about it. Their obsession lay instead with Sui dynasty sites. Among Yangzhou's many historical associations, none could rival the importance of the Sui emperor Yangdi's brief, ill-starred attachment to the city, especially at a time when memories were fresh of a period that lent itself to comparison with that paradigm of decadence and vainglory.⁷¹ Several Sui sites were popularly associated with the area around the Baozhang Lake, and it was in part the belief that the grave of Sui Yangdi lay in the Baocheng area, at a spot called Thunder Pool, that drew literati there.⁷² In the context of the Sui–Ming analogy, they were surely only too sensitive to the fact that the name “Precious City” was also used for the inner tomb precinct at the Ming founder's mausoleum at Zhongshan, outside Nanjing.⁷³ This is, therefore, one of those cases – Huangshan as we have seen is another – where the metaphoric environment of the wilderness took on physical landscape form. Shitao, we should note, has written the Ming reference into the fabric of his painting through the “thousands of crimson and vermilion dots” (there are no other pigments). For painters, the use of crimson, *zhu*, was a way of making a loyalist statement, *zhu* being a homophone for Zhu, the name of the Ming imperial family.⁷⁴ By these emblematic means, Shitao declares his presence in the Yangzhou landscape as a Ming prince.

Drunk in Autumn Woods, then, depicts the outing that Shitao had made to Baocheng the previous year with his two friends. Shitao, I take it, can be seen there in the center, walking with a staff; one of his companions (presumably the younger Su Pi (*zi* Yimen) supports him, the other (Xiao Cuo) watches from behind. Like the two men on their donkeys, he is headed for a village wineshop, marked out by its pennant. Two small groups of visitors have already settled down with their wine. They, like Shitao and his friends, have arrived by boat: Three boats, one for each group, are moored on the right. These anecdotal details are scattered – or rather carefully situated – among a profusion of trees, in which the astonishing mixture of vermilion and crimson complements the basic ink values to evoke autumn leaves. Striking for its vast space, the painting nonetheless comprises a single space–time unit, centered on the figure of

Shitao – the eye or “I” of the painting corresponding to the “I” of the poems. The steeply tilted, diagonal ground plane, transformed into a vertiginous descent on this side of the bridge, expands the boundaries of the figure's immediate domain to include everything we see. The bridge anchors the space structurally and, by means of a mediating tree, buttresses the figure of Shitao. Indeed, all the narrative details of the scene are disposed in careful relation to this stable center, motif balanced against motif. Painting's cosmology was never so clearly centered on the autonomous individual body, as Shitao's staff substitutes for the painter's brush to signify a unified expressive and illusionistic act.

The outing to Baocheng is not only represented in the painting but is the subject of the poem mentioned above in his explanation of the commission:

I keep my door closed all year: that's my usual life,
But leaving the suburbs for the countryside I
suddenly felt crazy.
On the narrow paths I didn't meet many of the kind
of people I have to bow to,
Just a compiler of poems resting on his back in the
wilderness fields. (It was the hermit Ni Yongqing.)
It's not that we're inseparable friends but we do get
on well together,
So we were delighted, and loosened our robes.
I give a great sigh today as I try to remember
Baocheng
With red trees all the way to the horizon, and a
drunken composition.

Why does Shitao say that he usually kept his door closed, meaning, presumably, that he didn't go out? His business letters provide some answers, but also tell a somewhat different story:⁷⁵ “Recently, because the road to your father's home has been flooded and I have been kept busy at home, I have not been able to thank him in person.” “I often think of you, but I do not dare visit. I am afraid of making a sudden movement.” “I received your message yesterday to visit [your?] studio. But a visitor from afar has suddenly arrived and wants me to go with him straightaway to Zhenzhou.” “I went to see you yesterday, because I had something to discuss. When I saw that you had a lot of guests and that I wouldn't be able to speak with you, I left.” “During this end-of-the-year period it has been consistently cold, and I haven't often ventured out. But on the first day of New Year I will visit you with a friend, to wish you all the best for the new year.” “As soon as the roads are better I will visit your residence.” “After I and Shucun said goodbye to you at your residence at midautumn, I fell sick at home. . . . I have often wanted to speak with you, but the distance makes it difficult for me to go to see you.” “When the weather improves I will come to

thank you in person." "When you came to see me the other day, I was out." On the one hand, Shitao was clearly kept at home by work and by his fragile health, and perhaps also by a dislike of the expected formal visits to his customers; on the other, it is equally clear that he could not dispense with these visits entirely. They concerned, as he puts it in his poem, the kind of people he had to bow to, and could lead to new commissions – precisely what happened in the case of *Drunk in Autumn Woods*.

Perhaps what Shitao means, however, is in fact something quite different: that, being busy and in ill health, he was rarely able to make the kind of pleasurable trip beyond the city walls that took him to Baocheng that day, just as, in these late years, he only rarely went on any trip that took him away from Yangzhou. (His most distant journey was to Nanjing in 1702.) There would have been something relatively special, then, about not only this outing but also his 1701 visit to Pingshan Tang with two monk friends that gave rise to a painting of the lotus pond there (see Figure 172), or the boat trip on Baozhang Lake in the company of Huang You and Cheng Daoguang that led to a painting of the famous Red Bridge that marked the beginning of the lake.⁷⁶ It is clear in any event that he valued this outing to Baocheng for the respite it offered from a routine in which he had to deal with social obligations. In the poem, the respite is figured in corporeal terms: As he leaves not only the city but its suburbs behind, he suddenly feels "crazy," and instead of the self-control of bowing is able to loosen his robes, in the company of a friend lying on his back, as they get drunk together in the autumn woods.

The old acquaintance whom Shitao encountered, Ni Yongqing, is known today for a surviving anthology of poetry by his contemporaries that he published in 1688; thus Shitao's reference to him as "a compiler of poems."⁷⁷ A decade earlier he, like Shitao, had frequented the gatherings sponsored by Kong Shangren (1648–1718), then in Yangzhou as a river management official. Ni was from Songjiang, and on this occasion was probably only visiting Yangzhou. He was known for his outspoken personality and was one of a number of Shitao's acquaintances who had known military life. As noted by Richard Strassberg, "In a farewell letter to him, Kong praises his heroism and urges him to accept the quieter life of a civilian."⁷⁸ Less well-known is the seriousness of his Chan Buddhist commitment, which led to his inclusion alongside monks like Shitao in a quasi-official biographical history of Chan Buddhism under the Qing, *The Complete Book of the Five Lamps*.⁷⁹ Of Shitao's two companions that day, Su Pi was a younger man from a local Yangzhou family and, at least for a time, a

regular companion of Shitao;⁸⁰ but it is the second man, Xiao Cuo, who most fully comes to life in the available historical record, having wisely taken the precaution of commissioning from Li Lin a literary portrait, from which the following description is taken:⁸¹

Mr. Xiao likes to write poetry, but has won no fame for it. He writes as the feeling strikes him, entrusting to poetry what moves him, and not bothering to imitate the Ancients. He also has the characteristic that he does not like to come into contact with the conspicuously wealthy; he prefers to accompany old scholars and worthy monks on outings around Yangzhou. He is widely acquainted in the Jiang-Huai area [between Nanjing and Yangzhou]. When celebrated gentlemen on travels from all over China come to the area between the Han River and Shu Ridge [the northern outskirts of Yangzhou], they drop in on Mr. Xiao. For their pleasure and his own, he takes them up to Pingshan Tang to drink wine, and points out to them the mountains on the other side of the Yangzi.⁸²

Elsewhere, Li Lin describes a now-lost "wilderness" portrait of Xiao Cuo by Shitao. A staff in one hand, a branch of plum blossom in the other, he stood before Fahai Temple on the banks of Baozhang Lake, the landscape around him engulfed in snow.⁸³

Shitao, Ni Yongqing, Su Pi, and Xiao Cuo are only four of more than a dozen figures in the painting; but the others – with the exception of one man in front of the wineshop, who might be the innkeeper, and two boy servants, one at the wineshop and the other waiting on a pleasure boat – can be taken to be fellow literati pursuing the same pleasures as those who are named. Their presence in the painting (as, perhaps, on the day) serves to dramatize the scene, further emphasizing its character as spectacle. As the report of Cheng Songgao's commission suggests, what he wanted to see was not simply autumn woods but men – literati – getting drunk in autumn woods; Shitao was to stage a scene of literati sociability. Here we might think back to the no-less obviously staged *Repotting Chrysanthemums*, which instead of sociability offers up to the voyeuristic eye the spectacle of literati solitude. Sociability or solitude: The staging of urban literati life accommodated both these poles, which are seen together in an album leaf that juxtaposes a solitary *qin*-player with a boat outing in the background (Figure 30).

Literati life was probably first made over into spectacle toward the end of the fifteenth century, when literati painters in Suzhou discovered that a socially exclusionary art form originally developed for a private culture of like minds was eminently marketable to the larger, moneyed public that was beginning to make its presence felt in Jiangnan life. In these early and distinctly self-conscious explorations of the literati's public image, the

painters often took local sites (gardens, temples, Tiger Hill) as their stage, taking advantage not only of local pride but of the fact that Suzhou was emerging as the center of a tourist industry. Literati self-interest intersected with civic identity to create the paradigmatic staging of urban literati life as spectacle. At the threshold of the eighteenth century, this paradigm for the cultural inflection of social space still applies to Shitao's painting of Baocheng, and indeed to a large proportion of his landscape paintings, including almost all his paintings with implied or explicit Yangzhou settings. By this time Yangzhou had risen to unprecedented prominence, and the efforts of urban improvement on the part of civic leaders had made it an enviable city to live in and to visit (as seen here in Ni Yongqing's presence, or in Xiao Cuo's vocation and perhaps professional status as cicerone). Already in 1689 Kong Shangren had included Yangzhou along with Beijing, Nanjing, Suzhou, and Hangzhou in his list of "five great cities beneath Heaven that any scholar-official must visit."⁸⁴

What needs to be specified more tightly here is the relationship between this literati staging and its Yangzhou public. Without, at this point, confronting the complexities of the city's market for painting, I wish to highlight the importance of two largely, though not wholly, distinct client networks on which Shitao depended. The first was drawn from Huizhou merchant families active in the Yangzhou salt monopoly, and involved men noted as much for their cultural sophistication as for their wealth. The key role of Huizhou merchants in inter-regional trade made them a prominent presence in many cities; but in Yangzhou, as major employers, civic leaders, and extravagant consumers, they dominated the life of the city. The Xi'nan Wus, for example, who were one of the leading families in both Huizhou and Yangzhou, commissioned paintings from Shitao on a regular basis over a period of some forty years. It was no doubt in part his long-standing relationship with such Huizhou merchant families that led him to settle in Yangzhou in the 1690s. Although he also sold widely outside this milieu, Shitao's livelihood, like that of numerous other literati painters, calligraphers, and writers in Yangzhou, essentially depended upon the Huizhou group. The city's literati professionals effectively existed in a client relationship to the Huizhou families. However, the economic relationship tells only part of the story; indeed, it is probably not fully explainable without an understanding of the cultural profile of these same families, which (with individual exceptions, of course) differed in a general way from, say, the Shenxi and Shanxi merchants and bankers also active in Yangzhou. The Huizhou families were noted for their attention to education, which led to the emergence of cultivated businessmen profi-

cient in literati skills, as well as family members who followed the literati path to eventually become officials, and others who were more or less dilettantes – not to mention those individuals without wealth, such as the painters Cheng Sui or Zha Shibiao, who ended up as literati professionals alongside the likes of Shitao. It is hardly surprising, then, that the gentry merchants of the Huizhou families were key patrons of literati culture from its first days of commodification at the beginning of the early modern period. *The Blue-Green Screen of the Southern Mountains* testifies to this long history, illustrating as it does an early-sixteenth-century poem by a celebrated Suzhou literatus working for a Huizhou patron.⁸⁵ In a situation where the boundaries between Huizhou patrons and the literati professionals who catered to them were extremely fluid, both sides stood to benefit. The patrons pursued their own interest in *shi* status, while the artists were able to avoid the forced compromises of a less sympathetic client relationship. The theater of literati life was one in which the patrons were not only part of the public but were also, like Wu Yuqiao in *The Blue-Green Screen*, apt to go onstage themselves to participate in the spectacle.

It is by no means sure, however, that *Drunk in Autumn Woods* was commissioned by a patron of Huizhou background. Although Songgao is not an uncommon name, one candidate is a certain Cheng Yan from Wujin who, in 1696, when he was to be found based in Tongcheng (Anhui), held the rank of secretariat drafter.⁸⁶ In other words, the patron may have been drawn from a different client network: that of officials, in and out of office. Shitao, one of whose earliest teachers was a Qing official in temporary retirement, cultivated officials as patrons throughout his life; and as many of the commissions included in this book demonstrate, these men proved to be no less attracted than Huizhou businessmen to the theatrical presentation of literati life in painting. They had their own investment in the role of the literatus, their claims on which provided them with part of their high status. We are dealing, then, with a shared discourse, one of those through which the diverse members of the elite recognized themselves as such.

Where, in relation to this, did the artist himself stand? The knowing self-presentation seen in *Drunk in Autumn Woods* and Shitao's other self-conscious exploitations of the literati ideal was so common in early modern painting and literature that it has been widely recognized in recent years as providing a key to our understanding of the period. For some scholars, working within the continuity-oriented "late imperial China" or "later Chinese painting" frame of reference, the self-consciousness comes down to the literati's heightened awareness of their cultural heritage. For Andrew Plaks,



30. "Memories of Young Wang." *Landscapes and Poems*, leaf 2, ink and color on paper, each leaf 27 x 21 cm. Private collection.

"the entire constellation of literati culture often becomes something of an affectation, a rather self-conscious attempt to fulfill a notion of what literati should be, instead of simply embodying the ideal spontaneously, as the great Song masters seemed to have done. Hence, the distortions, inconsistencies, and ironic focus of so much of the outlook of the period."⁸⁷ Can this self-consciousness really be explained, however, by Theodore de Bary's "burden of culture"?⁸⁸ After all, the burden was much the same in 1600 as it had been in 1500, and yet in 1500 literati wore it much more lightly. On the other hand, what *had* changed in the course of the sixteenth century was the entry of literati culture into the commodity market. Nothing in the literati's inherited values prepared him for this; on the contrary, it activated a deep-rooted anxiety that the calculated pursuit of profit compromised the theoretically spontaneous pursuit of authenticity. From this point of view, it is hard to see how literati could have done *without* self-consciousness. It was this, after all, that permitted the introduction of a psychological detachment into representation, thereby extricating the literati's authenticity from the morass of

moral compromise and holding out the possibility of resolving the contradiction inherent in the commodification of literati culture.

If we take this detachment to be a more or less conscious strategy, can we still define as *irony* the aesthetic embodiment of self-consciousness, as has recently become common?⁸⁹ As a rhetorical strategy – giving to understand by the way something is stated that what is meant is different from what is stated – irony invokes a disabused knowingness on the part of the viewer that can certainly be inferred in specific cases, most obviously the works of Chen Hongshou; but how widespread was it? That seventeenth-century literati artists often displayed a self-conscious detachment from the conventional meaning of their landscape paintings is not in doubt; yet this detachment and the disjunction it introduced into interpretation rarely appeals so actively to the viewer's mistrust of convention. I have instead spoken here of staging, spectacle, theater, for it is theatricality, I believe, that better describes the knowing presentation of self in seventeenth-century literati painting. For this there is a Chinese term to hand in the extremely common *xi*, as in *xibi*, usually translated as "playfully brushed," the translation as "play" obscuring the fact that *xi* is also a term for "theater."

Theater was as fundamental to the early modern culture of Jiangnan as is the cinema to our own, and cut across class divisions in a similar way. The Chinese dramatic tradition was, and is, founded on a radical disjunction between the character portrayed and the actor incarnating the role. Detachment was forced upon the actor by the conventions of role type (*bangdang*) within which each character took form. Operating within these constraints, which were at the same time a mine of possibilities, the actor undertook the onstage process of what can accurately be called the production of self. Similarly, one can describe the literati landscape painter's situation as one in which the production of self took place within the constraints of inherited literati role types (e.g., the recluse, the free spirit, the madman, the loyalist), the pictorial conventions of which, by their distance from contemporary social realities, necessarily imposed detachment upon the painter.

At the same time, however, literati – even the literati professional artists of the early modern period – were in one crucial respect differently situated from actors:

The self that they produced had its referent not in history, not in fiction, but in their own persons or the persons of their patrons. Only too aware of the gap between the literati role type and their or their patrons' private selves, artists were sometimes willing to expose that gap to view (here irony does seem to come into play). At other times they tried to close it down, while acknowledging the utopian character of the attempt, as Shitao does in *Drunk in Autumn Woods* by opening his inscription with the words, "I keep my door closed all year; that's my usual life." The fundamental theatricality of the enterprise, therefore, did not change. It was, I suggest, another of the enduring responses to the entry of literati painting into the commodity market, the result of a need to twist an originally exclusionary language of landscape painting into, if not quite its opposite, then at least something very different and, in social terms, more complex. It can be understood as the visible trace and symptom of a social displacement, a disruption of one order of social space in the creation of another.

CHAPTER THREE

The Common Claim on Dynastic Narrative



Perhaps because Shitao was not a fundamentally political painter but rather someone whose origins and history made politics unavoidable, when he directly engaged with politics in his painting it was almost always through his own imperial identity and on a personal basis. Only a few exceptional works survive to show his engagement in a more general field of political discourse. These uncharacteristic paintings, which speak vividly to major issues of the day, are in each case embedded in narratives – personal, familial, dynastic – that were not his own, and which he visualized as an outsider. A discussion of these paintings and their associated narratives at this point has the disadvantage of further deferring the discussion of Shitao's own narrative. However, it has the greater advantages of contributing to a richer context for Shitao's biography and of providing a bridge between the question of landscape's social space, discussed in Chapter 2, and the inevitably political issue of Shitao's imperial identity.

The structure of the dynastic changeover, as I have been describing it, was a disruption of the cyclically linear norm of the dynastic narrative. To institutionalize that cyclical narrative there existed the dynastic histories written by each new dynasty on the ruins of its vanquished predecessor in an act that legitimized its own existence. The control of political memory was too important for the state not to claim it for its own privilege. This historical narrativization of the dynastic past was

complemented by the imperially embodied narrative of the Qing ("Pure") dynastic present, which saw Shizu's reign of "Obedient Rule" (Shunzhi) give way to Shenzu's reign of "Healthy Prosperity" (Kangxi). The future was implicated too, in the person of the Heir Apparent as the embodiment of dynastic potentiality. Still, despite the security that Kangxi had painfully achieved for the Qing dynasty by the 1690s and 1700s, in neither of these forms was the dynastic narrative a given; nor was the contestation a phenomenon specific to the interdynastic wilderness – on the contrary, it extended into the heart of the state. To trace out this contestation of political memory, in painting and elsewhere, is to reveal the contours of a common space of debate that escaped the law of the state.

Fifty years after the Manchu conquest, political memory was, if anything, increasingly contested. Though the generation of those who had lived through the events of midcentury was gradually disappearing, the question of how those events would be remembered showed no signs of fading away. Eventually, just a few years after Shitao's death, the latent violence of the issue crystallized in the trial and execution of the Hanlin Academy's Dai Mingshi (1653–1713), accused of treason by fact of writing on a private basis about certain events of the fall of the Ming.¹ For another century thereafter it poisoned intellectual life through the so-called literary inquisition, under which Ming and early Qing writings thought trea-

sonous, seditious, or slanderous to the Manchus were proscribed, and those involved were severely punished. (If Li Lin's biography of Shitao has only recently been rediscovered, it is because his collected works, along with the works of numerous other friends and acquaintances of Shitao, were among those proscribed.) However, the struggle over political memory began much earlier than this, indeed almost immediately after the fall of the Ming. The stage was set, on the one hand, by an almost immediate explosion of unofficial history writing ("wilderness history," *yeshi*) on the events of mid-century, and on the other by the Qing state's decision as early as 1645 to construct an official version of that history that would be favorable to itself. The unofficial history writing continued unabated for decades, though the trial and execution in 1667 of several dozen people involved in a history of the Ming dynasty commissioned by a wealthy merchant made any nonofficial synthesis impossible. Forty-five years later, the execution of Dai Mingshi made clear that even fragmentary accounts would not be tolerated, now that all the subjects of the empire had been born under the Qing dynasty. The official *Ming History* for its part languished until 1679, when some of the successful candidates in the special *boxue hongru* examination of that year were assigned to the project, and a subsequent decree encouraged people to submit relevant private historical writings; yet even then it took until 1723 to create a final draft, the final version only finding its way into print in 1739. Within this history, the 1690s and 1700s constitute a moment of relative calm and freedom, the trial of 1667 seemingly safely in the past, and the imminent crack-down as yet unsuspected.

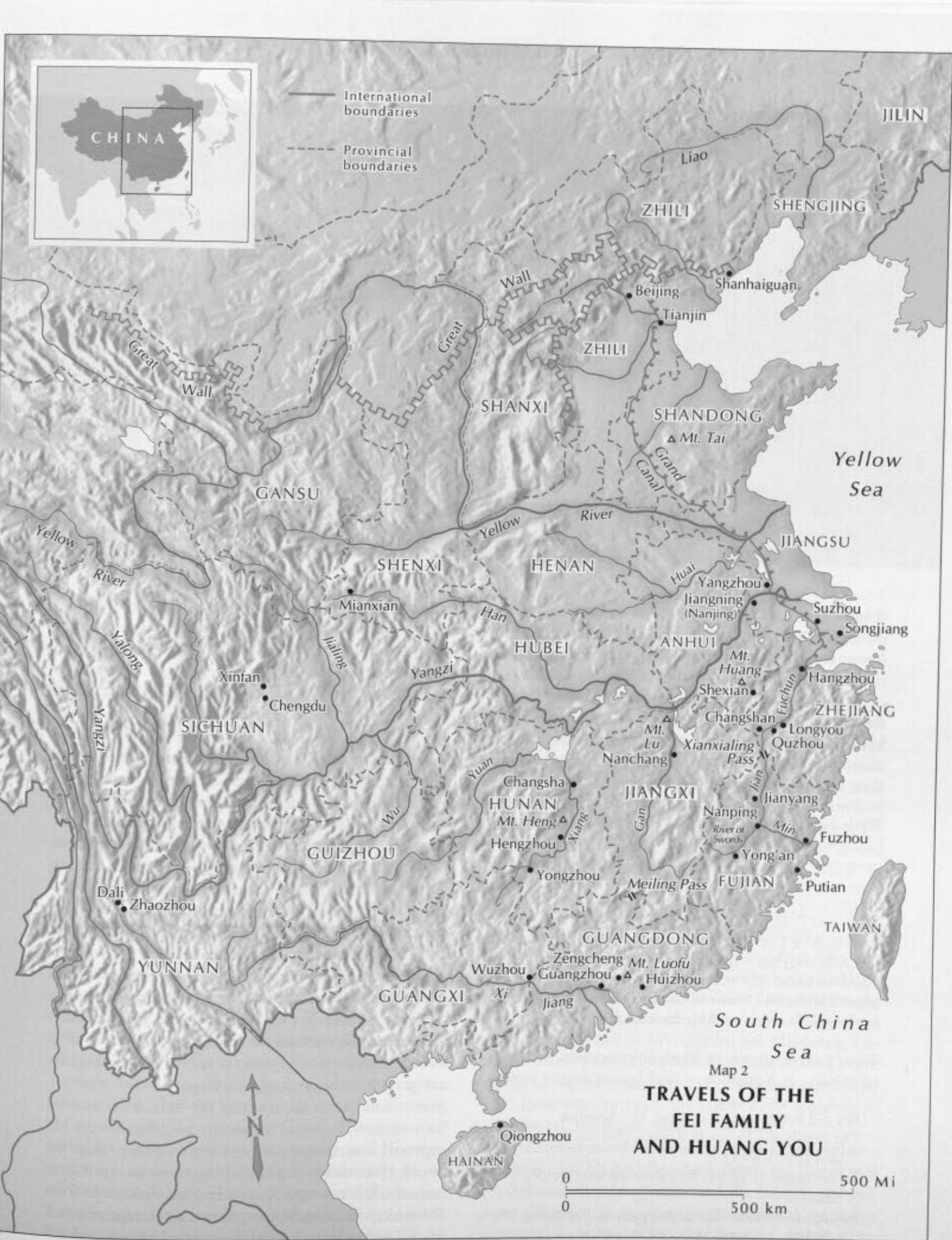
In contrast, during these same years the imperially embodied narrative of the Qing dynasty was entering ever more deeply into crisis around the issue of Kangxi's successor. This issue overshadowed the entire second half of Kangxi's long reign and continued to affect court culture well into the Yongzheng reign. Having opted in 1676 for the Chinese tradition of primogeniture over the Manchu tradition of struggle among princely candidates, Kangxi stuck to his choice of Yinreng, despite mounting evidence of the latter's unsuitability and destructiveness, until danger to his own person forced him to remove Yinreng, first temporarily in 1708 and then definitively in 1712 – though even then he resisted designating a successor (Yinzhen) until his deathbed. The danger that Yinreng posed to the stability of the empire was suspected as early as 1686 and grew steadily more evident through the 1690s, when at one point he had responsibility for state affairs while his father took charge of the military campaign against the Zunghars in 1696–7. Having announced his intention to abdicate in

Yinreng's favor, Kangxi drew back from the decision after hearing disturbing accounts of his son's behavior during his absence. While responsibility for the choice of Heir Apparent was the emperor's alone, historical precedent made it difficult to prevent ministers and even lower-ranking officials from expressing an opinion; and the scope of Yinreng's political maneuvering ensured that a wide range of officials, Manchu and Chinese, were either drawn into the fray or had opportunities to oppose the Yinreng faction indirectly without involving the emperor. Eventually, in 1703, Kangxi addressed a warning to his son by arresting his major supporter, Songgotu. All of this was known and followed far beyond the political classes; and Yinreng's personal excesses during the imperial tours of 1703, 1705, and 1707 – which involved among other things the large-scale procurement of boys and girls for sexual purposes – pushed the succession issue further into the domain of common public concern. In effect, the contrast between the responsibility, efficiency, and culture of Kangxi (as well as his promotion of neo-Confucian moral orthodoxy) and the dangerous instability of the son whom he was protecting could not but concern a population whose support for the emperor and his dynasty was inseparable from the order that he seemed to guarantee.²

It was not until Shitao's Dadi Tang years that these two issues of dynastic narrative impinged seriously upon his painting, and when they did so it was specifically through the genre of topographic landscape. The issue crystallized there, not only in the historical and political resonances of the places represented but also in the visual rhetoric of veracity that topographic painting required; this resonated with the chronicling impulse of history writing, a practice in which the patrons for these works had a deep personal interest. At the same time, two of the works to be considered here had a further shadow reference point in contemporary court art that documented the dynastic present, in the handscrolls by which Wang Hui (1632–1717) and his workshop recorded and constructed for history the Kangxi emperor's triumphant 1689 tour of the South.

THE ANCESTRAL TOMBS OF THE FEI FAMILY

In the unofficial history writing of the decades after 1644, the eyewitness account, with all its attendant emotional investment, displaced the spurious objectivity of the chronicler, authority being ceded to inalienably private experience. This privatization of history determines one of Shitao's best-known topographic commissions, *The Ancestral Tombs of the Fei Family*





(Figure 31). Fei Mi (1625–1701) was one of Yangzhou's most prominent intellectual figures. Nominated for the *boxue hongru* examination of 1679, he refused to participate, continuing as a teacher in Yangzhou. Although only fragments of his philosophic writings now remain, they have been enough to give him a prominent position in the modern roster of early Qing proponents of “practical learning” (*shixue*).³ According to Shitao's inscription, it was Fei Mi who had initiated the commission:

While he was still alive, Mr. Cidu requested that I paint for him a picture of his ancestral tombs. This was the anxious concern of a filial son. However, I had no way of knowing the precise aspect of the site. The gentleman was to make his own drawing of the place as he knew it to act as my guide, and I could then take up my brushes. But some three months later I heard the news of his death. Now his son [Fei Xihuang] has most humbly brought the drawing and asked me to quickly make a painting to fulfill his respected father's wish. So I breathed upon my frozen brushtip and executed this painting. May his soul judge its value.

There follows a poem in which Shitao evokes what must have been, in Yangzhou, a well-known family history:

His old home was, in its time, in Chengdu;
The family tombs are at Xinfan, also more than ten
thousand *li* away.
To eat beans or be left for drowned were hardly
unusual;
Swords and lances barred the path of the fleeing
scholar.

The family's [copies of the] classics, his secret love,
were turned to dead leaves;
He fled his devastated home like an orphan in
winter.
How could he have imagined that Yetian would be
his final resting-place?
This old man cannot help but weep for the hermit.

Shitao completed the painting in February 1702. Although usually reproduced in its entirety, which stresses its character as panoramic view, in normal viewing the handscroll would have been unrolled in two or three stages from right to left. It should first be read, therefore, as a movement out of the town gate of Xinfan toward the tombs. The effect is to reproduce or anticipate a pilgrimage to the tomb site; but this takes place in a curious atmosphere, one that gradually imposes itself over time. The painting is brightly colored, springlike: Both the urban and the natural landscape cry out for human activity, and yet there are neither figures nor animals to be seen anywhere. In this strange “silence” the painting's focus, the stele marking the tomb, imposes its presence more and more strongly in contrast to its pendant, the city gate. It is the land of the living, the town, that appears almost ethereal, whereas the stele, with its dark halo of trees, becomes insistently tangible. Shitao has captured that moment in a visit to a grave when the world of the dead seems briefly to assert its rights over our own. It is not surprising, therefore, to discover from the inscription that Shitao painted the image as much for Fei Mi as his sons: “May his soul judge its value.”



Fei Mi's drawing, whatever it may have looked like, guarantees Shitao's image as record not simply of the tomb site but of Fei Mi's memory of it. The eye, however, is convinced by the artist's fluid use of persuasive topographic conventions, such as the bird's-eye view of the town fading into mist; an appeal to eyewitness experience is combined with a rhetoric of veracity.⁴ Commissioned in part to serve as a catalyst for colophons, over time the scroll became a memorial to the memory of Fei Mi, whose spiritual presence is symbolized in the stele.⁵ Although at the outset Fei Mi may simply have intended the image to serve as a reminder to the family of their responsibility to the ancestral tombs, his death transformed the project into a family memorial. At the same time, the Fei family's embodiment of history was a project with which Shitao could identify, and in which others, beginning with the Feis, would have seen the resonances with his own experience. Shitao invested the project with the authority of his own life history and symbolic status.

The artist's poem evokes the chaotic circumstances in which Fei Mi "fled his devastated home like an orphan in winter." His father, Fei Jingyu (1599–1671), had become an official in the final year of the Ming dynasty. He served in successive posts in Yunnan, but resigned after being appointed to a new post in Guangxi. His resignation was refused eight times until in the end he shaved off his hair and declared himself a monk.⁶ Unfortunately, his home province of Sichuan was one of those worst affected by the collapse of order, notably through the

31. *The Ancestral Tombs of the Fei Family*, 1702, ink and color on paper, 29 x 110 cm. Musée national des Arts asiatiques-Guimet, Paris.

Zhang Xianzhong rebellion (1644–6), in which hundreds of thousands of people were killed. Fei Mi, who had stayed behind in Sichuan, was soon deeply involved in the resistance against the rebels and the Manchus. As summarized by a modern historian: "By 1646 he took the lead in building walls at Gaoding guan, north of Chengdu, and organizing armed forces to keep out the marauders. Toward the end of the following year he was captured by aborigines and held until ransomed. In 1648 he was appointed to a secretarial post by the Ming general Lü Daqi. Finding his home in ashes on his return to Xinfan three years later, he moved his family in 1653 to Mianxian, Shenxi." The family had, in fact, taken refuge along with other Xinfan families in a small village, White Deer Village, under the White Deer Cliff in the mountains of the same name, where some of them later settled. "In the fall of 1657 Fei Mi left Mianxian, taking his family and joining his father in Yangzhou in the spring of the following year." For fifteen years, therefore, from 1644 to 1658, the family knew a history of withdrawal, resistance, refuge, and exile.⁷

Three generations of male members of the family – Fei Jingyu, Fei Mi, and then the brothers Fei Xicong and Fei Xihuang (b. 1664) – assumed the family's embodiment of history as a solemn responsibility. They did so in several ways, which together form the matrix of re-



membrance in which Shitao's handscroll took its place. First of all, Fei Mi, assisted by his son Xicong, made a significant contribution to wilderness history in his *History of Devastation* (*Huang shu*), which reconstructs the events of the Zhang Xianzhong rebellion.⁸ His other son, Fei Xihuang, who belonged to the same generation as Huang You, was similarly interested in unofficial accounts surrounding the fall of the Ming dynasty. In his 1712 preface to Zheng Da's compendium *Unnoticed Works of Wilderness History* (*Yeshi wuwen*), he wrote that he had by that time read over fifty examples, yet he estimated that there were over a hundred more that he had not managed to see.⁹ His own work as a historian can be seen in two sections of his *Guandao tang ji*: "Examination of the Punishments and Disgrace of Various Subjects," and "Record of Subjects Condemned to Death and Those Condemned but Not Executed."¹⁰ *The Ancestral Tombs of the Fei Family*, with its single overgrown grave site contrasted to a once-more prosperous and peaceful town, speaks to wilderness history by evoking the memory of the "devastation" of Xinfan.

Second, the Feis were also poets of some significance, for whom remembrance was a constant preoccupation. Vivid traces of the war and banditry in Sichuan, the odyssey from Xinfan to Yangzhou, and their reactions to displacement can be found in the poetry of both Fei Jingyu and Fei Mi. Both men are represented in Zhuo Erkan's contemporary collection of *yimin* poetry, *Poems of Four Hundred Remnant Subjects of the Ming Dynasty*, which itself is one of the monuments of the emergence of an unofficial space of collective memory.¹¹ Father and son share a blunt, deceptively simple mode of expression, well-suited to their engagement with contemporary history. As is true of such Yangzhou contemporaries as Wu Jiaji (1618–84), even the titles of their poems sometimes have a chilling documentary horror, as in Fei Jingyu's "On Returning to Chengdu after the Chaos; the Survivors Had No Grain to Eat, and Lived

for Three Years on Roots."¹² More often, however, they favored a terse, plainspoken lyricism, as in Fei Mi's "Looking West":¹³

On Cold Food day, beyond the horizon,
No wine vessels are taken to the head of the grave.
Petals fall, it's just a butterfly dream,
The orchid's fragrance joins the cuckoo's
melancholy.
A solitary stone is left over from the distant past,
The clear river holds a hill.
In the lamplight I freely weep:
When will I ever pay my respects to the graveside
trees?

This preoccupation with the ancestral tombs in faraway Sichuan was the family's most concrete mode of remembrance and provided the immediate context for Shitao's 1702 handscroll. On the face of it, the Fei family was simply pursuing an orthodox filiality, maximizing its moral capital through publicly sanctioned and respected behavior. The surviving colophons to the painting certainly testify to its legibility in these terms. Beyond this, however, there was an obsessional quality to the family's cult of the ancestral tombs.

Fei Xihuang inherited the family style of poetry and its thematic obsessions, as seen here in a *yuefu* ode he wrote about the ancestral home he had at that point never seen:¹⁴

A hundred *mu* of farmland, a village of peach blossom:
A hundred different types of bird congregate there, and
monkeys screech after each other in play. This was true
pleasure. But bandits came from Shenxi and Gansu and
turned the city and the surrounding area into a cemetery.
Over a thousand-mile area they destroyed the homefires.
For three years there was no cultivation; people watched
for each other's death and ate [the dead]. My home village
was in ruins and uninhabitable, so my parents left the
village and its families behind and came east to Jiangdu
[Yangzhou]. As I look back toward Ba and Shu [Sichuan]



it seems as remote as the Big Dipper. I have been thinking of going back west, but the road to Shu is extremely dangerous; I wanted to go by water, but the Qutang gorge is impassible; I was going to take the mountain roads, but the Sword Pavilions [two mountains] and Bronze Bridge are difficult to climb. I look westward to the graveside trees and my heart suffers in sorrow.

It was probably because the family hoped to send the body back to Sichuan that Fei Mi was not finally buried at the family gravesite at Yetian near Yangzhou until nearly five years after his death, in 1706.¹⁵ In an account of the Yetian tombs written after his father's funeral, Fei Xihuang insists on the continuing importance of the ancestral gravesite:¹⁶

The tombs at Xinfan lie to the right of the altar to the gods of grain at the west [city] gate. While they were still alive, my father and grandfather both had a long-standing desire to return west. Every time they looked westwards tears soaked their sleeves, but they died without managing to fulfill their wish to return just once in order to pay their respects at the family tombs. In the end, when they themselves died they were buried here. Alas! Our family then became residents of Jiangdu. This is the tomb of our first Jiangdu ancestors. In the eighth month, at the time of the *lu la* ceremony, when we descendants perform the rites, we always pay our respects first to the west, and only then to this tomb. We dare not forget Shu! We, the sons and grandsons, did not live through the Great Chaos and the flight [east], but we shall never lightly forget our original home!

Shitao's handscroll was one more encouragement to Fei Xihuang to make the pilgrimage that his father and grandfather had not made. He did indeed journey to Sichuan some years after his father's death to pay his respects at the ancestral tombs; a neighbor led him to the site:¹⁷

Many fled from the events of the war:
A thousand houses, and not one is left.

32. *The Peach Blossom Spring*, handscroll, ink and color on paper, 25 x 157.8 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (57.4).

The mist is bright now the ashes are washed away,
I see this filial brother's gate.

My visit to you comes a generation later,
But it hurts my ears just to hear of those former events.

You ask me to look back across sixty years
To days separated from us by clouds and mountains.

The abandoned tumulus was near your home,
In the old days you were a close friend.

So not a year has gone by without paper money:
I sob in gratitude.

Half covered in grass, it shines with morning dew,
Entangled with shrubbery and creepers.

Nearby families are astonished at my return,
Women and children peer at the man from the distant east.

Ten thousand *li* to pour a single cup of wine,
And sprinkle water on the roots of a withered tree.

This journey, made after Shitao too had died, was the last chapter to be incorporated into the family history that Shitao's handscroll commemorated, though the scroll itself continued to attract colophons.¹⁸

However, another of the texts that Fei Xihuang wrote in Sichuan, this one a happier and very beautiful prose piece, directs us to a handscroll that Shitao painted for him after *The Ancestral Tombs of the Fei Family* but before his Sichuan journey (Figure 32). Among the places that Fei Xihuang visited was White Deer Village, where his family had taken refuge. I pass over his description of this idyllic spot in his *Record of the White Deer Peach Blossom Spring* to cite only the final passage:¹⁹

In the past Zhongchang Tong (179–219) wrote an *Essay on Happiness* and Tao Yuanming (365–427) a *Record of*

the Peach Blossom Spring, but both described fictional paradises that did not really exist. White Deer Cliff is the kind of place that those two gentlemen dreamed of without ever actually seeing. When my family was caught up in the chaos, it took refuge here. The other refugee families, the Zhaos, the Yangs, the Yins, are all distantly related to my own. When I arrived they were all overjoyed: "A descendant of the Fei family has come!" they cried. I listened to the elders as they talked of how they had fled together and assembled here seventy years ago. Now that one of the Feis can be seen again, the women peep out from behind curtains and children line up at the sides. In the evening I was served beans to go with the wine; a fire was lit to throw some light, and we talked warmly all through the night. The joy of returning to one's home was never greater than that night. I heard, too, that when the ten thousand peach trees blossom, their petals fall into the flowing water and sometimes reach the outside world. How could the Peach Blossom Spring be any better than this?

The Sichuan utopia of the Fei family imagination here merges with the utopia transmitted by poetic tradition; this, I suggest, provides the context for Shitao's painting of the theme of the Peach Blossom Spring (Taohua Yuan) illustrating a poem by Fei Xihuang, who presumably commissioned the handscroll. The painting is undated, but seals and signature together suggest a date around 1705-7. Once again, Shitao draws upon topographic conventions – the cracked-ice pattern of the fields, the solitary emblematic ploughman and, across the mountains, a mist-shrouded city gate – but here in the service of a mythic geography. Fei's poem similarly reduces the theme to its essentials: "The magic mountains are so deep and secret;/In the mouth of a valley, homes are hidden./A fisherman happens upon them;/ Peach blossom perfume the stream." As generalized as *The Ancestral Tombs of the Fei Family* is specific, *The Peach Blossom Spring* is left open to interpretation, attracting all the relevant aspects of the reader's personal experience – or knowledge of the poet's family history.

THE TRAVELS OF HUANG YOU

In an early-nineteenth-century compilation of poetry and small talk on Yangzhou's cultural history, *Guangling shishi*, Ruan Yuan found it worthwhile to record the biography of a man, by then entirely obscure, who is important here as a faithful friend and customer of Shitao:²⁰

Huang Yansi of Jiangdu, *ming* You, was crazy about inkstones, and took the name Yanlü [literally, Inkstones and Travel]. He loved to travel and had three pictures painted – *The Road to Shu*, *Crossing the Ridge*, and *Leaving the Pass* – for which all the famous and notable gentlemen of the Empire wrote colophons. His path crossed China a few

times, but he sometimes regretted that he had never reached Diannan [Yunnan]. Then he obtained the magistracy of Zhaozhou in Dali Prefecture, and was elated. He took up his post and died in office.

It was Huang You's (1661-c. 1725) obsessions (*pi*) that caught Ruan Yuan's eye, above all his urge to travel. Huang also had a third obsession, but this was one that Ruan, well aware of the political paranoia of the mid-Qing Manchu state, would not have mentioned even had he known. In a literary portrait of Huang You at the age of forty, Li Lin noted: "He loves to collect books and painstakingly annotates the ten thousand *juan* he owns. He is able to express himself in poetry and songs. He particularly likes to take notes [?] on incidents of loyalist bravery. . . . Having heard that Qu Wengshan from eastern Yue wrote a book entitled *Chengren lu*, he has been unable to make a copy and often expresses deep regret."²¹ Qu Wengshan was one of the most famous of all Ming *yimin* and active resisters, the Cantonese patriot Qu Dajun (1630-96). Like Fei Xihuang, Huang, it seems, was a collector of works of wilderness history. This fascination with the fall of the Ming may have been influenced by his family history, since both his father and uncle had served as officials under the Ming.²²

Huang's historical interests no doubt account for his interest in the Ming prince-painters Bada and Shitao. He paid handsomely through the Nanjing loyalist and calligrapher Cheng Jing'e (1645-1715) to commission a fine album of landscapes from Bada Shanren and owned at least one other landscape album by that Nanchang master.²³ Shitao, however, whom he only met at the time of the artist's return to the Ming loyalist fold in the mid-1690s, was more easily accessible. When a few years later he came to commemorate his far-flung travels with paintings, it was only natural for him to turn to Shitao, himself so well-traveled. The earliest reference in Shitao's painting to Huang's travels dates to 1695, when Huang was thirty-four and only starting out on what would be two decades of intermittent journeying. By this time he had probably climbed Mount Tai in Shandong and Huangshan near his ancestral home of She-xian.²⁴ In his inscription to an image in an album from that year for Huang You, immediately recognizable as Huangshan, Shitao allows himself a boast: "I've captured Huangshan's personality, so there's no need for me to give its name. Sending this to my elder brother in the Dao, Yansi, to transport you to the site of your former travels." True to his claim, he does not name Huangshan when he comes to represent it for a second time in the album. A facing colophon by Cheng Jing'e is written in forceful, "heroic" calligraphy and allows Huang to share in Cheng's own heroic image: "Peaks grouped

like swords and knife-points/To cut out one's intestines;/On the horizon, a man mastering the waves/Who should return to his ancestral home."²⁵ Huang's admiration of heroism and fierce eccentricity was widely shared during the mid-Kangxi period among men who like himself were born under the new dynasty. In a study of scholars of this period, Lynn Struve has argued that the roots of this admiration lay in contemporary ambivalence toward social convention, against the background of the unarguable dominance of a Manchu power structure that could hardly be opposed. According to Struve, this ambiguity was "etched most sharply in middle-level figures, men who were socially acceptable to the scholar-official elite but not completely part of it." The scholars did not confine themselves to admiration of heroism and eccentricity from a distance but found equivalents for the ideal in cultural practice, as did Huang You through his travels.²⁶

When next we find Huang You in Shitao's company, at the beginning of 1696, he had just returned from a trip to the Wu-Yue region, that is, southern Jiangsu and Zhejiang. The album, now lost, that Shitao painted for him on that occasion included three leaves related to the trip, including one of Hangzhou's West Lake and another of Yuling, also in Zhejiang.²⁷ The rest of 1696 and 1697 is a blank, but in 1698 Huang undertook a truly notable journey that took him up through the northeast, beyond Tianjin and even the Great Wall, to Manchuria.²⁸ It is not known who painted the handscroll entitled *Beyond the Northern Frontier* with which Huang commemorated his trip, though it may well have been Shitao. If the painting itself cannot now be seen, a few of its undoubtedly numerous colophons have survived in the literary collections of his contemporaries.²⁹ Most likely each viewing was accompanied by Huang's recounting of the journey; Li Lin, a close friend, describes one such occasion:³⁰

Stroking his beard, he spoke intimately to me:
 "With a single horse and two servants I passed the
 frontier post,
 The White Dew period [beginning September 8 or 9]
 had just begun, but we were already halfway into
 autumn.
 The sand was completely yellow, the buildings and
 embankments indistinct;
 At Yantai the river was frozen hard as iron.
 Around the courier station at Luyang snow was a
chi deep.
 With the frozen ground treacherous, I could not ride
 the horse,
 On all four sides a howling wind savagely blew
 gravel.
 In September in Jiangnan, the summer heat is not
 yet over,

Wearing a single layer of light muslin, the sweat still
 flows;
 But in the dark north, the weather changes so early
 That travelers wear heavy furs against the bitter
 cold."
 He took the small scroll in his hands and unrolled it
 for me:
 There was no-one to be seen for ten thousand *li* in
 the desolate wilderness.
 But someone advanced alone, with bold
 determination,
 A long sword hanging from his belt, and provisions
 attached lower down.
 I scrutinized [the painting] for a long time, and then
 pointed at it –
 The figure in the painting and my host were one and
 the same!

Li Lin then recounts how Huang took up his account again, to speak of the catastrophic recent events that everyone would have associated with that part of China. Li Lin reflects:

East of Shanhaiguan stands a rock:
 The place where the Tiger general destroyed the
 bandits.³¹
 The bandits were defeated and fled westward, their
 army destroyed,
 But though revenge was taken, the nation's altars
 ended up devastated.
 The energy of rulership quickly flowed to Yiwulu,
 And in the blink of an eye sixty years have passed.

The desperate attempts of the Ming to retain the Mandate of Heaven, their failure, the rise of the Manchus to take up the Mandate – these fateful events have taken on an air of inevitability. All Li Lin permits himself by way of commentary is the eloquent contrast by which he ends his poem: "I rolled up the scroll and handed it back to him, bade him farewell, and left; a girlish breeze was rising, and it looked as if it would rain."

By 1699 Huang was already planning a new journey to complement his northern trip; this time he would travel south to Guangdong. To mark his intentions he commissioned another "travel" portrait, entitled *Crossing the Ridge* (Figure 33). The ridge in question is Slender Ridge on the border between Jiangxi and Guangdong, one of the gateways to the far south. Although the painting now bears neither signature nor seals of Shitao, and the painter is mentioned by none of the many colophon writers, style and quality make the attribution to him inescapable, at least for the landscape setting.³² The figures and horse, on the other hand, seem to me to betray the hand of a specialized portraitist, perhaps the same Jiang Heng with whom he had collaborated on the portrait of Wu Yuqiao the year before: The fine and el-



egant brushwork and the confident realism of the face have no parallel anywhere else in Shitao's oeuvre.³³

The scroll opens in the depths of the mountains; steps cut in the rock descend from the top corner. Before the path crosses the bottom edge it has already bordered a ravine and crossed a flimsy bridge, passing through bamboo and plum blossom on the way. A little further on, the path reappears against the background of a waterfall dramatizing the ravine; still further along, the flowering plum trees and bamboo are joined by pines, and the path passes among boulders and overhangs. Finally, as we emerge into the open, we come upon a horse, a servant, and then Huang You himself. Unrolling the rest of the scroll, he turns out to be standing at the edge of the mountain, poised between the tangled mountain interior and an open vista of finely delineated clouds seen across the tops of pine trees. Branches of plum blossom stretch out protectively above his head; the slightly caricatural face of the servant serves to point up the "nobility" of his own; and the alertness suggested by the studied gesture of his left hand and the horse's head imply readiness for action.

Among the small group who inscribed the painting before his departure from Yangzhou in the winter of 1699, Qiao Yin lets us in on one of Huang's aims:³⁴

Who realizes that Mr. Huang has a profound idea
in mind?

How can his travels be mistaken for mere tourism?
Eccentrics and originals are men of the precipices
and valleys,
One will never meet them among the famous and
celebrated.
They live in reclusion in the marketplace, or as
hunters or fishermen,
A true hero cannot be detected by his outward
appearance.
Only you [Mr. Huang] can frequent those who have
thrown themselves into the sea,
Only you can recognize a Piqui gong.

Piqui gong, or The Man Clothed in Animal Skins, was a hermit of the past whom Shitao himself represented in an early autobiographical handscroll (see Figure 86).³⁵ "Those who have thrown themselves into the sea" is a reference to friends of the Sage Emperor Shun mentioned in a chapter of the *Zhuangzi* entitled "Giving Up the Throne." Like the Hermit of the Stone Abode, also represented in Shitao's earlier handscroll (see Figure 50), these men refused the empire when Shun offered to give up the throne in their favor. Huang, then, is interested not just in landscape and its historical resonances but also in the men of the wilderness, and probably more particularly loyalists of an older generation, whom he could hope to meet. These men, like Shitao, Bada Shanren, Cheng Jing'e, and Fei Mi, were living embodiments of the Ming dynastic afterlife.



Perhaps he hoped, among other things, to be able to transcribe more works of wilderness history; certainly, that other passion of his was directly relevant to the journey he planned, just as it was to the northern trip he had just completed. Huang's itinerary, according to Li Lin in another of the colophons written before his departure, was to take him through Zhejiang and Fujian to Guangdong. Another text by Li Lin mentions Guangxi (see later in this section); and his journey back from there was bound to take him through Hunan, and perhaps Jiangxi, as proved to be the case. This amounted to a journey through the principal centers of Ming loyalist resistance to the Manchus after 1644. Huang's extensive knowledge of the recent history of the South must have colored his whole project; he was finally going to see, in effect, the places that he had been reading about for years. Writing some years later, in 1704, Li Lin's cousin Li Guosong confirms that Huang's southern journeys (for a second one would follow) had a historical dimension: "He went south across the Five Ridges, and climbed the Platform of the Kings of Yue [in Guangzhou]. He gazed upon the traces of destinies, ancient and modern, on forts and battlefields."³⁶

Recent history also colored contemporary readings of this portrait, painted, we must not forget, by a Ming princely descendant from Guilin in the southwest. The colophon writers make their references to the recent events in the far South in two ways. Some of them make

33. Shitao (and unidentified portraitist?), *Crossing the Ridge* [*Portrait of Huang You*], handscroll, 1699. Sakamoto Collection, Osaka.

use of an obvious analogy in ancient history. In the pre-Han period, when this region largely belonged to the state of Chu, it had put up the strongest resistance of any part of China to incorporation into an overarching Chinese empire under central and north Chinese dominance. Following the collapse of the Qin empire (221–206 B.C.E.), which had first achieved such a unity, Liu Bang, the eventual founder of the Han dynasty, and Xiang Yu, the ruler of Chu, fought for power. The most explicit use of this analogy with the Ming resistance is by Feng He:

Since ancient times this region has many times been
the site of battles,
There is nothing to envy in this marshy land of
dragons and snakes [i.e. men of good and bad
judgment]
In those days Liu and Xiang were fighting against
each other,
An atmosphere of killing held sway, the world was
turned upside down.
When he blindly claimed a name to be revered, he
was simply deluding himself,
Whatever he did he was bound to lose since the
central plains remained sure.

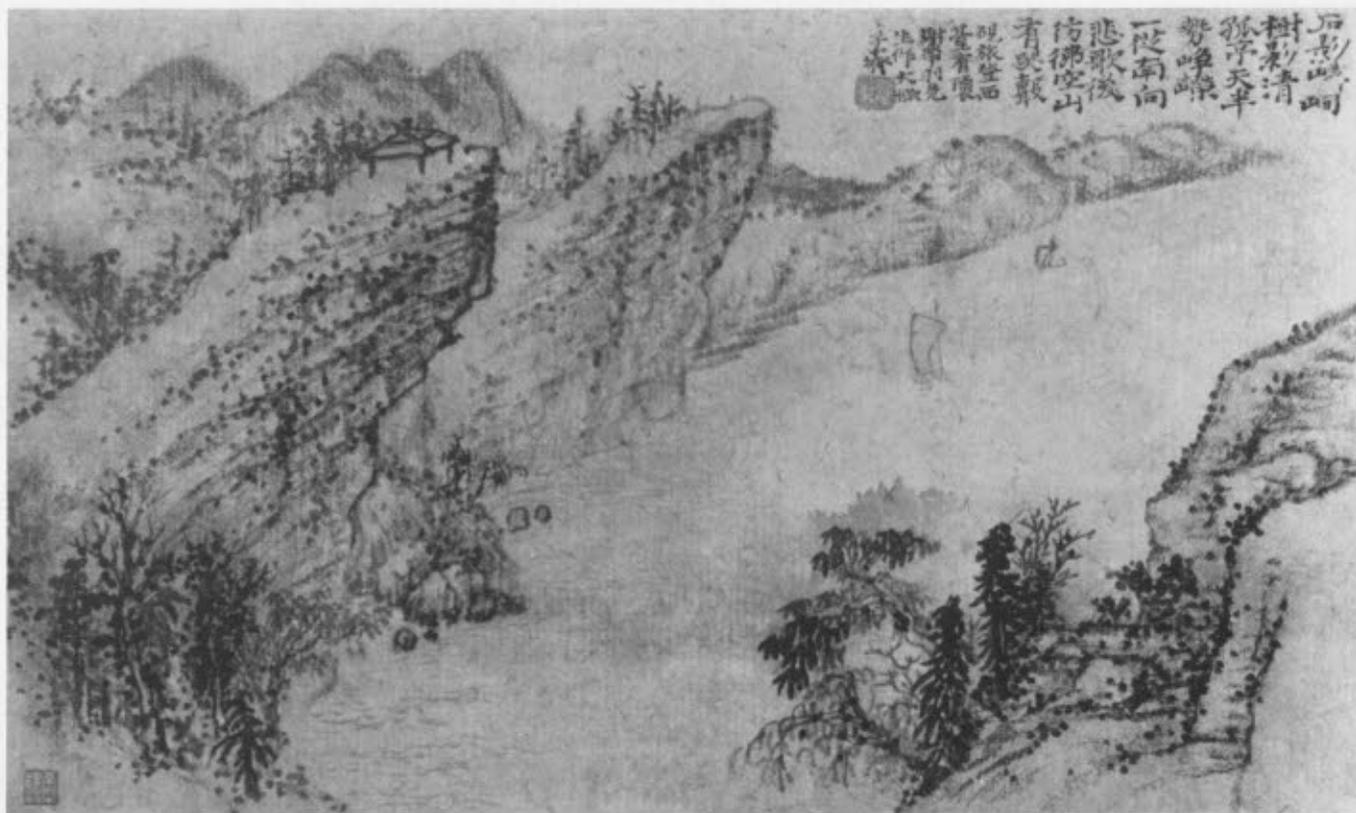


34. "Party to Send off Huang Yanlü," *Illustrations to the Poems of Huang Yanlü*, dated 1701–2, album of 22 leaves, ink and color on paper, each leaf 20.5 x 34 cm, leaf 22. Zhile Lou Collection, Hong Kong.

Feng was from Yaimen, just south of Guangzhou, where the last of the Song resistance to the Mongol invasion had been destroyed in a famous naval battle.³⁷ In this light, Feng's poem might better be described as a pained resignation to the inevitable. Xiang Yu stands here for the futility of southern resistance down the centuries, and Feng's final conclusion is a realistic assessment of the reasons for failure of the most recent example, the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories (1673–81). The second way in which the fall of the Ming was seen to enter the painting was through the wild plum blossoms that were part of the loyalist iconography of mourning, and which Huang himself liked to paint. Slender Ridge was also known as Prunus Ridge, some said because of its associations with a man of that name, while others believed it to be covered with flowering plum trees.³⁸ When another colophon writer, Liu Shishu (1700 *jinshi*, from Baoying), wrote that "The pearls have all been collected, leaving the ocean desolate. / Atop the ridge there still lies left-over plum blossom like snow," he seized the romantic kernel of Shitao's painting and Huang's journey³⁹ – all the more so when one realizes that "pearls" are written *mingzhu*, a homophone and partial homonym for "the Zhu [imperial family] of the Ming."

After Huang's return in the summer of 1701, Shitao used the poems that Huang had composed during his trip to paint an album depicting some of the places he had visited.⁴⁰ A year later he complemented it with a second album of the same kind. Only twenty-seven of the original thirty-two leaves can be seen today; moreover, leaves from the two albums are now mixed up together, and since only two leaves are dated, it is in effect necessary to treat all the leaves together as a single large album.⁴¹ One of the dated leaves, which originally closed the first album, depicts a gathering on the evening before Huang's departure; some of the colophons to Huang's portrait – Qiao Yin's, for example – were probably written on this occasion (Figure 34). A bridge disappearing into the mist anticipates his departure from Yangzhou. The other surviving leaves depict sites in Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, Hunan, and Jiangxi, but a text by Li Lin written after Huang's return around the summer of 1701 confirms that he had carried out his intention to visit Guangxi as well: "In the winter of *yimao* [1699–1700], Huang Yansi went against the current, in the face of the snow, upstream through Wu [southern Jiangsu] and Yue [Zhejiang], on into Min [Fujian] and Chu [Hunan], and taking in East and West Yue [Guangdong and Guangxi]. Over land and water he traveled 16,000 *li*, returning only after 540 days."⁴²

We might contrast this with the nearly contemporary representations of the 1689 Southern Tour prepared under the direction of Wang Hui during the 1690s. The



35. "The Western Terrace," *Illustrations to the Poems of Huang Yanlü*, dated 1701–2, album of 22 leaves, ink and color on paper, each leaf 20.5 x 34 cm, leaf 21. Zhile Lou Collection, Hong Kong.

narrative context in the *Nanxun tu* was entirely public: In contrast to Shitao and Huang You's highly personal involvement with a cultural concept of China as collective memory, the function of the scrolls was to affirm a political concept of nation in the present. Based on sketches made during the tours themselves, the finished scrolls required an effect of objectivity that forced Wang Hui to render his rhetorical craft as transparent as possible, seemingly devoid of any personal response. The viewer consequently registers the picture as a "veritable record."⁴³ In contrast to Wang Hui's brief, which was to identify state and nation with the *person* of the ruler, Shitao's albums accomplish something equally extreme and ultimately not unrelated: the identification of political history and China as a cultural concept with one man's personal obsession.

Among the surviving leaves, the first stop on Huang's journey to be represented is the celebrated Angler's Terrace of the Han hermit Yan Guang, on the Fuchun River in Zhejiang (Figure 35). From Hangzhou southward there were two main routes: The first followed the coast; the second, a watercourse southwest into Jiangxi. Beginning at Tonglu, this watercourse takes the name of the Fuchun River for a stretch of some twenty *li*; the An-

gler's Terrace lies close to its end. There were in fact two terraces, east and west, the Western Terrace being the more famous of the two – indeed, it was one of the most sacred loyalist sites in all of China. It was there that Xie Ao (1249–95) and other Song patriots held a memorial service for their hero, Wen Tianxiang (1236–83), after his execution in Beijing in 1283. Xie Ao recorded the event in a celebrated text that, Shitao tells us in a note, was the direct inspiration for Huang You's poem. "Ever since the sorrowful song arrived in the direction of the south," Huang writes, "these empty mountains have seemed to be filled with the sound of weeping." The most famous depiction of the Fuchun River was by the Yuan dynasty painter Huang Gongwang (1269–1354); as one would expect, Shitao has taken his pictorial cue from Huang Gongwang's style. Apart from the memorial service, Xie was also involved in the establishment of a cemetery for Song *yimin* close to the Western Terrace, as well as (reportedly) in a plot by which *yimin* stole and reburied under more honorable circumstances the bones of the Song emperors.⁴⁴ Beyond the specific loyalist associations of the Western Terrace, Huang You's poem here alerts us to the fact that his journey took him through the sites of not just Ming but also Song loyalist resistance to foreign invasion.

From the Western Terrace, Huang continued south down the river system through the area of Longyou to Quzhou; during the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories, this was the point from which Qing forces in 1676 had



36. "Xianxia Ling Pass," *Illustrations to the Poems of Huang Yanlü*, dated 1701-2, album of 22 leaves, ink and color on paper, each leaf 20.5 x 34 cm, leaf 19. Zhile Lou Collection, Hong Kong.

launched their attack on Geng Jingzhong in Fujian. The poem and Shitao's illustration depict the area in the utopian terms of the Peach Blossom Spring, which, as in the painting for Fei Xihuang, was also meant to remind the viewer of the disorder from which it provided a refuge. Huang's last stop in Zhejiang was Xianxia Ling, the easternmost section of a low mountain range that crosses over from the northeast corner of neighboring Jiangxi (Figure 36). Eight hundred years before, a road had been cut in the rock to create a controllable pass into Fujian; the modern road still passed this way:

As if the rugged terrain was not enough to sigh
about, now there are the dangers of the narrow,
"sheep's liver" path.
Our stumbling footsteps are nothing to boast about
beside the horse's brave advance.
In talk and laughter one should also find a place for
danger;
Whose are these regrets that fill the map's empty
spaces?

A participant in the 1676 Geng Jingzhong rebellion, the Hatless Wilderness Historian (Xu Xu), explains: "When riders reach here they usually dismount and lead the horse up. With a hundred men to defend it, even ten

thousand men could not get past." As one of the two main points of entry into northern Fujian, Xianxia Ling was indeed a "strategic point," and the Qing capture of it from Geng Jingzhong's forces was a turning point in that campaign.⁴⁵

Passing through Jianyang, Huang You proceeded south to Nanping, which lies at the confluence of three major rivers, which were also three major routes. Arriving from the north, he had the choice between a journey into the hinterland of Fujian, or continuing by the Min River down to Fuzhou and the coast. Postponing the experience of the rapids of the first stretch of the Min River, he took a thrill-seeker's detour, following the Sha River upstream to Qingliu, before returning to Nanping and continuing south via Fuzhou. One album leaf explains the detour, providing the spectacular sight of his boat running the Nine Dragon Rapids between Qingliu and Yong'an, which rivaled any mountain as an experience of strangeness and danger (see Plate 10). Shitao enriches his topographic realism with some understated nominalism based on the metaphorical images of Huang's poem: "The rapids thunder like [water] rushing through a pipe;/with piles of white waves, melancholy cuts off the sky from view./Stones grow like melon seeds, or crouching tigers and leopards;/men mingle blood with sweat, growing intimate with the flood sharks." Shitao adds in a note that he was also inspired by a poem on the same subject written by Qu Dajun. For Huang, with his particular interest in Qu's *Chengren*



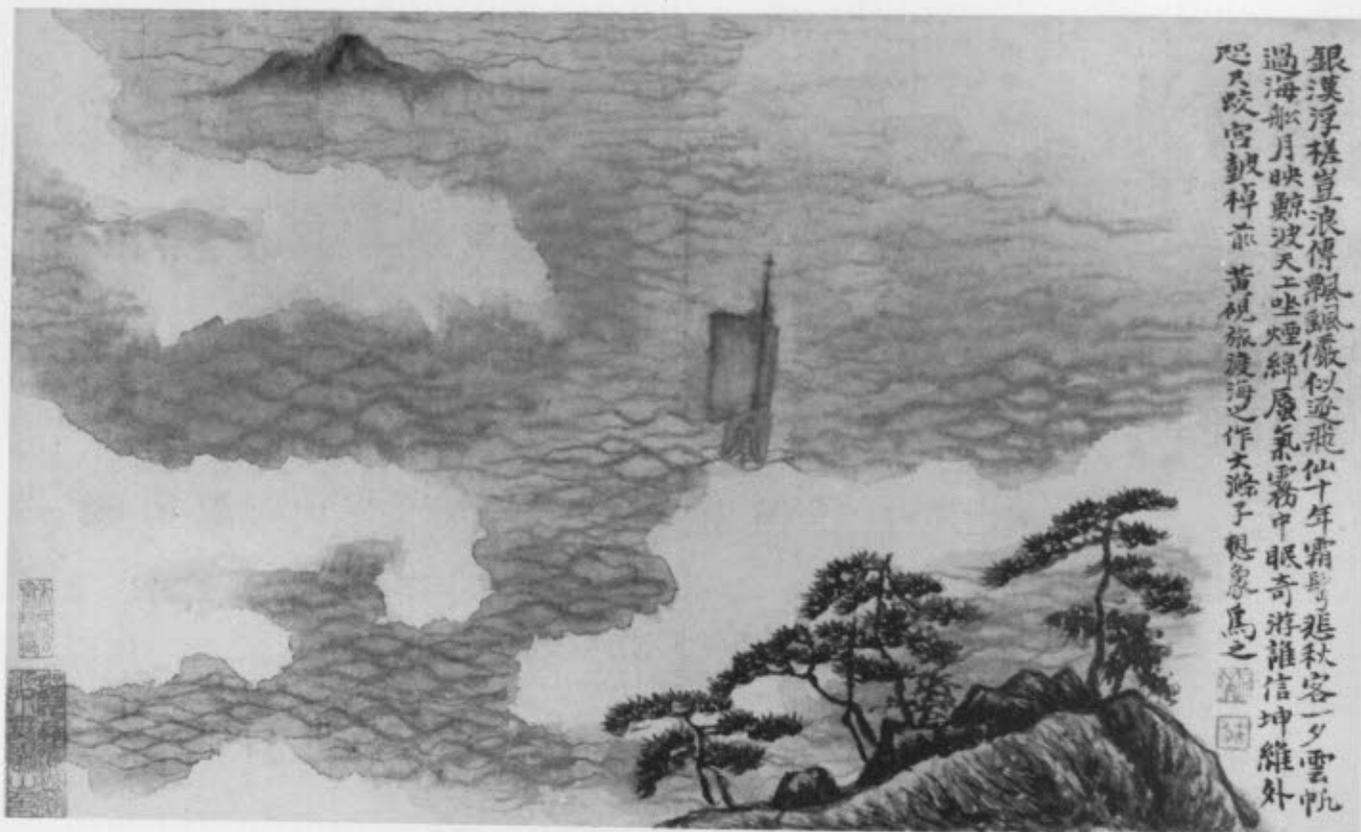
37. "Sunrise Pavilion," *Illustrations to the Poems of Huang Yanlü*, dated 1701–2, album of 22 leaves, ink and color on paper, each leaf 20.5 x 34 cm, leaf 17. Zhile Lou Collection, Hong Kong.

lu, the mention of this famous onetime loyalist figure would no doubt have reinforced the hidden historical theme of the album, despite the fact that the purpose of Qu Dajun's visit to the area (in 1687) was to work on the local gazetteer for Yong'an at the request of the area's magistrate.⁴⁶

From Nanping, Huang followed the Min River down to Fuzhou, the capital for more than one ill-fated regime. Following the Mongol conquest, the second-to-last emperor of the Song, Duanzong, had briefly reigned there, attracting Xie Ao among others to his court. More recently, the Longwu regime of the Southern Ming had also taken Fuzhou as its capital, attracting many loyalists, including the painter Hongren. Moreover, it was in a Fuzhou prison that Zhu Hengjia, Shitao's blood relative and thought by some to be his father, had been left to die after being brought there in chains from Guilin. As late as the 1670s it had been Geng Jinzhong's center of power during the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories.⁴⁷ The main route south from the City of Banyan Trees, as Huang describes it, followed the coast to Putian and far beyond, into Guangdong. The next of Huang's poems that Shitao has illustrated dates from the time of his journey from Fuzhou to Putian. After mentioning that he plans to leave Fujian for Guangdong by

the end of the spring, he closes the poem with an indirect reference to the area's recent sad history: "How could I bear to come back here again? / Here and there nightjars call from spring woods." The nightjar was not originally a *yimin* symbol, but it had two associations that lent it to the poetic iconography of *yimin* mourning: It sheds bloody tears, and its mournful cry sounds like *bu ru guiqu*, "better go home." As one Ming *yimin* poet writes, "Returning home, I can hardly believe that the talking nightingale / has changed into a nightjar, bitterly weeping for the loss of the nation."⁴⁸

Huang kept to his schedule, and we next find him awaiting a letter in Huizhou, within striking distance of Mount Luofu and Guangzhou. Reaching Huizhou Prefecture, Huang had entered a region that stretched south and west through the prefectures of Guangzhou and Shunde and that, in 1647, had been an active center of Ming loyalist resistance to the Qing. There were two roads from Huizhou to Guangzhou: The southern one was more direct, but the northern route had the advantage for Huang of passing through Zengcheng, the main point of entry for Mount Luofu. He did climb Mount Luofu, fulfilling a twenty-year-old dream, before going on to Guangzhou. While in that area he made a trip south of the city to one of the area's vantage points for looking out over the Pearl River estuary: the Sunrise Pavilion outside Panyu (Figure 37). To survey this area was to gaze upon more than one page of loyalist history. The first is one I have already mentioned: In 1279, with Wen



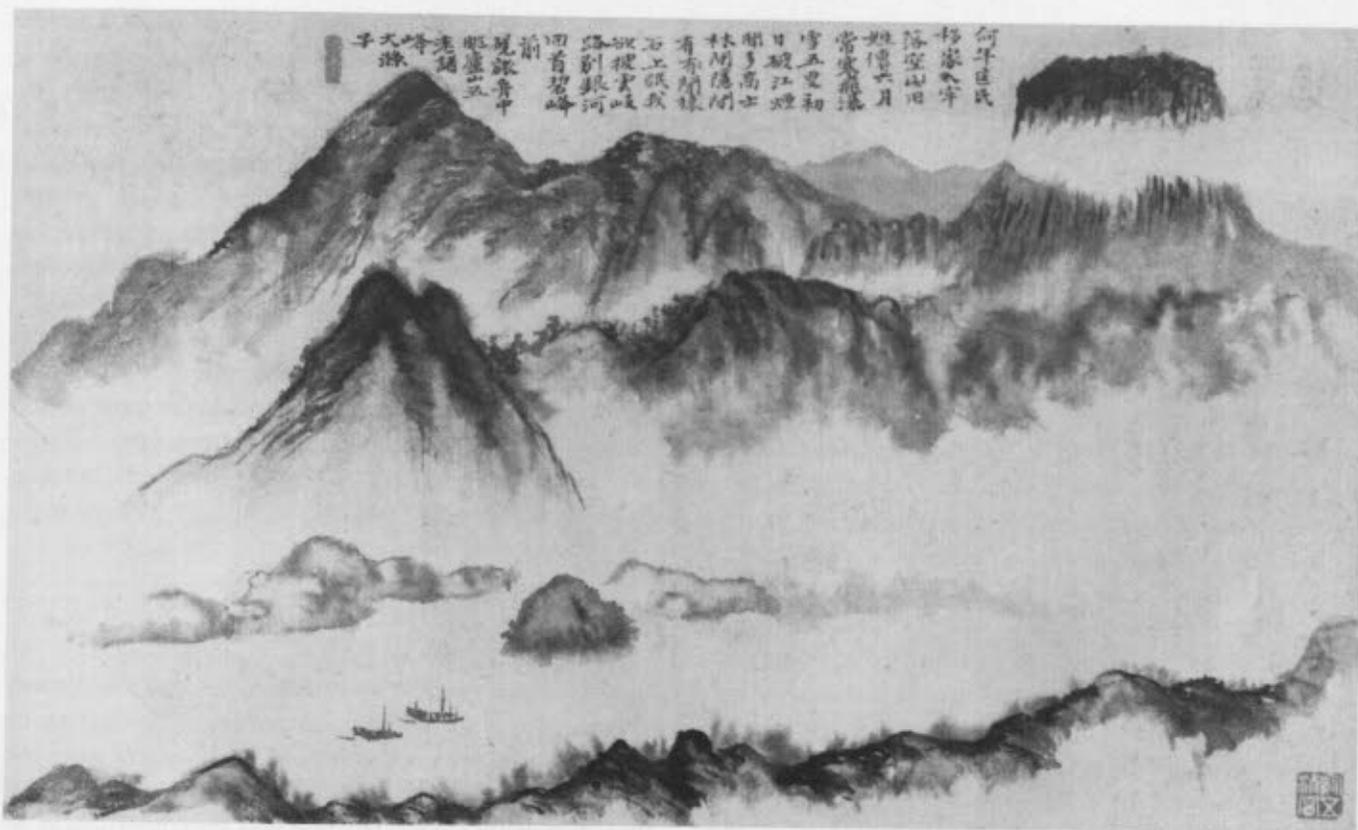
38. "The Sea Crossing to Hainan Island," *Illustrations to the Poems of Huang Yanlü*, dated 1701–2, album of 22 leaves, ink and color on paper, each leaf 20.5 x 34 cm, leaf 9, Zhile Lou Collection, Hong Kong.

Tianxiang already held prisoner aboard a warship of the Yuan navy, the Song fought their last great battle with the Mongols – a naval engagement just down river from Panyu, at Yaimen. The Song commander, Zhang Shijie, was posthumously celebrated together with Wen Tianxiang and Lu Xiufu as one of the "three heroes of the fall of the Song."⁴⁹ Four hundred years later, in 1647, the Pearl River estuary was also the theater of operations for the resistance efforts of the "Three Loyalists of Guangdong."⁵⁰ Panyu itself, meanwhile, was the home of Qu Dajun. In the poem's second half, Huang You loses himself in sheer awe at the view the site offered of the sea, or rather the estuary; but it is the historical associations of the place that account for the melancholy atmosphere of the first half of his poem:

Alone in the lonely pavilion, I begin a grand song,
The water is so deserted, the sky so vast, that geese
could hardly cross.
The noise of the tide attacks Zhancheng Guo;
The far-away rise in the hills is Guizi Po.

After a sea crossing to Hainan, site of Su Shi's (1036–1101) most famous exile, the crossing itself visualized

by Shitao as the passage to a fairyland-like beyond (Figure 38), Huang You began the journey back to Yangzhou. This part of his itinerary is far less well represented among the surviving leaves; when we next pick up his traces it is the following spring, 1701, and he is already in southern Hunan (see Figure 45). Shitao identifies the place as the stretch of the Xiang River between Hengzhou and Yongzhou, and mentions that a journey he himself had made fifty years before (probably a trip south from Wuchang that he made in 1657 and was the closest he ever got to returning to Guilin) was in his mind as he painted the scene.⁵¹ Huang, on the other hand, would have associated the area with the rebellion of Wu Sangui; this was Wu's base, and it was to Hengzhou that he retreated at the end, dying there in 1678. Since Li Lin, writing after his return to Yangzhou, states that Huang had visited Guangxi, his most likely route north from Hainan would have taken him along the main road to Wuzhou, just inside Guangxi, and from there along a secondary road to Guilin, where he would have picked up the main road north through Hunan via the Xiang, passing first through Yongzhou. If this is approximately correct, one imagines that among the ten leaves now unfortunately missing from the album, some may have depicted the Guilin–Quanzhou area of Shitao's birth, with its spectacular karst mountains and its memories of Zhu Hengjia's abortive uprising.⁵²



39. "Mount Lu," *Illustrations to the Poems of Huang Yanlü*, dated 1701–2, album of 22 leaves, ink and color on paper, each leaf 20.5 x 34 cm, leaf 12. Zhile Lou Collection, Hong Kong.

When Huang's whereabouts can next be fixed, it is June 1701 and he has entered Jiangxi. In the absence of other details one can only note that the main road north from Hengshan along the Xiang River has an offshoot at Changsha; this cuts across into Jiangxi until it joins the major north-south road of eastern China a little before Nanchang. It is there that we find him, in the company of one of the "eccentrics and originals" who were part of the reason for his journey. Three years prior he had managed to obtain an album from Bada Shanren. Now he met the man himself for the first time, and Bada obliged him with a colophon to his portrait at Slender Ridge. After the expected lines of praise, in his closing lines Bada turns an amused eye on Huang's interest in people of his kind, an interest easily visible from the colophons: "Wherever you take out your painting and talk with people," writes Bada, "they are all great drunkards of the present dynasty!" – using an ambiguous formula that allows him to refer to the Ming without actually writing its name. From Nanchang Huang went north, passing if not actually climbing Mount Lu (Figure 39). His poem stays with the theme of hermits, in a romantic tribute to the likes of Bada; indeed, Bada himself may be its implicit subject, since Lushan was associated

with Nanchang much as Huangshan was with Shexian: "When did Mr. Kuang move his family into [the mountains]?/As he roamed free in the empty mountains, his former name continued to be transmitted." Shitao's painting is at once true to the way Lushan is seen in reality, and to Huang's vision of it as a world in itself concealing the hermits of his day.

Huang's last stop as represented in the album was in Nanjing, at the home of Cheng Jing'e (Figure 40). By this time Cheng's visits to Yangzhou and Nanchang were over; indeed, from 1697 to his death in 1715 he never left Nanjing again.⁵³ This settled life, in such contrast to Huang's wanderlust, is the subject of Shitao's painting and the poem it illustrates:

Within the circle of mountains and the twisting
streams, the quiet knows no end,
Among the woods lives, quietly, Baodu Weng.
He only pays attention to his fields and garden,
with their harvest of taro and chestnuts,
And is oblivious to roads leading west or east. . . .

True to his claim, Shitao has depicted the underlying idea of the poem, turning Cheng's home into an icon of unwavering reclusion. The image is governed by a symmetry centered on the house, alone in the landscape. Behind the house are three hills, the tallest one in the middle; in front, the riverbank on one side is mirrored by a bridge on the other, both being echoed in turn by the

oblique walls of the house. This building has a clear, if approximate, diamond shape, roughly centered, and has been further intensified as a motif by its whiteness, by the addition of a halo of bamboos, and by a sharp, straight tree cutting vertically through its center. These elements are balanced, of course, by just as many others that distract the viewer's attention from the artifice, but it is these nevertheless that consecrate the house as a strikingly stable site charged with energy. The rather desolate landscape, and the sober colors, give that energy the particular moral cast of the *yimin* ideal.

It was already the sixth month of 1701 when Huang passed Mount Lu, and still the sixth month when Shitao completed the first set of more than ten leaves for him in Yangzhou. Given Huang's travel time, the old painter must have been one of the first people Huang went to see upon his return, with news of Bada and Cheng Jing'e. It gives pause for thought to realize that the first installment of the album was painted in such a short space of time, despite the fact that, in Shitao's words, the images were "obtained with difficulty." The album bears a few contemporary colophons from the winter of 1704-5 that keep us in the same *yimin* world, notably one by Li Guosong that I cited at the beginning of this account.⁵⁴ The colophons from that occasion reveal that Huang's interest in the South was not fully satisfied by his 1699-1701 journey, for in the autumn of 1703 he made a second journey to the far South. In fact, we know from other sources that even before this he had given in to his restlessness with a trip to Huangshan in the autumn of 1701.⁵⁵ Huang You's travels continued, as Ruan Yuan's biography records:⁵⁶ A journey to Sichuan can be dated to the few years following 1705 and was commemorated in a painting, *The Road to Shu*, in which Shitao may well have been involved, and for which Fei Xihuang wrote a colophon on the occasion of Huang's departure.⁵⁷ Huang's appointment in Yunnan, the last piece in the jigsaw of his travels, did not come until 1724, when he was already sixty-three. Tragically, he died just three months after his arrival in this far-flung corner of the empire, his own death being followed almost immediately by that of his only son, who had accompanied him.⁵⁸

History enters painting in these works for Huang You through geography and the sense of place. Instead of the events themselves, we are given the place where something of significance once happened; and this site of collective memory comes to us mediated through Huang's personal responses. Moreover, his responses belong to a narrative context – retained in the paintings – that fully makes sense only on its own terms, as the playing out of an obsessional desire. The common landscape space of collective memory is thus not simply transmit-

ted through, but also subordinated to, Huang's utterly personal project. Shitao's contribution is an empathetic visualization that accepts the authority of Huang's obsession and places his own imagination and rhetorical skills at its service. Shitao's muting of his own voice and adoption of a topographic rhetoric of veracity creates the illusion of a fusion of responses. This in turn molds the viewer's response in a similarly empathetic direction and thus imposes the authority of Huang's personal response to history. However, while Huang's project most obviously concerns political memory, it may also, in its curious echo of Kangxi's wide travels of the same period through imperial tours and military campaigns, incorporate a modest response to the imperially embodied narrative of the dynastic present, to which I now turn.⁵⁹

THE FLOODS OF 1705

In Yangzhou 1705 was no ordinary year but the sixtieth anniversary of the Yangzhou massacre; nonetheless, in the early summer the city hosted the Manchu emperor on his fifth tour of the South. The visit was marked by two unusual incidents. The first was the construction, at enormous expense, of a new palace to lodge the emperor during his few days in Yangzhou. Underwritten by local merchants and officials, its construction was announced to Kangxi only once it was too late to stop.⁶⁰ The other incident was the irresponsible behavior in Yangzhou of the Heir Apparent and those allied with him. Then, at the end of the summer, a terrible flood hit the northern Jiangsu area: Even Yangzhou itself was inundated. Since natural disasters were popularly understood to be omens of heaven's will, the potential was there for some to see a connection between the floods and the recent imperial tour. After the floods ended in the autumn of 1705, Shitao painted a commemoration of the disaster, *Desolate Autumn in Huai-Yang*, and inscribed it with a poetic meditation on dynastic destiny. From this poem it can be seen that Shitao was among those who saw, or chose to see, a connection (Figure 41).

The emperor's Southern Tour first took him through the Yangzhou area at the beginning of the fourth month, but he did not at that point enter the city.⁶¹ He instead continued south by canal to Suzhou, Songjiang, and Hangzhou, and from there returned north via Suzhou to Nanjing, finally proceeding from there to Yangzhou as his last major stop in the Jiangnan area on 23 May. While the imperial entourage was still in Nanjing, however, an incident occurred that was to become widely known. Unforgivably, worms were found in the mats on which the emperor was to sit. Responsibility lay with the Prefect of Nanjing, Chen Pengnian (1663-1723), a



40. "The Home of Cheng Jing'e," *Illustrations to the Poems of Huang Yanlü*, dated 1701-2, album of 22 leaves, ink and color on paper, each leaf 20.5 x 34 cm, leaf 20. Zhile Lou Collection, Hong Kong.

popular official with a reputation for honesty who nonetheless found himself in danger of a death sentence. Only after the intercession of the Liang-Huai Salt Commissioner, Cao Yin, who beat his head against the floor so hard that the blood flowed and the sound of the knocks could be clearly heard, did the emperor pardon the prefect.⁶² Pierre-Henri Durand has recently shed new light on this well-known incident, demonstrating that despite the silence of most of the sources, it was in fact the Heir Apparent, Yinreng, accompanying his father on the tour, who demanded the death sentence for Chen.⁶³ To make matters worse, the prefect also found himself attacked by his superior, the Manchu governor-general of Jiangnan, Asan (d. 1714), for having refused the latter's orders to impose a special tax to finance the emperor's reception. However, since Chen was taking seriously imperial decrees that expenditure on the Southern Tours should be kept within reasonable bounds, Asan's attack was no more successful than Yinreng's.

When the emperor reached Yangzhou, in contrast to the constrained circumstances of previous visits in 1689 and 1699, he was on this occasion housed in luxury for over a month at a lavish temporary palace at Precious Pagoda Wharf, specially constructed with funds contrib-

uted by Cao Yin as well as the Suzhou Textile Commissioner, Li Xu, and numerous Yangzhou merchants. The emperor's reaction to the luxurious welcome that he received in Yangzhou was ambivalent, understandably so in the circumstances. To the extent that the luxury was the fruit of hard-won stability and prosperity, and a conspicuous demonstration of loyalty, it cannot have been unwelcome. Rewards, therefore, were decreed for all those who had paid for the Yangzhou palace. Still, with Yangzhou a classical symbol of the corrupting influence of pleasure, how could he not also have been mistrustful? A poem that he composed during his stay might, in fact, be taken as indirect approbation of Chen Pengnian's stand against Asan:⁶⁴

Sui Yangdi indulged himself in watching rare
Yangzhou flowers – I pity him with a long sigh.
Oh, that my heart may be filled with the knowledge
of Classics and Histories to bring peace to the
nation;
Oh, that I will not let it be driven to follow my lust
and my craving for extravagance.

However, while Kangxi was seeking the just measure, the Heir Apparent was profiting to the full from Yangzhou's "resources," mobilizing local salt merchants to buy in Suzhou boys and girls for his private use. If his father knew of this at the time, he said nothing; but in Yangzhou it is unlikely to have remained a secret.

The imperial entourage left Yangzhou on 1 June and traveled north by the Grand Canal, stopping at Qingkou outside Qingjiangpu near where the canal and the Huai River met to inspect the dike construction undertaken since the previous inspection in 1703. Water control was a major responsibility of rulership and was the most important practical concern of the Southern Tours. The Kangxi emperor took the state's responsibilities in water management extremely seriously, involving himself personally in all the state's hydraulic engineering projects. The concern was certainly justified: After a shift in the course of the Yellow River in 1644 the silt it deposited had polluted the Huai, causing recurrent, sometimes devastating flooding, and the subsequent return of the Yellow River to its former course in 1683 had not resolved the problem. The damage to northern Jiangsu agriculture, the disruption of transportation of food supplies to Beijing along the Grand Canal, and the massive cost of repairing breached dikes imposed a heavy economic burden.⁶⁵ Moreover, Kangxi was ob-

essed with the dangers of natural disasters, soliciting constant weather reports from his secret informants in Jiangnan.⁶⁶ While he may not himself have been superstitious, he certainly respected the power of superstition in popular thinking and fully understood the symbolic value of rain, drought, and flooding as divine indicators of the state of contemporary government. This symbolism first found its way into Shitao's painting in an album leaf that he painted in 1689 for presentation to the emperor at the time of Kangxi's second Southern Tour (see Figure 57). Its formal four-character title, "The Seas Are at Peace and the Rivers Are Pure," neatly alludes to the question of water management. He returned to the theme, as we have seen, a decade later, in an image of timely rain in a 1699 album painted on the eve of the third Southern Tour for an unidentified official – seal impressions on the album raise the possibility that Cao Yin was the recipient (Figure 42).⁶⁷ A second leaf, drawing on the metaphorical association of horses with government service, depicts horses bathing in a river (Figure 43). Inscribed upon it, the rhetorical question "How could they not enjoy themselves?" seems to allude to the heaviness of official responsibilities, though it is not clear whether the artist is empathizing with the horses (who may evoke government bureaucrats taking time off) or consoling the groom (who may evoke a supervising official such as Cao Yin). Two years later, Shitao

41 (*facing*). *Desolate Autumn in Huai-Yang*, hanging scroll, ink and color on paper, 89.3 x 57.1 cm. Nanjing Museum.

42. "Rainstorm," *Landscapes, Figures, and Flowers*, dated 1699, album of 12 leaves, ink or ink and color on paper, each leaf 24.5 x 38 cm, leaf 4, ink on paper. Shanghai Museum.



took up the theme of water management once more in a more specific context. In the spring of 1701 the northern Jiangsu area flooded seriously, and Shitao's Manchu student Tu Qingge oversaw the repair efforts at one of the critical spots, Shaobo. In the autumn, when the work was over and the village rebuilt, Shitao visited Tu at Shaobo, on the banks of the lake of the same name. This we know from a recently discovered album leaf that Shitao painted on board Tu Qingge's boat (Figure 44). His appropriately watery painting depicts the recovered fields, beyond which lies Shaobo itself, already rebuilt under his supervision, and finally the still-swollen lake behind:

At the edge of the water a new town pacifies the people,
The lake waters reach the sky, floods without a shore.
The laboring [population] still praises the government of the day:
Don't mock me for painting *gantang* trees that don't resemble [real trees].

43. "Horses Bathing," *Landscapes, Figures, and Flowers*, dated 1699, album of 12 leaves, ink or ink and color on paper, each leaf 24.5 x 38 cm, leaf 10, ink and color on paper. Shanghai Museum.

Through the image of *gantang* trees, Shitao compares his young friend to a paragon of local government in antiquity and provides another paean to Qing rule.

Four years later, in June 1705, the most recent work at nearby Qingkou seemed to Kangxi to have placed the seal on decades of efforts. In a rare moment of pride, he addressed the assembled courtiers on the newly built dike:⁶⁸

Before the thirty-eighth year of our Kangxi reign [1699] muddy water was flooding over, and where you are standing now was then muddy water too. At that time when one looked from the boat, the water and the banks were the same level and you could see far beyond the banks on either side. Since then the water has gradually been returned to grain transport use: The banks were raised higher than the water, and now they are over a *zhang* higher. The clean water flows freely and pushes the silt against the north bank, leaving just a thin line of muddy water. From the look of things, our hydraulic project is completed – our heart is truly joyful.

With this, the imperial entourage returned to the capital; but three days after the emperor arrived back in Beijing, massive rains flooded northern Jiangsu. In Shitao's words, "On the sixteenth day of the sixth month [5 August] of the year *yiyou*, following rains there were vast waves for a thousand *li* all through Huai [Huai'an]



and Yang [Yangzhou]. The two prefectures together formed a marshy kingdom; faced with this frightening sight it was hard not to be anxious." Indeed, so anxious was Shitao that he composed a long song from which this explanation derives.⁶⁹ The floods were not bad enough at this point to inform the emperor; but it turned out to be a summer of great rain, and pressure from both the Yellow River and the Huai eventually broke the dikes in four places. On the eleventh day of the seventh month (29 August), Zhang Pengge informed the emperor of the situation, to the latter's great alarm. Two weeks later, with no improvement in the situation, the emperor declared his opinion that Zhang had been pursuing a short-sighted and dangerous course by shoring up the Gaojiayan dike against the full force of the flow of the two rivers: Although this had benefits for the peasants who worked the land closest to the dike, it raised the level of the rivers relative to the northern Jiangsu region, enabling an even worse disaster than the present massive flood of the entire area. His own view (now) was that the dike ought to have overflow points that would sacrifice the land near the dike in order to protect the larger northern Jiangsu area as far south as Yangzhou. Nonetheless, five days later, Zhang's approach prevailed, and the breaches in the dike were once more repaired, the work being completed by the twelfth day of the ninth month (29 October). The emperor remained dissatisfied, however, and a month later instituted a broad review of water-control policy for the Huai–Yang area.

Desolate Autumn in Huai–Yang is the formal seal-script title that Shitao gave to his commemoration of the floods of the ninth month. Equally formal is the long, "old-style" poem that covers the full width of the top of the painting. Slanting washes at the horizon line suggest heavy rains, now distant. Mist invades the space of the city at the bottom of the image, rendering it dreamlike; willows next to the city wall evoke the city's unfortunate Sui history. A figure looks out from an upper-story window, a silent witness; another pushes his skiff across the flooded landscape of the city outskirts. For most of its



44. Shaobo, album leaf mounted as a hanging scroll, ink and light color on paper, 32.5 x 24 cm. © Christie's Images.

eighty-six lines the poetic commentary on this scene speaks, not of nature, but of history:

1. Heaven loves to see people born, but people do not assume their responsibility;
When humans depend on worldly desires, Heaven does not take responsibility for them.
When the relation between Heaven and humans reaches this point, how can one not be concerned?
I write it into the empty mountains, in order that history [lit. the hundred generations] may be seen.
But the vastness of history is extremely obscure,
May the empty mountains facing me judge the truth of what I say . . .

- 3 I let my thoughts wander to [Emperor] Wendi who
early on had a son,
A child who buried his family and lost the Sui
dynastic line.
[Emperor] Yangdi of the Sui [imperial] house was
devoid of plans,
Let me recount how he subverted the human Way.
At that time he did not abandon his attachment to
the Labyrinth of Desire [Mi lou],
Everywhere [the sounds of] songs and flutes wafted
through pavilions and over terraces.
- 4 The talent of the Sui [i.e., Wendi] was naturally
quick, Heaven had difficulty competing,
The mind of the Sui was naturally intelligent,
learned in the Classics and Histories.
The benevolence of the Sui, and its virtue, were
admired by all,
The trusted Yang Su transmitted his final
instructions.
But his final instructions had no tally, and as soon
as this was seen
Sui [dynastic] family members everywhere laid claim
to the throne.
- 5 But at the Western Pond orders were still given to
the Sixteen Courtyards
At Nanzhou they continued to excavate a canal
from the Five Lakes.
The Eight Tunes of the Five Lakes had so much
charm,
With relaxed satisfaction [Yangdi] enjoyed the
autumn.
But the red face-powdered [beauties] stopped
arriving, the Sui family perished,
And no matter how beautiful the women, they were
consigned to the earth.
- 6 The Sui's neglect was its own death-sentence, for
want of making provision.
With rice as precious as pearls and firewood as
expensive as cinnamon, Heaven was disturbed.
Soldiers were conscripted daily for faraway
campaigns,
Alas, no-one took care of the affairs of state.
In the palace *li* plums [*li* was also the name of the
Tang imperial family] grew along with the
willows and *prunus*,
And it was not the willow and *prunus* that were
valued but the jadelike *li* plum.
- 7 Amid unbearable grief, the central plain was thrown
into turmoil,
Success and loss did not lie in distant campaigns on
the frontier.
During all the year's three hundred and sixty days
He only faced the misty flowers [of Yangzhou], and
night after night slumbered.
[Meanwhile] traitrous officials in Yangzhou imposed
new taxes,

- Departing of their own accord in perfumed
carriages, as he relapsed into his muddled state.
- 8 Were the winding railings and storied pavilions
charming or not?
They were able to cause an immortal to become a
libertine.
At the south of the [Grand] Canal the willows
withered
At the north the *li* plums flourished.
The willow flowers blown away, where did they
fall?
The plum flowers gave way to fruit, spontaneously
forming. [. . .]
- 10 Even if it was to cause deaths for a thousand or ten
thousand years,
It was not worth [giving up] a single glance at a
surpassing beauty.
The beauties are no longer to be seen, the Labyrinth
of Desire is no more,
In the sixteen western courtyards, the Sui poison
was extirpated.
Southward along the [Grand] Canal for a thousand
li, the imperial tour comes to Jiangdu,
To this day how can a lightning glance be allowed
to mislead?

The Sui, in Yangzhou wilderness poetry, was usually an indirect reference to the Ming; through the topos of Yangdi's decadence the poets gave a romantic explanation of their own dynasty's loss of the Mandate of Heaven. Nonwilderness artists in Yangzhou like Yuan Jiang, meanwhile, were more interested in the Tang, whose palaces afforded them with a suitably flattering metaphor for Qing prosperity. However, no one would have read Shitao's poem on this painting as a reflection on the fall of the Ming. Not only does it commemorate a contemporary disaster, but Shitao refers explicitly in the last two lines to an imperial tour that could only be the one that had just taken place that year, though it also evokes the tour by which Yangdi fell in love with Yangzhou. The Sui history and its moral, therefore, must refer to the Qing; Shitao has interpreted the flood as an inauspicious omen connected to the dangers of the sensual South for the Qing emperors. It seems certain, in fact, that the poem is Shitao's response to the behavior of Yinreng during the 1705 imperial tour with, in the background, the construction of the temporary palace. Sui Wendi, cited with full approbation, stands here for the Kangxi emperor; and in the figure of Yangdi, who lost an empire, is an alarmed warning of what could happen if Yinreng continued in his present ways and eventually gained the throne. Kangxi eventually came to share the same sense of alarm, and after further scandals and internecine jockeying for power, in 1708 stripped Yinreng of his Heir Apparent position. "How," declared the em-

peror in his public denunciation of his son, "could I entrust to a man like this the vast enterprise of our descent?"⁷⁰ Yet six months later Yinreng was restored, supposedly chastened; only when he had continued in his old ways for a further four years did Kangxi definitively strip him of his power.

Shitao is not usually thought of as a social commentator, and despite everything that has been established in recent years about his generally pro-Qing stance it still comes as something of a surprise to see him a vocal supporter of Kangxi. It is true that one plausible candidate to be the recipient of this scroll, the writer and editor Zhang Chao had published a compilation of contemporary writings, *Compendium of Writings of the Present Age* (*Zhaodai congshu*), that was intended to bear witness to the cultural achievements of the Qing period.⁷¹ However, we forget too easily that Shitao himself was no stranger to political circles and events. All his life he had frequented Qing officials, and he continued to do so in Yangzhou, their numbers including some of the Hanlin academicians who were then in Yangzhou to work on the *Complete Poetry of the Tang* imperial publishing project. Few of those men would have been anything other than opposed to Yinreng. Moreover, Shitao could feel a personal connection to the immediate protagonists in the Chen Pengnian incident, since he had met the emperor during two earlier imperial tours and was on friendly terms with the Salt Commissioner Cao Yin. He may even have had personal contact with Chen Pengnian himself.⁷²

Shitao would presumably have known about the early summer incident in Nanjing, and more to the point would have known at the time of creating *Desolate Autumn in Huai-Yang* that Chen was imprisoned in a Nanjing temple, the victim of Asan's further machinations under the protection of Yinreng. Chen was now improbably accused of disrespect to the throne for having transformed a former brothel into a lecture hall where there were discussions of Kangxi's *Sacred Edict* of injunctions on moral conduct. After the April incident the common people had welcomed Chen Pengnian with refreshments as he accompanied the emperor; now in the autumn there were demonstrations in his favor. (Although this was apparently not generally known at the time, he was under a death sentence that was eventually commuted, but not until April 1706).⁷³ Shitao was also, of course, extremely well-connected in salt merchant circles and was well-placed to hear about events like the involvement of salt merchants in Yinreng's libertinage during the Southern Tour. If we cannot say exactly how much Shitao knew about Yinreng's activities and political influence, we may assume that he knew more than enough to justify the analogy with Yangdi of the Sui.

For all its friendly interest in Kangxi's fortunes, however, Shitao's is nonetheless a voice from the Ming wilderness. The historical section of the poem cited above is followed by a long description of the flood; the poem then ends with these lines:

Today I collect my energy and venture out from my
Cleansing Pavilion,
In front of the gate the water has subsided, but in a
room a boat still rolls.
I open my broken old inkstone to be my sun and
moon [the sun and moon characters together
make the single character Ming],
And with a worn-out brush depict the desolate
purity of autumn.

Finally, at the end of the inscription, after signing himself Dadizi, Ji (the Ji of Zhu Ruoji), he added two seals: "Ruoji" and "orphaned old man." He here resurrects what, in Chapter 4, will be seen to be a youthful preoccupation with Kangxi's fate; for was it not as someone who felt a personal relationship to the role of Heir Apparent that he took a special interest in Yinreng's destiny? Dynastic fortunes were always, for Shitao, a personal affair.

The discursive space in which the paintings discussed above participate was, in modern terms, at once private and public; it was the site both of a privatization of collective memory and of a broadening of a common public claim on dynastic narrative. The activities, obsessions, declarations, and meditations that inspired and surrounded the paintings had in the first instance a personal or family character; in this sense, they might seem to be private rather than public. However, while the initiative was personal, the anticipated reception was not. This can already be inferred from their function as *record*. Shitao's long historical poem inscribed on *Desolate Autumn at Huai-Yang* belongs to a genre that lay at the opposite pole from that of the intimate lyric; its formality and ambition proclaim a more public purpose of the painting. If the 1705 floods were of obvious general interest (floods in general inspired many poems), one should not underestimate the interest of Huang You's travels, which were exceptional for their time, or of the Fei family tombs, given Fei Mi's national reputation. In each case the record speaks to an anticipated more general interest. Sometimes the reception can actually be traced through surviving colophons such as one sees on Shitao's portrait of Huang You or *The Ancestral Tombs of the Fei Family*.⁷⁴ In such cases the colophons at once register and bring into being what could be called a *serial* space of sociability and independent debate, that is,

a space constituted cumulatively over time through small gatherings of the kind depicted in leaf 22 of *Illustrations to the Poems of Huang Yanlü* (see Figure 34).

It would be anachronistic to take for granted here categories of private and public that were at this time only in the process of historical formation and were, in any event, never to develop the antimonious relationship characteristic of Western modernity. What is visible in the serial space of sociability and the discursive space of debate it supported is instead something very different: a fluid interpenetration and mutual conversion of concerns that we now think of as either private or public but that, in the practice of that time and place, bore witness to the relative lack of clear public-private differentiation.

In *Drunk in Autumn Woods*, which mythologizes the participants as figures in a specific Yangzhou cultural history, the painting's separation of its inhabitants into distinct groups, each inhabiting its own space, is virtually an illustration of this space of sociability in action. Unlike the hierarchically leveled and channeled structure of state-governed public discourse, this space was cellular, cumulative, and responsive to private initiative and happenstance. It took form in improvisational contexts that were characteristic of the early modern dissociation of space from place, contexts such as letter writing, handscroll viewing, leisure gatherings, poetry society meetings, farewell gatherings, fellow traveling, or temporary visits to Yangzhou, to mention only those typical elite activities that repeatedly left their mark on Shitao's painting as catalyst and/or theme. In the handscrolls considered in this chapter, the separations of time and

of space between the different interventions are suppressed to create a larger site of assembly and, often, dialogue, which transformed private claims on dynastic narrative into public ones – fragments of a collective claim to an independent say in broader societal affairs.

The same process can be seen, albeit with very different political agendas in each case, in contemporary Yangzhou literary projects, such as Zhuo Erkan's compilation of poetry by remnant subjects of the Ming and Zhang Chao's compilations of contemporary essays,⁷⁵ most notably the monumental *Zhaodai congshu*. The serial space of sociability takes more dynamic form in Zhang's anthologies of letters, with their sustained, overlapping, and cross-referential discussions.⁷⁶ (By the second volume he was publishing the letters in the order that he had received or sent them). More dynamic still is the polyphonic structure of Zhang's short collection of aphorisms, *Shadows of Secret Dreams (Youmeng ying)*, where each of the author's statements is followed by the aphoristic commentaries of others (including Shitao).⁷⁷ From these various publications one can identify dozens of the contemporary concerns around which a public-private discursive space was formed at that time in Yangzhou and beyond, the dynastic narrative being one such concern.

Later in this book, I shall have occasion to examine more closely a number of other issues that concerned Shitao deeply, including professionalism, moral values, religious teaching, consumerism, and economic security. Chapter 4, however, remains with dynastic narrative and, more especially, the issues of loyalism and collaboration as Shitao engaged with them personally.

CHAPTER FOUR

Zhu Ruoji's Destinies



In a 1686 poem entitled "Song of My Life," written at the age of forty-five as a farewell to his friends in the South before his departure to seek his fortune within the orbit of the Manchu court in Beijing, Shitao looks ahead, narrativizing his future, anticipating success:

Last night, as if blown by the wind, I dreamt of going to the capital,
The [messenger] dove's bell blended with the cries of wild geese in flight;
A letter from an old friend described everything in great detail,
Asking a southern wind to hasten me northward.

Alas! We are not like wild deer, and do not gather lightly,
Living lives that truly are without restraint and hard for others to make out;
In this life one never frees oneself of the pains of parting,
From the Pavilion of Sadness we listen to the clear sounds [of the water below].

In imagination I have already traveled ahead to Mount Hua [in Shenxi Province],
Not to mention the steep peaks of the Five Terraces [Mount Wutai in Shanxi Province] and the Twin Chambers [Mount Song in Henan Province].
Following the Yangzi and the Huai rivers I shall chart a course,

And once across the Yellow River I shall travel on into the distance.

I seek out distant journeys to compose into songs
That will extend my [poetic] intent to the eight corners of the universe.

But I promise you that we will meet again in some future year,
As the river and the city that I leave behind are my witness.¹

In sharp contrast, in a set of poems written in the New Year of 1701 at the age of sixty, the artist, drinking alone in his Yangzhou home, looks back on his life to lament his unfortunate destiny:

To be born in terrible times – how can one bear it?
With neither family nor home, I encountered
Gautama [Buddha].

But Dadi has thrown all of that away
And now, in the middle of the night, the wind is whistling.

I wrongly mistrusted my own roots, proclaimed I didn't care,
Simply followed what I saw and avoided discussion.
I wasn't hurt by gossip of the kind
That said: "How can Qingxiang [i.e., Shitao] be a man?"

White-haired and muddle-headed, I find it hard to speak,
But in my sixtieth year I offer thanks to Heaven.

Not knowing where my family and nation were,
 I entrusted myself to temples as a monk, a living
 transcendent.
 Seeming to be mad or drunk, I have been passed
 over by my times;
 Like a workhorse or an ox, I just turn out paintings.
 None of my contemporaries has ever asked
 If I have dreamed of mounting on the dragon's back
 or pushing the swing.²

Whether looking forward in a poem that is silent on his purpose but eloquent on his ability to project into the future, or later looking back on wrong turns taken and broken dreams that are left unexplained, Shitao acknowledges his destiny as a story that he had his own share in writing.

For Shitao, as for most educated men in his period, it was axiomatic that he had a destiny to assume. While there existed a range of competing interpretations of this basic fact of life, in the early modern period destiny was generally understood to be potential; that is, heaven did not simply decree a person's fate but, in more dialectical fashion, bestowed talent and fortune (good or bad) to which the responsibility of the human actor was to respond with the hope of determining heaven's response.³ Narrativization was unavoidable. However, as the contrast between the two poetic texts illustrates, over the course of a lifetime writing also meant rewriting: One narrative of destiny gave way to another as Shitao reconsidered the emplotment of his life narrative. This is where the modern character of Shitao's approach to destiny most clearly emerges, for his writings in general give little sense that the constraints of any preexisting cosmological scheme particularly preoccupied him. There is instead a strategic dimension to his narratives, and to the shifts from one narrative to another, that implies a concept of calculable risk similar to that identified by Anthony Giddens as a diagnostic feature of modernity. For Giddens, calculable risk is a modern phenomenon insofar as it reflects "an alteration in the perception of determination and contingency, such that human moral imperatives, natural causes, and chance reign in place of religious cosmologies."⁴ In Shitao's case, I am suggesting that a long-established discourse of destiny, and the narratives constructed using that discourse, were employed by him to similarly strategic purpose. This, at any rate, accords with the evidence of the 1701 poems cited above, which are haunted by the sense of mistakes made and possibilities denied. One sees in them a man preoccupied in characteristically modern fashion with the maximization of his capital resources, of which his imperial origins were a part.

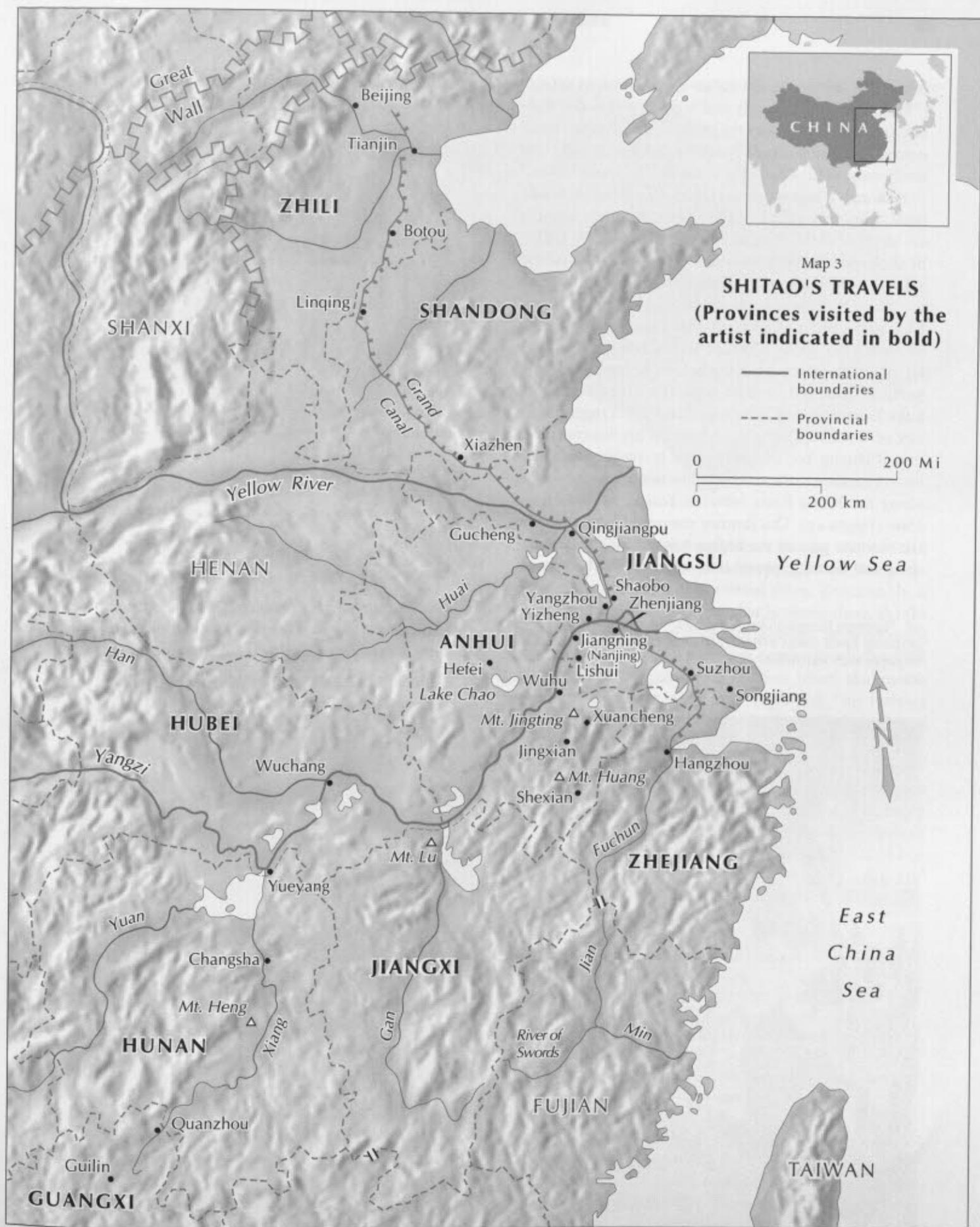
From 1697 onward, as Dadizi, Shitao became a central figure in the loyalist community of the Yangzhou

area. He did so not only by embracing the interdynastic culture of political mourning but by publicly disclosing his identity as a Ming prince, which gave him a special cachet among loyalists and their admirers. This was far from the first time that Shitao's imperial origins had played a central role in the course of his life; living as he did under a newly established, alien dynasty, he spent a lifetime with the burden of being a living political symbol. The only question was how secretly or openly he assumed the burden; he certainly could not escape it, if not in his dealings with others, then psychologically. It was always central to his destiny, even when his conception of that destiny shifted.

While it is the history of Shitao's explicit engagement with Ming dynastic identity in the last decade of his life that is most important for this book, one cannot hope to make sense of this engagement without first considering how he arrived at that point. My account is quite detailed, because it is in the twists and turns of the story that the logic of his later political identity can be seen; but it is not narrowly focused on politics, since Shitao's path through life as a descendant of the Ming imperial family was always tightly bound up both with his public religious identity and with his role as a painter. The present chapter takes the story up through 1692, tracing the emergence and then the contours of a first narrative of destiny, and breaking off on the eve of a moment of crisis – a crisis from which was born a second narrative that eventually led him to the Dadi Tang in Yangzhou. Chapter 5 follows him there, then traces out the imaginary paths of return that led back from the Dadi Tang to distant Guangxi province.

FROM QINGXIANG TO XUANCHENG: 1642–1677

The man known to his Yangzhou friends in the late 1690s and 1700s under the Daoist name of Dadizi and the Buddhist name Shitao was born into the family of the Ming prince of Jingjiang, in either Guilin or Quanzhou in southwest China, in 1642.⁵ His original name, as he only came to admit toward the end of his life, was Zhu Ruoji. Two years after his birth, the Ming dynasty fell, and in the following year, 1645, his family was massacred. The head of the extended family (perhaps even his father), Zhu Hengjia, the prince of Jingjiang, had made an ill-considered claim to the Ming throne.⁶ The massacre was the retribution subsequently meted out, not by the Manchus but by a rival Southern Ming regime based in Fujian. While Zhu Hengjia was dragged off to the Longwu regime's Fuzhou capital where he was left to die in prison, the infant was saved by a family re-



tainer ("A servant in the palace carried him to safety" ["Biography of Dadizi"]) and hidden within the Buddhist church. In this way the orphaned and dangerously named Zhu Ruoji came to pass his childhood, and eventually most of his adult life, as the monk Yuanji Shitao.⁷

Although it is possible that Shitao was born in Guilin itself, where the palace of the Jingjiang princes stood in the shadow of the Peak of Solitary Elegance, all his life he declared himself to be a native of Quanzhou (Qingxiang), some ninety miles to the northeast. This town on the Xiang River was home to the important Xiangshan Monastery, and it seems likely that Shitao's earliest years of flight were spent in refuge there;⁸ but by the age of ten or eleven (1651-2), if not before, he had been taken north on foot and by boat along the Xiang River, past Lake Dongting, and then east down the Yangzi, to the city of Wuchang. Fifty years later, in his illustration to one of Huang You's travel poems, he recalled this boyhood experience in a visual recollection of the landscape along the Xiang River between Yongzhou and Hengzhou (Figure 45). This journey removed Shitao from the western part of the region known as Yue (Guangdong and Guangxi provinces), where he had been born,

to the northern limit of the adjoining region of Chu (Hunan and Hubei provinces).⁹ In "Song of My Life," the journey is presented as just one moment in a longer, ongoing spiritual journey:

Throughout my life I have maintained a remote hope,
Applying myself to leaving the dust of the world behind me.
[For,] once beyond the experience of separation and turmoil,
In complete detachment, I became aware of the true reality.

To search for instruction in the Way is no easy journey,
But even in my dreams I had the spirit of a kind friend to teach me.
Uninhibited, [we traveled] for thousands of miles as far as Lake Dongting
On roads that everywhere stretched off into the distance toward the land of the immortals.
Always in sandals [i.e., on foot], I walked toward the horizon,
Like a floating leaf I made my way to tame the dragon.

45. "Between Hengzhou and Yongzhou," *Illustrations to the Poems of Huang Yanlü*, dated 1701-2, album of 22 leaves, ink and color on paper, each leaf 20.5 x 34 cm, leaf 3. Zhile Lou Collection, Hong Kong.

In Wuchang, he and his protector, who is only known today under his Buddhist name Yuanliang Hetao (*hao* Luweng), stayed for several years in a temple refuge that remains to be identified.¹⁰ According to Li Lin, it was in





46. *Landscape of Mount Heng*, dated 1687, folding fan, dimensions unavailable. Palace Museum, Beijing. Source: *Gugong bowuyuan cang Ming Qing shanmian shuhua ji*, vol. 1, pl. 76.

Wuchang that Shitao learned to read, to write calligraphy, and to paint:

By the time he was ten years old he liked to collect old books, but did not know how to read them. Someone said: "If you cannot read, why do you collect them?" Only then did he start gradually to read.¹¹ In his free time he traced rubbings of old calligraphy and took a particular liking to Yan Lugong [Yan Zhenqing, 709-85]. Someone said: "Why do you not study [the calligraphy of] Dong Wenmin [Dong Qichang] who is so popular today?" So then he changed and studied Dong, though he did not like it very much. He also learnt to paint landscape, human figures, and flowers and plants, birds and animals. He was often praised by the people of Chu.

Significantly, one of his early painting teachers, Chen Yidao (1647 *jinsbi*, died c. 1661), far from being a Ming loyalist was a Qing official who belonged to the first generation of southern Chinese officials to collaborate with the Manchus. Shitao's studies with Chen came at some point during the latter's temporary retirement, c. 1654-8.¹² During his Wuchang sojourn, Shitao also traveled within the Chu region. In or around 1657, by then sixteen years old, he made a journey back south, through Changsha to Mount Heng in southern Hunan, whose scenic wonders he recalled thirty years later in an especially fine fan painting (Figure 46).¹³ The trip took him so close to his native Quanzhou that one must wonder if this was not the ultimate destination he had in

mind. The journey naturally took him by way of Lake Dongting and the celebrated Yueyang Tower that overlooked the lake from its northeast shore. Remarkably, it is still possible to read poems that he wrote there, thanks to his later practice of illustrating poems from different moments in his life. One of these poems, in which which he writes of "the sound of soldiers [that] shakes the ground," expresses, as he later explained, "my feelings as a young man, at losing my family and nation" (see Figure 81).

At this point, based in Wuchang, Shitao had not yet sought to attach himself as disciple to any prominent Chan master; but when he decided to do so, the choice was bound up with the choice of a political orientation as well. Writing twenty-five years later, in "Song of My Life," Shitao relates the moment of decision to his private encounter with (a rubbing of) a celebrated text by the Tang dynasty writer Han Yu (768-824).

The primordial veneration of Han's stele suddenly
rose luminously [before me].
With no-one else present my eyes went up and
down the columns of its fragmented words.
Turning away, I walked away without looking
back, my tears falling,
And then decided by divination which of [the two
regions of] Wu or Chu was closest.¹⁴

Han Yu's stirring, loyalist text was written for a stele that commemorated military victories of Emperor Xianzong (r. 806-21) that helped to stave off the disintegration of the Tang dynasty. In the context of the early 1660s it was only too relevant, since it made a case for

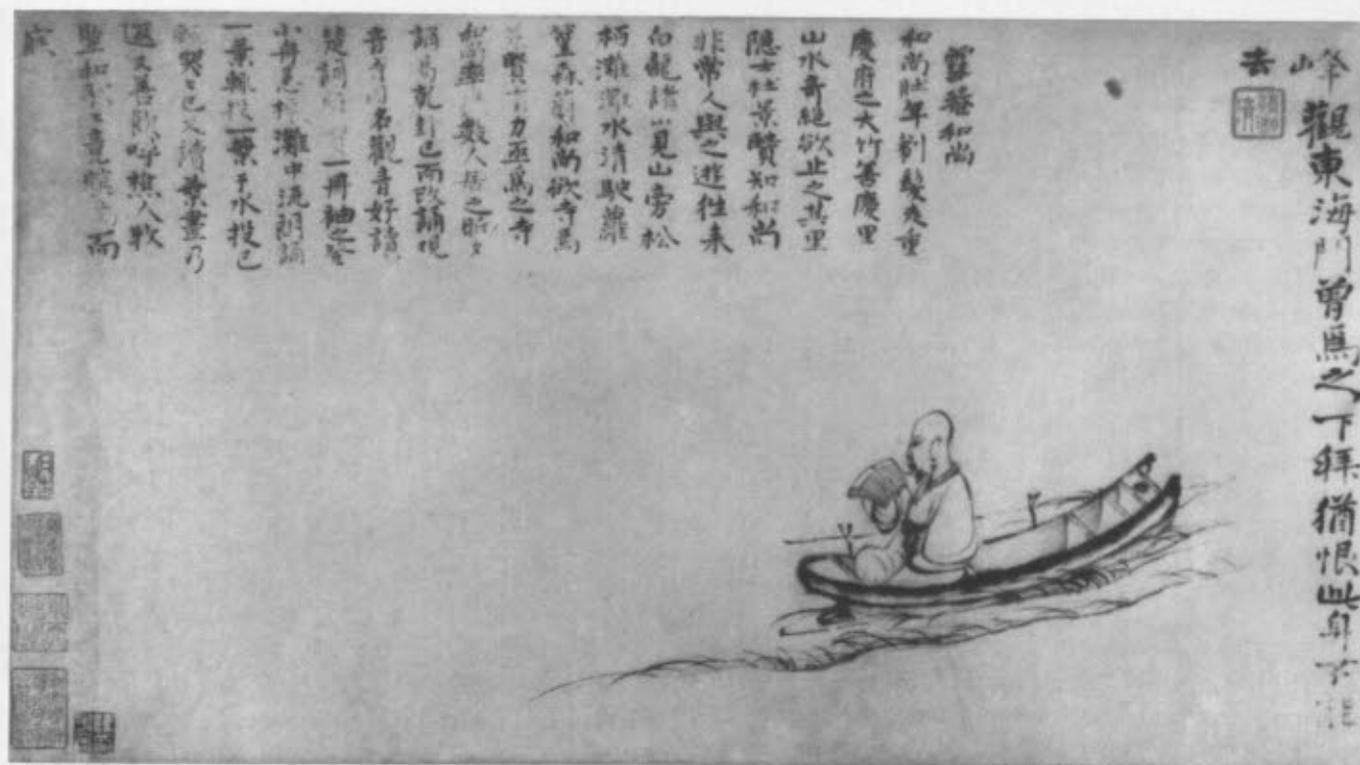
loyalism that the reader's hindsight necessarily qualified with the knowledge that Xianzong's restoration of the dynasty's fortunes was only temporary. Because Shitao associates his encounter with Han Yu's text with his departure from Wuchang, it can be approximately dated to 1663-4 (as discussed shortly). It almost immediately followed, therefore, the suppression of the last of the Southern Ming regimes around which resistance to the Qing had centered since 1644, and came at a time when the transfer of the Mandate of Heaven to the Qing was now difficult to deny. It is hardly surprising that this should have been the moment when the issue of his future political orientation finally crystallized, as highlighted in his account of the encounter. To be sure, he there makes vividly clear his continuing emotional commitment at the time to the dynasty under which he was born, but he also presents his decision to move on in terms that signal a new political pragmatism. We learn that he hesitated between Wu (southern Jiangsu) and another part of Chu, a choice of destinations that needs to be viewed not only in the context of the vast Linji Chan monastic network but also, more narrowly, in relation

47. "Narcissus," *Landscapes, Flowers, and Bamboo*, album of 12 leaves, ink on paper, each leaf 25 x 17.6 cm, leaf 7. Guangdong Provincial Museum. Source: *Shitao shuhua quanji*, vol. 2, pl. 366.



48. "Reading the *Li Sao*," *Landscapes, Flowers, and Bamboo*, album of 12 leaves, ink on paper, each leaf 25 x 17.6 cm, leaf 12, Guangdong Provincial Museum. Source: *Shitao shuhua quanji*, vol. 2, pl. 371.

to the Tiantong lineage into which he was subsequently integrated.¹⁵ In Tiantong terms, the Chu destination would likely have implied seeking out one of the disciples of Hanyue Facang who had established themselves in Hunan, at Mount Heng and elsewhere; those monks, whom Shitao had no doubt encountered during his travels in that area, were known for their Ming loyalist sympathies.¹⁶ The Wu destination, in contrast, meant (as it turned out) approaching Lü'an Benyue (d. 1676), who was a major follower of Muchen Daomin (1596-1674), a Zhejiang abbot notorious for having suddenly and dramatically shifted his loyalty from the Ming to the Qing in the mid-1650s. In 1659 Muchen had accepted an invitation to come to Beijing and serve the Shunzhi emperor, a devout Buddhist. When Muchen himself returned to the South, Lü'an, who had followed him north in his entourage, stayed behind in his place. After the death of Shunzhi in 1661, however, the regents of his young successor, Kangxi, looked far less kindly on the Buddhist church, and Lü'an was required to return to the South, where he established himself at Qingpu, near



49. "Monk Xue'an," *Hermits*, handscroll, section 5, ink on paper, 27.5 x 314 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

Songjiang.¹⁷ Following the collapse of the Southern Ming resistance, then, Shitao made a distinction, common at the time, between an emotional loyalism to the Ming and a pragmatic collaboration with the Qing. The question for him, here rather obliquely formulated in geographical terms, was this: On which side should he place his hopes for a Buddhist career?¹⁸

Together with the unmentioned Hetao, Shitao opted for Wu and for collaboration with the Qing, though his vague account in "Song of My Life" of their departure and journey eastward belies by its carefree tone what was at stake:

Words arrived from associates offering kind
invitations,
With sleeves [respectfully] upraised I visited famous
sites of beauty.
Like a drifting cloud I gave in to my inclinations;
Like the ocean waves, I went wherever I happened
to land.¹⁹

In fact, the two men went initially to Mount Lu in the neighboring province of Jiangxi, staying at the important Kaixian Monastery, where Muchen Daomin had once been based. From a later mention by the artist, it is known that Shitao's sojourn at the monastery occurred in 1664; from this, one can infer that they probably left Wuchang in late 1663 or early 1664.²⁰ Today

there survives an album in which one leaf is explicitly identified as having been painted at a site beside Kaixian Monastery. Assuming that the artist is referring to the date of execution of the album leaf (rather than giving a date for a pictorial composition that he is re-creating), the album was painted in 1664, giving it a claim to be Shitao's earliest surviving work. The twelve technically limited paintings include Buddhist, Daoist, and Ming loyalist themes, some illustrating poems from years before, including his journey through Hunan c. 1657. One leaf illustrates a text specifically dated to 1657, when he visited the Yellow Crane Tower in Wuchang (Figure 47).²¹ The subject of the painting, narcissus, was indissociable from the name of Zhao Mengjian (1199–1267 or before), a minor member of the Song imperial family with whom Shitao would naturally have felt a bond. A seventeenth-century belief had it that Zhao, after the fall of the Song to the Mongols, had painted narcissus as a loyalist image of familial and national grief – a symbolism Shitao retained. In his inscription to his picture Shitao interprets the two narcissus bulbs as incarnations of the Nymph of the Luo River, possessing an almost imperceptible "icy brightness" that is easily understood as a metaphor for his own aristocratic identity and character. In a similar vein, a second leaf presents the image of a shaven-headed monk in a boat reading a text venerated by Ming loyalists, *The Songs of Chu* (Figure 48).

Still more interesting is a much later painting that reworks, and in a sense explains, the image of the loyalist monk in a boat as used in 1664 (Figure 49). The later image belongs to a handscroll (c. late 1670s?) depicting

hermits from the past, each of whom had, like himself, hidden his true identity under an assumed name.²² Each portrait illustrates a brief biography that is transcribed beside the painting, and to most of the texts (though not this particular one) the artist has added an annotation, sometimes as brief as a signature and a date, that associates the portrait with a specific moment in his own life. The biography illustrated is found in a sixteenth-century work, Zheng Xiao's *Record of Subjects Who Withdrew* (*Xunguo chen ji*).²³ Shitao's version reads as follows:

Monk Xue'an: In middle age this monk shaved his head and went off to Dazhu Shanqing near Chongqing [in Sichuan]. The landscape being extraordinary in the extreme, he wanted to settle there. A gentleman of the area living in retirement, Du Jingxian, knew that the monk was someone out of the ordinary, and accompanied him in his wanderings. They went around the region of Mount Bailong and the other [nearby] mountains, until they saw a riverbank next to the mountain with pine and cypress trees, pure flowing water, and lush forests of bamboo. The monk wanted to build a temple at that spot, and Jingxian, who had the means, decided to build it for him. The monk took in a number of disciples and went to live there. Morning and night he chanted the "Qianpu" section of the *Book of Changes*, until later he changed and chanted the *Guanyin Sutra*, from which the temple took the name "Guanyin." He liked to read *The Songs of Chu*; sometimes he would buy a copy, put it in his sleeve and climb into a small boat, and speed out into the middle of the river. As he finished reciting each page aloud he would throw the page into the water, then weep, then start reading again, finishing all the pages before he went back home. He was also a good drinker, inviting woodcutters and herdboys to sing with him; and when they stopped singing he would close his eyes and fall asleep.

Shitao has left unstated the aspects of the Xue'an story that make it so relevant to his own circumstances. Zheng Xiao's fuller version begins by evoking the context of social disorder that led to Xue'an's withdrawal from ordinary life – the years following the death of the Ming founder Zhu Yuanzhang in 1398, known as the Jingnan troubles. Much as in the years after 1644, during that brief but murderous period the princes given local power by Zhu Yuanzhang fought for control of China, some as supporters of his successor, Zhu Yunwen (Jianwen), and others in opposition. In 1402 Zhu Di defeated his nephew Zhu Yunwen and took the throne as the Yongle emperor. Xue'an was thought to have been a censor under Jianwen, and the point of citing the story is that he became a monk for moral and political reasons, not religious ones. In Zheng's version, the monk gives up chanting the *Book of Changes* only under pressure from Du Jingxian; and his chanting of *The Songs*

of *Chu*, the loyalist's "bible," is portrayed even more strongly as a repeated ritualistic exercise. Though Shitao does not associate this section of the handscroll with any particular moment in his own life, its close visual connection to the leaf in the 1664 album painted at Mount Lu points back to a youthful period of his life when Buddhist concealment and his "feelings as a young man at losing my family and nation" went hand in hand.

However, another image in the same handscroll complicates this straightforward picture (Figure 50). This scroll section depicts a hermit whose biography is drawn from a chapter of the *Zhuangzi* entitled "Giving Up the Throne."²⁴ Following the portrait, an annotation associates the image with the artist's sojourn at Kaixian Monastery in 1664. The hermit is depicted within a cave, seated at a stone table, looking up from a book, and is identified as the Hermit of the Stone Abode, to whom the legendary Sage Emperor Shun offered the empire. Angrily refusing, the hermit took refuge in a cave to pursue self-cultivation, leaving Shun to preside over what turned out to be a golden age. Following the artist's hint to relate this story to his own circumstances in 1664, one notes that this followed by only two years the final collapse of the Southern Ming resistance and the ascension to the throne of Kangxi. Improbable as it may seem (but as we shall see, he had his reasons), Shitao, with an immodest sense of his own potential importance in the struggle of dynasties, seems to have considered himself to be rendering a service to Kangxi (then still a child) by concealing his identity. Here for the first time the Ming *wangsun* can be seen stepping outside the bounds of Ming loyalist sentiment, and bringing the Qing emperor into his calculations.

Leaving Mount Lu, the two monks went on to Qingpu in Jiangsu, where no later than 1665 Shitao sought to become the disciple of Lü'an Benyue, who had returned from the capital not long before.

As the gulls of the Five Lakes flew close I felt a sense
of fellow-feeling,
Tall peaks were reflected in the Sanmao River like
Mount Gṛdrakūta itself.²⁵
There resided a perfected man bearing witness to
intrinsic truth (my late dharma father, Lü'an),
Returned from the imperial court, he gave guidance
from his mountain grotto.
Three times I battled with my emotions and
ascended the Dharma Hall,²⁶
Repeatedly I was punished, and given a thrashing.

Though the experience was grueling, the new arrival was not rejected. He now became, as one of his seals later formulated it, "grandson of Tiantong Min [Muchen], son of Shanguo Yue [Lü'an], Shitao Ji."²⁷



50. "Hermit of the Stone Abode," *Hermits*, handscroll, section 1, ink on paper, 27.5 x 314 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

Acceptance by Lü'an, however, meant further wanderings: The young monk was ordered to travel widely, "for to be confined is to become shallow and narrow-minded." Together with Hetao, who had also become Lü'an's disciple, Shitao journeyed through the network of Linji temples in Jiangsu and Zhejiang, notably visiting Suzhou and Hangzhou; but it was in the neighboring province of Anhui (their likely destination all along) that they finally found a congenial temple and a community of literati into which they were welcomed:

The three peaks of Zhu from afar seemed joined,
but like the three barriers to enlightenment
opened up,²⁸
The mists of Yue [Zhejiang] and moonlight of Wu
[southern Jiangsu] powdered the craggy heights.
Just as my friendship with gibbons and cranes began
to seem endless,
Suddenly, ahead I saw the Terrace of the Yellow
Emperor [Mount Huang].
The silvery color of the cloud-sea blended with
fragrant mists,
And billowing clouds carried transcendents toward
Penglai Island.²⁹

It was not at Mount Huang that Shitao settled, however, but in the area of the small city of Xuancheng, which he and Hetao probably reached as early as 1666, and where they appear to have moved from temple to temple during the first few years of their sojourn.³⁰

The more important city of southern Anhui was Shexian, also known as Xin'an. Located near the Huangshan mountains lyrically described by Shitao, Shexian was the capital of Huizhou Prefecture, which, as noted in Chapter 2, was ancestral home to many of China's most wealthy and cultivated merchant clans – the same clans that would later provide the bulk of his clients when he came to settle in Yangzhou. It was also a leading center for both art collecting and painting, with the nearby presence of Mount Huang not only stimulating a local school of painting but further attracting painters from all over southeast China. Indeed, Shitao himself (apparently without Hetao) seems to have spent much of the period from around 1667 to 1670 away from Xuancheng, in the Shexian area. He was drawn there for at least two reasons. The first was the proximity of Mount Huang, which Shitao climbed for the first time in 1667. The area's second attraction was the arrival of a culturally active official from Zhili Province, Cao Dingwang (1618–93), as prefect of Huizhou in 1667.³¹ Cao first contacted Shitao during his initial stay on Mount Huang of over a month, commissioning from him a huge album of views of the mountain (see Figure 85). The two men subsequently became extremely friendly, and it was no doubt due to Cao's patronage that Shitao spent so much time in the Huizhou area between 1667 and 1669.³² He also made a second ascent of Mount Huang in 1669 together with the prefect's son, Cao Fen, an amateur painter who would later serve as a central government official.³³ On one surviving work that he painted for Cao Dingwang (see Figures 155, 156), Shitao expressly made himself known to the

prefect as a disciple of Lü'an and Muchen, thereby advertising not only his deference to Qing power but also his ambition to follow in their footsteps as imperially favored monks.³⁴

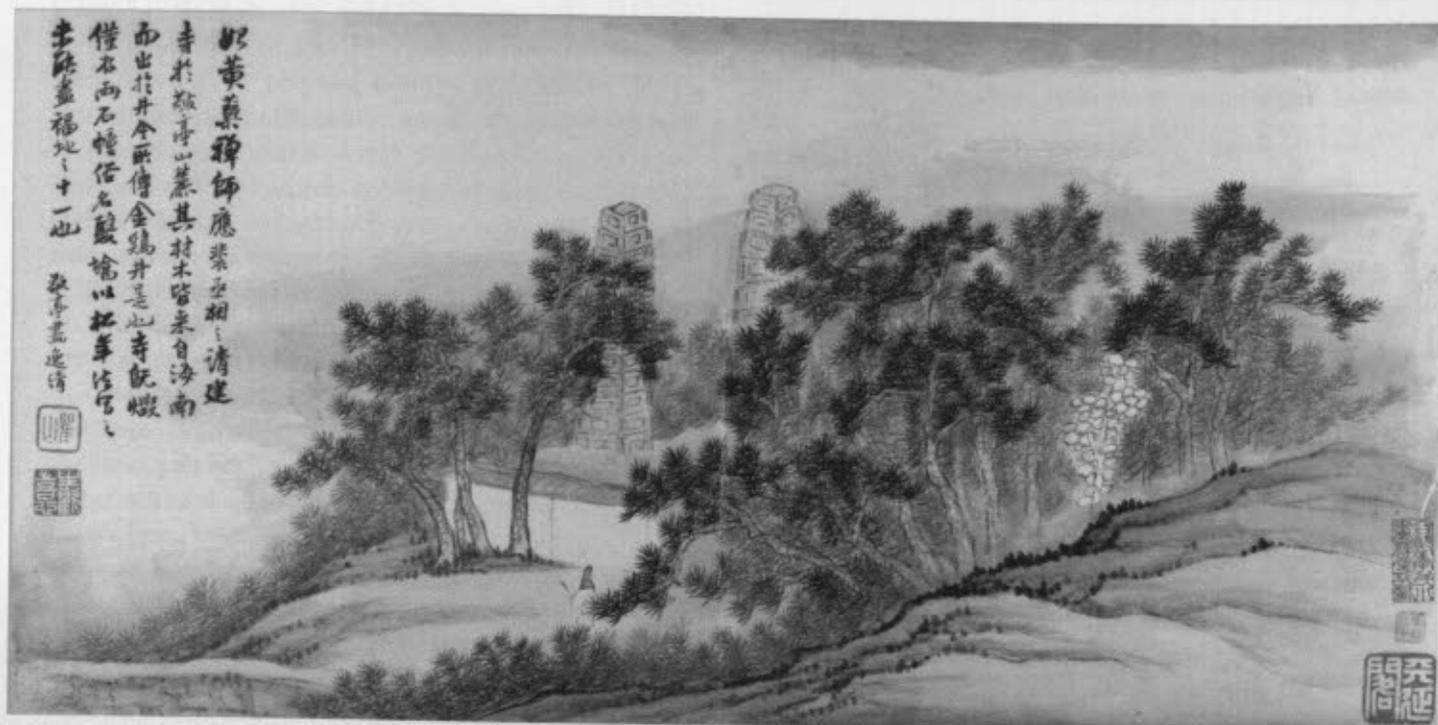
In Xuancheng, meanwhile, the most notable aspect of Shitao's life in the late 1660s was his introduction to a local "poetry and painting society" (*shihua she*), where his work received encouragement and appreciation from the other members, largely drawn from the local gentry. Given the politicized nature of such societies earlier in the seventeenth century, it is significant that its two leading lights, Shi Runzhang (1619–83) and Gao Yong (b. 1622), would be nominated to take part in the extraordinary *boxue hongru* examination of 1679. Both men accepted their nomination and were successful in the examination, which led to posts in the Hanlin Academy.³⁵ As a *jinshi* of 1649, Shi Runzhang had already served as an official under the Manchus during 1651–67. Another member of the society, Shitao's great friend Mei Qing (1623–97, *juren* of 1654), tried as late as 1667 to succeed in the *jinshi* examination. On the other hand, the painter Xu Dun (b. 1600, also known by his Buddhist monk name Banshan) was a confirmed Ming loyalist.³⁶

Shitao's most sustained period of residence in Xuancheng, however, and one that renewed his close contact with Hetao, began around 1670 or 1671.³⁷ In "Song of

My Life," he explains his return to Xuancheng in terms of a welcome return to religion after the pleasures of his association with the prefect in Shexian: "Yet, I had hoped to follow Huangbo's way/So, at Mount Jingtang, again I lived only with the lonely clouds." The spiritual description masks more concrete concerns: Around 1671 he and Hetao appear to have taken over responsibility for Guangjiao Temple (also known as the Temple of the Two Pagodas), located south of Mount Jingtang, itself ten *li* north of Xuancheng (Figure 51).³⁸ The original building on the site had been built by one of the patriarchs of Linji Chan, Huangbo Xiyun (died c. 850), the teacher of Linji Yixuan (d. 867) himself. The temple had long been in serious disrepair, but in the early Qing it was the object of a sustained effort of restoration pursued at the initiative of Lü'an Benyue and supported by the local elite, with Shi Runzhang playing an important role in the fund-raising. Following the initial efforts of a certain Linyun, the arrival of Shitao and Hetao at this temple undoubtedly created expectations that its reconstruction would be continued and completed under their supervision. Shitao's presence in Xuancheng was necessary, in other words, if he was to fulfill his unwritten "contract" with the community.³⁹

Consistent with this, most of Shitao's traveling away from Xuancheng during the 1670s seems to have been on Buddhist business. Thus in 1673 he returned briefly to Jiangsu, to Yangzhou, where he stayed at the Jinghui Monastery, closely associated with Muchen Daomin.⁴⁰ One wonders if this visit was not connected with the failing health of Muchen, who had been living in retire-

51. Mei Qing (1623–97), "Guangjiao Temple," *Scenic Sites of Xuancheng*, dated 1680, album of 24 leaves, ink and color on paper, each leaf 27 x 54.6 cm, leaf 14. Museum Rietberg, Zürich, Gift of C. A. Drenowatz.





52. *The Wilderness Man of Hanbin*, section of a handscroll (?), ink on paper, whereabouts unknown. Source: *Shitao biannian* (n.p.), unidentified publisher, Japan.

ment in Zhenjiang on the opposite bank of the Yangzi from Yangzhou. Muchen's death in the sixth month of 1674 came at a turbulent moment, for China had once more been plunged into civil war. The last few days of 1673 had seen the start of the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories, which soon posed a serious threat to the Qing. As Frederic Wakeman has written, "the summer and fall of 1674 . . . saw the dynasty at its lowest point since the capture of Beijing three decades earlier."⁴¹ Wu Sangui, with his power base in Shitao's native southwest, had taken over the province of Hunan. In one of the revolt's many repercussions, a peasant rebellion broke out in the Shexian-Xuancheng area in the summer and fall of 1674. Shexian itself fell into rebel hands in the third month (Cao Dingwang had left his post only a matter of months earlier), and when the news reached Xuancheng the local population fled into the surrounding countryside, not returning until several weeks later, once the uprising had been put down by local troops. Shitao, who had long since returned to Xuancheng, was one of those who fled into the nearby hills while the Qing armies put down the rebellion.⁴² Once again, his personal experience of the confrontation between supporters of the Ming cause and the Qing was of disorder versus order.

He later referred to these events in an annotation to a painting (whereabouts now unknown) that closely follows the format, style, and theme of the handscroll to which the depictions of the monk Xue'an and the Hermit of the Stone Abode belong; indeed, it may originally

have been part of the same scroll. Shitao there evokes a Han dynasty hermit of the Chu region, the Wilderness Man of Hanbin, famous for having refused to stop farming to salute the emperor, who was on a tour of inspection (Figure 52).⁴³ On being asked why, he replied (in Shitao's version):

"I am a man of the wilderness. Let me ask you this: Is a new Emperor put on the throne when the Empire is in chaos, or when it is in order? Does the Emperor take the throne to be a father to the Empire, or does the Empire work for the benefit of the Emperor? Today you lack people to labor; yet you travel unrestrainedly and every peasant stops to look. Why do you want people to look?"

Shitao's annotation relates this image to the aforementioned 1674 peasant uprising in southern Anhui. Thus, when he writes, "In the year *jiayin* [1674] I was keeping away from the armies at Mount Bogui's Platform of the Immortals," the armies in question were both rebel and Qing forces. The story itself is clearly a post-1678 critique of the Chu-based Wu Sangui, who in that year established his own dynasty, the Zhou, as the culmination of a long fascination with the trappings of power. In relating it to his personal experience of events in 1674, however, Shitao articulates the deep desire of most to avoid a return to the chaos of midcentury. This was the basis of the unspoken bargain that local elites in the South (despite their nostalgic attachment to the Ming) struck with the Qing, trading their disengagement against the Qing restoration of order – ensuring in the process the failure of the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories.

In the winter of 1674, with the worst of the danger past, Shitao commemorated his role in the restoration



work at Guangjiao Temple in a handscroll (Figure 53, see Plate 1). Although this work has traditionally been considered a self-portrait, the meticulously precise depiction of the seated individual, in contrast to the elaborate setting with its dramatic luminosity and leitmotif of strangely shaped pines, betrays the hand of a professional portraitist.⁴⁴ The title of the painting, *Master Shi Planting Pines*, refers to the establishment of a suitable physical setting for monastic practice, and here specifically refers to the restoration work. At the same time, all of Shitao's major Buddhist images appear to have a political as a religious dimension, and Richard Vinograd has speculated that in this case, given the outbreak of the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories in that year of 1674, the ostensible theme "may have served as a metaphor for broader aspirations of restoration: of Shitao's childhood personal and dynastic status as a prince of the Ming dynasty."⁴⁵ However, this is hard to square with his use of a seal that reads "your monk-servitor," in implicit address to the emperor, which is most easily understood as a (self-serving) allusion to the former imperial role of his teacher and his teacher's teacher. Indeed, the relatively rare "monk-servitor" seal is one that Shitao later reserved for works explicitly associated with his pursuit of Qing imperial favor.⁴⁶ In the painting Shitao has cast himself in a supervisory role: Like a gentry landowner watching his servants at work in the garden, he sits quietly while a child monk and a monkey bring pines forward for planting. Since an inscription by another Chan monk implies that the child – rather similar

in appearance to the seated figure – brings to mind Shitao's beginnings as a monk, one might read the image as representing his Buddhist coming-of-age in career terms. If so, given the intimate connection between the temple restoration and his Buddhist lineage, Shitao's pursuit of his private aspirations of restoration would seem to pass by way of Qing imperial power.

In 1675 Shitao began traveling more widely again from his Xuancheng base, making one trip to the Songjiang area, where Lü'an was based, probably returning to Xuancheng by the end of the year.⁴⁷ In the spring of 1676, while the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories was still dangerous, he set off for Jingxian, between Xuancheng and Shexian, where he was friendly with the recently appointed district magistrate, Deng Qifen (served 1674–81), a fellow native of Quanzhou.⁴⁸ He then went on to Huangshan, which he climbed that year for the third and last time.⁴⁹ However, Lü'an died in the autumn of 1676, and it is probably not a coincidence that Shitao can be located in Jiangsu Province again, albeit in Yangzhou, in the tenth month.⁵⁰ The following year, 1677, he visited Jingxian for the second time at the beginning of the autumn, staying at the Shuixi Academy as a guest of the magistrate Deng Qifen, and soon after made the last of his annual journeys back to Jiangsu.⁵¹ By then he (and Hetao) had completed the restoration of Guangjiao Temple.⁵² Among the several paintings surviving from this period, one of the most revealing is an uncharacteristic work that he painted in Jingxian at the beginning of the autumn of 1677 (Figure 54). Step-



ping far outside his usual iconographic range, Shitao depicted a horse and groom, a subject closely associated with the Yuan artist Zhao Mengfu, a descendant of the Song imperial family who had served under the Mongols and whose name was consequently anathema to Ming loyalists. Far from fearing the connection, Shitao expressly cited Zhao's name in his inscription. The painting illustrates a well-known Tang poem by Du Fu, transcribed by the artist, which develops the metaphor of the groom or horse trainer as a judge of talent and potential. Despite the lack of a dedication it is logical to think that the work was destined for his host, Deng Qifen, who had been responsible for restoring the academy where Shitao was staying: One of the purposes of such academies was to prepare scholars for the civil service examinations. Though this might not seem too personally relevant to a Buddhist monk like Shitao, monks too could be brought to the attention of superiors and eventually the court, which was in a position to make prestigious temple appointments. The painting is certainly a polite acknowledgment by an artist-in-residence of the qualities of his government patron, but one might also see in it a request for the magistrate's support.

Looking back over the course of Shitao's life as I have reconstructed it up to this point, one's impression is of a man oscillating between competing desires: on the one hand, his attraction to the pleasures of sociability, travel, and art, and on the other, his aspiration to become a

53. Shitao (and unidentified portraitist?), *Master Shi Planting Pines*, dated 1674, handscroll, ink and color on paper, 40.2 x 170.4 cm. Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taiwan, Republic of China. Gift of Mrs. Luo Zhixi.

successful Chan master – successful, that is, at both the worldly and spiritual levels. One sees him taking himself in hand at successive points: at the end of his sojourn in Wuchang, then in his approach to Lü'an, and once more when he returned from Shexian to Xuancheng and became seriously involved in restoring his temple. This impression of oscillation is not wrong, I think, and may even correspond to a fundamental aspect of his character – it was, at any rate, to be a continuing feature of his life for many years to come; yet his early life reveals a different pattern when viewed from the standpoint of public purpose and political ambition. In these terms, there is, on the present fragmentary evidence, a clear break between the periods before and after 1663–4. Prior to then one gets the sense of someone reacting to the accidents of circumstances as he goes, content with and convinced by his role as a monk, identifying with Ming loyalist sentiment but willing to study painting with a former Qing official. As of the encounter with Han Yu's text and subsequent departure from Wuchang, however, begins his serious pursuit of a Buddhist "career" and accompanying interest in collaboration with Qing power. Here it seems possible to speak of a first life narrative, one initially conditioned by the end of the Southern Ming resistance in 1662 and conse-



54. *Horse and Groom*, dated 1677, hanging scroll, ink and color on paper, Wuxi Municipal Museum. Source: *Shitao shuhua quanji*, vol. 2, pl. 401.

crated by his acceptance (c. 1664–5) as Lü'an's disciple. This narrative runs like a thread through both aspects of his life in the 1660s and 1670s, the more broadly sociable and the more narrowly religious, as he frequents present, past, and future Qing officials and, in parallel,

begins to ascend the Chan career "ladder," first becoming a recognized disciple of Lü'an and then taking on serious monastic responsibilities with the restoration of his temple. At the same time, he retained throughout an emotional attachment to the Ming, but precisely as sentiment, to be distinguished from political and professional ambition.

However, the narrative of destiny that Shitao first constructed for himself in the early 1660s, when he was in his early twenties, and that guided his actions through the 1670s and beyond also had a separate special thread that concerned his princely identity, one that surfaced most clearly in the *Hermits* handscroll. From the point of view of his aristocratic origins, he seems to have seen the priesthood not simply as a refuge from danger but as allowing him to take up a high-minded stance of neutrality, standing aside magnanimously to allow events to take their course. There is in this – as well as in the personal interest in emperors that he displays in the handscroll – an extraordinary sense of his own importance that can be explained only by a belief that he, as the sole surviving heir to the line of the Ming princes of Jing-jiang, was himself a potential claimant to the imperial throne. Confirmation that he believed this to be the case is provided by an emotional poem that he wrote in 1677 after receiving a visit from a certain Zhong Lang (1659 *jinshi*). This stranger from Zhejiang informed him, to his apparent stupefaction, that Shitao's late father had served as a magistrate at the end of the Ming dynasty, at which time Zhong's own father had known him well. Many questions surround this information: for example, How could a Ming prince serve as a magistrate? And how could Zhong be so sure that this was the son of the man his family had known? The fact that Shitao made no subsequent reference to this information, therefore, may indicate that he himself, once the initial excitement had passed, discounted it. However, his initial reaction is extremely revealing for, as Wu T'ung has pointed out, it suggests that he was not sure of the precise identity of his father within the Zhu family. It also led him, exceptionally, to speak of the family and of his belief that he might be its sole male survivor. In words that would have been vividly explicit to anyone who knew his origins but otherwise would have been perfectly obscure, Shitao writes:⁵³

Alas! I was born at an unlucky moment;
As I shed my milk teeth I found myself in danger.
The nest was destroyed and the eggs smashed.
My brothers preferred to remain loyal till the end.
A hundred died, but somehow not every last one.
Wearing [Buddhist] black I quit the world of dust.

In the light of his mythic sense of his own dynastic importance, it seems certain that his aspiration to follow

in the footsteps of Muchen and Lü'an, by approaching Kangxi as they had approached Shunzhi, translated a secret desire to find a way back to the lost palace of his origins.

FROM XUANCHENG TO BEIJING: 1678-1692

With the temple restoration completed, Shitao once more took his destiny in hand. In the summer of 1678, he was invited to Nanjing, presumably as the result of an initiative on his part, by the Xitian Monastery in the city's southern outskirts. This became his effective base for the following two years or so, though he remained officially attached to the Guangjiao Temple in Xuancheng.⁵⁴ During this period, he developed a close friendship within the *sangha* with Zulin Yuanlin, a monk-poet who was a more senior fellow student of Lü'an and may have played a role in the subsequent transformation of Shitao's professional Buddhist circumstances.⁵⁵ In 1680 Shitao formally broke his ties with Guangjiao Temple yet did not attach himself, as one might have expected, to the Xitian Monastery. Instead he transferred to the more important Changgan Monastery (also known as Bao'en Monastery) beside it, just outside Nanjing's southern city wall; there – in what was effectively a promotion – he was given his own humble temple/retreat, the Single Branch Pavilion. In the account of the move in "Song of My Life," one senses that he had felt distracted by the worldly, literati side of his life in the 1670s:

Tiring of my travels, I longed to rest awhile;
 Friends at Changgan [Monastery] promised me a
 Chan refuge [Shitao notes: "Master Qin, Master
 Shi, Master Wei"].⁵⁶
 In a Buddhist haven of golden grounds and pearl
 trees life promised to be uneventful;
 The solitude of the Single Branch was just what I
 had hoped for.⁵⁷

Although Shitao nowhere mentions the fact, Hetao must have preceded, accompanied, or joined him in Nanjing, since Mei Qing addressed a poem to the two monks together there in 1680, and the two were subsequently often in each other's company. However, the *Complete Register of the Five Lamps* (*Wudeng quanshu*) officially records only Shitao as a monk of the Single Branch Pavilion, giving Hetao's affiliation as Guangjiao Temple in Xuancheng.⁵⁸ The name "Single Branch," then, marks among other things Shitao's new independence; most likely, Hetao lived in one of the neighboring temples, since they remained in close contact.

There can be no doubt that for Shitao this was a turning point, marking a new stage in his first narrative of

destiny. The relocation, following a serious illness, was in the first instance accompanied by an intensified commitment to ascetic Chan self-cultivation. Li Lin, in his "Biography of Dadizi," describes the move in mythic terms:⁵⁹

He lived at Mount Jingting for fifteen years. Several days before he was going to leave, he opened wide his cell and made available the key of his book cupboard to his old acquaintances, letting them take away all the calligraphies, paintings, and old objects that he had accumulated in his life. He reached Qin-Huai with nothing but himself, and nursed his illness at Changgan Monastery. On top of a hill he dwelt perilously in an idol niche. The niche faced south, and he personally inscribed it with the words "The Bolt-Upright Single Branch." People from Jinling [Nanjing] came to bother him daily, but he closed his eyes and refused all of them.

A set of poems written immediately after his arrival, which survive in several transcriptions by the artist, including one that accompanies a monochrome painting representing the Single Branch Pavilion, show the pride he felt at having his own hermitage (Figure 55). The conditions, however, were spartan. The poems describe a dilapidated space of just "half a *jian*, without any possessions," with a couch that was "half in mid-air, but secure, and a single heater propped up on the floor." Summing up his new commitment, he writes: "In a dream I fixed on following the solitary crane; in my mind I have seen the venomous dragon [of desire]."⁶⁰ During the years 1680-2 he led an austere, relatively solitary life in the Single Branch Pavilion, largely devoting himself to religious study. "I tried to refuse visitors completely, finding it hard to be sociable; / But visitors came, and remarkably were not astonished by their reception" ("Song of My Life"). Not surprisingly, many of his known contacts in this period were monks or men who moved in monk circles.⁶¹ However, in the 1680 poems one also glimpses a quite different motivation for his move to Nanjing, intersecting with the first: "The Huai's waters flow east to their end, / at Zhongshan I kneel before the railings / The moon is bright after a man attains stillness, / Among frosty traces a solitary shadow mourns." For the orphaned prince, Nanjing offered in the Zhongshan mausoleum of the Ming founder a way of making symbolic contact with his family origins: "He no longer sweeps the dust from temple floors, / Not knowing where to seek his scattered relatives."⁶² Li Lin's biography, having noted Shitao's refusal of Nanjing visitors, comments: "Only when the recluse Zhang Nancun (Zhang Zong, 1619-94) came did he leave his idol niche and talk with him. From time to time they would go together on donkeys to Zhongshan to kowtow beneath the pine trees of the Ming imperial tombs."



Around Shitao, meanwhile, the world was rapidly changing. By the late 1670s it would already have been clear that the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories was doomed, though the end did not finally come until the end of 1681.⁶³ As it brought the situation increasingly under control, the Qing court concurrently set about wooing southern intellectuals, initially by the ruse of the special *boxue hongru* examination in 1679 that led Shitao's Xuancheng friends Shi Runzhang and Gao Yong to join the Qing government in Beijing.⁶⁴ Although many remnant subjects who were nominated refused to participate, the examination was successful in co-opting some, as well as impressing others as a political gesture in their direction. Nanjing, as the former southern capital and now the single most important center of intellectuals with Ming loyalist sympathies, was a key object of the Qing ideological offensive.⁶⁵ Whether he intended to do so or not, by moving there Shitao was placing himself at the center of events in the South. These began to come to a head around 1683, when it became known that Kangxi was preparing an imperial Southern Tour for the following year, a visit that would bring him southeast to Nanjing and to the Changgan Monastery.

In line with his Xuancheng friends, Shitao turned out to be much more receptive to Kangxi's overtures than many of the other recluses in Nanjing's southern suburbs. In 1683 an official based in Xuancheng, Zheng Hushan, was entrusted with finding artists to work on a planned map, or perhaps topographic representation, of the Jiangnan region; the provincial administration in every province had been ordered to supply maps of this kind to the central military authorities.⁶⁶ When Zheng sought out Shitao (probably not in this regard; he seems to have had Chan interests, and the two would have had mutual friends in Xuancheng), Shitao saw this new acquaintanceship as a chance to have his painting recommended to court. So interested was he in the prospect of court patronage that he included his poem to the official (which likely originally accompanied an example of his work) in a manuscript selection of his poems from that year, followed by the rare "servitor-monk" seal:⁶⁷

The Vice Prefect of Xuanzhou has a fine reputation;
Day after day knocking at mountain gates as he
continues his search.

Far transcending common viewpoints in his
questions about Chan,
This man recommends literary talent and
sophistication to his superiors.

Today I am commanded to paint the hills and
valleys;

In books I seek out the [proper] appearance of
mountains and forests.

Painters [*huashi*] are as numerous as the clouds, but
which one is truly marvelous?

I invite you to open your eyes and, at your ease, be
astonished.

A single word of approval [from you] and a
thousand eyes will pay attention;

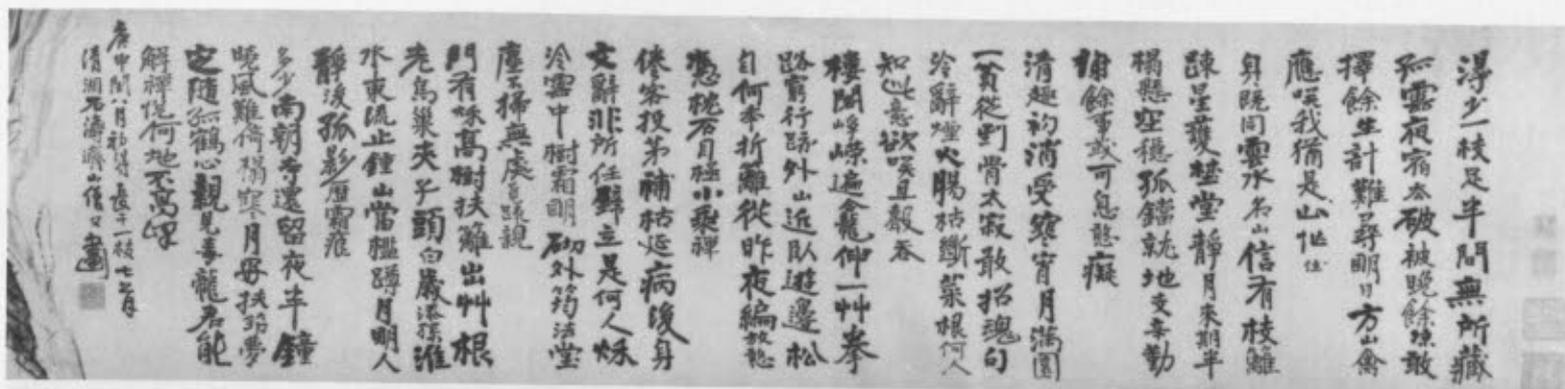
Sharp as a Bingzhou knife, you judge the brush and
paper.

My desire is to seek the Emperor's appreciation;

I prefer to start from painting in thinking about a
patron.

Although it is difficult today to imagine Shitao's painting in a court context, the modern view of Kangxi court painting, especially for the period prior to the 1690s, is probably overly skewed toward the classicizing modes regrouped today under the name of Orthodox painting. Not that Shitao is likely to have been seeking a position as court painter, but for a monk painting was one means of attracting the imperial attention that could lead to a religious appointment as abbot of a temple. In the event, Zheng Hushan's visit seems not to have led to anything, and Shitao had to content himself for the moment with the patronage of government officials in Nanjing such as the Provincial Education Commissioner, Zhao Lun (1636–95), whose father had died defending his native town against the Manchus.⁶⁸

He did, however, have one small but for him decisive success. In 1684, when Kangxi visited Changgan Monastery, Shitao was among the assembled monks who greeted Kangxi. Although he had no reason to think that



55. *First Arrival at the Single Branch Pavilion: Poems and Painting*, handscroll (sections 1 and 2), ink on paper, 29 x 350 cm. Shanghai Museum.

the emperor would notice him, against all odds Kangxi addressed him directly with a question (what he asked is not known). By his own account, proudly recorded in two poems on the experience, Shitao was dumbstruck, "my tongue tied in knots as I rushed to answer."⁶⁹ Already deeply impressed by the charismatic imperial presence of Kangxi and his entourage, he was overwhelmed by the sudden transformation of his position from a participant-observer of the spectacle to a central actor in the event. In that one intense moment, he came to see the sign that he truly was destined for the life of a Buddhist monk:

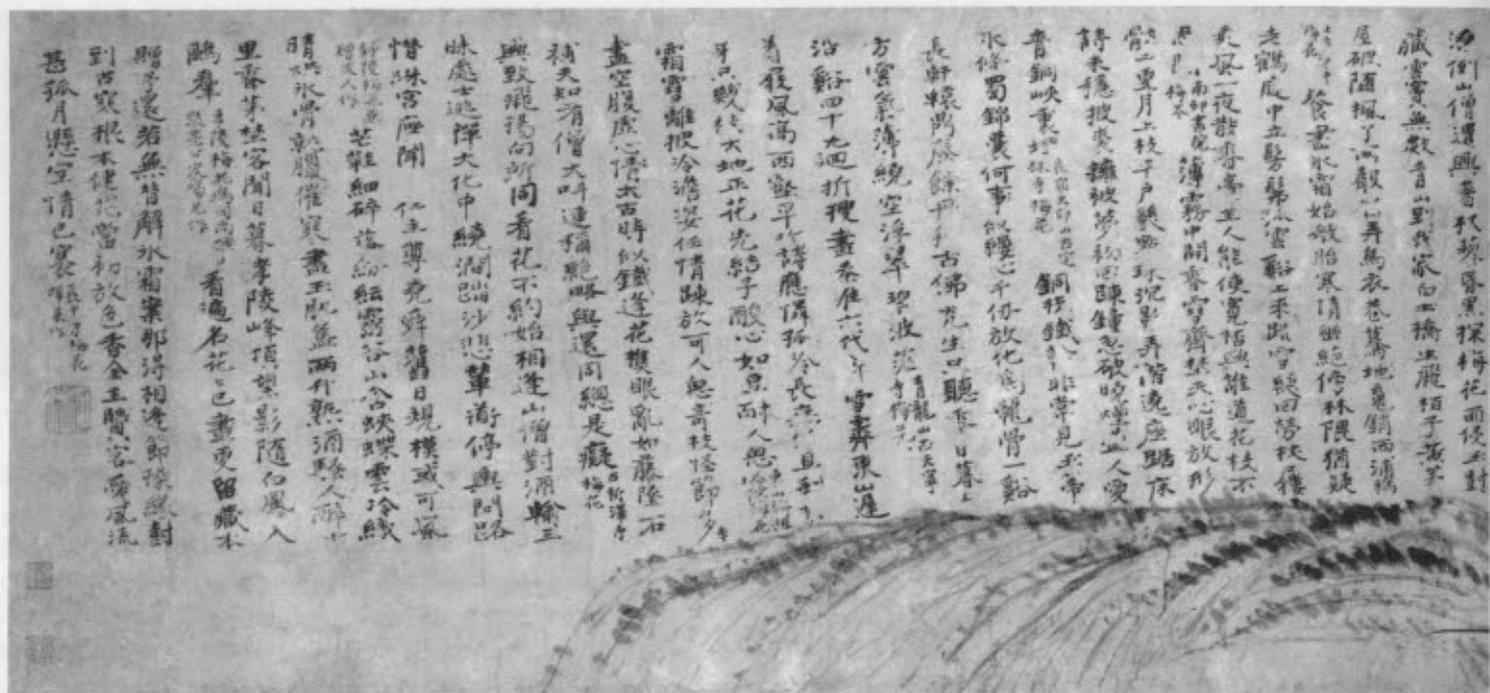
To have encountered my destiny is certainly no accident;
Now I begin to be convinced that my tree-nest
cannot be exchanged against a private residence.

On a personal level, part of the explanation for Shitao's course must lie in his awareness of the Qing imperial patronage that Lü'an and Muchen before him had enjoyed. After his three years of reclusion, he was more confident than ever before; the austerities of the Single Branch Pavilion had apparently served their purpose, and he was now ambitious for his future.⁷⁰ However, the larger narrative of the dynastic changeover also impinged directly on his situation. The Qing state was well aware that not every "man of the wilderness" who defined himself politically in relation to the previous dynasty saw his mourning for the fall of the Ming as necessarily incompatible with a certain acknowledgment of the Qing, no matter how grudging. In the first place, even the most uncompromising Ming loyalism was haunted and implicitly framed by the argument that if the previous dynasty had not fallen down on its responsibilities, it would not have lost the Mandate of Heaven. Independent of this, as argued earlier, it was integral to the ritual process that the period of political mourning (embodied by the remnant subjects) was not expected to last indefinitely. There was no formal time limit, however: Much depended on the fortunes of loyalist resistance and on the behavior of the new rulers, as well as on the

temperament of the individual mourner. Kangxi's advisers had a keen understanding of this issue, which underpinned the diplomatic offensive of the Qing court toward southern intellectuals from the late 1670s onward. It was clear to one and all that the failure of the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories, certain after 1678, removed the last obstacle to Kangxi's successful rule. It was all the more striking, therefore, to the southern Chinese that he chose to be conciliatory toward the Ming's mourners. Kangxi's 1684 Southern Tour played a pivotal role in this political operation. Although there were those, such as the painter Bada Shanren, who were sickened by the presence of a Manchu emperor in south China, for many others, I would argue, Kangxi's first Southern Tour in 1684 was received as the signal for the end of mourning.⁷¹ The symbol of the Qing emperor's sensitivity was his careful attention to the Ming tombs: both those at Beijing, where he paid his respects as early as 1676, and that of the Ming founder, Hongwu (Zhu Yuanzhang), in Nanjing's northeastern outskirts, which he visited on the 1684 tour.⁷² In a poem that Shitao wrote about a visit of his own in 1685 and later inscribed with a number of others on a painting of plum blossoms, we can see that he was one of those receptive to Kangxi's gesture (Figure 56):⁷³

We follow the stream along the sandy bank, sad
road of the Emperor;
We stop the palanquins to ask the way, and regret
the [lost] crimson palace.
At the site we hear that Emperor Ren [Kangxi]
reveres Yao and Shun:
The [ritual] formulae of former days may yet turn
out to be followed.

Despite his own susceptibility to Qing overtures, however, Shitao's circle of friends in the southern suburbs of Nanjing was, overall, far more weighted toward loyal-



ism than the Xuancheng group. Thus, for example, the same 1683 poetry manuscript that includes his poem for Zheng Hushan also documents friendships with several prominent loyalists of an older generation, including the artists Cheng Sui (1605–91), who had refused an invitation to take part in the 1679 *boxue hongru* examination, and Dai Benxiao (1621–93), son of an active Ming loyalist who eventually starved himself to death.⁷⁴ Within this world of intellectuals and artists living in the shadow of the Ming imperial tombs, Shitao's origins as a Ming prince were probably known, ensuring him a secure place despite (or perhaps partly helped by) his difficult character. In a biography written in the 1680s in which he mentions Shitao's princely origins, one of his Nanjing friends, Chen Ding, offers a pungent assessment of the man; in it one recognizes the profile of a “strange gentleman,” or *qishi*:

He was a resolute and upright character and did not like bowing down before others. Sometimes he was boastful and overbearing, looking down on everybody, sometimes very haughty and inaccessible. He would not condescend to anything impure and kept far away from the people [of the world] so as not to become defiled. . . . Those who are trying to correct the world and to break away from a vulgar life are usually not in harmony with their time. They often give cause for misunderstanding and slander. With his lofty and pure nature the Blind Arhat would never become like those who float like ducks on water, moving along with the waves. No wonder that he was disliked by the common crowd of the world.

As a *qishi* whose loyalty was private and emotional rather than a public commitment, Shitao was able to

mingle with the self-defined loyalists of Nanjing because men in both roles shared the common metaphorical environment of the wilderness. It is appropriate, therefore, that Shitao should have signed as a “man of the wilderness” the poem for Zheng Hushan in which he sought Kangxi's patronage.

The servitor, the remnant subject, the *qishi*, the man of the wilderness: We can think of these most usefully as ritual options that Shitao had to reconcile with his equally complex class/caste identity. Shitao's simultaneous status as a monk (*fangwai*), scholar (*shi*), and imperial-family member (*wangsun*) imposed an unusual burden of ritual responsibility on him, since these were the three groups entrusted with the definition of society's ritual and symbolic character. Consider, for example, the responsibilities of scholars in relation to loyalism, as seen in a text written around 1700 by Shitao's Yangzhou biographer, Li Lin. Li was writing to Zhuo Erkan, who had compiled a collection of poetry by remnant subjects, to give his comments on Zhuo's selection. Li Lin considered only committed loyalists to be worthy of the name “remnant subjects”:⁷⁵

. . . None of the people who died during the Chongzhen period [1628–44] can be included; having already died, they were not remnant subjects. If you mix up those who had already died with the remnant subjects, not only do you insult the latter, but the former would perspire with shame. Even among the remnant subjects themselves there are distinctions to be made. At the beginning of the Shunzhi reign [1644–61] the government was entirely dependent on the previous dynasty's examination recruitment for its personnel. Those who had been dismissed from office [under the



Ming] were not considered by the Qing, and were uniformly excluded from office. Such men were not uninterested in serving as officials; they wanted to serve but did not get the chance. How can they be lauded as remnant subjects? There are other examples of this kind. For example, in the final *jinshi* examinations of the Ming, large numbers of candidates were summoned to the capital and then sent back. Many *juren*, too, have taken the higher examinations again and again without passing. Neither group can be confused with remnant subjects. You must investigate carefully to seek out the truth. How can one lightly trust what is said by a man's close companions or fellow townsmen? Anyone making such a selection [as yours] needs to have an iron liver and use an iron writing brush to succeed in composing his book.

In this letter, one can see both the ideal of ritual responsibility, as institutionalized in the loyalist, and its real-life corruption. In another text, Li Lin gives an equally hard-line view of the ritual responsibilities of a prince of the fallen dynasty. He takes as his example none other than the Song descendant Zhao Mengfu, whom Shitao cited in his 1677 horse painting for the magistrate of Jingxian:⁷⁶

In the past, Hu Jizhong considered that for five hundred years before and after, and ten thousand *li* in any direction, there could be no rival to the calligraphy and painting of Zhao Mengfu. In later generations, when anyone has obtained a fragment of his work he has always treasured it like a great jade. But each time [I come across it] I close my eyes and will not look. It is not that I dislike his calligraphy and painting, but I dislike the man. If I dislike the man, how can it be because he served the Yuan dynasty? After

56. *Searching for Plum Blossoms: Poems and Painting*, handscroll, dated 1685, ink on paper, 30.6 x 132.2 cm. The Art Museum, Princeton University. Museum purchase, gift of the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation.

all, those who served the Yuan were legion; why would I detest only Mengfu? Mengfu's family was the Imperial family. Wang Yanfu has said: "What is difficult to return to is Heaven; what becomes impure is one's heart-mind." Today we must treat Mengfu as a Guangwu of Han, or a Zhaolie of [Shu] Han. But we certainly cannot treat him as a Liezu of Southern Tang.⁷⁷ The whole world had come under the control of the Yuan dynasty; it was quite unlike the Tang situation where warlords each had control of a region, and the balance of circumstances had to be weighed. So one could have expected of Mengfu that he would sincerely face the ruler of the northern territory and sacrifice his life in mourning for his nation. How could he bring the Imperial family to an end and go into service? If he had wanted only to escape disaster and preserve himself, he could have entrusted his life to the Lotus Society [i.e. the Buddhist priesthood], or hidden his shadow with the yellow cap [of a Daoist]; he could thus have kept his person pure, and not served in government at all. The fact that Mengfu deliberately did not take this route, but instead served the Yuan, reveals how his heart-mind had forgotten his family lineage. Despite all his abilities, how can he be valued? This is why I so detest him, and thus close my eyes and will not look [at his work].

After 1683, of course, Shitao's course of action no longer corresponded to this ideal; and yet, he had indeed "entrusted his life to the Lotus Society," enough in itself to command respect. On the other hand, he was far from escaping all criticism. He is known to have en-

countered difficulties within the Chan hierarchy in Nanjing. Chen Ding speaks of “slander” and “dislike,” and in his 1701 New Year’s poems Shitao alludes retrospectively to “gossip of the kind that said: ‘How can Qingxiang be a man?’”

By the second half of 1686 Shitao was planning a trip to the capital; judging by subsequent events, he had hopes for imperial patronage that would allow him to circumvent the local Buddhist power structure in his pursuit of a significant post.⁷⁸ He appears to have felt that there was no reason not to announce his intentions publicly; the result was the long autobiographical poem “Song of My Life,” upon which I have drawn throughout this chapter, in which he took leave of his friends in Nanjing. He set off (without Hetao) in the spring of 1687, having first moved to Yangzhou at the turn of the year. It has long been known that he ran into difficulties and abandoned his journey, but it is only with Joseph Chang’s recent discussion of new documentary evidence that the importance of this episode has become clear.⁷⁹ Having arrived at the Grand Canal town of Qingjiangpu at the Yellow River, he interrupted his journey to seek out a patron and took up lodgings at a Linji Chan temple.⁸⁰ He was carrying with him at the time a painting on which he had worked for three years in the late 1660s and of which he was intensely proud: a second version of the *Sixteen Luohans* handscroll whose superb first version, painted in 1667 for the Huizhou prefect, Cao Dingwang, is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (see Figures 155, 156). “As assembled demons surrounded me, it was stolen by an evil serpent. To this day (1688, seventh month) I don’t dare to think about it, yet though I don’t dare have these thoughts, for two years now I have fallen into depression.”⁸¹ His temple lodgings are likely to have been at the Linji temple Ciyun An, which was closely associated with another prominent monk, Yulin Tongxiu (1614–75), who had accepted the patronage of the Shunzhi emperor. Yulin belonged to the Panshan lineage, which was the Tiantong lineage’s great competitor, and was notoriously contentious; his followers were even known to turn to violence in their disputes with other monks.⁸² It is hardly surprising that Shitao’s journey to the capital to seek his fortune as Muchen’s “grandson” inspired the animosity of Yulin’s followers, leading to the theft of his treasured scroll, which he was presumably planning to use in Beijing in his campaign for imperial recognition. Shocked by the loss of the scroll, and shaken by his most direct experience yet of Chan politics, Shitao returned to Yangzhou.

Nonetheless, the incident did not deter him from preparing once more to travel north; but before he was

ready to do so he may have got wind of the imminent second Southern Tour, since he was still in Yangzhou when Kangxi visited the city in 1689. In the interim, it should be noted, he had extended his social connections by frequenting the city’s leading poetry society, the Spring River Poetry Society. He had also come to know such prominent Yangzhou Ming loyalist figures as Fei Mi; as had been the case previously in Xuancheng and Nanjing, Shitao’s pro-Qing attitude did not prevent friendships with such men, just as his friendly relations with them did not prevent him from continuing to seek Qing imperial patronage.⁸³ It was the relatively enthusiastic reception given to Kangxi in Nanjing and Yangzhou in 1689, the result of a decade’s diplomatic efforts, that placed the seal on the Manchu ruler’s acceptance in Jiangnan. There is ample evidence that when Kangxi visited Yangzhou in the second month of 1689, for only two days, Shitao contributed fully to the welcome held out to the imperial entourage. He composed, for example, two formal laudatory poems praising Kangxi’s rule and welcoming him to the South, which he subsequently transcribed on several occasions. The most interesting of these is a 1689 album leaf on which one of the two poems is inscribed (Figure 57). A modest and subtle painting, it economically evokes the vastness of what is perhaps the Yangzi River; the inscription has a formal four-character title, *The Seas Are at Peace and the Rivers Are Pure*, and continues:

The Eastern Tour through the ten thousand states
stirs sounds of joy;
Singing and dancing everywhere welcomes the jade
girdles [of the Emperor’s entourage].
We rejoice at the auspicious winds around lofty
Mount Tai [sacred mountain of the East and
symbol of the Heavenly Mandate to rule];
And see the auspicious atmosphere embracing the
Overgrown City [Yangzhou].⁸⁴

The painting, then, is a vision of nation: the Chinese nation at peace under the rule of the Great Qing dynasty, awaiting the emperor’s arrival in the South; the peaceful nation that it was the purpose of Kangxi’s inspection tours of 1684 and 1689 to bring into symbolic existence. Intended, often speculatively, for presentation to the throne, poems and paintings of this kind by Kangxi’s subjects, monks included, were the mirror reflections that confirmed its reality, or at least its ideological power. Judging by the signature – “Servitor-monk Yuanji prostrates himself nine times” – this particular painting was indeed intended for presentation to the emperor himself.

It is clear, in fact, from another pair of poems that he subsequently inscribed on a third, more complex work,

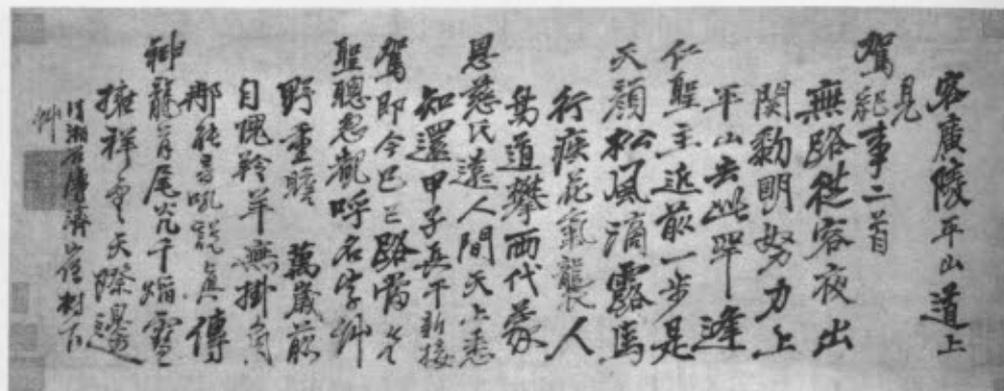


57. *The Seas Are at Peace and the Rivers Are Pure*, 1689, album leaf mounted in a handscroll, ink and color on paper, 25.8 x 34.9 cm. Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taiwan, Republic of China.

that Shitao's efforts were not in vain (Figure 58). These poems depict with startling immediacy the uncommon (but for Shitao not unprecedented) experience evoked by their shared title: "On an Audience with the Emperor on the Road to Pingshan during My Stay in Yangzhou." In the painting itself, Shitao depicted himself in the shadow of Pingshan Tang [Level-with-the-Mountains Hall, to the northwest of the city], where Kangxi resided during his brief stay in Yangzhou. At once protective and menacing, the imperially occupied mountain writhes dragonlike around the tiny figure. Though the lack of a "servitor-monk" signature or seal on the handscroll rules out any intention to submit the scroll itself to the throne, the fact that the poems go beyond awe and flattery to formulate a specific request suggests that they were first written to be presented to Kangxi in the wake of this, his second audience:

I cannot make out the road; it is still dark as I pass
through the city gate;
Dawn breaks as I push on toward Pingshan.
Apart from times like this one rarely meets Sage-
rider Ren,
Taking a step closer, this is the Heavenly Visage
I see.
Amid pine-scented breeze and dripping dew, the
horses move swiftly;
The fragrance of flowers surrounds me as I take a
dangerous path.
Two generations have enjoyed Imperial benevolence;
Maitreya is distant;
Among men and in Heaven above perfect
understanding has returned.

In the year *jiazi* [1684] at Changgan I was first
received by the Emperor;
Now in *jisi* [1689] I must advance [again].
The Sage in his intelligence suddenly looks at me,
calling me by name;
Before His Imperial Majesty I keep my eyes fixed
on the ground.
I am ashamed that this antelope has no place to
hang his horns;



How can I get the words out to tell the true story
of my life?
The Divine Dragon flashes with a thousand flames
along the length of his body;⁸⁵
An auspicious cloud appears on the horizon.

Written with a formal humility that betrays its utilitarian artifice, this text makes clear the practical purpose of Shitao's by now long-standing desire to approach Kangxi: He hoped that, just as Shunzhi had favored Muchen and Lü'an, so now Shunzhi's son would favor the son of Lü'an and grandson of Muchen (as his prominently placed seal proclaims him to be), presumably by offering him a temple responsibility. Kangxi's reaction to his request must have seemed encouraging – thus the “auspicious cloud” that appeared on the horizon. Although such a request might on the surface seem not only presumptuous but unrealistic, Shitao did have reasons for hope beyond the Lü'an–Muchen–Shunzhi connection. This was a period when Kangxi, as part of his diplomatic efforts, was willing to go outside the established channels to bring talented individuals into the fold of his court. He also seems to have had a specific interest in painter-monks: In 1689, for example, the monk Qingyuan was summoned from Mount Hua and ordered to compose poetry and paint in the emperor's presence. At the end he was presented with an incense burner and officially escorted back to Shenxi.⁸⁶ Either through Chan circles or officials, Shitao may already have had some awareness of Kangxi's interest before planning a trip to the capital and making his bid for attention in Yangzhou.

Nonetheless, there is something ultimately not entirely satisfying in the picture of Shitao as a monk driven by ambition to appeal to the emperor over the heads of the Chan hierarchy. One only has to recall Shitao's previous intense private involvement with his princely identity to be convinced that this too-neat, too-conventional ambition incorporates a silence. Perhaps we are misled, in fact, by a public discourse in which the relationship is formally presented as one between a monk and the

emperor. The other way of interpreting his striking attraction to Kangxi (and, one might add, his haughty character) is precisely in terms of his princely status. Through the affinity of caste, we may suspect that he hoped to find in contact with the emperor, and with princes such as Bordu, some sense of his own lost origins. This, as I suggested earlier, was a second, private plot complicating the narrative he had planned for his life as a painter-monk and Chan master seeking imperial patronage. The shock of his first 1684 face-to-face dialogue with Kangxi, which introduced him to the power of the imperial charisma, activated more than mere public ambition.

Before leaving on his long-deferred journey to the capital, Shitao first returned briefly to Nanjing in late 1689, where he stayed at his old home of the Xitian Monastery, thought to be the home of Hetao.⁸⁷ Perhaps he was seeking advice, either from Hetao or from his other close friends in the *sangha*, Zulin and Zu'an, for a handscroll painted in Nanjing as a farewell present to a friend before his departure for the North bears an inscription in which he confesses his anxiety in the face of his upcoming journey.⁸⁸ His anxiety could only have been reinforced by the unsympathetic reception he encountered from certain monks in Nanjing. As one of his lay-Buddhist friends in the city commented, “The words of men are quite absurd./Most of them did not encourage him to stay./Meeting him now, they express surprise,/Loudly lamenting that there is not enough time to talk.”⁸⁹ Returning to Yangzhou at the beginning of 1690, he finally left for Beijing in the spring.

Upon reaching the capital, his first address was the residence of a central government official by the name of Wang Fengrong (d. 1703), whose family, whether coincidentally or not, hailed from the same Guangxi hometown as Shitao. The Qiehan Studio was to be his home for a year and a half, from the second month of 1690 to the seventh month of 1691. Wang had most recently served in the high-ranking position of vice minister in



the Ministry of Personnel, but at the time of Shitao's stay he was living quietly in retirement at his Beijing home due to a recent bereavement.⁹⁰ Wang had previously known Shitao in Nanjing, where he had acquired a painting by the artist in 1685. In an inscription that Shitao added to this painting in Beijing, he notes that their previous meeting had been in a Nanjing temple.⁹¹ When one relates this to the fact that in other works for Wang Fengrong he on one occasion signed with his full Buddhist name (Shitao Yuanji), and on two other occasions inscribed paintings with extremely ambitious discussions of "painting Chan," it may be reasonable to infer that Shitao's Buddhist status as much as his artistic skill interested his host, and that Wang's invitation to the monk was in one way or another connected to the bereavement. In any event, whatever Wang's motivations may have been, Shitao acknowledged his unusual hospitality with some of his finest work in the north.⁹²

Surviving poems and paintings from his stay in Beijing show Shitao to have been patronized by two other officials at the highest levels of government during his sojourn at the Qiehan Studio. One was a relative of Wang Fengrong, the highly sociable Wang Zehong (1626–1708), then vice minister in the Ministry of Rites, who enjoyed a high reputation as a patron of literati;⁹³ the other was the even higher-ranking Wang Zhi, then minister in the Ministry of Revenue, for whom he painted at least four works in 1690.⁹⁴ He also frequented the rather different but equally privileged milieu of Manchu aristocrats, in which he had at least two friends. Bordu, an important patron and collector as well as amateur painter, was a great-grandson of the founder of the Qing dynasty. Shitao had met him during Kangxi's 1689 tour, if not already on the earlier tour in 1684, and it has often been thought that it was Bordu who first encouraged Shitao to come to the capital. Certainly, Bordu paid unusual attention to Shitao in Beijing, taking him as his painting teacher, commissioning paintings from him, and making it possible for him to see important private collections in the capital.⁹⁵ In what was evidently an effort to promote him, Bordu in early 1691 brought his

58. *On an Audience with the Emperor on the Road to Pingshan during My Stay in Yangzhou: Poems and Painting*, dated 1689, handscroll, ink and color on paper, 29.5 x 117.5 cm, colophon 29.5 x 74.5 cm. The Art Museum, Princeton University. Museum purchase, gift of the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation.

work to the attention of Wang Yuanqi, a highly placed scholar-official artist who worked in a classicizing mode. Bordu first invited Shitao to paint a hanging scroll of bamboo, leaving room for orchids and rocks to be added. The choice of bamboo as a subject was probably judged to appeal to Kangxi's personal interest in this theme.⁹⁶ Wang was then invited, probably at a later date, to complete the painting (Figure 59). Bordu also arranged for Shitao to go through the same process – again with a bamboo painting – with another classicizing artist, Wang Hui, who had just been summoned to the capital in 1691 to take charge of the vast project of recording the Southern Tour of 1689 (Figure 60).⁹⁷ Shitao's other aristocratic friend was Bordu's young cousin, Yueduan (1671–1704), another collector and amateur painter. Yueduan was the eighteenth son of the late Prince An (Yolo, died 1689), an important Manchu general who played a key role in suppressing the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories. One of the highlights of Shitao's northern stay was a visit to that princely compound, where he was invited to use a Ming imperial porcelain-handled brush.⁹⁸

However, if the artist was clearly welcome in such circles, whatever efforts were made on Shitao's behalf by these high officials, Manchu aristocrats, and well-placed fellow artists came to nothing. Not that this was surprising: Shitao arrived in Beijing at the very moment when the pressure from Kangxi on Han Chinese intellectuals at court was at its height. The years 1689–90 were, notably, the moment when the leader of the so-called reform faction, Li Guangdi (1652–1718), made a conspicuous shift of allegiance on the apparently abstract question of the relationship between *ch'i*, energy, and *li*, structural order. Having previously been a prominent defender of a *ch'i*-based philosophy derived from

Wang Yangming (1472–1529) that permitted a certain ideological freedom of maneuver in the tradition of the late Ming period, he adopted a neoconservative philosophy of order based on the privileging of *li* that harked back to the Song philosopher Zhu Xi (1130–1200).⁹⁹ The rhetoric of order was subsequently to do long service as a fundamental ideological tool of the Qing state. Shitao's bid for recognition at court, coming at a moment when the contingencies of political circumstances privileged a classicizing form of painting that could be co-opted as the visual expression of state ideology, was thus perhaps inevitably doomed to failure. His frustration spilled over in early 1691 in his inscription to an unusually ambitious improvisatory landscape for Wang Fengrong:

As for today's travelers in the realm of brush-and-ink, they have never set eyes on the famous mountains and great rivers, far less lived in a solitary house on a hidden cliff. They have never been a hundred miles away from a city, and would not deign to enter a room and stay there for half a year [meditating]. Instead they trade overflowing cups of wine and purchase brand-new "antiques." They have never attained true understanding but just spread their mediocrity everywhere. How could they be able to judge? They look at [paintings] and say: "This one is the brush-and-ink of such-and-such a master, this other one is such-and-such a school of painting method." They're like the blind leading the blind, like one ugly woman criticizing another: Can one call this connoisseurship?

While a certain modern art history, attracted to binary oppositions, has conditioned us to read this kind of text as an Individualist attack on Orthodox painting, it is unlikely that Shitao would have recognized himself in such a scenario. In fact, all the evidence points to Shitao having been on the best of terms with the painters we now associate with the latter name, who in 1691 represented a conservative visual culture of the Chinese scholar-official class that was still (just) somewhat independent of the Qing state.¹⁰⁰ Shitao's condemnation of false connoisseurs more likely targets those tastemakers of the court who by their ignorance, as he saw it, were preventing his recognition by Kangxi.¹⁰¹

The recent discovery of a major poem written during 1691 has revealed that he was eventually made an offer, though not one he was willing to consider.¹⁰² Its title could not be more explicit: "Written in Reply to the Various Friends Who Have Asked Me Why I Do Not Establish a Temple [*kai tang*] and Live in the World." Any lingering doubts that one might have about the considered nature of Shitao's stance, and the seriousness with which he pursued his Buddhist career (though on his own terms), are removed by this text. Shitao begins by evoking the fragrance of vegetarian temple meals as a metaphor for the sense of community that the *sangha*



59. Shitao and Wang Yuanqi (1642–1715), *Orchids, Bamboo and Rocks*, dated 1691, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 134.2 x 57.7 cm. Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taiwan, Republic of China.

had offered to him as an orphan, contrasting this harshly with the odor of mutton eaten with strangers as a metaphor for the life that some were proposing he now choose. Various references in the poem suggest that this was linked to a concrete offer that he had received to



60. Shitao and Wang Hui (1632–1717), *Bamboo and Orchids*, dated 1691, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 130 x 56 cm. Zhile Lou Collection, Hong Kong.

take charge of some very minor provincial temple in the North. He then castigates himself as not being worthy of his imperial origins, and as lacking in courage or will; he exhorts himself not to allow himself to sink gradually into common worldliness, and to remember that it

is the lack of material possessions that is to be valued. Gathering steam, he proclaims his lineage to be as large as any palace, reassures himself that a monk with faith in his vocation is spiritually well-placed, and pugnaciously takes as self-conception Zhuangzi's image of the immense *peng* bird transformed from the *kun* fish: "If the *kunpeng* bird were to spread both its wings, who could be blamed for the darkness of Heaven and earth [that would result]?" Having taken his courage in both hands, he is able at the end of the poem to reject frankly his friends' suggestion:

In some three-family village I could open a temple,
In a desolate shrine I could struggle to promulgate
the great mercy [of Buddhist teachings].
But rightness, and success and failure, depend on
luck –
How can one mount a bird while riding an ox?

Again, we see Shitao preferring to hold out for the opportunity that he considered worthy of him; and for the first time we see him acknowledging that his imperial origins were part of his calculation.

In the face of all his unrewarded efforts, he was not surprisingly tempted at moments to return to the South; indeed, he announces his intention to leave as early as the second month of 1691. If, in the end, he extended his stay at that point, it was perhaps because Kangxi's interest in painter-monks was at its height in that year.¹⁰³ It was in 1691 that Xuezhuang (Chuanwu Xingtang), a Chan monk of the Caodong School who, like Shitao, was celebrated for his paintings of Huangshan, was summoned to court. When Xuezhuang arrived at the capital, however, he did not appear for the imperial audience, sending another monk in his place. Kangxi was impressed, and not only had him escorted back to Huangshan but provided him with the means to found a temple there. Also in 1691, Xinshu Fuqian made the journey to the capital and submitted a fan painting for presentation to the throne. Kangxi then summoned him for an audience in a Beijing temple, as a result of which he was ordered to study painting with Wang Yuanqi, who reportedly used the monk as a "ghost painter." Later, however, he was given an imperial appointment as the abbot of Wanshou Temple and was continuously ordered to submit paintings to the throne.¹⁰⁴

Shitao himself had no such success during 1691. Still in the capital at the beginning of the autumn, he at that point finally left the Qiehan Studio to move to Ciyuan Temple in the southern section of Beijing – the "Chinese city." The temple was located in a quiet, scenic area in the south of the city, north of the Temple of Heaven, at the eastern end of Goldfish Pond.¹⁰⁵ Shortly after his arrival, laid low at the time by illness, he had the flattering experience of receiving the visit of the Manchu Minis-

ter of the Board of Justice, Tu Na. Since the minister's son Tu Qingge is known to have become Shitao's student, it is tempting to think that the purpose of the father's visit was to invite Shitao to tutor the son.¹⁰⁶ Shitao's principal aspirations, however, were as a Chan master, the role in which he appears in a portrait by an unidentified friend, known today only from a copy of the figure itself, that harks back to Song and Yuan dynasty portraits of Chan masters (Figure 61). The image he was trying to project of himself in this role is vividly preserved in his inscription, written at Ciyuan Temple during the same autumn:¹⁰⁷

Such joy! Such joy!
 My empty, blind eyes see nothing of Maheśvara's
 greatness –
 Why would I stop at rolling with laughter in front
 of the ruler?
 With the divine spirit of the Black Bean I dash right
 through.
 When I want to leave, I leave! When I want to stay,
 I stay!
 A thousand-pound bow is not released to catch a
 rabbit,
 It takes a soaring *qilin* or a phoenix
 To be worthy of my coming forward.

The eccentric and impertinent arrogance that Shitao advertises here (reminiscent of Xuezhuang's refusal to appear before the emperor) conforms to one of the oldest-established personae of Chan masters in the Linji Chan School – an indifference to convention and to power.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, the poem cites the two most important masters for that school, Huangbo Xiyun (died c. 850) with whom Guangjiao Temple in Xuancheng was closely associated, and the founder of the school, Linji Yixuan (d. 867) himself, who gave Huangbo the name of Monk Black Bean in reference to his unseeing blindness. That “blindness,” of course, is also claimed by Shitao, the Blind Arhat; as we know from elsewhere, it included a disinterest in material ambition, though here it is also directed (if that is the word) at Maheśvara, a Heavenly King particularly important in the Lamaist Buddhism that was strongly supported by the Qing court. Still, Shitao did not want his “blindness” to be mistaken for a lack of all ambition: The poem's second half pragmatically announces his willingness to remain at the capital in the event of a suitably exceptional opportunity.

In the winter of 1691, with no success in sight, Shitao moved to the nearby city of Tianjin for the winter months. The visit, at first sight unexpected, is explained by the fact that Ciyuan Temple was an annex of the much more important Dabei Monastery in Tianjin. On his way to that monastery he happened to meet another monk, a certain Juhui from Guangdong who was traveling in the opposite direction, to the capital, to request

imperial permission to return to his home temple (presumably the emperor had appointed him abbot of some northern temple). The fact that his newfound acquaintance was on his way to court seems to have inspired Shitao to one final effort to attract Kangxi's attention. He presented the monk with a handscroll in which were transcribed ten of his most autobiographical poems and sets of poems written between 1680 and 1691, including several that I have cited in this chapter. The handscroll was in effect an invitation to Juhui to familiarize himself with the details of Shitao's life and career, and to put in a good word for him in Beijing (though his dedication affirms a renewed determination to return south). The scroll is among other things a staggering exercise in name dropping, mentioning monks who had received imperial favor, celebrated remnant subjects, and outstanding officials, as well as his connection with a monastery, Changgan, that had received particular attention from the emperor, and his personal encounter with Kangxi there in 1684. Taking the obsequiousness a step further, he also included the poems that he wrote to welcome the emperor to the South in 1689.¹⁰⁹ Having floated this trial balloon, he continued on to Dabei Monastery, where his major friendship was with the current or former abbot, Shigao, a Linji monk of the generation prior to his own. Shigao had several lay disciples, including one man who had been one of Shitao's early painting teachers.¹¹⁰ Through Shigao, an active poet, Shitao became acquainted during that winter with Tianjin's most important cultural patrons, the cousins Zhang Zhu (1659–1704) and Zhang Lin (d. 1713). The former was another lay-Buddhist disciple of Shigao and fellow participant in a small poetry society, the latter a leading salt merchant.¹¹¹

In the early spring of 1692 Shitao returned to the capital, writing soon after to his old Xuancheng friend Mei Qing to announce once more his long-delayed departure.¹¹² His address at that point is unclear, though one surviving painting from the third month was painted in Haichao Temple, on the north side of Goldfish Pond, near Ciyuan Temple (see Figure 170). In the event, however, it was not until the summer that he wrote a long formal poem of farewell addressed to his friends in the capital, likening himself once more to the mythical *peng* bird, but now to evoke the idea of free movement and departure.¹¹³ Moreover, he was still in Beijing as late as the autumn. Tempting though it is to infer that he lingered out of continued hesitation, the real explanation may be more prosaic; for there is an uncharacteristic absence of surviving and recorded artworks from this year, suggesting that he may once more have been laid low by illness.

Failure in Beijing meant the end of Shitao's public attempt to use his skills as an artist (but also as a poet and

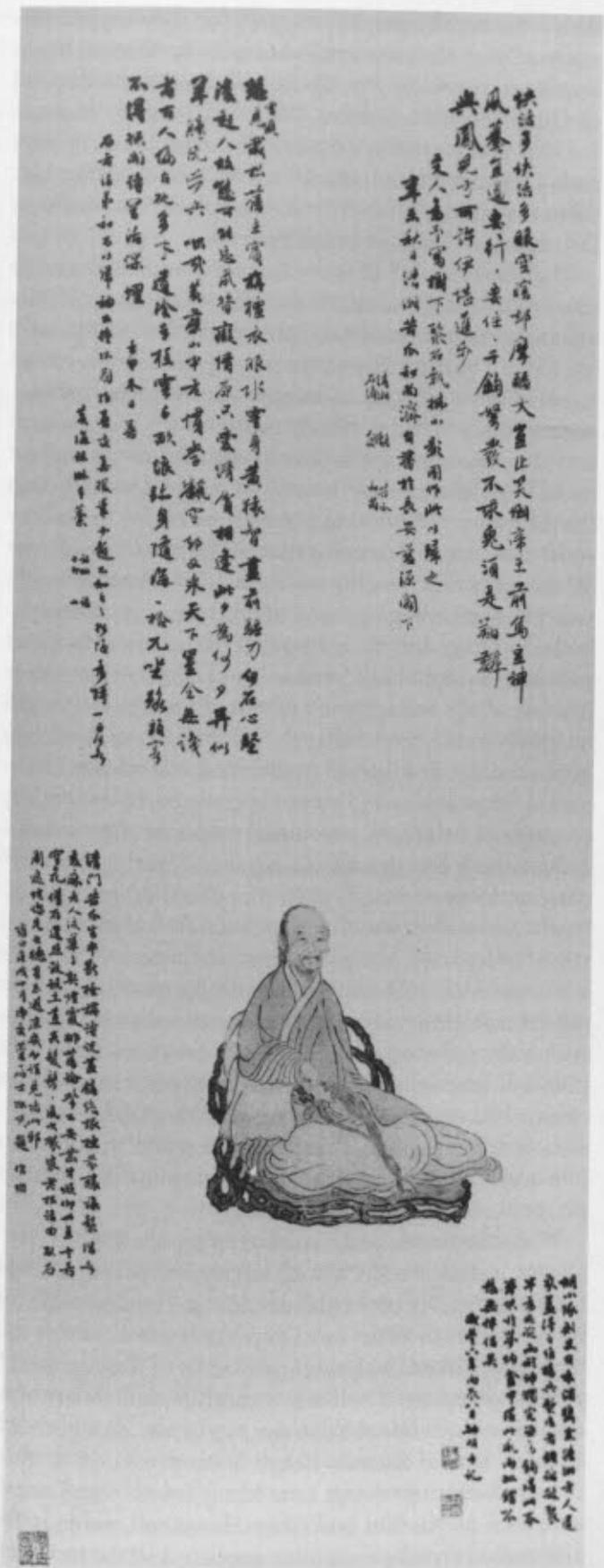
Chan teacher) to attract imperial patronage for his role as a monk; concurrently, it ended his private interest in approaching Kangxi. It shattered what can be confirmed in retrospect to have been the narrative of his destiny that he had first begun to imagine for himself around 1663-4 and had pursued tenaciously since the late 1670s. That narrative was determined by the final failure of resistance to the Qing and the establishment of peace, but also by Shitao's ambition, his extraordinary sense of caste identity, and his need to find a way back to the palace of his origins. The destiny he envisaged cast him as an important and independent monk, and was to be realized through the pursuit of Qing imperial patronage as a monk-painter. So deep were the scars of his Beijing experience, however, following on earlier difficulties in the church in Nanjing, that they led Shitao to rethink his life once more. The signs of this can be seen as early as the winter of 1691, in a poem he wrote in Tianjin to Zhang Lin:¹¹⁴

Half a lifetime, traveling north and south: the wind
and dust has aged me.
Having renounced the world, I am still close to
those in the world.
I have wandered too long to feel the hardship
But in the priesthood I rarely find people of my
own mind.

In Shitao's estrangement from the Buddhist church lay the seeds of a new sense of his destiny, a revised plot for the narrative of his life. It had much to resolve: the knowledge that his princely origins (which were known in the capital) had not in the end helped him, that the palace into which he had been born could not now be replaced by the Qing palace, and that in the choice between Ming loyalism and collaboration with the Qing he had made what was coming to seem the wrong decision. Facing these unpleasant facts, in the eighth or ninth month of 1692 Shitao finally took true leave of his friends in the capital and, after a brief stopover in Tianjin, returned to the South.¹¹⁵

THE ART OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

For this chapter's biographical account, I have made extensive use of documents, both textual and visual, that were authored by Shitao himself; but in order not to interfere with the reconstruction of the artist's life, I have passed over the intrinsic significance of the documents as examples of an extraordinary practice of autobiography, central to Shitao's art as a whole. Before continuing with more documents of even more diverse character, I want to take advantage of this break in the story



61. Wang Fang, *Holding a Fly-whisk*, dated 1865 (facsimile portrait of a portrait of Shitao), hanging scroll, ink and color (?) on paper, dimensions unknown. Fujian Provincial Museum, Fuzhou. Source: Zheng Wei, *Shitao*, pl. 1.

to stand back briefly from the theme of destiny and give some overdue attention to the important issue of an autobiographical art. Shitao lived at a time when autobiography had only rather recently evolved into a widespread and complex practice stretching across the verbal and visual domains. The range and intensity of his own autobiographic practice make him one of the most important representatives of this distinctive seventeenth-century development.

As a poet, Shitao worked autobiographically in two main ways: through poems that recorded the feelings of a moment and through *occasional* poems that marked significant events in his life and more explicitly addressed a public audience. The former poems, such as his 1657 meditation at Lake Dongting, accumulated over the years, until in late life he had at his disposal a vast pool of such "diary entries" from a lifetime's articulation of emotional experience. He often drew on these poems *ex post facto* to accompany paintings, either by inscribing the poem on the painting surface itself or (in albums) by pairing poem and painting on facing pages. In these cases the poetic text – sometimes a catalyst for the painting, other times paired with it only once the painting was done – was recontextualized within a larger word-image nexus of memory representation: One particularly important example from around 1700 is discussed at the end of Chapter 5. Shitao used his occasional poems rather differently. These too accumulated, but he tended to illustrate them only within their original biographical context (as in *On the Road to Pingshan*; see Figure 58); that context once past, he returned to them only to incorporate them (along with the others) into larger autograph selections of his poetry. The selections were no doubt partly a hedge against the possibility that his poetry would not be printed during his lifetime, as did in fact prove to be the case.

Some selections were restricted to poems from a specific moment in his life, as in his manuscript of poems from 1683 or the manuscript of his 1701 New Year's poems; but on other occasions he brought together poems from widely varying moments, allowing the chronological arrangement to imply a narrative. Among these latter selections, the handscroll he presented to monk Juhui in 1691 is perhaps the single most spectacular example. Autograph selections took the form either of albums or handscrolls and were, naturally, calligraphic artworks as well. Underlining this calligraphic dimension, Shitao always transcribed his poems using a range of different script types and calligraphic styles. The effect is to advertise a kaleidoscopic identity, which is equally a feature of the selected poems, whatever the period in his life to which they correspond.

Alongside poetry and calligraphy, the signatures and seals with which Shitao authenticated his artworks tell

their own autobiographical story; for they remind us repeatedly of his geographical origins in Western Yue, and more specifically in Quanzhou (under the names of Qingxiang and Gukou). They also identify him as a Chan monk with a certain self-image, as a "bitter melon" and a "blind arhat," as well as exposing his Chan lineage as Shitao Yuanji, "grandson" of Muchen Daomin and "son" of Lü'an Benyue.

Thus Shitao's art of autobiography involved much more than just painting. At the same time, he took full advantage of the autobiographic possibilities of painting itself. The most important way he did so, at least in terms of sheer quantity of images, was through painting with a "diary" nature, closely related to his lyric poetry and often accompanied by such poems. Painting's capacity to visualize, or more loosely to respond visually to, the memories embodied in poems from earlier in his life constituted one of his richest autobiographic resources. What made this possible on the side of painting itself was a long-standing tradition of lyric painting, in which both the image and the materiality of the painting were ascribed an origin in an irreducibly personal experience. My use of the term "lyric" in this context refers both narrowly to the model that the *shi* lyric poem, with its implied basis in a specific individual experience, furnished for painting, and more generally to the aesthetics of *qing*, or subjective emotional response that in late Ming culture had in some cases taken form as a cult of passion, love, or desire.¹¹⁶ In this painting tradition a fundamental rhetoric of authenticity around the brush trace, understood as a psychomaterial trace of the self, was combined with such iconographic possibilities of self-representation as: the presence of a human figure within the painting who functioned as a surrogate "I" (this was especially important for Shitao); the use of elements from nature (e.g., bamboo) as metaphors for the self; and, more indirectly, the visualization of subjects in a way calculated to reveal the nature of the artist's personal response to them.

While the literati practice of painting has historically always included other visual economies as well, from the Yuan dynasty onward the lyric tradition increasingly imposed itself as the most important one available to the literati artist. The lyric combination of iconographic and psychomaterial self-representation, still relatively discreet in the work of Yuan dynasty artists, was pushed to a new level of intensity in late-fifteenth and sixteenth-century Suzhou painting. Late Ming artists from Jiangnan, such as Xu Wei and Chen Hongshou, made self-affirmation visually even more explicit, and the modern concept of an Individualist school of painters in the late seventeenth century is a way of registering a still further intensification. Without attempting a historical explanation of this long process that made Shitao's own, rather

extreme practice possible, one can note that several different factors contributed. These include, at the very least, the erosion of the authority of dynastic cosmology in the face of the rise of local, urban culture, the increasing commodification of literati artistic practices, and the traumatic experience of dynastic transition (both Yuan to Ming and Ming to Qing). Shitao's approach stands out by his systematic exploitation of memory and the sheer insistence of the authorial "I." In his hands, the autobiographical impulse within the lyric tradition is given its most single-minded elaboration, matched only by the art of Bada Shanren.

In further pursuit of what was virtually an obsession, from an early point in his career Shitao complemented his basic lyric practice of painting by exploiting, from time to time, the possibilities of figure painting. These works are relatively rare in his oeuvre, but they often signal an important autobiographical statement. The *Hermits* handscroll is one example, in the long tradition of pictures that sum up the biography of a legendary or historical personage in a "portrait" of the person, who is shown engaged in an activity related to one of the highlights of the biographical narrative. The autobiographical possibilities lie in the artist's identification with his subject, which Shitao underlined in his accompanying inscriptions by juxtaposing the biography of his subject with references to his own life. As we have seen, Shitao also drew on the possibilities of (self-)portraiture. In the 1674 *Master Shi Planting Pines* he stage-managed his portrait in order to situate himself within an ambiguous, multileveled narrative centered on the symbolic act of tree planting, whereas in the 1691 *Holding a Flywhisk*, his accompanying inscription turns the image into a defiant manifesto of his transcendence of his immediate circumstances. Later paintings such as *Dadizi's Portrait of Himself Asleep on an Ox* (Plate 6) would combine the two genres of the "narrative portrait" and the true (self-)portrait in some of the most striking self-images he ever produced.

How does Shitao's autobiographical art relate to the history of autobiography proper? In the major study of Chinese autobiography to date, Pei-yi Wu argues that the period from roughly 1585 to 1680 constituted the "golden age" of autobiography as a highly personal mode of writing.¹¹⁷ Prior to this, such writing was rare. Subsequently, the short, contained, self-characterizing texts that were typical of the seventeenth century continued to be produced but became standardized and impersonal, while the autobiographical impulse in its most highly personal form migrated to a variety of other literary forms, notably novelistic fiction; autobiography in its personalized form became fragmented and elusive at the same time that it became increasingly pervasive. Although Wu develops his argument in terms of prose

writing, and more specifically Confucian prose writing, it can be extended with some modification to poetry and painting as well. It was in the late Ming that the narrativizing autobiographical potential of lyric poetry began to be more systematically exploited. It then became common in poetry collections to organize the poems chronologically, poets more frequently added contextualizing prefaces to individual poems, and the writers of prefaces to poetry collections painted a more complex picture of the poet's life. In painting, meanwhile, the seventeenth century was the heyday of the autobiographical act of commissioning an informal portrait, to which the sitter often added (whether at the time or much later) a colophon reflecting on his life. Successive portrait commissions from the sitter further reinforced the narrative dimension. These examples from poetry and painting support the idea that the seventeenth century saw a systematized, almost codified interest in autobiography. Conversely, echoing Wu's argument on the later development, while many eighteenth-century poets and painters continued to exploit the resulting subgenres, others developed a new type of autobiographical practice, much more fragmented and unsystematic, in which fictionality played a key role, often undermining codified forms.¹¹⁸

The shift from one historical moment of autobiography to another, however, was a slower process than Wu suggests, and was no respecter of centuries strictly defined: When poetry and painting (and fiction) are taken into account as well, it seems more reasonable to note a significant historical overlap, circa 1680–1720. In its straightforward self-fashioning impulse, Shitao's practice in many ways is a typically "seventeenth-century" one, and most of its modes as outlined above were characteristic of that period. The most distinctive features of his practice, however, test the limits of seventeenth-century convention, anticipating the developments of the next period. No other painter of the time so often represented his own earlier poems nor so strongly insisted on the temporal schism between the moment of the poem's composition and the painting's execution. Although in Shitao's own case the same narrativization of destiny that opened up the chasm also bridged it, others after him would take the chasm and leave it unbridged. Equally significant is the sheer insistence of the autobiographic impulse in his practice as an artist, extending far beyond the explicit documents discussed in this chapter and the next to pervade even many of his most opportunistically commercial products. After Shitao, the way was open for the autobiographic impulse to enter the landscape of pictorial genres at almost any point; his very mastery of the seventeenth-century codification of autobiographic practice began the erosion of its authority.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Acknowledgment of Origins



The 1696 handscroll *Calligraphies and Sketches* by Qingxiang opens with two vignettes from his southward journey from the capital in the autumn of 1692 (see Figure 72, sections 1–2). One depicts the enforced physical intimacy and chance friendships of Grand Canal journeys through an improvised literati gathering aboard (at Xiazhen at the border of Shandong and Jiangsu provinces on the Double Ninth), the other the impressive towing efforts of the boat haulers at Linqing in Shandong. The journey was less uneventful than these paintings and their accompanying poems would suggest, however: At one point his boat capsized in strong winds, and if Shitao himself escaped unharmed, his luggage – including all his accumulated poems, books, and scrolls – was completely lost. Nonetheless, after the initial shock and sadness, by his own account he found himself laughing off the disaster, letting out “a long cry like a gibbon in the middle of my broken dreams” – as if he experienced the accident somehow as a catharsis after all the frustrations of the capital.

Shitao ended his southward journey in Yangzhou at his old home of the Jinghui Monastery, but must have set off almost immediately for Nanjing, where Hetao was still living, since he is found there in the tenth month. A brief Nanjing sojourn followed, through the winter of 1692, when his principal contacts were with other monks and lay Buddhists.¹ It was during this period that one of his closest monk friends, Zulin, inscribed

both his 1674 *Master Shi Planting Pines* (self-)portrait and the more recent one, *Holding a Fly-whisk*.² Zulin’s poem (the same in each case) confirms that Shitao’s Chan career was blocked and hints, sadly, that his friend was no longer content to be a monk.³ More elements of Shitao’s new orientation can be gleaned from a set of four poems written in early 1693 after he returned to Jinghui Monastery in Yangzhou. These poems, replying to ones he had received from the young Yueduan in Beijing, give an update on his circumstances and state of mind.⁴ The first mentions the boat disaster, the second his memory of painting with a Ming imperial brush at the residence of Prince An; but the last two poems are the most illuminating, and need to be read in sequence:

Everyone in the nation said not to retain Ji.
What use in retaining him? Ji’s so complicated.⁵
If they happened to meet Ji himself, they just pulled
their whiskers and laughed.
Laughing themselves silly at their old [dharma]
brother of former days.
[Here,] where the Huai River’s waters reach the
gate, bears the name of the Great Tree,⁶
As clouds from the Yangzi River press down on
Shu Ridge, I remember the imperial descendant.
After all the luxury and decadence it is good to be
back,⁷
With the excitement of being on my own I take up
my solitary staff again.

There flew here from the imperial city a wisp of
 bright cloud,
 And in the heavens the Gourd Star could be
 recognized as a bitter melon.⁸
 From the chaotic atmosphere within the thousand
 bolt-upright peaks comes snow,
 Blowing open the great earth, spreading its strange
 flowers.
 Who finds promotion in the paradise of non-
 imagination and non-non-imagination?
 In his loneliness, this empty prince does not inquire
 after his family.
 He gives a long cry: He has never returned home,
 will he ever be able to?
 Watch me throw my brush aside and attack the
Nanhua [chapter].

Realizing that the Chan hierarchy in Beijing is unable to take him seriously and has no place for his contribution, all things considered he is happy (or so he would have us believe) to have left the social obligations and luxury of the capital behind him and to be able to recover his independence.⁹ Still it is not a Chan identity that he reaffirms in his final poem, but a Daoist one. His “long cry” is specifically Daoist in character, and the *Nanhua* is one of the inner chapters of the *Zhuangzi* that teach the need to unlearn the ways of the world. Success and failure are the same in the end, it seems. Nonetheless, there remains his other identity as an “empty prince” and an orphan, which imposes the need to recover his origins, to return home, however that may be realized. This poem announces that Daoism would have a role to play in that project as well.

YANGZHOU AND BEYOND: 1693–1696

What is left out, however, is the central role of painting in the life that Shitao now foresaw for himself. In fact, this almost certainly guided his decision to settle in the Yangzhou area, where he could count on his contacts in the Spring River Poetry Society to introduce him to the city’s vast painting market. After the *sangha*, after the court, it was the market to which he would now turn to ensure a self-empowering security and prominence. Shitao spent the early summer of 1693 at the Yousheng Ge studio of a certain Xuegong, “in the mountains” (see Figure 91). A plausible candidate for the identity of Xuegong is Wang Xuechen, one of the wealthy leaders of the poetry society with which Shitao had been connected since 1687.¹⁰ Later in the summer Shitao moved to a second private residence, Wu Mountain Pavilion, which was certainly in the area of Mount Ganquan, some thirty-five *li* to the northwest of the city; perhaps, then,

Yousheng Ge was located in the same area.¹¹ An album that he painted in the autumn for one of his patrons of the late 1680s, the prominent Yangzhou merchant Yao Man, who was also a society member, suggests that Yao may have been the owner of the pavilion. From this point on, Shitao would never again leave the Yangzhou area for more than a brief stay elsewhere. He remained at the pavilion into the autumn at least, but the winter of 1693 found him back in Yangzhou itself, at a temple address: the Hall of the Great Tree (Dashu Tang), probably within the Jinghui Monastery, which had previously been his home from 1687 to 1689. He returned to Wu Mountain Pavilion in the summer of 1694, but by the autumn he was in Yangzhou again, at the Jinghui Monastery, where he remained through the spring of 1695.

This is not the place to trace out the details of Shitao’s transformation into a full-time professional artist; that story is more appropriately left to Chapter 6. What I wish to stress at this point is the awkwardness of his situation in the years 1693–4. In his new, post-Beijing sense of personal destiny, the importance of painting as a career was growing in inverse proportion to his diminishing commitment to the *sangha*. For the moment, however, this left Shitao in a doubly unsatisfactory situation, one where he was compromised both as a monk and as a painter. A statement from 1693 betrays his discomfort: “I have a solitary and stubborn character, and have difficulty getting on with people; though I feel daily more distant from society, I am falling deeper into it. My contemporaries all laugh at me for remaining in Hinayana [i.e., continuing to be a monk]; as I see it, I could reply, but I am better off saying nothing.”¹²

The difficulty of this situation, combined with the further awkwardness of his need to find his way back into a world of loyalism that he had not fully embraced since his teenage days, may explain two albums of dark, pessimistic paintings dating from 1693 and 1694, respectively – the earliest of a series of highly personal, autobiographical albums he painted between 1693 and 1696 that constitute a visual “diary” of his emotional life during those years. In the first of the two, the album painted at Wu Mountain Pavilion for Yao Man, a mood is constructed, in part through the use of a notably dark color scheme, to which Shitao gives the name *chou*, or melancholy (lit.: “an autumnal heart”) (Figure 62). In the inscriptions he sometimes names the mood directly; other times he evokes it indirectly through the mention of autumn. In the accumulation of resonances around this central idea – his aging, his failure, the wilderness, rain, solitude – Shitao finds a pessimistic unity of self. He painted the second album in late 1694 for a Shexian acquaintance, Huang Lü, who lived in Nanchang.¹³ Unlike the album for Yao Man, with which it shares the

“dark” melancholy, this one is in the end less concerned with mood than with structure – what one might call the structure of destiny. Free passage seems to be blocked, paths return us to their starting points, houses are given iconic status and contrasted with aimless wandering (Figure 63), and solitude is given existential significance: “Who shares one’s vicissitudes in the world?/In my old age I have no possessions, and have turned crazy and stubborn.” As if to answer this question, the album closes with an image of barren trees, inscribed with a justly celebrated statement in which Shitao evokes and pays homage to nine other artists, some dead, others living: Kuncan (1612–c. 1673), Cheng Zhengkui (1604–76), Chen Shu (c. 1617–c. 1687), Zha Shibiao (1615–98), Hongren (1610–64), Cheng Sui (1607–92), Bada Shanren (1626–1705), Mei Qing (1623–97), and Mei Geng (1640–c. 1722).¹⁴ All of these painters were at once, in the terms of the time, “men of the wilderness” and “originals,” though not all were loyalists. After his encounter with the hegemony of Dong Qichang–derived classicism in the capital, Shitao’s differences from other “originals” seem to have faded before what he now recognized to be a kinship of goals. They have become models to whom he can look as he embraces painting as a primary vocation: “Those who enter through the ordinary gate to reach the *Dao* of painting are nothing special. But to achieve resounding fame for a time – is that not difficult to accomplish?”

To judge by the evidence of Shitao’s painting, a further turning point came in the summer of 1695. His work from those months is experimental and expansive, with all his old confidence of the mid-1680s on display.¹⁵ While there are sad images, his work is no longer permeated by discouragement and doubt. Perhaps he was finding success in his new professionalism: At the beginning of the summer, for example, he made a brief, undoubtedly remunerated trip to northern Anhui to be the guest of a temporarily retired grand secretary, Li



62. “Illustration to a Poem Using Dongzhi’s Rhyme,” *Landscapes for Yao Man*, dated 1693, album of 8 leaves, ink or ink and color on paper, each leaf 38 x 24.5 cm, leaf 1, ink and color on paper. Guangzhou Art Gallery.

63 (facing). “Who Shares One’s Vicissitudes in the World?” *Landscapes for Huang Lü*, dated 1694, album of 8 leaves, each leaf 28 x 22.2 cm, ink or ink and color on paper, leaf 4, ink and color on paper. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles County Fund.



誰共浮沉天地間老無一物轉癡頑
不知石斫荒如許醉裏吟成對客
刪 清湘賸尊有濟漫設於淨慧



Tianfu (1635–99).¹⁶ Perhaps it was simply that the fragments of a new identity were falling into place with time. What is certain is that he had come into contact with a few new and highly supportive friends and customers in the Yangzhou area. One was the traveler Huang You. Another was the merchant Xu Songling, on whose estate in Yizheng (a small city to the west of Yangzhou), Shitao spent that summer; Xu had a history of collecting wilderness painting.¹⁷

In two of the albums for Huang You, Shitao left the leaves facing the paintings blank. Huang then requested inscriptions to complement the images. The list of participants is a selective who's who of literati celebrities in the Yangzhou area, centered on the Ming prince, Shitao, and the young loyalist admirer, Huang You. Although only some of the colophon writers were true loyalists, others having participated in the Qing civil service examinations,¹⁸ even the latter had strong loyalist sympathies. Small wonder, then, that Shitao tries on, so to speak, a loyalist persona in his inscription to a classic image of wilderness melancholy showing reeds, geese, and waves stretching out into the distance across the Yangzi or some great lake (Figure 64):

A broken line of geese like characters;
waves stretching into the distance.

Melancholy for the lost nation piles up in my heart.

Elsewhere in the albums, the wilderness vision is often combined with Daoist references: the Peach Blossom Spring, the long whistle of the adept, and the unkempt hair of the hermit. This last reference comes in an extraordinary self-portrait in which Shitao looks defiantly out at us, his long beard and raggedy topknot rendered in careful detail: the very image of rejection of the (Qing) world (Figure 65).

When next Shitao's whereabouts can be documented, it is already the ninth month of 1695, and he has entered on a new stage of intense self-examination. In Yangzhou during that month, Shitao painted an album of landscapes and flowers for a certain Qilao.¹⁹ Two leaves that



64. "Melancholy for the Lost Nation Piles up in My Heart," *Landscapes of the Highest Class*, album of 12 leaves, ink or ink and color on paper, each leaf 23 x 17.6 cm, ink or ink and light color on paper, leaf 11. Sen-Oku Hakkokan, Sumitomo Collection.

65 (facg). "Hermit in a Boat," *Landscapes of the Highest Class*, album of 12 leaves, ink and light color on paper, each leaf 23 x 17.6 cm, leaf 10. Sen-Oku Hakkokan, Sumitomo Collection.

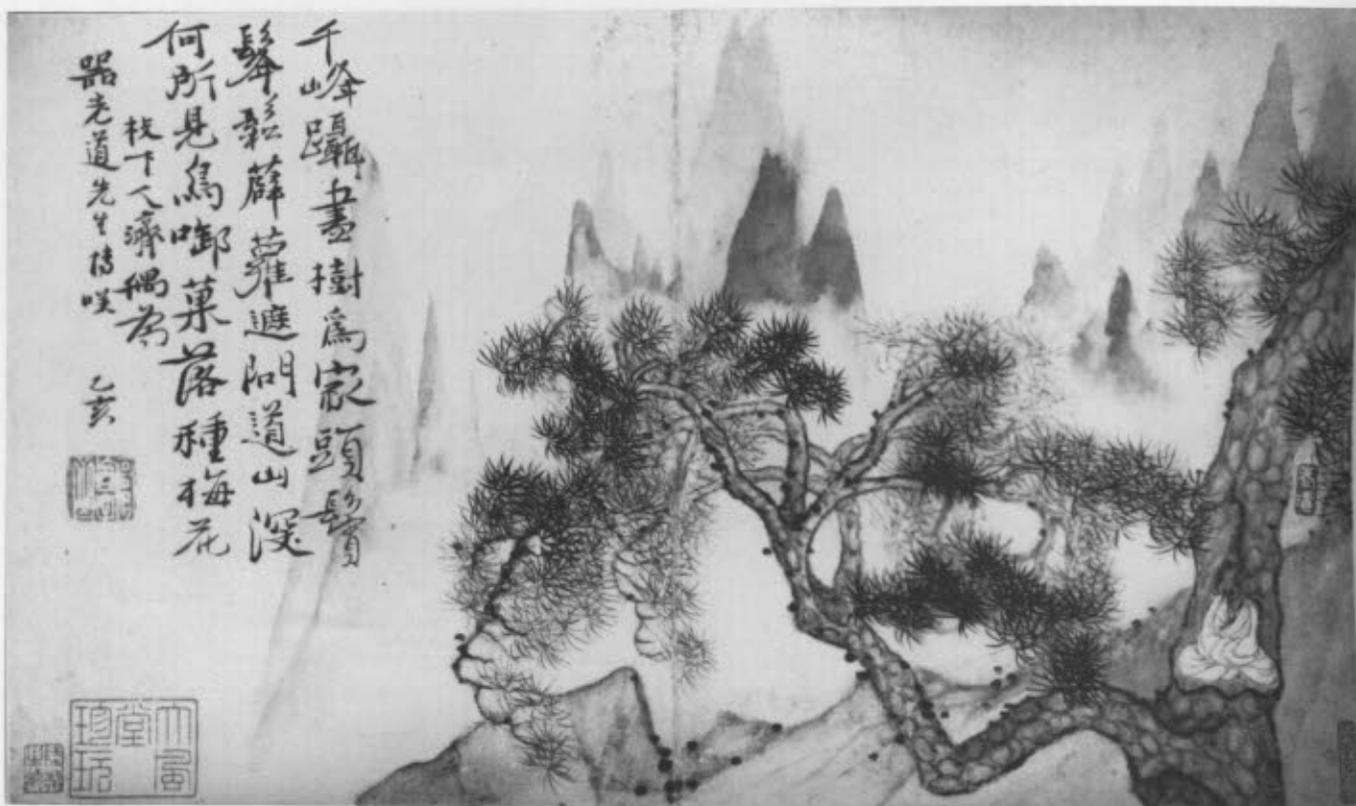
can still be seen today vividly confirm the seriousness of his "study of the *Dao*" and confirm the album's Daoist orientation. One bears this startling inscription:²⁰

No hair, no hat: I've broken with both those ways
[i.e., he has hair and wears a hat].

I have abandoned them for the fishing rod in the painting.

Reeds in shallow water, some unknown place,
The great Universe [*qiankun*] seems to be ordered
in this space.





66. "Hermit within a Hollow Tree Trunk," dated 1695, album leaf mounted in a handscroll, ink and color on paper (originally from *Paintings and Calligraphies for Qilao*, dated 1695, album of 5 leaves). Sichuan Provincial Museum.

The implication is that he has abandoned the shaven and uncovered head of a monk; in its place he claims for himself the persona of a Daoist hermit, the fisherman whose rod has no line, by commitment to the principle of nonaction. The second leaf explicitly recontextualizes the established Chan iconography of a meditating monk in a tree (Figure 66).²¹ A figure sits cross-legged in the trunk of a twisting pine against a background of blade-like peaks:

I have walked across a thousand peaks; a tree is
now my home,
The hair on my head hangs loose and covers my
piluo robes.
I inquire after the *dao* in the depths of the
mountains: What do I see?
Birds bring seeds, and drop them to plant flowering
plums.

Here, Shitao's white robes are not those of a monk but instead the *piluo* of a traditional Chinese hermit. We are asked, too, to imagine again his hair hanging loose and long, in direct contravention of Buddhist practice and Qing laws. Also, if this is an image of meditation, his visions are not of Buddha or the Buddhist paradise but of

the magical workings of nature that reveal the *dao*, here associated with a key remnant-subject motif, the flowering plum tree.

Also in October 1695, Shitao visited the wealthy Xu Songling at his home in the city, the Liugeng Garden, to view chrysanthemums. In a note to a poem written on that occasion, he writes that on the following day he preceded Xu Songling in *returning* to Yizheng, to the Place for Reading to Study the *Dao*: Clearly he had been based there before this trip to Yangzhou.²² He would now live there, perhaps even continuously, until late in the spring of 1696. From this second long period that Shitao spent at the Xu estate, little work is recorded and even less has survived. This relative "silence" may not solely be due to the accidents of transmission. In a set of poems written for his host at the end of the following spring, he says in one that "the painting studio is dim," suggesting that he not been practicing his art.²³ In another he writes: "In the Place for Reading to Study the *Dao*," /From the height of autumn to late spring, /How many worrying things /Have preoccupied me during my old illness." At a time when, as we have seen, things were starting to go well for him again, there was only one "worrying thing" that was likely to provoke an intense and private struggle. At the beginning of 1696, Shitao was fifty-five years old and had spent all his life in the fold of the Buddhist *sangha*. The evidence of subsequent events makes it almost certain that Shitao was now finally contemplating the renunciation of monastic

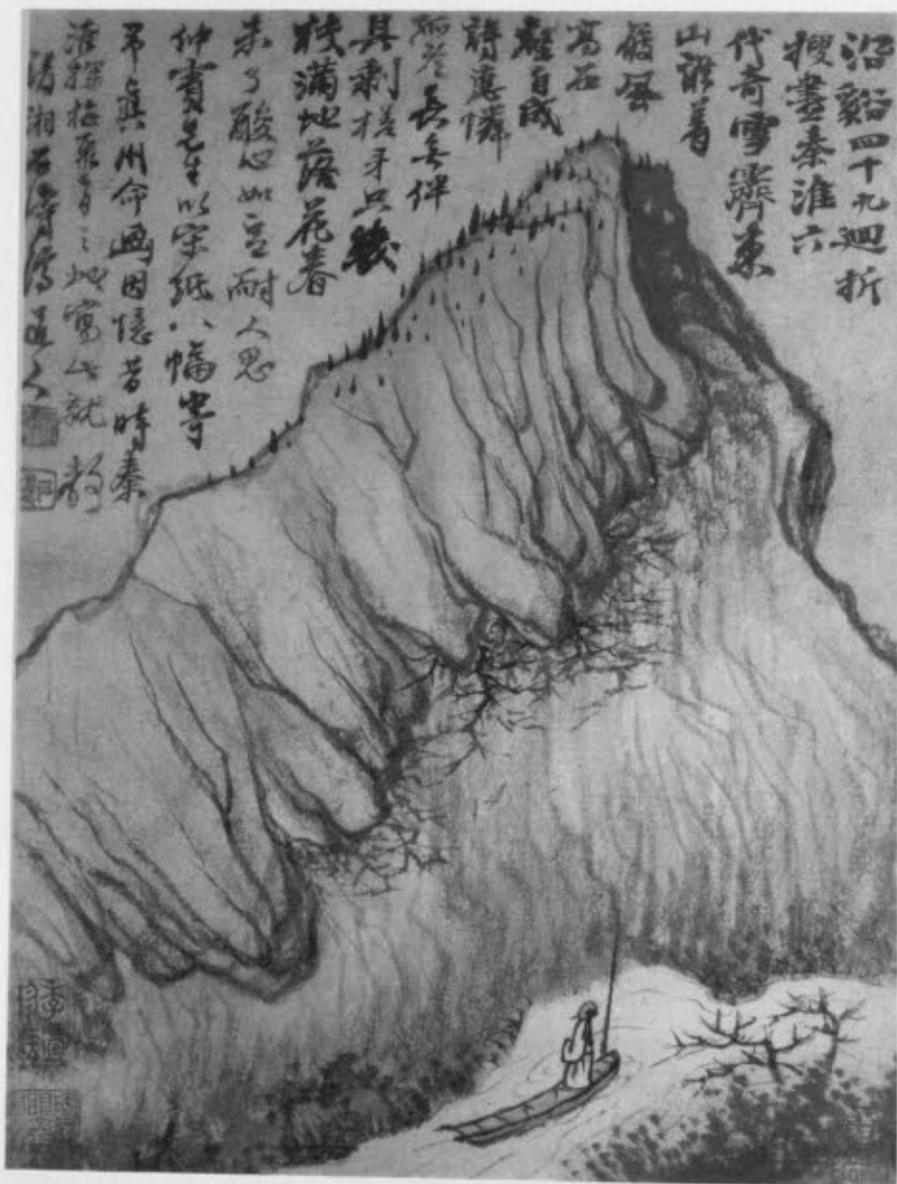
orders. He was faced, therefore, with what must have been a painful decision, fraught with guilt and uncertainty. The one work that had survived from the winter of 1695–6, the album now known as *Reminiscences of Qin-Huai*, bespeaks an intense preoccupation with his identity, even a spiritual struggle of sorts; it brings us as close to the process of decision as we are ever likely to come.

Indeed, one leaf bears a signature, unique in Shitao's oeuvre, that offers a condensed image of the complex moment of decision that Shitao had now reached (Figure 67). The signature reads: "Dadi Zunzhe, Ji," with Ji an abbreviation of his formal Buddhist name, Yuanji. The other two components of this name are far more difficult to elucidate. The term *zunzhe* is one that Shitao had used in its Buddhist sense of "arhat" in an earlier name, the Blind Arhat, but here its more general, nonsectarian meaning as "venerable person" must also be in play; for "Dadi," roughly translatable as "the Great Cleansing," has Daoist rather than Buddhist overtones. Referring to a Daoist process of self-purification, it was equally the name of one of the canonical sites of Daoist sacred geography, the Dadi Grotto, thirty-fourth of the thirty-six secondary cave paradises, situated at Mount Dadi in Yuhang County near the city of Hangzhou in Zhejiang. During the early Qing period, Yuhang County in general became a major center of Daoist temples and teachers, especially of the Dragon Gate branch, and at Mount Dadi in particular there were two important temples that served as a basis for a succession of major Dragon Gate teachers.²⁴ The Dragon Gate branch brought about a renaissance of the "northern" Quanzhen School at the beginning of the Qing period, in part through an influx of Ming loyalists into its ranks after 1644 but also through imperial support by the Shunzhi and Kangxi emperors. Within the overall network of Daoist lineages, its importance was comparable to that of the Linji School in contemporary Chan Buddhism.²⁵ While "the Great Cleansing" unavoidably brings to mind the process of spiritual self-transformation in which Shitao was then engaged, it is almost certain that he intended the geographical reference as well. Less than



67. "Bamboo at the Water's Edge," *Reminiscences of Qin-Huai*, album of 8 leaves, ink and light color on paper, each leaf 25.5 x 20.2 cm, leaf 3. © The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1996, John L. Severance Fund, 1966.31.

three years before, in the summer of 1693, he had depicted the landscape of Yuhang County, with Mount Dadi at its center, in a handscroll for a friend who was planning to visit the area.²⁶ He could not have been unaware of the fact that the site had been associated, at the beginning of the Yuan dynasty, with Southern Song loyalists who took refuge in Daoist temples, before the phenomenon repeated itself after 1644.²⁷ The painting on which this first appearance of the Dadi name occurs is a sobering if ultimately hopeful one: a somber image of winter, the end of the seasonal cycle, within which the young bamboo emerging bravely in the foreground stand as the announcement of a new cycle's beginning.



68. "Searching for Plum Blossom along the Qin-Huai River," *Reminiscences of Qin-Huai*, album of 8 leaves, ink and light color on paper, each leaf 25.5 x 20.2 cm, leaf 8. © The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1996, John L. Severance Fund, 1966.31.

Shitao dedicated the album to Huang Jixian, who accompanied his friend and relative Huang You to see the artist in Yizheng during that winter; it was probably painted shortly after the visit.²⁸ This most intractable of Shitao's works is at once compelling of reflection and resistant to any easy understanding. Apart from the signature on leaf 3, the only further inscription is on the final leaf (Figure 68). Following a poem, he writes: "I remembered seeking out the places around the Qin-Huai River [to the south of Nanjing] where plum blossom was abundant; so I painted this to attain tranquillity." The poem itself is one that he had written about the plum blossoms in the courtyard of a Nanjing temple in

1685, part of a set of nine on this theme that he inscribed on the handscroll *Searching for Plum Blossoms* following his pilgrimage in search of them in that year. The accompanying image, instead of depicting the temple site, sums up the whole venture: "Along the Qin-Huai with its forty-nine bends, I seek out the strange wonders of the Six Dynasties."

Richard Vinograd has argued, on the basis of the stylistic references to Nanjing artists, particularly Gong Xian, that the album's general theme is "reminiscences of Qin-Huai" (its modern title).²⁹ It may be, however, that the entire album, and not just its final leaf, may also represent specific Nanjing sites. The opening leaf, for example, represents a two-story formal building hidden deep within a forest with mountains at its back (Figure 69). Easily taken for a temple, it belongs instead, I believe, to a larger group of representations by early Qing artists of the gateway to the tomb of the Ming founder at Zhongshan. Nanjing artist Hu Yukun (active c. 1640-72) explicitly identified the site when he painted it in the 1660s and 1670s, but others such as Gao Cen, Gao Yu, and Gong Xian depended on their audience to recognize the squarish two-story formal building that marked the sym-

bolic center of the remnant subject's interdynastic world.³⁰ As noted in Chapter 4, this was one of the sites that Shitao visited during his 1685 search for plum blossoms. Closely related is the singular image of leaf 4, in which four curiously slablike, orange-brown forms differentiate themselves from the green mass of the ground on which they stand; thorns cover the barren wasteland scene (Figure 70). Shitao's image echoes contemporary descriptions (of which I shall introduce an example later in this chapter) of the ruins of the Ming palace precinct in Nanjing, in which thorns were one element contributing to the desolate character of the scene.

Should one take this as evidence, then, that the Great Cleansing was essentially a political process, and that Mount Dadi was of interest to Shitao principally as a loyalist site?³¹ This would be to underestimate the complexity both of the album and of the process with which it engages. In what is now the second leaf of the album,

he eschewed the intimate, head-on views of the other leaves in favor of a bird's-eye view of a temple complex nestled high on a cliff, above a vast river that immediately brings to mind the Yangzi (Figure 71). The image compares closely with a 1663 painting of Changgan Monastery by Kuncan, who like Shitao had been attached to that great Nanjing Buddhist establishment.³² Shitao's composition sets up a spiral from the distant boats descending the river to the main hall of the monastery, suggesting a metaphor for his arrival and installation at Changgan, with which he was still officially associated in 1696; at the same time, the distanced view creates a sense of psychological detachment suggestive of his alienation from the *sangha*. Later in the album, the concentrated, upward-surg-ing mountain of leaf 7 is answered in the eighth and final leaf by the differentiation into multiple downward-pointing fingers of energy of a mountain wall curled back on itself. The shapes of these two mountains/ridges are so very similar that one could read them as complementary views of a single form, albeit differently situated in imagination and memory. To the dark outside of the first corresponds a luminous interior, in a combined yin-yang mandala of contained organic process that harks back to his most Daoistic images of the 1670s and 1680s.³³

By the summer, Shitao's struggle was over, judging by the fact that he was willing to accept an invitation to the Shexian estate of another new acquaintance, the prominent merchant Cheng Jun (1638-1704). Like Xu Songling, Cheng collected the work of loyalist artists, and he was to prove an important customer.³⁴ At the end of the summer, Shitao presented his host with a handscroll that examines the artist's life since his Beijing days, *Calligraphies and Sketches by Qingxiang*. In Chapter 6 I shall return to this work for its element of commercial self-advertisement; but here it is necessary to look at the way Shitao brought together poems from the preceding several years with new paintings to lay out the course of his destiny as he now understood it.

Thematically and compositionally, the scroll falls into four parts: two long passages in the middle, of equal



69. "The Xiaoling Mausoleum [?]," *Reminiscences of Qin-Huai*, album of 8 leaves, ink and light color on paper, each leaf 25.5 x 20.2 cm, leaf 1. © The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1996, John L. Severance Fund, 1966.31.

length, framed by short opening and closing passages. The opening (calligraphic) passage is devoted to his experience at the capital. The two main parts of the scroll deal then successively with his journey back to the South and with his merchant patrons. Finally, the scroll closes on an image of his personal religious identity. The calligraphies and paintings were probably not executed strictly in order.³⁵ The core of the opening passage, for example, is a 1692 poem of farewell to his friends in the capital; but to this he later added three other poems from his Beijing stay that overlap physically with the beginning of his treatment of the southern journey (Figure 72, section 1). Shitao built the representation of his jour-



70. "An Overgrown Hillock," *Reminiscences of Qin-Huai*, album of 8 leaves, ink and light color on paper, each leaf 25.5 x 20.2 cm, leaf 4. © The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1996, John L. Severance Fund, 1966.31.

ney south in the second part of the scroll around three images: of moored boats, a spray of chrysanthemums, and a view of his boat being dragged through canal locks (Figure 72, sections 1–2). He generally followed the sequence of the journey, pairing the moored boats with a poem written at Botou, not far south of Tianjin, commemorating the ephemeral friendships of the journey, and later framing the view of the canal locks with poems from canal locks further south at Gucheng and Linqing. In between, though, immediately following the chrysanthemum spray, he added (perhaps as an afterthought) a poem about an enforced stop of nine days at Xiazhen, far to the south of Linqing. The treatment of

merchant patrons in the third part of the scroll falls into three visual units (Figure 72, sections 3–4): Of these, the first is calligraphic, comprising two long poems from the winter of 1691–2 for his Tianjin salt merchant patrons Zhang Zhu and Zhang Lin, and the third is a depiction of Cheng Jun's Pine Wind Hall in Huizhou, where he was presently staying, borrowing the style of the celebrated local remnant subject Hongren for the purpose. Between the two (echoing the centrally placed chrysanthemums in the second section) are paired images of orchids and bamboo, which could refer equally to the Zhang cousins in the North or to Cheng Jun in the South. Finally, the short concluding passage consists of a remarkable self-portrait of Shitao as an arhat sitting within a tree (Figure 72, section 4; see Plate 2).

It is through the relationships among the handscroll's four parts that Shitao's narrativization of his destiny becomes clear. The opening passage has the most public character: Its four poems, two of them addressed to government ministers, place Shitao in the North at the nation's center, in cultural circles that overlap with national political life. In stark contrast, Shitao's self-portrait at the other end of the scroll closes

the narrative with a personal and private exploration of identity that is implicitly situated in the South, where he executed the painting.³⁶ Shitao offers us two successive versions of the shift from one to the other. In the first, the viewer-reader follows the artist's geographical displacement from North to South; this displacement of the solitary traveler across the national landscape has a mythic nature that is announced in the scroll's opening poem. There Shitao, taking leave of his Beijing friends, compares himself to the legendary *peng* bird that, transformed from the *kun* fish, flew south on its immense wings (according to Zhuangzi) in the sixth month of the year.³⁷ Shitao's second version of the shift replaces the national landscape with the transregional one of which commerce was the driving force. He does this by situating his displacement within the framework of the relative stability and security of merchant patronage, embodied by the Zhang cousins in the North and Cheng

Jun in the South.³⁸ This displacement was a movement of return that took him back to the home territory of the Huizhou merchant families, his most faithful patrons over thirty years – a fact that Shitao underlines in the poem accompanying his depiction of Cheng's residence.

What light does this shed on the strange closing image, for which Shitao took up again the language of figure painting that he had learned from Chen Hongshou? Against the close-up silhouette of a mountain peak, an ancient cypress contains the emaciated figure of an arhat, his ears elongated and pierced with an earring, gray hair almost to his shoulders, his eyes firmly shut – this is the Blind Arhat. An explanatory title reads, “An old tree in the empty mountains: He sits within it for forty life cycles”; but the real explanation comes at the end of the final dedication: “The man in the picture, can he be called the Blind Arhat's future incarnation or not? Ha, ha!” Viewed through the prism of his solitary wanderings across the national landscape, the final self-image is like a self-derisive stele erected on the ruins of his pursuit of a Buddhist career. As Richard Vinograd has written, this image “appears to be a final, somewhat wistful letting-go of a long-maintained role and identity, with its spiritual attainment deferred to a possible future incarnation.”³⁹ The image is more than this, however: It must also be viewed through the alternative prism of his movements across a transregional landscape of patronage, entailing a return to that part of the country where he was in greatest economic security. If the *sangha* (and the pursuit of imperial patronage) could be left behind, it was only because the market – represented emblematically in the scroll by Huizhou merchant patrons – offered an alternative.

The question of Shitao's religious and philosophical commitment after he settled in his own home in Yangzhou during the following fall or winter has long been controversial. Did he become a Daoist? Did he remain a Buddhist? Had he ever really been a Buddhist in anything more than a formal sense? If he did become a Daoist, was it in a religious or a philosophical sense? Should



71. “Temple above a River,” *Reminiscences of Qin-Huai*, album of 8 leaves, ink and light color on paper, each leaf 25.5 x 20.2 cm, leaf 2. © The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1996, John L. Severance Fund, 1966.31.

we be making these hard and fast distinctions? The confusion can be traced back to the decades following Shitao's death, when the Daoist commitment of the artist's late years was lost from view and a simplified historical image of Shitao as a lifelong Buddhist monk-painter was formed instead. For the so-called Yangzhou Eccentrics, who dominated painting in the city in the second and third quarters of the eighteenth century, and for their contemporaries, Shitao's life narrative was reduced to that of the Ming loyalist and orphan prince who took refuge in Buddhism and painting.⁴⁰ This is the moment when Shitao's treatise on painting acquired the Buddhist name by which it is usually known today, *The Recorded*



Remarks on Painting of Monk Bitter Melon (*Kugua he-shang huayu lu*).⁴¹ This later creation of a lifelong Buddhist Shitao had its own logic. After all, decades of work from his Buddhist years was still in circulation, and after 1696 he sowed further seeds of confusion himself by continuing to use his Buddhist names, Yuanji, Shitao, and Kugua, alongside his one new non-Buddhist name, Dadi or Dadizi. It is little wonder that he sometimes had difficulty shedding his Chan past even with people he knew.⁴²

Shitao's earliest recorded use of the Dadi name is found, as we have seen, on a leaf from the 1696 *Reminiscences of Qin-Huai*, as "Dadi Zunzhe." For the public significance of the process of self-reinvention that Shitao called the Great Cleansing, we have the testimony of several contemporaries, beginning with Tao Wei, the son of the prominent Yangzhou loyalist Tao Ji (1616–99). Tao Wei notes that Shitao "suddenly let his hair grow and wore the yellow hat. He gave his studio the name Great Cleansing Hall, and thereafter his friends called him by the same name."⁴³ Long hair and a yellow hat were the outward signs of a Daoist. Here, Tao may conceivably be employing these images metaphorically, but the point is hardly altered: According to this testimony, Shitao was recognized to be presenting himself publicly as a Daoist at the time he moved into the Great Cleansing Hall, perhaps by the very use of the name of a great Daoist site for his home. Subsequently, since a Daoist needed a Daoist name, his friends began to refer to him as Dadizi, literally the Master of the Great

Cleansing. The evidence of Shitao's signatures to paintings and calligraphies in 1697 and 1698 confirms that the Great Cleansing name was first applied to his residence, for he seems not to have used the name Dadizi himself until well into 1697.⁴⁴ In addition to Tao Wei's testimony, there are several other similar characterizations of the artist. Writing in 1700, Li Lin tells us: "His name is marked on the jade records, he is distressed by the idea of raising children. /He entrusts himself to the Yellow Hat [of Daoism] to avoid the dust of ordinary life. . . ."⁴⁵ The celebrated Cantonese official Liang Peilan (1632–1708) writes in 1703 that "He manages to resemble a transcendent living in this world, /And has even learned how to transform pigments into gold!"⁴⁶ Jiang Shijie (1647–1709), a Suzhou-based loyalist, speaks in 1704 of Shitao's "white hair and yellow cap."⁴⁷ Likewise, his old friend and student Bordu addresses him as the "*daoshi* (or Daoist priest) from Qingxiang" in several of the poems that he sent to Shitao from Beijing.⁴⁸ None of these descriptions would have been written had Shitao not been presenting himself in a clearly Daoist fashion. Independent of these contemporary accounts, there also survives a brief, hastily written letter by Shitao, no more than a note (letter 4). Undated but signed Dadizi, it reads: "During the noontime music [?] I will sweep the Zhuning Hall. Your transcendent excellency. Sent to Shenlao, the great transcendent." Since Shenlao was apparently the abbot of a Daoist temple with which Shitao was ritually involved, it is worth noting that several Daoist establishments were within striking distance



of Shitao's home, including the famous Fanli Monastery (see Figure 5) in the New City.⁴⁹

By 1697, therefore, Daoism had taken on a visibly central place in Shitao's public identity. This can be related to his post-Beijing narrative of an unfortunate destiny that cast him in a role of enforced professional self-reliance; if the court would not guarantee his security and autonomy by patronizing him as a Chan master, then the market was to do so by supporting him as a painter, and somehow a Daoist identity must have furthered this process. It may well have been helpful, first, on a bureaucratic level: Normally when a monk renounced monastic orders, it was to "return to ordinary life" (*huan su*). The former monk readopted his original family name and registered bureaucratically as an ordinary citizen. He further lost his privileges of exemption from taxes and, in this period, from the hair-cutting edict.⁵⁰ Shitao, however, was in a very different position from other monks because the return to ordinary life would in theory have obliged him to register himself officially as a member of the Ming imperial family. Since this was surely out of the question, given his residual reticence to declare his family name, the status of a Daoist priest (*daoshi*) would have been very useful – assuming that he could produce the ordination certificate that monks and priests were required by the authorities to be able to show. In the circumstances of late-seventeenth-century China, where leading *daoshi* no less than prominent Chan monks were often former literati, and where too it was acceptable to pursue quietly and

72. Calligraphies and Sketches by Qingxiang, dated 1696, handscroll, ink and color on paper, 25.7 x 421.2 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing. (Sections 1–2 at top, sections 3–4 at bottom – see text.)

independently the arduous process of self-cultivation, *daoshi* status would not have been difficult for Shitao to acquire.

However, to anticipate the theme of a later chapter, Dadizi's public profession of Daoism was not merely expedient; he was a serious if ultimately ambivalent adherent of the "inner-alchemy" Daoism wherein religious and philosophical purposes are fused (see Chapter 9). Like Chan, inner-alchemy Daoism allowed a commitment to personal self-cultivation by the adept; this could be practiced in part through cultural forms not specific to religion – painting, for example. In fact, through paintings and poems one can document an ongoing fascination with Daoism going all the way back to his teenage days. Dadizi's pursuit of Oneness thus represents as much the surfacing of a previously submerged religious-philosophical orientation as it does a new departure. It must often have been hard to tell where the philosophical commitment ended and the religious one began, an ambiguity that surely attracted him. Moreover, again like Chan, inner-alchemy Daoism was not exclusive but was often open to combination with other means of self-cultivation. The artist's statement, reported in the "Biography of Dadizi" (c. 1700), that he had now placed himself "outside both Buddhism and Daoism" has its context in this syncretism. In 1696–7, however, as he

took on a public *daoshi* identity for the first time, he clearly wanted others to be quite clear about where he stood; for his very name served as a conspicuous advertisement of his adherence to the Dragon Gate branch of the Quanzhen School, whose teachers were at this time the most vigorous representatives of inner-alchemy Daoism. Behind the Dadizi name may even lie a connection to a specific Dragon Gate lineage at Mount Dadi.⁵¹

Shitao's third and final life narrative was a response to the failure of his ambitions and concurrent disillusionment with the Buddhist church, and to his realization that his origins made him welcome within a Yangzhou community sympathetic to loyalism. It was also made possible, one should not forget, by the relaxation of political repression, which had begun following Kangxi's ending of the regency in 1669 and lasted into the 1700s. The narrative that started to take form around 1693, when he was past fifty, is the story of his gradual elimination of self-denial, as he integrated his princely origins into a public identity as a professional painter, which initially he tried to fuse with that of a Daoist adept as well. In 1697, we have come only partway, and the story is still murky. In the reconstruction of its later stages, to which I now turn, we shall be able to see more fully the role that destiny seemed to Shitao, in these post-Beijing years, to have marked out for him. Since the concept of destiny had its most fundamental context in the kinship questions of birth and family, the remainder of this chapter examines the 1697-1707 period from this particular point of view, leaving the issues of professionalism and Daoism until later chapters (6 and 9, respectively). Shitao's acknowledgment of origins took the form of imaginary paths of return. Of these, I trace out three: his relationship with a fellow imperial descendant, Bada Shanren; his acknowledgments in signatures and seals of his imperial origins; and his illustrations of his own early poems in the service of a self-image as the orphan prince. Although Shitao pursued all these paths simultaneously, and often in conjunction, for clarity's sake they are presented separately here.

SHITAO AND BADA SHANREN

Shitao was heir to a long tradition of painting by imperial family members. The earliest art-historical texts record several emperors and princes of the Northern and Southern Dynasties (317-589) as significant painters. Under the Tang (618-907), the horse painter Cao Ba was respected as a princely descendant of the Wei Kingdom (220-85), and under the Five Dynasties (907-60) and the Song (960-1279), the landscapist Li Cheng (919-67) was equally respected as a princely descen-

dant of the Tang; but it was the Song imperial family, with its numerous artists from Zhao Ji (Emperor Huizong, 1082-1135) and his cousin Zhao Lingrang (active 1088-1100) to Zhao Mengfu and his son and grandson under the succeeding dynasty of the Yuan (1272-1368), that represented the high point of the tradition. Huizong later became the model for the Ming emperor Xuande (Zhu Zhanji, 1399-1435); Zhao Mengjian and Zhao Mengfu, as we have begun to see, were positive and negative points of reference, respectively, for those who wrote about Shitao. As a prince-painter, Shitao was not only assuming an established role but drawing upon the glory of a well-known history. He engaged with that heritage in several ways, notably through his relationship with his distant cousin and fellow prince-painter, Bada Shanren.

Shitao's earliest mention of Bada is in the previously cited long inscription praising Individualist painters, added to an album of landscapes for Huang Lü in the autumn of 1694. His praise there for the "dripping-wet ink of Bada Shanren from Nanchang" implies that he had already been familiar with Bada's work for some time. In fact, Shitao went so far as to express his admiration further by painting a number of leaves in the album in styles inspired by the Nanchang artist.⁵² He very likely paid homage to Bada Shanren in particular, despite the mention of ten other artists in his inscription, because Huang Lü was from Nanchang and knew Bada.

Indirect contact between Shitao and Bada probably began not much later than the spring of 1696, when an unknown collector (not from Yangzhou) commissioned Bada Shanren to write out Tao Qian's "Essay on the Peach Blossom Spring" and then sent the calligraphy to Yangzhou to be illustrated by Shitao.⁵³ In his dedication, Bada states that he is leaving room for a painting to be added, undoubtedly at the wish of the patron. Since Shitao in his later inscription refers to the patron as a friend of his, it is likely that Bada Shanren would have known who was going to add the painting, yet he speaks only of "the person who will do the painting" (*huizhe*). This reticence suggests that he and Shitao had never before collaborated in this way, much less had any direct contact. Shitao, in his undated inscription to the completed painting, was clearly excited that contact had been made and keen to claim the special bond between them: "Bada Shanren's calligraphy and painting are the best in the entire country. My friend, Mr. (text unclear), sent this scroll to me in Yangzhou and asked me to add a painting. . . . Bada Shanren and I are one thousand *li* apart, but we are two of a kind."⁵⁴

Starting in 1696, the two painters also drew closer through the efforts of Cheng Jing'e. During the years 1696 and 1697, when he was in Yangzhou, Cheng took



on the role of agent of the two prince-painters.⁵⁵ While Cheng was probably not an intermediary in the *Peach Blossom Spring* collaboration, he did help one patron of Bada Shanren to acquire a work by Shitao in 1696. Bada's inscription to a landscape handscroll that Wang Fangyu dates to no later than 1696 includes the following statement: "I saw this painting by Huang Gongwang and copied it for Huiyan. I have heard that Shitao recently did one painting with a bright green color for Huiyan. This masterpiece was done through Cheng Jing'e's introduction, and after much persuasion. If this is true, my painting is only a common piece of merchandise for dealers."⁵⁶ It would seem likely that by the end of 1696 the two painters not only were aware of each other's existence but deeply admired each other's art, and recognized their shared princely status as a bond. This last point, I suspect, was one reason for Cheng Jing'e's interest in acting as their agent.

Soon after this, in the second lunar month of 1697, Shitao inscribed, in his Great Cleansing Hall, a painting by Bada of a single narcissus, having already contributed one inscription to it at some unspecified earlier date, most likely in that same month or slightly earlier (Figure 73). Bada Shanren's painting itself has been dated by Richard Barnhart and Wang Fangyu to around 1696.⁵⁷ From the poem in the earlier (right-hand) inscription it is clear that Shitao took this single narcissus – "fragrance of the nation," inevitably evocative of the Song prince-painter Zhao Mengjian – to be Bada's self-image:

A jade leaf from a golden branch, an aging remnant subject;
His brush and inkstone are refined and excellent,
leaving the dust of this world far behind.
Elation comes, and he paints a flower as if playing
with a shadow;
An empty-eyed monk in the Tushita Heaven was
his former incarnation.

73. Bada Shanren (1626–1705), *Narcissus*, with *Inscriptions* by Shitao, handscroll, ink on paper, 30.3 x 90.3 cm. Wang Fangyu Collection, New York.

Bada Shanren is the Xuege of former years, who long ago perished [*linli xianqu*]. I look at this and inscribe it.

Although Shitao's appended comment has been interpreted to mean that he believed Bada Shanren to have died, this reading does not take into account the two characters *linli* ("long ago") that precede *xianqu* ("perished" or "died").⁵⁸ Is Shitao likely to have believed Bada to have died long ago, when the painting by Bada Shanren that reached Shitao's home at the beginning of 1697 was painted as recently as the previous year? More plausibly, Shitao is speaking metaphorically, telling us that the Buddhist monk Xuege had perished as an identity or persona, the artist now being reincarnated as the non-Buddhist Bada Shanren. This accords with the poem's reference to a "former incarnation" of the artist as a monk who had attained enlightenment.

The term *xianqu*, it should be noted, can also refer more specifically, in Daoist terms, to the passage through death to the status of an immortal, introducing an ambiguity that may not be simply coincidental.⁵⁹ As early as 1684, Bada Shanren had written out the Daoist text *Huangting neijing jing* (Scripture on the Inner Phosphors of the Yellow Court), and from that year onward often used a seal reading "immortality is attainable" (*ke de shenxian*). It appears, for example, on his *Peach Blossom Spring* "collaboration" with Shitao. More recently, Bada had been fascinated by the *Zhuangzi*; perhaps Shitao had seen the works by him that evoked mystical transformation on the model of *Zhuangzi*, or his deer paintings, which could easily be taken for Daoist works. Furthermore, although the name Bada Shanren has been shown to be, in reality, a reference to a Buddhist sutra,

Shitao may have been influenced by the alternative explanation offered by their mutual acquaintance Chen Ding, who had written biographies of both men in the 1680s and was in Yangzhou in early 1697 to publish a collection of his writings in which both biographies appear. Chen's account of the name cites Bada as saying, "The eight great ones [*ba da*] are the four chief and the four secondary points of the compass. In all I am great, and none is greater than I." Whether this is credible or not (Wang Fangyu has suggested it is not), it made available to Shitao an explanation of the name as a mystical, apparently Daoist identification with nature.⁶⁰ To Shitao, engaged as he himself was in the shift toward a Daoist identity, and no doubt burdened with guilt over his renunciation of monastic orders, it must have been easy to persuade himself that his relative and fellow prince-painter whom he so admired had anticipated him in leaving behind him his former incarnation as "an empty-eyed monk in the Tushita Heaven." His insistence on Bada Shanren's former Buddhist incarnation as Xuege is echoed in a new seal of his own that he used from c. 1697–8 onward reading "Kugua of former years" (*xiangnian Kugua*).⁶¹ As Richard Barnhart has noted, if one makes the effort to imagine the painting without the second, left-hand inscription, the placement of this first one emerges as curiously close to Bada's image: It almost touches Bada's narcissus in a gesture that Barnhart associates with mourning but that might alternatively be taken to be one of intimacy and solidarity. Bada, meanwhile, just as Shitao was taking him for a Daoist, was himself taking Shitao still to be a Buddhist monk. Replying to a request for paintings from a Yangzhou patron (Zhang Chao), for example, Bada encouraged him to show his finished paintings to "the great master Abbot Shitao;"⁶² and again, in an inscription to an orchid album by Shitao, he wrote: "Chan [Buddhism] and painting are each divided into Southern and Northern [schools], but Abbot Shi's paintings of orchids are in a style of their own."⁶³ As we shall see, Shitao eventually had to ask Bada to stop addressing him as a Buddhist.

It is not clear when Shitao's *direct* contact with Bada began, or who initiated it. There is a catalog record of a painting by Shitao for Bada Shanren painted in the ninth month of 1696, but it is far from sure that it can be trusted.⁶⁴ What is certain, on the other hand, is that by the time Shitao wrote to Bada c. 1698–9 in the one example of their correspondence that survives today to request a painting from him, Bada had already written to him several times. Several mutual acquaintances were close at hand as possible intermediaries. One was Cheng Jing'e, of course, who as part of his ongoing activity as Bada's agent arranged in the spring of 1697 for Shitao's

friend and patron Huang You to obtain an album from Bada (delivered in 1698).⁶⁵ Another was Cheng Jun, who traveled to Nanchang in early 1698. Shitao knew of this trip in advance, for he painted a dark, uncompromising "wilderness" landscape for Cheng Jun to mark the occasion (Figure 74). The style of the painting, which harks back to his 1694 album for Huang Lü, was probably intended as a homage to Bada, which in turn suggests that he expected Cheng Jun to visit the Nanchang painter.⁶⁶ Yet another possible intermediary is a certain Li Pengnian, who inscribed an album by Bada in Nanchang in the summer of 1697 and traveled from Nanchang to Yangzhou in 1698.⁶⁷ Some years later, in 1702, Shitao painted a picture of Li in his studio, again adopting for the occasion a style inspired by Bada Shanren.

However, the only concrete surviving evidence of the direct contact between the two prince-painters remains the letter that Shitao sent to Bada c. 1698–9 (Appendix 2, letter 3).⁶⁸ Replying at last to Bada's earlier letters, he addressed Bada as a Daoist: "I have heard that you have reached the venerable age of seventy-four or seventy-five, and that you climb mountains as if flying! Truly you are one of the transcendents!" He went on to request a painting to replace one that Bada had sent earlier (probably via Li Pengnian or Cheng Jun), this time carefully specifying his needs and insisting to Bada that he had left the *sangha* to become a Daoist adept:

I would like to beg of you a small hanging scroll three feet tall and one foot wide. [It should have,] on a flat bank, an old house with a few rooms and a few ancient, useless trees, and in the room on the upper level just an old man, nothing else around. This will represent Dadizi in his Dadi Tang [Great Cleansing Hall]. . . . The picture that you were kind enough to send me some time ago was too big. My small house cannot hold it. In your inscription, I beg you to write "Dadizi Dadi Caotang tu" [A Picture of Dadizi's Great Cleansing Thatched Hall]. Please do not refer to me as a monk, for I am [now] a man who wears a hat and keeps his hair, and is striving to cleanse everything.⁶⁹

From the mid-1690s until Bada Shanren's death in 1705, Shitao and the Nanchang artist were established as the two great prince-painters of the day, sought after for collaborative works (Figure 75).⁷⁰ They were seen as a natural pair, as in Li Guosong's colophon of 1701–2 to a collaborative album: "Mr. Ba and Mr. Shi are both from the former imperial family; their virtue leaves Zhao Chengzhi [Zhao Mengfu] far behind. Their calligraphy and painting are unsurpassed; through and beyond the brush and ink is a sense of solitary survival."⁷¹ Bada, meanwhile, continued to speak highly of Shitao, while Shitao continued regularly to paint and write in styles inspired by Bada whenever appropriate occasions presented themselves. The last of these homages is also



74. *Landscape*, dated 1698, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 137 x 58 cm. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Purchased 1979.

the most faithful (Figure 76). A fan painted in the eighth month of 1705 (Bada died before the year was out), it depicts a single figure amid a cluster of eleven houses: a mountain village in the picture but symbolic of the urban environment in which both he and Bada lived. To

the painting Shitao has added a cry of sadness: "Great round forms from a fat brush: who is there to understand this idea?"

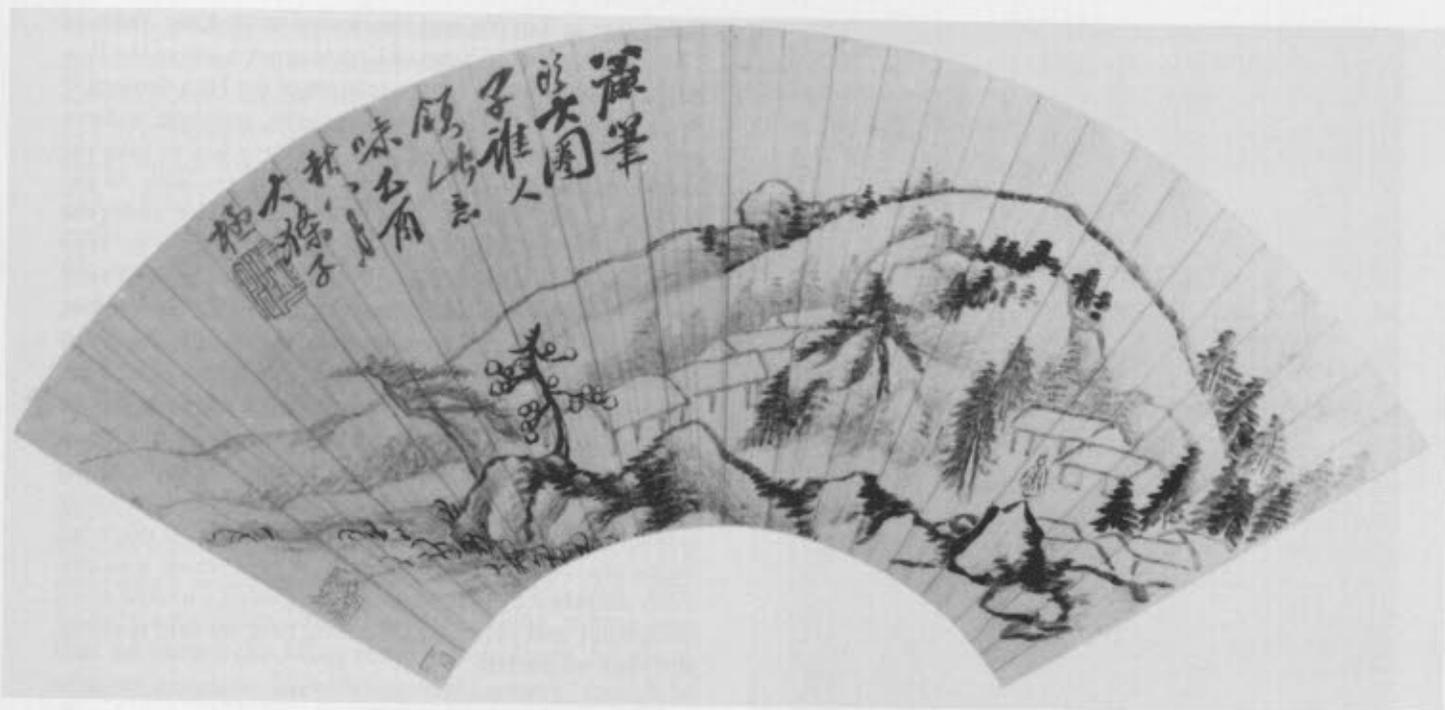
Shitao and Bada Shanren were, of course, only two of the numerous imperial descendants of the Ming dynasty scattered all over China. It was natural that some of the others would visit Yangzhou or sojourn there, and equally natural that artworks by those who, like Shitao and Bada, had become artists would find their way into the hands of Yangzhou collectors. Thus, during Shitao's Dadi Tang years one finds an imperial descendant from Shenxi inscribing an album by Shitao, just as Shitao similarly inscribed a painting by another (by then deceased) imperial descendant from Yunnan.⁷² Even more to the point, a nephew of Bada from Ganzhou in Jiangxi wrote a colophon, in Shitao-style calligraphy, to a painting of two clumps of orchids by Shitao at the artist's home during the 1700s (Figure 77).⁷³ Responding to the image of two plants, which seem to reach out to embrace each other across the space that separates them, Shitao's distant relative interprets the painting not only as a portrait of living imperial descendants like themselves but as a paper offering calling back the lost souls of the deceased. These objects and events suggest something of a larger matrix of *wangsun* connections within which the friendship of Shitao and Bada Shanren had its special place.

Though it would be natural, following Shitao's Yangzhou contemporaries, to see Shitao's friendship with Bada Shanren and other members of the Zhu family as the only one that could do justice to his imperial identity, it is worth remembering that Shitao had another princely friend in the person of Bordu – great-grandson of Nurhaci, the founder of the Manchu state that became the Qing dynasty – who himself chose to study painting with the Ming *wangsun* Shitao. After his return to the South, Shitao remained in close contact with the Manchu aristocrat, for whom he continued to execute commissions on a regular basis until the end of his life. Bordu was not, moreover, the only member of the Qing imperial family with whom he had contact: Some time after 1700 Shitao painted a second hanging scroll of two clumps of orchids, not unlike the first, for Bordu's relative and friend Yueduan, also an amateur painter and known for working in the style of Bada Shanren (Figure 78).⁷⁴

Moving though the story of Shitao and Bada may be as an episode in the history of Ming remnant-subject culture, it was underpinned on Shitao's side by considerations of caste to which specific dynastic affiliations were irrelevant. Moreover, we cannot forget that Shitao, in stark contrast to Bada, saw no contradiction between the increasingly open acknowledgment of his family ori-



75. Shitao and Bada Shanren (1626–1705), *Rocks, Trees, Orchids, and Bamboo*, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 120.3 x 57.5 cm. © Sotheby's, Inc.



76. *Landscape*, dated 1705, folding fan, ink on paper, dimensions unknown. Shanghai Museum.

gins and a continued friendly attitude toward the Qing dynasty. His many paintings and poems for Qing officials during the Dadi Tang years are one example, his various paintings on the theme of rain and good government another; and if Kangxi's visits to Yangzhou in 1699 and 1705 did not inspire the artist to seek any further audiences with the emperor (Shitao was ill at the time of the 1707 visit), on the other hand there is no trace in his pictorial responses to those events of the defiant retreat into a private Ming universe that the 1699 tour inspired in Bada.⁷⁵

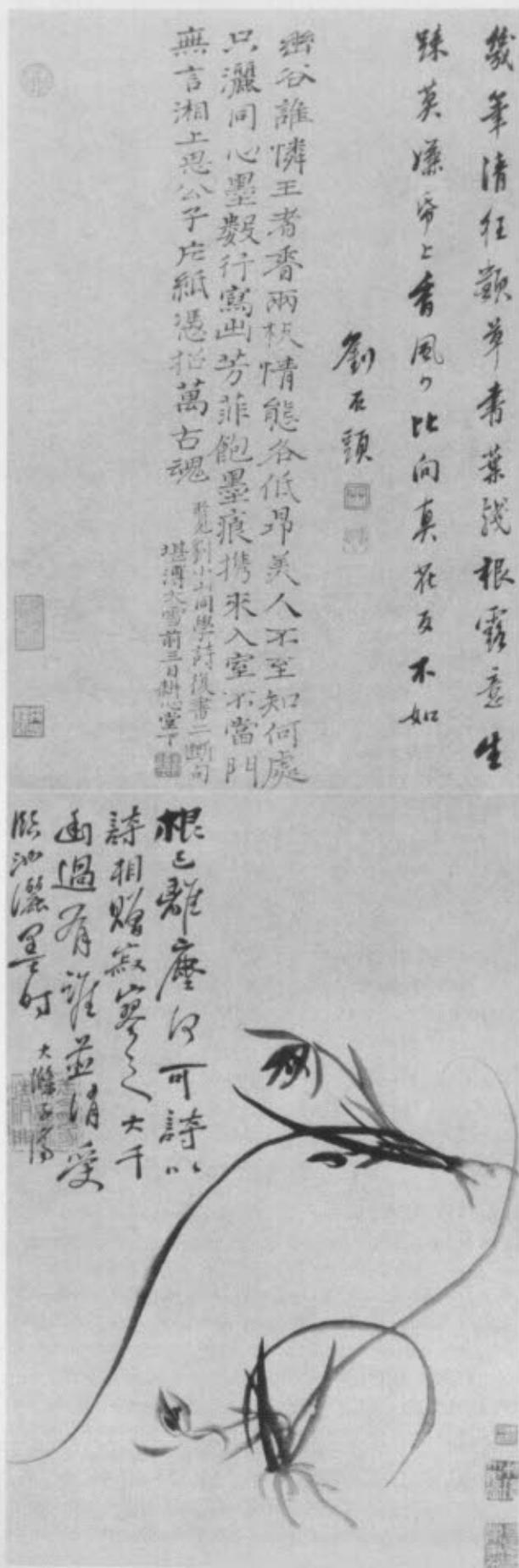
JINGJIANG DESCENDANT

Shitao's developing relationship with Bada Shanren was only one of the means by which he pursued a reconciliation with his family origins and publicized his identity as a Ming prince, following long years of discretion and self-denial. Cautiously and gradually, after he moved into the Great Cleansing Hall he also began to change the names he used, a process that can be traced through new additions to the roster of self-referential seals that he had accumulated over a lifetime.⁷⁶ Among the earlier seals that he continued to use at Dadi Tang was one reading "Azhang" (see Figure 82), which may mean that Shitao was the oldest son in his family, since *zhang* often means "older" in a family context. Now, in 1697, he added a new seal that in a sense reveals the secret of

the earlier one, for it read "Azhang, tenth-generation descendant of Zan" (see Figure 79).⁷⁷ Zhu Zanyi was second in the line of Jingjiang princes enfeoffed by the founder of the Ming, Zhu Yuanzhang. Although the legend of the seal would still have been obscure for many, nonetheless it unambiguously identifies Shitao as a descendant of Zhu Xinglong, the Ming founder's elder brother.

For the Ming loyalists of the Yangzhou area, the imperial identity of Shitao transformed him into a living symbol of the dynasty to which they had offered their lives. Most of the prominent figures in that aging group of men had known Shitao in the 1680s or earlier; but one who had not was Li Lin, whom Shitao met for the first time in 1698, as Li describes:⁷⁸

In Yangzhou's Eastern City there is a Mr. Shi from Western Yue [modern Guangxi] who has been famous in the city for his calligraphy and painting for several years now. My cousin Dacun [Li Guosong] once told me: "Mr. Shi is a member of the former Imperial family." In the winter of *dingqiu* [1697–8] I twice called upon him, but he was ill and I was unable to meet him. In the next year *wuyin*, I had to flee the flooding, and settled outside Yangzhou [?]. When he heard that I had arrived, he came out of the city to visit me, and the next day I passed by his study. He took out a handscroll of landscapes and flowers to show me: It was impulsive and free – what used to be called the untrammelled class. The recent poems he had written at the end of the scroll were also full of strange, startling lines. Had [Hu] Jizhong seen this, I know that he would certainly have used his words of praise for [Zhao] Mengfu to praise Mr. Shi [instead].⁷⁹ Having inquired after his lineage, I learned that he was descended from the Princes of Jing-



jiang, just as Liu Yu was descended from King Yuan of Chu. Although King Yuan of Chu was not a son of the Emperor, yet he was still a close relative of the Han dynasty.⁸⁰ With abilities of this kind in calligraphy, painting, and poetry, what difficulty would [Mr. Shi] have had to take examples to the capital and make himself available to patronage, as Mengfu did when he entered service under the Yuan? If he deliberately withdrew into religion to keep himself pure, is it not because he wanted to be able to meet his ancestors later in the underworld? Thus his calligraphy, painting, and poetry are even more to be valued, due to his character.

Alas! For my part, I am descended from a marshal of the previous dynasty. Although my hair is gray, yet this memory remains. As soon as I saw Mr. Shi, without knowing where the tears came from I let out a cry. . . . My family is one of loyal gentlemen: How could I not have made his acquaintance? But who realizes how my sorrow was infinitely deepened by that meeting? Afterward, I looked at his calligraphy and painting; for a long time we said nothing, and then we parted.

Li Lin immediately places Shitao within the now familiar discourse of the prince-painter, defined by the precedents of the early Yuan period. Shitao is contrasted favorably with Zhao Mengfu, just as he was at other times paired with Zhao Mengjian; but whereas Bada could without second thought depict a lone narcissus, knowing that he would be taken to be identifying himself with Zhao Mengjian, Shitao himself generally avoided comparisons with the Zhao family during this late period; instead, he looked elsewhere in the long and distinguished tradition of prince-painters. By early 1699 at latest, Shitao added to his roster of seals one with the legend "today a commoner and a poor man" (see Figure 77), the second line of a couplet by Du Fu, from a famous poem written for the Tang painter Cao Ba. The first line of that couplet, which all would have known, gives the seal its full force: "The general [Cao Ba] is a descendant of [Emperor] Wu of the Wei."⁸¹ In fact, Li Lin's essay to the contrary, Zhao Mengfu would not have been an entirely unfair comparison; clearly, Shitao simply consigned his earlier ambitions at the capital to silence, allowing his new admirer to idealize him. We can assume that he would have seen no good reason to relieve Li Lin of his illusions, especially since he had in the interim moved much closer to Li's position.

Li Lin belonged to a prominent gentry family of Xinghua that traced its scholarly and political lineage back to Li Chunfang (1511–85), a senior grand secretary under the Ming. Several members of the Li family are represented in an early collection of biographies of Ming

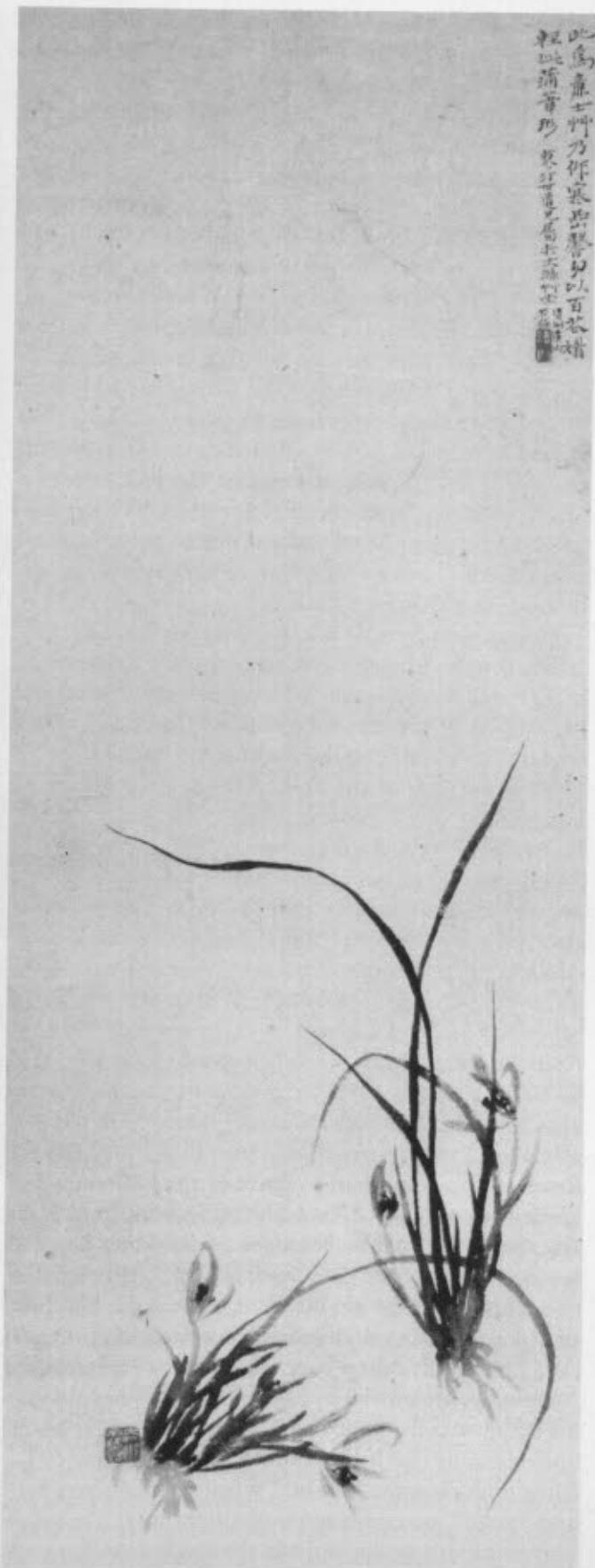
77 (left). *Orchids*, album leaf mounted as a hanging scroll, ink on paper, painting 43 x 29.4 cm. Nanjing Museum. Source: *Shitao shuhua quanji*, vol. 2, pl. 345.

loyalists, *Huang Ming yimin zhuan*. They are also well represented in Zhuo Erkan's compilation of remnant-subject poetry, whose criteria for selection we have seen Li Lin criticize for laxness. Perhaps the most famous of the Li family loyalists was Li Qing (1602–83), *jinshi* of 1631, who twice refused recommendations for official posts under the Qing. Also well-known was Li Gan, whose comments on fashion I cited in Chapter 1. Li Lin and his older cousin, Li Guosong, followed this family tradition, earning a meager living as professional writers. Li Lin was the perfect person to write the authorized biography that would bring Shitao's past into line with his loyalist present. The silences in the "Biography of Dadizi" (c. 1699) are as meaningful as the information provided. It makes no mention of Shitao's political ambitions within the Buddhist church nor, needless to say, of Shitao's encounters with Kangxi in 1684 and 1689. Li barely mentions Shitao's stay in Beijing, noting only that he visited the Ming tombs. Conversely, he insists at some length on Shitao's imperial ancestry (though he does not give Shitao's princely name, Zhu Ruoji) and includes a pedantic appendix castigating any remaining doubters.⁸²

Like the other remnant subjects, especially the more eccentric ones, Shitao also attracted admirers among a younger generation of men for whom they inspired a romantic fascination. Su Pi, who accompanied Shitao on the outing depicted in *Drunk in Autumn Woods* (see Plate 5), was one such admirer, Huang You another; a third was Hong Zhengzhi (1674–1735), from a wealthy Huizhou family in Yangzhou, whose portrait is reproduced in Plate 14. Hong studied painting with Shitao and collected the master's paintings. He is also known to have possessed a detailed autobiography by Shitao entitled *My Own Account*, unfortunately lost; clearly, his relationship with Shitao was also caught up with the artist's political identity.⁸³ In a long colophon that he wrote in 1720 after acquiring Shitao's 1686 handscroll *Streams and Mountains without End*, Hong Zhengzhi transcribed a colophon that Jiang Shijie (1647–1709) had written for another landscape handscroll by Shitao:

As he looks toward the southern capital and the
northern capital,
Following the devastation, Qingxiang's family is no
more.
With his brush the white-haired man exhausts an
imperial descendant's tears,
All that remains is the rivers and mountains of a
handscroll picture.

In the late 1690s, Shitao painted for his young friend an album of orchid paintings that originally contained a very large number of leaves but no longer exists in its original form. Only a single leaf from a well-recorded



78. *Orchids*, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 68 x 26.5 cm. Tianjin People's Publishing House. Source: *Shitao shuhua quanji*, vol. 2, pl. 289.

twelve-leaf selection has been reproduced (Figure 79). From the evidence of the written record, Hong subsequently invited other people to add colophons, probably on facing leaves; he was especially interested in involving remnant subjects, and when necessary was even willing to send the whole album out of town to obtain a desired contribution.⁸⁴ Unfortunately, precise dimensions are not available for the one reproduced leaf, but its proportions leave open the possibility that the orchid painting for which Zhu Kanpu wrote his colophon, together with the paper on which the colophon is written (the two now mounted as a hanging scroll), originally belonged to Hong's album. The partial list of known contributors already allows us to infer that Hong (like Huang You earlier, in his two albums of 1695) created an interdynastic space centered on the paintings of a Ming prince and further defined by the colophon contributions of other Ming imperial descendants, remnant subjects who lived in Yangzhou or had Yangzhou connections, and admirers such as himself.

Five of the presently known contributors, including Li Guosong and Jiang Shijie, are frequently encountered in surviving colophons to Shitao's paintings.⁸⁵ Jiang Shijie, the son of the celebrated loyalist Jiang Cai, was a Suzhou-based calligrapher and painter known for his work in the style of the Yuan dynasty artist Ni Zan.⁸⁶ Huang Yun was a prolific writer and scholar known for his plain, principled character; apparently poor, he found patrons to publish his works over at least four decades from the 1640s to the 1680s.⁸⁷ Hong Zhengzhi's uncle Hong Jiashi (1645–1712) was a widely traveled scholar, philosopher, and man of letters, established in Yizheng. Like Huang Yun, he was recommended for office but declined, ostensibly on the grounds of age.⁸⁸ Xian Zhu was a native of Luzhou in Sichuan who was based in Yizheng; a poet, calligrapher, and painter, he also published two collections of poetry.⁸⁹ His name is an obvious pseudonym that means, literally, "formerly famous." The Yangzhou gazetteer of 1733 offers the following information: "Xian Zhu, *zi* Qianfu, from Nanjing. Some say that he belonged to the Ming imperial family but concealed the surname Zhu." Although the two Zhu characters are different, there is the hint here of a second reading of his name: "formerly of the [imperial] Zhu family." In a later biography we learn more: "When Qianfu moved to Jinling [Nanjing] he said that his family was from Luzhou [in Sichuan] and explained apologetically that his surname Xian was taken from his Ming princely name Yiyuan." When the characters "yi" and "yuan" are combined in the right way, it requires only one more stroke to make the single new character "xian."⁹⁰ In Hong Zhengzhi's album, his colophon was written after another by Bada Shanren, and it is prob-

ably not a coincidence that he chose to write about the link between the two Ming prince-painters.⁹¹

These five men, together with some we have already met such as Li Lin, Ni Yongqing, Cheng Jing'e, Tao Ji, and Fei Mi, and others who will be encountered later, define the remnant-subject community in Yangzhou and beyond into which Shitao was welcomed in his role as prince-painter.⁹² Still, despite the acceptance that Hong Zhengzhi's album demonstrates, Shitao continued to nurse private feelings of dissatisfaction with himself and with the world. This we know from a remarkable document, the so-called *Gengchen Manuscript of Poems*, that gives us access to Shitao's thinking on the very questions on which he usually remained silent. The manuscript comprises poems that he wrote on the last night of the year *gengchen*, 1700, together with others written two weeks later on the last day of the New Year's festival. New Year's Eve was traditionally a moment to reflect on the passing of time, so it is not surprising to find him looking back on his life and assessing his present circumstances. Moreover, during the year that was just beginning, 1701, he was to be sixty years old, thus completing a full cycle of years – a fact that gave that last night intense significance for him. Furthermore, he was ill, and the fear of impending death he mentions later in 1701 may already have been preoccupying him. He is particularly explicit in the first two poems, written on New Year's Eve, which were cited at the beginning of Chapter 4 but deserve closer attention here:

To be born in terrible times – how can one bear it?
With neither family nor home, I encountered
Gautama [Buddha].
But Dadi has thrown all of that away
And now, in the middle of the night, the wind is
whistling.
I wrongly mistrusted my own roots, proclaimed I
didn't care,
Simply followed what I saw and avoided discussion.
I wasn't hurt by gossip of the kind
That said: "How can Qingxiang [i.e., Shitao] be a
man?"

Shitao introduces the poems with this comment: "With private grief for my sad destiny I write these seven-character poems, but those who know me need not read them as poetry." Not reading the poem, then, as poetry, we finally have explicit confirmation of the ambivalence toward his family origins that made it possible for him to countenance collaboration with Manchu power, and confirmation that it was his princely identity, known to others, that led to criticism of his collaboration: "How can Qingxiang be a man?" Now he regretted that he had wrongly mistrusted his own roots and had "proclaimed he didn't care." The second poem is no less re-

vealing, confirming the power of his public, political ambition, now abandoned but not forgotten.

White-haired and muddle-headed,
I find it hard to speak,
But in my sixtieth year I offer
thanks to Heaven.
Not knowing where my family
and nation were,
I entrusted myself to temples
as a monk, a living
transcendent.
Seeming to be mad or drunk, I
have been passed over by my
times;
Like a workhorse or an ox, I just
turn out paintings.
None of my contemporaries has
ever asked
If I have dreamed of mounting on
the dragon's back or pushing the
swing.

If the metaphors of the last line are obscure, in context they appear to refer to ambitions for imperial favor. He clearly resented the assumption that by character ("Seeming to be mad or drunk") he was unsuited to a national role, and equally resented his dependence on the market. Li Lin in his biography makes the same judgment: "Born into this generation, his courage and energy found no use. Unable to do anything else, he lived as a monk, and [now] lives out his old age on the reputation of an artist. Alas!"

Shitao continued to pursue private and public reconciliation with his origins. The earliest dated instances of his public reference to his Ming princely name, Zhu Ruoji, date from late 1701–early 1702: signatures in which he uses the characters "Ji" and "Ruoji," which he seems at first to have reserved for rare occasions.⁹³ Around the same time (the earliest examples date from 1702) he began to use a large and visually inescapable seal, reading "Jingjiang descendant" (*Jingjiang Houren*) (see Figure 12), which is rather more common.⁹⁴ Also in 1702 he traveled to Nanjing, where he paid his respects once more at the tomb of the Ming founder at Zhongshan. One likely echo of this pilgrimage – his only trip away from the Yangzhou area after 1695 – is a brief, rather overwrought essay by Li Lin responding to the lost poems



79. "Orchids and Bamboo," *Orchids*, album of 12 painting leaves with colophons on facing pages, ink on paper, dimensions and whereabouts unknown. Source: *Shitao huaji*, fig. 24.

that Shitao wrote to mark his visit to the Zhongshan mausoleum:⁹⁵

Qu [Yuan] and Zou [qiu Ming] stayed within protected walls, so they did not experience for themselves the fall of Chu or Han; yet their feelings were so unbearable that they could not control themselves.⁹⁶ What would it have been like if they had been unlucky and Heaven had given them the age to live through the fall [of their states]? The "Elegy for the Sacred Tree" was written by someone from a different family [from the imperial one]. But when it comes to

"Paying My Respects at the Imperial Tombs" by a family member such as Dadizi, the grief is cutting and the sorrow heartfelt: The feelings are unbearable, uncontrollable. I read the poems once and my clothes were drenched – with tears? with blood? I was completely overcome; need one ask how [Dadizi] felt?

For Shitao, effectively unable to return to Guangxi, a pilgrimage to the Zhongshan mausoleum would have been a symbolic replacement for tending his parents' grave. Judging by the dates of his stay in Nanjing, he may well have visited the tomb at the time of the Qingming festival, the customary moment for visiting the family gravesite.⁹⁷ On the other hand, we cannot assume, and it is even unlikely, that he went to Nanjing specifically for this purpose. His "elder brother," Hetao, was still alive in Nanjing in 1693: When, one wonders, did he pass away?⁹⁸

On present evidence it was not until some years after their first appearance that Shitao began to make more frequent use of the abbreviated versions of his Ming princely name. "Ji" and "Ruoji" are thus entirely missing from the thirty surviving leaves of the 1703 albums for Mr. Liu, for example (see Chapter 8), despite that patron's known loyalist sympathies. If the dated works presently available clearly demonstrate a more open attitude from late 1705 onward, with the two abbreviated names regularly appearing in both signatures and seals from that point on, his use of a "Ruoji" signature and a "Dadizi, Ji" seal on his painting for Yueduan (d. 1704; see Figure 78), suggests that prior to this he may have been more open in circumstances he felt to be appropriate.⁹⁹ Not once, however, could Shitao bring himself to use his complete princely name: Zhu Ruoji. Thus, he retained to the very end a lingering reticence and caution that requires explanation. There is some evidence to suggest that he believed himself to be the Jingjiang line's sole remaining descendant and heir: By calling himself "Azhang, tenth-generation descendant of Zan," he not only put himself in a direct line of princely descent but also effectively claimed the status of the next in line. We know from the 1677 poem cited in Chapter 4 that he thought himself the only survivor of a massacre of his family. He may have had reason to believe, or perhaps simply wished to believe, that all those before him in line had also been killed. It was not an unreasonable supposition, given the sequence of bloody episodes that destroyed the Jingjiang line between 1640 and 1650. Believing himself, then, to be the heir to the Jingjiang line, Shitao could not but be sensitive to the dangers of making a public show of his identity. A Ming loyalist insurrection was not yet out of the question at this time, and as late as 1709 Kangxi was cautious enough politically

to have an unwitting Ming pretender executed.¹⁰⁰ It is worth noting that he did so with the help of the Liang-Huai Salt Commissioner of the time, Cao Yin, to whom Shitao was well known.

Shitao's final act of atonement and reconciliation involved not his own name but that of his home. In the last year of his life, Shitao began to speak of his home increasingly as the Hall of the Great Foundation (Daben Tang).¹⁰¹ To mark the occasion, he carved four new seals: two with the hall name alone (see Figure 220 for one), a third reading "Ji of the Hall of the Great Foundation" (see Figure 218), and a fourth reading "Ruoji of the Hall of the Great Foundation" (see Figure 217). All dated appearances of the name, whether in seals or signatures, fall in the year 1707. What, then, was the meaning of this new name? The Hall of the Great Foundation was the name of a palace building, within the Ming palace in Nanjing, that was built in 1368 at the orders of the Ming founder for the instruction of his sons and other imperial family members.¹⁰² The "great foundation" referred to the instruction they received there, which they were expected to put into action and transmit to future generations of the Ming dynasty. Shitao's interest at this time in Ming imperial Nanjing is attested by a fine topographical painting depicting Qingliang Terrace just within the southwest corner of the city wall.¹⁰³ Though not itself a Ming imperial site (it had a much more ancient history), Qingliang Terrace is made to stand in for the Ming palace. In the poem that Shitao inscribed above the scene, the "abandoned courtyards" of the site are set against the image of "mausoleum pines," and he ends with lines that evoke the trope of now-gone palace singers: "Since ancient times the rise and fall of dynasties has inspired sadness; don't visit this hilltop with any hope of hearing the sounds of songs." To this painting and poem, signed "the leftover man from Qingxiang, Ji," an as-yet-unidentified remnant subject responded with a loyalist poem above the painting, "tearfully inscribed." Though Shitao unfortunately left no equivalent commentary that would elucidate the precise significance of the earlier Daben Tang for him, we can reconstruct some of the conventional meanings attached to it from a Kangxi-period guidebook to, and historical meditation on, historical Nanjing, *Visits to the Historical Sites of Jinling (Jinling lan gu)*. Shitao is not known to have been personally acquainted with the author, Yu Binshuo, but may well have known the book: Its editor was Zhang Zong, mentioned in the "Biography of Dadizi" as the person in whose company Shitao visited the sites of Nanjing during the 1680s. At the very least, through Zhang he would have been aware of such an important historical site. The Hall of the Great Foundation – the final heading in the guidebook, where it sig-

nifies metonymically the entire Ming palace ruins – is itself discussed only at the end of the long entry:

In the eleventh month of the first year of the Hongwu reign (1368), a Hall of the Great Foundation was once again built within the palace precinct. Teachers were chosen to instruct the princes and the children of the nobles: They all studied there. What sadness! Once this great foundation was established, good fortune lasted for over two hundred and seventy years. The country was at peace, and culture flourished. Its merits rivaled the Zhou and the Han, its empire surpassed Tang and Song; it was comparable to the six dynasties [of history]. But the founder of the dynasty had no far-seeing or great provisions, and his [late Ming] descendants calculated only from day to day. The extent of the extravagance! The neglect of virtuous effort! What a contrast it makes. Today the former palace is planted with millet. Seekers after history pass through the ruins, the misty waste spotted with white dew, squirrels amid the clumps of brambles. With a single breath, they all sigh. On the one hand resplendence, on the other desolation. In rulership, instability and stability cannot be spoken of on the same day. Merit or danger: Which path will be followed? Appearances or substance: Which will flourish? It is necessary to have those who can make the distinctions. This is the main purpose of my visits to the sites of history.¹⁰⁴

Yu Binshuo's text is not critical of the Daben Tang, which symbolizes for him the legitimate aspirations of the Ming at its beginnings. This sits well with Shitao's adoption of the name for his home. It makes sense that in identifying his home with a Ming palace, he would have returned to the beginning of the dynasty, choosing a place that encapsulated the idea of the Ming as a positive aspiration, untainted by the later corruption of the idea; but the Daben Tang also symbolized his personal connection to the Ming imperial center. Shitao, one recalls, identified himself not as an eleventh-generation descendant of Zhu Xinglong but as a tenth-generation descendant of Zhu Zanyi who, unlike his father, would have studied in the Daben Tang. It was in this way that Shitao at the end of his life finally recovered in Yangzhou the palace that he had lost in Guangxi.

THE ORPHAN PRINCE

In his hallucinatory preface to the *Gengchen Manuscript of Poems*, Shitao exposes the scar of a terrible lack, as he imagines the wholeness of family at the moment of his birth:

Tonight, the last night of the year *gengchen*, sitting in illness, I suddenly feel sad; but it is not in one or two words that I can do justice to the feelings of a lifetime. I think of

my parents giving birth to this body of mine, which this year is sixty years old, asking themselves if I was a boy or a girl. I let out a cry, and the priest there was happy to know it was me. I wasn't made of grass or wood, but I couldn't form words to thank the Earth god. [Still,] having this blood and this heart-mind, I was not ashamed to make my own life.

At the age of sixty, Shitao felt the need to reconcile himself to his origins, affirming a unity for his life in a movement of cyclical return. His contact with Bada Shanren and his declarations of his family lineage were two complementary paths of return; but there was also the path seen in the *Gengchen Manuscript* preface, by way of an effort of memory and reconstruction directed toward unspeakable origins and a secret history of concealment over long decades and thousands of miles.¹⁰⁵ To expose that history – to “come out” in modern parlance – was to assume the role of the orphan prince, and indeed in these late Yangzhou years Shitao came to refer to himself in seals and signatures as “the Old Man Who Is Alone in the World” (*Lingding Laoren*): an intensely resonant name that not only evokes his lack of a wife or children (and thus descendants) but also alludes to the broken contact with the entire older generation of his immediate family. In this latter sense, it is translatable as “Orphaned Old Man.”¹⁰⁶

The orphan prince is one of the great symbolic topos of the Chinese dynastic imaginary. In the theater and in popular and middlebrow urban culture more generally, the orphan prince was the symbol of loyalist hopes, the child to be saved from destruction and returned to the throne.¹⁰⁷ Although Shitao's cultural heritage generally lay elsewhere, this is one theatrical topos that echoes through his own accounts of his life: “Not knowing where my family and nation were, I entrusted myself to temples as a monk, a living transcendent.” In the “high tradition,” meanwhile, through which Shitao explored his secret history, the orphan prince took on a different guise, as the solitary survivor, witness to history, victim of an unfortunate destiny: “To be born in terrible times – how can one bear it? / With neither family nor home, I encountered Gautama.”

Cast out from the security of kinship networks, and cut off from his geographical origins, Shitao compensated by filling his work with reminders of his origins. Long before he began to publicize his princely identity through seals and signatures, he regularly proclaimed his geographical origins in Western Yue (Guangxi), and more specifically Quanzhou, with seals reading “mountains of Yue” (*Yue shan*) (see Figure 63), “a man from Gukou [Quanzhou] at the headwaters of the Xiang” (*Xiangyuan Gukou ren*) (see Figure 160), “Shitao from Qingxiang” (*Qingxiang Shitao*) (see Figure 212), “Ji

from Qingxiang" (*Qingxiang Ji*) (see Figure 160), and "old man from Qingxiang" (*Qingxiang Laoren*) (see Figure 186). The paintings themselves often incorporate emblematic signs of origins in the form of signature motifs. In one of his albums of reminiscences, executed in 1684, Shitao explained the personal meaning for him of a type of flat-topped tree common in his work of the 1670s and 1680s: "I am used to painting flat-topped trees, /From time to time I switch around the hut. /I sit alone there, beside the water, /You can assume that I'm thinking of Qingxiang."¹⁰⁸ Though no text confirms it, the cone-shaped mountain peak so closely associated with Shitao is surely related to the famous "sugarloaf" karst mountains for which the Guilin area was celebrated. The fact that the palace of the princes of Jingjiang stood at the foot of the most famous of these, the Peak of Solitary Elegance (*Duxiu Feng*), in the city of Guilin itself, can only have intensified the significance of the mountain form for him. Very early in his career Shitao displaced this sign of his origins into a Huangshan context, where similarly shaped peaks could be seen, a Guilin landscape high in the clouds (see Figure 158). More speculatively, his many paintings of caves and grottoes, obviously evocative of religious asceticism and access to the beyond, also bring to mind the fact that the Guilin area where he was born was known for its grottoes as well as its mountains. We do not know what visual memories, if any, Shitao had of these celebrated natural wonders that served as refuges at the fall of the Ming.¹⁰⁹ However, it is notable that in most of his paintings of caves, Shitao depicts himself (or a figure with whom he can be identified) inside the cave, or at least framed by it, turning it into a shelter for the solitary individual (Figure 80; see Figure 50). This suggests that Shitao may have chosen the name Dadi for his Yangzhou home with reference less to Mount Dadi itself than to the cave at its heart, Dadi Grotto Heaven.

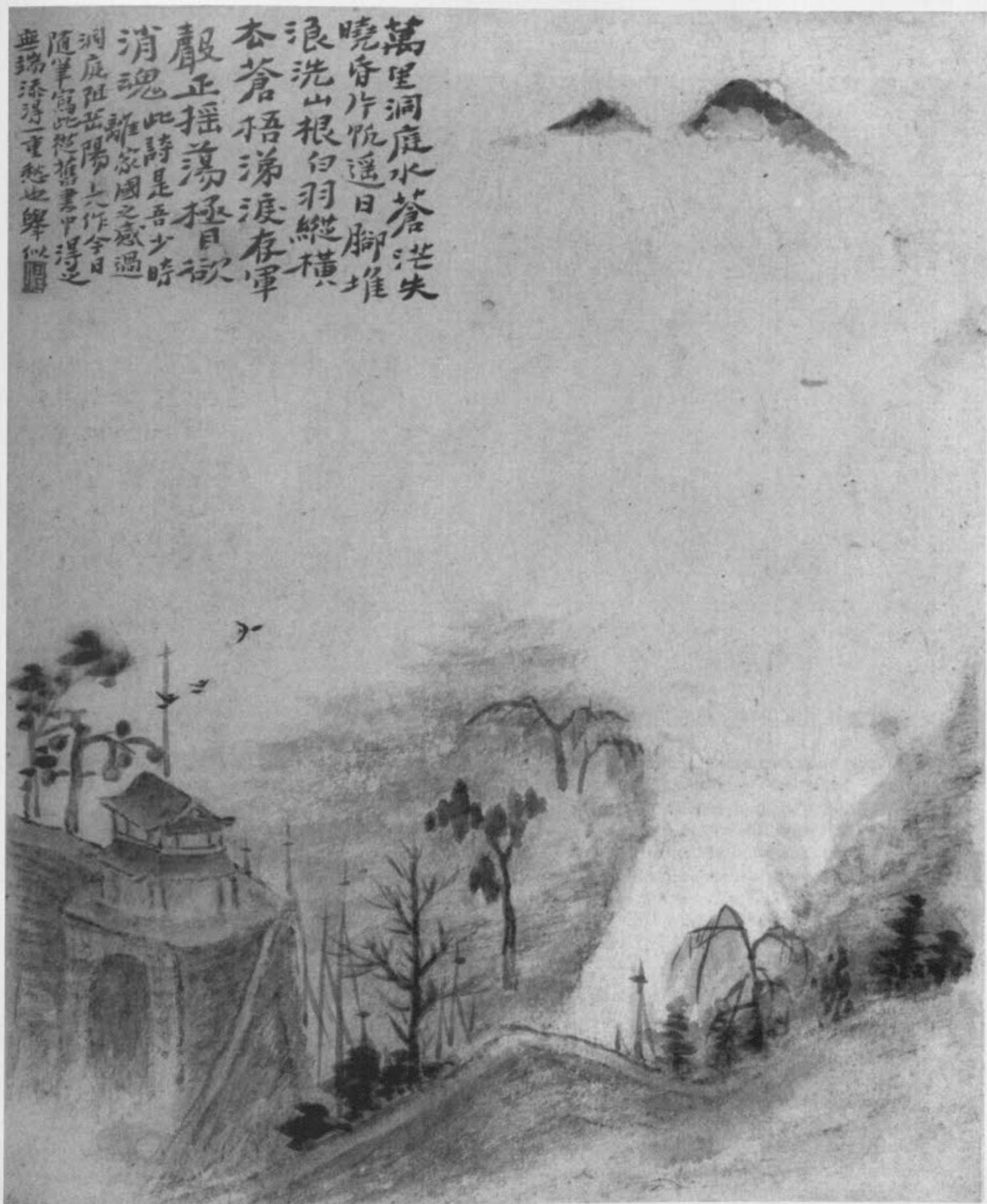
To such specific reminders of origins, Shitao added many autobiographical memory depictions of the orphan prince. Among the most poignant of these is his illustration, probably from 1701, of a poem that he had



80. "Singing Strings Spring," *Landscapes of the Highest Class*, album of 12 leaves, ink or ink and light color on paper, each leaf 23 x 17.6 cm, leaf 4, ink and light color on paper. Sen-oku Hakkokan, Sumitomo Collection.

written as a teenager in the 1650s, little more than a decade after the fall of the Ming (Figure 81):

The ten thousand *li* of Dongting's water
Are blurred, lost in the dawn half-light.
A sail floats at the foot of the sun,
Waves upon waves have washed away the
mountain's roots.
White feathers scatter in all directions,
An old *wutong* tree remains, weeping.
The sound of soldiers shakes the ground;
I gaze, heartbroken, into the distance.



萬里洞庭水蒼茫失
 曉昏片帆遙日脚堆
 浪洗山根白羽縱橫
 本蒼梧涕淚存軍
 聲正搖蕩極目欲
 消魂此詩是吾少時
洞庭阻岳陽六作今日
隨筆寫此從舊書中得之
 無端添得重愁也舉似

81. "Yueyang Tower," leaf from an album of 6 leaves of painting and calligraphy by Shitao and Bada Shanren (1626-1705), ink and color on paper, 21.9 x 17.2 cm. Private Collection.



82. "Yueyang Tower," *Eight Views of the South*, album of 8 leaves, ink and light color on paper, each leaf 20.3 x 27.5 cm, leaf 5. British Museum, London.

To this he added a note of explanation:

This poem expresses my feelings as a young man at losing my family and nation. I wrote it when I was stuck at the Yueyang Tower, waiting to cross [Lake] Dongting, and now I have sketched an illustration. I found [the poem] in an old book, where "the tattered edges added another layer of melancholy." I have imitated that effect [in the painting].

The distance is at once psychological and temporal, taking its cue from the experience of reading the old manuscript. Shitao has faded out parts of motifs, so that the different elements of the scene emerge, dreamlike, from pale obscurity to be read as mist, water, light, or clouds according to context. The poem must date from no later than 1657. He crossed Lake Dongting twice in the 1650s: once in 1654–5 and a second time in 1657, when he followed the Xiang River south as far as Mount

Heng, only a few hundred miles downstream from the place where he was born. Shitao's insistence, forty-five years later, on the loyalist character of his early poem reflects not only his greater openness by that time, but perhaps also the nature of the commission to which the painting belongs; for it is one of three leaves that were apparently accompanied by others by Bada Shanren (though not necessarily the Bada leaves included in the album now).¹¹⁰

At a slightly earlier date, probably at the end of the 1690s, Shitao had included a similarly ethereal illustration of the same poem in an album of memory landscapes (Figure 82). While there was in that case no explanatory note, Shitao signed himself "Dadizi who is alone in the world" (*lingding Dadizi*), anticipating the later "old man who is alone in the world" (*lingding laoren*) and bringing into play the idea of the orphan prince. In fact, the entire album in question, *Eight Views of the South*, may be read as an extension of that idea, representing his experience of wandering while concealing his identity. Drawing again on poems written at the time, Shitao evoked decades of journeying. If the images



83. "Feilai Peak," *Eight Views of the South*, album of 8 leaves, ink and light color on paper, each leaf 20.3 x 27.5 cm, leaf 4. British Museum, London.

are rearranged in the approximate sequence of lived time, the figure gazing out over Lake Dongting in the mid-1650s as soldiers march by gives way to "the still figure who sits playing a *sheng*" at Lingyin Temple near the Buddhist cave temples of Feilai Peak, outside Hangzhou, around 1665 (Figure 83).¹¹¹ He explores the landscape of Jingxian in Anhui c. 1676–7, and we meet him again in the late 1670s as he passes by the Marbled Stone Cliff on the south bank of the Yangzi, a few miles from Nanjing: "Tomorrow I'll be gone, a thousand *li* away, / Looking back on the water's fast current" (see Figure 210). Settled temporarily in Nanjing in the early 1680s, he visits the Flower-Rain Terrace (Yuhua Tai): "[I]n the evening at sunset after people left I often climbed this platform. When I finished chanting poems I sometimes painted it as well" (see Plate 9). He walks to Nanjing's East Mountain: "Coming upon the distant rising peak, / I say to myself: I ought to settle in this

place" (see Figure 209). Beyond East Mountain, he visits Square Mountain, with its mountaintop pool known as Stone Dragon Pool, and through the symbolism of the imperial dragon discreetly evokes his princely status: "Why is the surface of the dragon's pool among the clouds / Disturbed by waves?"¹¹²

This album is far from unusual: The orphan prince is the protagonist, the witness, throughout the vast number of memory landscapes that Shitao painted in the years after settling definitively in Yangzhou, from *Qingxiang Dadizi's Reminiscence of the Thirty-six Peaks* to the great *Waterfall at Mount Lu*, where we see him together with his early protector, Hetao (see Plate 12). It is significant that in these memory landscapes Shitao evoked almost exclusively moments and places from the years before 1683, when he began his pursuit of Qing patronage. These paintings thus establish a connection between Shitao's post-Beijing destiny as a prince-painter and his initial sense of himself as a prince taking refuge in the *sangha*. The artist passes over in silence his years in Beijing from 1690 to 1692, as well as his first stay in Yangzhou in the late 1680s. A few images can be tied to

the post-1683 years in Nanjing, but these, as we shall see, make no reference to the collaborationist life narrative that had begun to engage him by that time. In this way, the process of remembering extended Shitao's final narrative of destiny, as a prince-painter and orphan prince, backward in time to encompass the full stretch, if not all the moments, of his life.

It is true that to focus on the orphan prince entails a narrowing of the framework of interpretation. One could argue with equal justification, for example, that Shitao's remembered wanderings and exile belong to the larger history of inter-dynastic, wilderness representation, and as such are not essentially different from, say, Gong Xian's purely imagined landscapes. One could also argue with no less justice that they have a further context in the long literati history of representations of wanderings and exile, to which they add a further chapter. Certainly, Shitao was sensitive to these contexts. One can see his interest in the inter-dynastic wilderness, for example, in the loving re-creation in *Eight Views of the South* of the environment of the Nanjing suburbs, home to so many loyalists and exhaustively depicted by the painters among them. His engagement with the literati tradition is clear from his many illustrations of classic poems, closely related to his memory landscapes, where like any educated man he could easily find echoes of his own experience. Li Bai's celebrated poem *Sending Off Meng Haoran at the Yellow Crane Tower on a Journey to Guangling [Yangzhou]*, however, which Shitao illustrated in a late 1690s album of illustrations to Tang poems, is most than just one of the most famous Yangzhou-related poems of the tradition, not to mention a classic parting poem; it also condenses the part of Shitao's own life journey that had taken him from Wuchang to Yangzhou (Figure 84). If I choose here to place the emphasis on the orphan prince as protagonist, it is because the specificity of his wilderness and literati identities, as well as his autobiographical art, lies there. This is strikingly confirmed in the *Illustrations*



84. "Illustration to Li Bai's 'Sending Off Meng Haoran to Guangling,'" *Illustrations to Tang Poems*, album of 8 leaves, ink and color on paper, each leaf 23.3 x 16.5 cm, leaf 2. Palace Museum, Beijing.

to *Tang Poems* to which this leaf belongs, where only the first seven images are illustrations of the poems. The eighth and final leaf bears no poem to identify the solitary figure who gazes out at us, only a signature – the single character "Ji," from his Ming princely name.¹¹³

The memory implicit in that melancholy image is rendered explicit in an album painted shortly before his death, *Reminiscences of Jinling [Nanjing]*, which opens with a very similar image illustrating a lament from 1680, drawn from the set of poems he had written upon moving into the Single Branch Pavilion in Nanjing (see Figure 214). Shitao looks out at us from his home in memory, voicing the private sorrow of orphanhood that had stayed with him his whole life:

I begin to feel the flavor of purity
 On this winter's night, as moonlight floods the
 courtyard.
 Utter poverty pierces me to the marrow,
 Under the sky I dare to call out to the souls of the
 dead.
 Among cold words I abandoned the [family] fire,
 My liver withered, a root divested of leaves.
 Who appreciates this meaning? –
 I want to sigh, but the sound comes out a sob.