ARS ORIENTALIS
A SPECIAL ISSUE HONORING
THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE FREER GALLERY OF ART

Freer Gallery of Art, ca. 1923.
Freer Gallery of Art Building Records,
Freer Gallery of Art and
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives,
Photographer: National Photo.
Ars Orientalis solicits scholarly manuscripts on the art and archaeology of Asia, including the ancient Near East and the Islamic world. The journal welcomes a broad range of themes and approaches. Articles of interest to scholars in diverse fields or disciplines are particularly sought, as are suggestions for occasional thematic issues and reviews of important books in Western or Asian languages. Brief research notes and responses to articles in previous issues of Ars Orientalis will also be considered. Submissions must be in English, with all non-English quotations provided in translation. Authors are asked to follow The Chicago Manual of Style, 14th ed. A style sheet is available from the managing editor or at the Ars Orientalis home page.

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On the cover: Seated man, attrib. Basawan, Mughal period, ca. 1580–85. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, F53.60. Also reproduced on page 46.
Preface

Seventy-five years ago, in 1923, the Freer Gallery of Art opened to the public as the first Smithsonian museum for the fine arts, thanks to the vision and generosity of Detroit railroad-car manufacturer Charles Lang Freer (1856–1919). In 1906 Freer had offered the United States government his extraordinary collection of Asian and American art and, together with architect Charles A. Platt, had designed the building that would house it. Since that original bequest of some 9,000 objects, the holdings of the Freer Gallery have nearly tripled, now totaling more than 26,000 objects; the American holdings, which Freer considered “harmonious” and therefore complete, do not grow. Today the gallery is known throughout the world for its Chinese paintings, Japanese folding screens, Indian and Persian painting and manuscripts, and Buddhist sculpture.

But Freer’s vision extended beyond accumulating Asian art and designing a facility that would bring it to public attention. Knowing how little the arts of Asia were then appreciated by Westerners, he also bequeathed to the University of Michigan funds for research and publication on the Freer Gallery’s Asian holdings. Out of that bequest was born a long collaboration between the gallery and the university in the study and presentation of Asian art. Since 1954 that collaboration has been largely articulated through the pages of Ars Orientalis, which is cosponsored by the University of Michigan Department of the History of Art and the Freer Gallery of Art.

As a testimonial to the continuing strength of the partnership between the two institutions, the Editorial Board of Ars Orientalis invited distinguished scholars of Asian art to honor the Freer Gallery’s seventy-fifth anniversary by contributing articles on objects in the Freer collection to this special issue. Contributors were asked to reassess classic works in the collection from a contemporary point of view. To that end, Ann C. Gunter and Margaret Cool Root (whose coauthorship enacts the Freer/University of Michigan connection) examine archaeological and historiographic issues surrounding the silver phiale inscribed with the name of the Achaemenid Persian king Artaxerxes I (r. 465–425 B.C.), as well as the social meanings of such royally inscribed phialai. A tenth-century bronze sculpture of Queen Sembiyan Mahadevi as Parvati leads Vidya Dehejia to reconsider early Indian conceptions of portraiture. Martin J. Powers argues that the twelfth-century handscroll Tao Yuanming Returning to Seclusion is based on a Song notion of romantic marriage not present in the fourth-century prose-poem upon which it improvises. James Cahill proposes that the Tang elements noticeable in such Yuan
works as Qian Xuan’s *Yang Guifei Mounting a Horse* and Zhao Mengfu’s *Sheep and Goat* may have been reintroduced into China by way of Central Asia. The similarity of *Barbarian Pasturing a Horse* to several hanging scrolls in other collections suggests to Richard M. Barnhart that they were all produced in an early fifteenth-century workshop and marketed as Song works. Yoshiaki Shimizu uses a hanging scroll attributed to Tenshō Shūbun to help define “Shūbun,” “Shūbunesque,” and “anti-Shūbun” styles in fifteenth-century Japanese landscape compositions. And Marianna Shreve Simpson’s reexamination of a sixteenth-century Persian manuscript commonly called the Freer Jāmi reveals embedded in one of its illustrations the microscopic signature of painter and calligrapher Shaykh-Muhammad.

The presentation of these seven reassessments has been much enhanced by Beth Schlenoff, a former graphic designer at the Freer Gallery, and Carol Beehler, the Freer’s art director for publications. Both assisted in updating the design of *Ars Orientalis*. It is the long history of such acts of cooperation, as well as the Freer Gallery of Art’s seventy-five years of enriching and exhibiting the Freer legacy, that the present volume celebrates.

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Replicating, Inscribing, Giving: Ernst Herzfeld and Artaxerxes' Silver Phiale in the Freer Gallery of Art
FIG. 1.
The Freer Artaxerxes phiale. Courtesy Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 74.30.

a) side view  
b) interior view  
c) exterior view  
d) drawing by Julie Perlmutter
Replicating, Inscribing, Giving: Ernst Herzfeld and Artaxerxes’ Silver Phiale in the Freer Gallery of Art

In 1974, the year following its fiftieth anniversary, the Freer Gallery of Art purchased a silver phiale (fig. 1) inscribed with the name and titulary of the Achaemenid Persian king Artaxerxes I (r. 465–425 B.C.). An extremely rare example of royally inscribed Achaemenid precious metalware, this phiale was one of four nearly identical handleless, shallow silver bowls that had come to light in Iran sometime before 1935, reportedly as a group. The Gallery’s seventy-fifth anniversary offers a fitting occasion on which to draw renewed attention to this important acquisition. In the almost quarter century since its accession, research and thinking on a wide range of art historical, philological, archaeological, technical, and ethical issues concerning Achaemenid precious metalware has reaffirmed both the authenticity and the significance of the Freer phiale and its companion pieces. In this article we offer new evidence on their authenticity as well as on the site and circumstances of their discovery and subsequent modern history. From there we probe a variety of issues relating to the ancient history and social meaning of such vessels within the context of the Achaemenid Persian imperial ethos, associated economies of power, prestige, and wealth, and spiritual resonances with notions of the beautiful.

DESCRIPTION

The Freer vessel is a shallow bowl with a plain, everted rim. Viewed from the exterior, it has a round depression at the center, which is encircled by fourteen raised leaf-shaped tongues terminating in lotus buds. Nestled between each pair of buds are fourteen raised lobes. Viewed from the interior, the round depression at the center of the bowl becomes a boss (in Greek, the omphalos or navel) encircled by the floral decorative elements, which now appear as concavities. The cuneiform inscription runs continuously around the interior rim of the bowl close to the outer edge (starting at 12 o’clock on fig. 1b and moving clockwise), leaving undorned a space roughly equivalent to two of the fourteen leaf and lobe units. Two rectangular depressed marks (1.2 mm × 0.65 mm at outer extremities of the rectangle) occur: one on the inner rim near the inscription and the other on the outer rim. Macrophotography of the mark on the outer rim reveals a vague linear pattern that may depict one or more animals if it is not simply the result of creasing in the metal surface (fig. 2). The phiale measures 4.8 cm in height and 29.5 cm in rim diameter. It weighs 922 grams. The vessel was shaped, decorated, and finished through a combination of hammering, chasing, engraving, and burnishing. Recessed centering marks are visible on both exterior and interior. The condition of the bowl is excellent except for a few minute areas of copper corrosion and severe abrasion of a small passage of the inscription.

Roland Kent’s translation of the Old Persian inscription reads: “Artaxerxes the Great King, King of Kings, King of Countries, son of Xerxes the King [who was] son of Darius the King; in whose royal house this silver saucer was made.”

MODERN HISTORY OF THE PHIALE

Hamadan (Ecbatana): Putative Provenance? The Freer phiale and the three other nearly identical...
inscribed vessels said to have been found with it were first published in 1935 and 1937 by Ernst Herzfeld, who supplied no information on provenance or current owner and whereabouts of the artifacts at that time. Only subsequently was the provenance of Hamadan furnished by A.T. Olmstead in his influential historical account of the Persian empire. As inheritor of Herzfeld’s directorship of the Chicago Persepolis Expedition, Erich Schmidt might have been expected to be privy to the same documents or anecdotes concerning the vessels that Olmstead was. But instead, in his publication of the Persepolis excavations, Schmidt displays thinly veiled frustration over Olmstead’s unqualified declaration of the Hamadan provenance for this important set of artifacts without any substantiation. As Schmidt observes, “We must assume that Olmstead had definite information with regard to the find-location of the bowls. . . . Herzfeld, who published the Artaxerxes vessels, reported neither their find-spot nor their present location.”

Schmidt’s frustration on this point was undoubtedly double-pronged. In general terms, the name Hamadan attached to a mysteriously retrieved artifact was already a warning signal on a variety of levels to field archaeologists working in Iran. In more specific terms, Schmidt had personal reason to be provoked by Herzfeld’s withholding of information on many crucial details of his field operations as first director of the Chicago Persepolis Expedition (1931–34). Schmidt may even have entertained suspicions that the Artaxerxes phialai had a Persepolis connection that Herzfeld was unwilling to share with him. By leaking what we would currently call the “disinformation” of a Hamadan provenance to Olmstead, Herzfeld would have been diverting attention away from the fact that he was actively engaged in the excavation of Persepolis at the time when the phialai “came to his attention.” We shall first take up the general problem of Hamadan as a provenance; then we shall discuss the additional complexities of Herzfeld’s activities at Hamadan and at Persepolis and how the two may intertwine to produce new perspectives on the provenance of the Artaxerxes phialai.

Treasures of Hamadan. Modern Hamadan in northwest Iran is the site of ancient Ecbatana, capital of the Median kingdom during the first half of the first millennium B.C. and later the satrapal capital of Media in the Achaemenid empire as well as a summer residence of the king. Although the site has been the subject of small-scale archaeological probings and survey reconnaissance, it has not yet been extensively excavated scientifically, in part because so much of the ancient city lies beneath the modern one. Hamadan has, however, long been identified as a major source of illicitly retrieved Achaemenid antiquities. Work by Oscar Muscarella has raised awareness of the overarching set of problems here. We proceed from that starting point toward a more detailed set of observations on some aspects of the Hamadan “problem” as it is likely to relate to the Freer phiale and its companion pieces.

Precious metal artifacts of Achaemenid type said to have emerged from Hamadan in 1920 and again in 1923 have been thought by some to share cohesive
aspects suggesting an anciently accumulated collection, perhaps dating to the reign of Artaxerxes II (r. 404–359 B.C.) or later. It is apparently entirely unknown (in general, let alone in particulars) where these objects were discovered at the site (assuming for the sake of discussion that they were indeed recovered from the ruins of ancient Ecbatana).\(^{10}\) Subsequently, in the early 1930s, a collection of precious artifacts was said to have been flushed by torrential flood waters from its ancient place of deposition somewhere in the ruins of Ecbatana and washed up onto high ground, where it was retrieved and melted down or dispersed “by the peasants.” Roman Ghirshman dignifies the material involved by referring to it as “the Hamadan Treasure.”\(^{11}\) In this, he follows good precedent, implying by his application of the (capitalized) descriptor “Treasure” to clandestinely retrieved artifacts some verification of ancient status as a deliberately accumulated and thenceforth uncontaminated collection. Furthermore, Ghirshman’s consistent use of the article “the” (in “the Hamadan Treasure”) lends a special sense of historical specificity and legitimacy to the artifacts. “The” after all suggests that on the basis of careful assessment this collection of artifacts from Hamadan is the collection that must be reckoned with as a “Treasure.” “The” further suggests (through rhetorical innuendo that plays on the scholar’s natural desire to know) that this “Treasure” has a particular history behind it—a history relating to the city of Ecbatana into which this miraculously recovered material record can give gripping physical insight.

The so-called Ouxus Treasure presents a parallel case. Dalton’s careful explanation of the complexities surrounding its discovery (in 1877) and subsequent events bringing the “Treasure” into the purview of scholarship is sobering.\(^{12}\) The story only begins with the fact that two different versions of the original place and circumstances of discovery exist. From there, the narrative becomes truly complex, involving additions to and subtractions from the (purported) original group of artifacts called the “Treasure,” including the addition of blatant forgeries of some of the original artifacts. The story of “the Ouxus Treasure” of precious Achaemenid artifacts (which has at least been discussed by scholars as a problem) is interesting in connection with the story of “the Hamadan Treasure.” There are similarities that have the ring of folkloric mystification: The gleaming wealth of ages past is miraculously “washed up” by a raging river flood and thus revealed to the humble peasant remnants of some once-glorious ancient civilization. The peasants are, to be sure, not viable custodians of the miraculously disgorged legacy. The Treasure is thus ultimately saved by the European military officer, ambassador, traveler, or archaeologist. Following the salvation (or perhaps functioning as an important aspect of the salvation), the ancient history of “the Treasure” (the circumstances under which it was first gathered and then kept together as a group until modern times) is given an elaborate historical explanation. Such explanation will often contain important observations of possibilities; but precisely because the nature and circumstances of the Treasure qua Treasure are suspect (even perhaps blatantly falsified), such discussions will be extremely difficult to wrest from the level of plausible speculation to the level of more securely verifiable probability.\(^{13}\)

Recent work on the Ouxus Treasure has attempted systematically (at the remove of over 100 years) to recontextualize this material.\(^{14}\) Similarly valiant efforts have been made by scholars working with the precious vessels once exhibited in the Metropolitan Museum of Art as the Greek (sic) and Roman Treasure and now repatriated to Turkey.\(^{15}\)

Unfortunately for our task in relation to the Freer phiale, “the Hamadan Treasure” remains much more elusive; its integrity as a “collection” or “treasure” or ancient assemblage remains suspect. Ghirshman is frustrating in his oblique presentation. He discusses the Treasure in some detail—alluding to specific types of precious vessels, for instance—and simultaneously he illustrates numerous works with the caption “Hamadan” or “Hamadan (?).” But he does not state whether any of these artifacts are those to which he is alluding as part of the Treasure in his accompanying text. In this way he avoids dealing with the issue of whether these vessels are thought to be part of the Treasure or are simply additional examples that are somewhat similar. Thus on page 309, for instance, he says, “In the Hamadan Treasure are some particularly fine bowls engraved with the names of the Great Kings of Kings.” Adjacent to this remark, he illustrates as “Hamadan (?)” the deep gold bowl
now in Tehran inscribed trilingually with Xerxes’ name. He also illustrates—this time as “Hamadan” (with no parenthetical question mark)—the shallow gold bowl (we would call it a *phiale*) inscribed trilingually with Darius’s name and (at that time at any rate) in a collection in Geneva. The information offered in his list of illustrations does not clarify the issue.

Ghirshman’s problematic presentation, with its allusions to royally inscribed bowls, brings us close to the Freer *phiale* and our difficulties in investigating its archaeological history. The city of Hamadan has not only been a major site of illicit excavation of genuine antiquities buried in the ruins of ancient Ecbatana. It has also functioned as a strategic point of conduit into the antiquities market for artifacts retrieved clandestinely from elsewhere in Iran. Such objects are brought to Hamadan for sale because Hamadan is a place where dealers expect to buy Achaemenid artifacts. For Achaemenid artifacts obtained elsewhere in Iran, the Hamadan label is often applied because it is believable—so active is that city’s reputation as a source. And if the final purchase before export is actually made at Hamadan, the dealer can document without dissembling that the artifact is (in a certain sense) “from Hamadan.” Thus, as Muscarella has demonstrated, the name Hamadan is frequently invoked in the creation of fictitious provenance of genuine Achaemenid antiquities; and the difficulties are heightened by the fact that Hamadan has long been a center for forgery operations.¹⁶

**Herzfeld at Hamadan and Persepolis.** One goal of the current project has been to press the provenance question of the *phiale* by investigating the Herzfeld archive in the Freer Gallery. It was with some excitement that we discovered a drawing of one of the four *phiaalai* in a Herzfeld sketchbook (fig. 3) that has been in the Freer since 1946.¹⁷ The drawing includes the caption “7 July 1934 Persepolis.” It thus supplies a *terminus ante quem* for the discovery of all four vessels (if we accept Herzfeld’s published indications that they were found as a group).¹⁸ The notations beside the drawing suggest something of the excitement of discovery; and the date and place designation conveys the feeling that the artifact was found as well as drawn at Persepolis. On the following page, Herzfeld has copied the *phiale* inscription but without adding a date. The sketchbook seems to point unambiguously, in other words, to the site of the heartland imperial capital of Persepolis itself as the provenance of the four *phiaalai*. It seems also to supply a fairly close chronological framing for the discovery. And finally, it seems to link Herzfeld closely to the act of discovery.
This new information was gratifying from the viewpoint of solving a long-standing puzzle of provenance for a set of artifacts of particular historical significance. It was exciting on a variety of levels relating to the archaeology of the imperial capital, the relation of precious portable objects to that archaeology, and the plausible functions of this set of royally inscribed phialai. Subsequent work in the archives revealed, however, a far more complex situation—one that maintains Herzfeld at the center of the narrative but brings the story back to Hamadan.

Our research now shows that Herzfeld had access to the phialai as early as 1932. In one notebook labeled “Keilschriften,” he copies the phialae inscription, including a transliteration and a caption reading “Silberschüsseln Hamadan, Okt. 1932.” Earlier pages in the same notebook preserve copies of inscriptions labeled “Hamadan, Oktober 1929.” While the immediately following page preserves a copy of the inscription on a bronze dagger in Tehran and is undated, the next page (p. 118) displays the date 4 March 1933. A second copy of the phialae inscription occurs on a page in a notebook labeled “Keilschriften II,” where the copy is followed by the notation “Hamadan, 4 Silberschüsseln.” Here the numeral “4” is written like a superscript as if added after the writing of “Silberschüsseln.” This undated page is sandwiched between copies of cuneiform inscriptions from Persepolis. Several preceding pages record inscriptions from the Fratabara Temple, and these are dated 14–22 September 1932. Following the Artaxerxes phialae inscription is a copy of a cuneiform tablet from Persepolis on a page labeled 23 November 1932. The final entry in this notebook copies an inscription on a brick from the Apadana at Persepolis and is dated 17 February 1933.

To summarize: Judging by the record Herzfeld creates through his notebooks and sketchbooks, our earliest documentation of the Artaxerxes phialai now reaches back to 1932. Furthermore, Hamadan, rather than Persepolis, is the place to which Herzfeld’s extant notebooks first attach his encounter in 1932. Nowhere does Herzfeld state in the notebooks that he or someone else actually found the phialae at Hamadan. Indications do, however, point to his having at least had possession of them there in October 1932. His diary indicates his presence away from Persepolis, in Isfahan, on 17–18 October 1932. The entry for 16 October may read “Hamadan,” but it is difficult to decipher. By 19 October, he was, at any rate, back at Persepolis. Further investigation of the diary has not so far yielded another more definitive indication of his presence at Hamadan in October 1932; but conceivably information is encoded in some way that we have missed. The sketchbook drawing of one of the four phialai, with its label including “7 Juli 1934 Persepolis,” implies that Herzfeld had at least one of the vessels with him in Fars by that time.

Persepolis was being excavated by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago under the direction of Ernst Herzfeld beginning in 1931. Indeed, in 1934 he was dismissed by the Iranian government on charges of smuggling antiquities from Persepolis out of the country during 1933 and 1934. The indications supplied by the documents in the Herzfeld Papers compel us to understand that it was Herzfeld himself who had possession of the vessels between 1932 and 1934 and successfully removed them all from Iran in 1934. The documents tie the vessels both to Hamadan and to Persepolis. One of our challenges, thus, is to propose plausible scenarios for the Hamadan-Persepolis connection. Before plunging into that complicated matter, it is well to look briefly at Herzfeld as a personality in order to contextualize our unflattering portrayal of him as a smuggler.

This distinguished pioneer of the archaeology and history of Iran was at once a scientifically motivated discoverer and scholar, a decently motivated collector, and a self-servingly motivated commodifier of one and the same artifacts. Before his excavations at Persepolis, Herzfeld had already accumulated significant collections of antiquities that he had removed from the sites he investigated. These collections included, for instance, a group of well over 200 prehistoric stamp seals that he had gathered up primarily...
from Tepe Giyan in central western Iran. The extent of his collections of varied types of artifacts is really not well understood. The prehistoric stamp seals are, thus, a revealing case. Herzfeld sketched a number of them in his field notebooks, kept daily as he explored the Near East; many of these drawings reappear in his pioneering publications that lay out a basis for the importance of studying this class of artifact.\(^22\) As far as we can determine, however, Herzfeld made no full inventory (much less catalogue) of his entire collection of prehistoric stamp seals. Eventually, one lot of these artifacts (numbering 158 items excluding a number of scarabs) was sold by the Gans Gallery in 1947. Their whereabouts was unknown to the scholarly community until 1991, when Dr. John Adams donated them to the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology of the University of Michigan in memory of his late wife, a Michigan alumna who had purchased the lot from the Gans Gallery in 1947, where they were advertised as the earliest collection of garment buttons ever known.\(^23\) Other seals from Herzfeld’s private collection entered the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, which, unaware of the lot sold to the Gans Gallery for commercial distribution, apparently believed at the time that it was receiving the entirety of this notable core collection of artifacts—much as the Metropolitan Museum thought in 1944 that it was purchasing the entirety of Herzfeld’s library and archives.\(^24\)

Specifically at Persepolis, Herzfeld is known to have cut a head from the eastern stair relief of the Apadana to give to the crown prince of Sweden (later King Gustaf). He also removed a foot covered with graffiti from a representation of Darius in the Palace of Darius and sold it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1945.\(^25\) In sum, there is a well-documented pattern of unethical practice even at Persepolis in the 1930s, where he was meant to be excavating scientifically under the auspices of a major research institution and according to established agreements between Chicago and the Iranian government concerning division of finds. Other corroborating suggestions of his behavior at Persepolis can be pieced together, completing an overall picture of a conflicted relation between the scientific impulse and a secretive, essentially mercenary one. We can appreciate now, for instance, the reason for Herzfeld’s seemingly irrational objections to Robert Byron’s attempts in 1933–34 to take photographs at Persepolis. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion (hinted at but not explicitly explored by Christopher Tuplin) that the excavator was anxious to keep a tight lid on information in order to prevent discovery of illegal activity.\(^26\)

In the 1970s during restoration work at Persepolis, a cache of crated Achaemenid alabaster tableware was discovered in the Fortification area. The artifacts had been prepared for shipment out of Iran, addressed to Herzfeld personally, and hidden, apparently awaiting a safe time to retrieve them in secret.\(^27\) It seems likely that Herzfeld was using areas of the Fortification as a staging zone for a major illicit export operation, which he could only partially carry off before his expulsion at the end of 1934. He may have brought antiquities from Hamadan and elsewhere to Persepolis for crating and exporting under cover of the bustling excavation enterprise.

In order to press any further the issue of the Hamadan-Persepolis connection as it relates to the four silver phialai, we must review the issue of the vessels’ authenticity.

**Authenticity Revisited Part I: The Vessels**. Recent analyses conducted independently by the Freer Gallery of Art/Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and by the British Museum have established strong grounds for the authenticity of the vessels based on fabric and technique of manufacture.\(^28\) Microscopic examination, together with information on composition obtained through X-ray fluorescence and neutron activation analysis, shows the bowls to be closely similar in methods of manufacture as well as metal alloy. The silver-copper alloy of the three phialai that have been subjected to laboratory analysis is consistent with that of ancient silver in general and with other examples of Achaemenid silver.\(^29\)

The weights of the vessels may offer independent corroboration of authenticity. Recent studies have demonstrated that extant Achaemenid silver vessels (as well as many silver artifacts including phialai listed in Athenian temple inventories) yield striking correlations between their weight in grams and a round number equivalence to the Achaemenid Persian silver coins called sigloi.\(^30\) The implications of this are myriad and extremely interesting.\(^31\) Some
emphasis has been placed on the notion that no forger in the 1930s could possibly have been aware of the significance of standardized weight equivalence to the siglos in the manufacture of Achaemenid silver vessels, since published scholarly work establishing these correlations is all more recent. This factor supports the already strong indications of authenticity. We should interject a cautionary note here, as a caveat on the relative significance that ought to be accorded to different aspects of argumentation. First, it is likely that in modern Iranian forgery operations authentic Achaemenid coins have often been melted down for the production of fake ancient silver vessels. Thus a forged silver vessel might very naturally weigh in grams the round number equivalent of a certain number of Persian sigloi. In this way, a modern forgery would (1) not be detectable through materials analysis alone, and (2) it would seem doubly authentic because it did in fact conform to a round number equivalent in sigloi.

It is a well-attested phenomenon in modern Iran for a worked object in precious metal to be priced by direct equivalence between weight and coin value of that weight. In other words, the notion is traditional and would have been standard practice for many Iranian forgers. For that matter, from antiquity well into the twentieth century in Iran and Iraq coin too was weighed in commercial transactions. The notion would also, incidentally, have been thoroughly ingrained in Herzfeld, with his lifetime of exploration and ethnographic observation in Iran as well as his vast knowledge of western Asia across time. Analogy with other contexts of ancient, late antique, and medieval eras simply reinforces the understanding that coin was often melted down for the production of silver objects—and vice versa. It is for the late twentieth-century Western-based scholar that the idea of these direct equivalencies within the Iranian context seems a recent revelation.

Thus, the fact of a round number equivalence to sigloi does not in itself eliminate the possibility that a silver vessel is a modern forgery. It is, nevertheless, an important feature to be considered seriously.

More recent work by Michael Vickers has added a new dimension that is directly relevant to the four Artaxerxes phialai. He has been able to compute the equivalences of weights in grams to weights in Persian sigloi of all four vessels. He determines that although individually their weights vary and do not in each case yield a round number equivalent in sigloi, the four vessels add up to a combined weight equivalence of 600 Persian sigloi. Assessment in terms of combined weight turns out to be a distinctive feature of the ancient economies of meaning of sets of precious vessels. Thus it is a feature bearing directly on authenticity.

In the Parthenon inventories dating to about the same period as the reign of Artaxerxes, silver phialai are almost always listed in groups, with the weights given as a total for the group. Thus, for instance, two different sets of four phialai are listed (one in 427/6 B.C. and one in 425/4 B.C.) with combined weights that yield precise equivalence to 260 sigloi and to 320 sigloi, respectively. They are obviously much smaller vessels than the four Artaxerxes phialai (with their combined weight equivalence of 600 sigloi). Another set of only two phialai cited in the 427/6 Parthenon inventory yields a weight equivalent to 450 sigloi. These two are much heavier and presumably larger than the set of four vessels of which the Freer example is a part. The main point for our purposes here is that in contemporary Athenian practice we have evidence that silver vessels were inventoried and assessed for monetary value in sets. There is in fact only one entry for a single phiale. It is for the year 416/15, with a monetary equivalence of 150 sigloi. This weighs in at exactly the same value as the Artaxerxes phiale in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and a bit lighter than the Freer phiale.

Other types of evidence from antiquity can be marshaled to demonstrate the production of sets of plate made to a combined weight. An inscription on a vessel in the late fourth-century A.D. Esquiline Treasure gives a weight for a set of four such vessels—and indeed the dish is one of four retrieved in that hoard. Although we do not yet have evidence quite that explicit for the Achaemenid empire, the Parthenon inventories come close (and it is important to acknowledge that some of the precious vessels inventoried there in the fifth century will have been Persian spoils). Support for the notion that precious vessels might have been made as sets to specifications of a combined monetary value in the Achaemenid empire is also suggested by the representation on the
FIG. 4.
The Darius Vase (Naples 3253):
a) detail, scene of Persians; 
b) tribute scene (detail of 4a).
After Adolf Furtwängler, Griechische Vasenmalerei (Munich, 1906), pl. 88.

Darius Vase (fig. 4). Here, a man in Persian garb is shown bringing toward the treasurer a nested set of three phialai (fig. 4b). The entire scene implies that these vessels will be assessed along with the registration of tribute/taxation in coin that is implied by the man moving forward from the other side, offering a large sack presumably containing money.39

Vickers’s determination of combined weight equivalence for the four phialai under discussion here provides an important new piece of evidence supporting the authenticity of the Artaxerxes vessels and their collective identity as a set that was produced together and kept together until their division on the market after 1934.

Clearly, the membership of the Freer phiale in a matched set brings it into line with aspects of ancient
practice relating to precious phialai and other forms of plate gleaned from epigraphic and visual testimony. We are reminded that the gift-bearing delegates to the king on the reliefs at Persepolis also offer precious vessels in pairs (fig. 5). In this sense, the set aspect offers oblique confirmation of authenticity. At the same time, however, this very feature renders suspect the authenticity either of the entire group or at least of all but the presumed legitimate ancient item that served as the template for a series of modern copies. Artifacts appearing on the market in multiples perforce ring warning bells among museum curators accustomed to the wiles of the forger. Oscar Muscarella has, with justification born of a lifetime’s experience in the curatorial trenches and analyzing tactics in the antiquities trade, urged real skepticism about unexcavated multiples of distinctive artifacts. And he has urged this skepticism in a discursive context that refers directly to the four Artaxerxes’ phialai.49

The importance of healthy skepticism notwithstanding, we could point to many cases of bona fide and excavated matched sets of artifacts within the ancient Near Eastern context alone. Particularly liturgical implements, banquet paraphernalia, and other categories of ritual or ceremonial utensils inevitably exist in sets.41 Two nearly identical Achaemenid silver phialai were excavated from separate tombs at Ialysos on Rhodes and may have derived from spoils of the Persian Wars taken from one Persian’s dinner set, which was divided among a group of Rhodians.42 Had they emerged on the art market as a pair said to have come from Hamadan, they would immediately have been suspect not only because of their putative provenance but also because they are a replicated commodity.

In an environment where framing, symmetry, and mirror-imaging play a crucial role in creating a “stereophonic” representational aesthetic dynamic, it would be misguided to suppose that the actual performances of ritual and courtly activities utilizing artifacts would be “monophonic” and therefore deploy only single items. Thus, for instance, we might expect to find a pair of incense burners rather than just one if we were to excavate a previously unlooted storeroom of royal utensils serving the court of the Achaemenid king. Our expectation would be generated by the Apadana reliefs at Persepolis, where the

strategic placement of a matched set of two such implements side by side is clearly meant to suggest an actual courtly stage setting in which two incense burners would stand in front of and framing the enthroned king.43

With respect to our set of four royally inscribed phialai, it is by now generally accepted that replication of models within the Achaemenid empire was a calculated feature of the message conveyed by official art.44 And recent work in Achaemenid seal production is demonstrating the importance of replication and the need to understand more about the conditions under which replication was condoned, sanctioned, deemed necessary, or prohibited.45 Surely within the court environment we are dealing with when discussing precious vessels inscribed with the name of the king, it becomes essential to entertain
the likelihood that replication as a matched set was part of the social function of the artifacts—not an a priori indication of clandestine reproduction in a modern forger’s studio at Hamadan.

In sum, all results of laboratory analysis (including indications of production techniques) support the authenticity of the four silver phialai. Furthermore, their nature as a matched set of artifacts (weighing as a set of four an equivalence to a round number of 600 sigloi and said to have been retrieved as an assemblage) accords well with conditions that we would expect to pertain within the Achaemenid empire.

**Authenticity Revisited Part II: The Inscriptions.** The question of the authenticity of the inscriptions has remained open. In theory, they could have been applied in modern times to authentic ancient artifacts in order to enhance the value of those vessels and to lend credence to their historical integrity as a set. From the time of their initial publication, opinion on the authenticity of the inscriptions has been divided. In 1937 Herzfeld defended the inscriptions against H. H. Schaeder’s condemnation made on philological grounds.⁴⁶ Since then the inscriptions have been accepted by Kent and Olmstead as well as by more recent commentators.⁴⁷

A lingering doubt has been voiced about the placement of the inscriptions on the vessels’ inner rim, in contrast to the typical placement of royal inscriptions on stone and metal tableware on the exterior.⁴⁸ We would argue, however, that the elaborately plastic decoration of the Freer phiale and its mates, combined with their horizontal everted rims, makes the placement of a lengthy royal inscription (meant surely to be highly visible) around the interior of the rim a viable option. The “interior” of the rim of a vessel such as the Freer phiale is not an interiorized place in the sense of being hidden. Rather, it is the most dramatically visible location that is also suitable for a long royal text. It is as aggressively presented an inscription as that on the deep gold bowl said to have been found at Hamadan and now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which bears the trilingual inscription “Darius the Great King” on the smooth vertical upper zone of the exterior.⁴⁹

The placement of the inscriptions on the Freer phiale and its mates seems (in terms of display quality) consonant with the ethos of royal inscriptions on vessels throughout the history of the ancient Near East. Furthermore, it presages the treatment that will become typical in royally inscribed plates and shallow bowls with strongly everted rims in Islamic times. Given how few royally inscribed precious metal phialai are yet known from the Achaemenid empire and given the fact that none is from an established excavated context, it is presumptuous to cast doubt on the Freer vessel and the three identically inscribed companion pieces based on the location of the text.⁵⁰

The multiple copies of the phiale inscription in Herzfeld’s notebooks—in particular the two copies linked to Hamadan—raise the possibility of forgery. It is conceivable, at least in theory, that Herzfeld discovered the four vessels without inscriptions either at Hamadan or at Persepolis (where he was digging) and had the inscriptions added to the vessels at Hamadan (where sophisticated forgers could have followed his instructions meticulously). Then, following the addition of the inscriptions, he could have brought the vessels (back?) to Persepolis, where in 1934 he drew one of the vessels and copied the inscription yet again. We would have to presume in this case that in his 1932 Hamadan renderings the great philologist was working out the text in preparation for supplying orders to the forger; making sure it would fit easily along the rim of the vessels, establishing the transliteration for the text (which he would later publish as a genuine text). In this scenario, the annotated 1934 drawing completed (or at least labeled) at Persepolis along with the third rendering of the text would then acquire a rather different status. It would have to be considered the earliest actual extant copy of the vessel inscription off one of the (forged?) phialai—as opposed to another mock-up for the forger’s order.

The drawing made at Persepolis in Herzfeld’s sketchbook (fig. 3) is an elaborate measured diagram. The annotations accompanying the drawing read (from top to bottom):

14 fertige rosette!
inschrift 69.5 cm lang
4 mm bruchstabhöhe
7 Juli 1934 Persepolis. Artaxerxes I. silver dish
As we suggested earlier, there seems to be a genuine excitement in the tone of Herzfeld’s notations. The fact that he measures the inscription certainly seems to suggest not that he had it forged after discovery of the phiale but, rather, that the entirety is ancient, discovered and examined by Herzfeld with meticulous interest. If Herzfeld commissioned the forging of the Artaxerxes inscription on four genuinely ancient phialai, then he also “doctored” his sketchbook to create the false impression that he was studying the inscriptions on the vessels as fresh scientific discoveries.  

It is not unheard of for archaeologists to falsify notebooks in order to produce a calculatedly misleading impression. Curtis, Cowell, and Walker note that few people in the 1930s would have been in a position to orchestrate the forging of these philosophically viable Old Persian inscriptions. Although they do not name names, it is obvious that Herzfeld was one of the few scholars of that period who could possibly have been in such a position.

Be that as it may, physical examination assessing tool marks, wear, and corrosion over passages of the inscription categorically corroborates the contemporaneity of inscriptions and vessels (at least as concerns those in the Freer Gallery and the British Museum for which this charge has been put to the technical analysts). Prevailing wisdom accepts the inscriptions as genuine.

Authenticity Revisited Part III: The Punch Marks. The tiny rectangular punch marks found in close connection with the inscription on the Freer phiale (fig. 2) may be an additional clue to the authentic Achaemenid setting of these vessels and to the production of their inscriptions. Their shape, appearance, and dimensions initially prompted Paul Jett of the Freer Gallery to postulate that they might be modern hallmarks of the type not infrequently found on exported silver—for example, as a guarantor of metal standard. Consultation of hallmark catalogues, in an attempt to explore the possibility that a customs agent punched the marks in modern times at some border control point as they traveled from Iran to the United States, has, however, yielded inconclusive results. The closest hallmark Jett has located is that used in France beginning 1 July 1893 to guarantee transition into France from a large range of points including Persia. The small device is rectangular (of unspecified dimensions) and seems to display an elongated form that somewhat resembles the image revealed through macrophotography on the outer rim of the Freer’s Artaxerxes phiale; but it does not appear to be identical. If the marks on the phiale could have been shown to be modern guarantee insignia, they would have added to our information on the modern history of the vessels, perhaps ultimately enabling us to determine conclusively whether they all left Iran together following the same route. If they are not modern hallmarks of international export agency, what are they?

It has so far not been possible to prove through documents currently available that the tiny punch marks were already on the phiale when Herzfeld first came in contact with them. It occurred to us that the marks might have been punched in by Herzfeld himself—using a punching device specially made for him to “seal” these precious antiquities with a personal sign. The seal device used by Herzfeld on his hundreds of drawings, maps, and notes is an EH monogram—not a representational form. There is no particular reason why Herzfeld would necessarily have wanted to repeat his monogram in this different context; and if resale of clandestinely exported silver plate was in his mind, there were good reasons for him not to punch in an EH monogram. We might envision him commissioning a punch device resembling an imagined Achaemenid stamp of guarantee in order to add his own conceit to a set of authentic artifacts. His occasional lapses of scientific protocol at Persepolis in the thirties suggest this capacity to fuse his own identity as archaeologist with the identity of the gifting agency of the Achaemenid king whose history he was meant to be unmasking through analysis of the material record. We think, for instance, of his gifting of a section of Persepolis relief sculpture to the Swedish crown prince. Removal of the relief was a form of appropriation of it and of gifting agency over it; in this way the act resembles the application of a personally commissioned stamp reminiscent of an Achaemenid one to vessels inscribed with the name of the Achaemenid king. Herzfeld would have been following age-old precedent here, conforming to patterns established, for instance, by
the twelfth-century Elamite king who added his own inscription to the inscribed victory stele of King Naramsin after removing it from Sippar to Susa.\textsuperscript{57} The problem here is that the marks do not resemble known insignia of the Achaemenid empire. They do not seem to be the type of mark that Herzdorf would have invented to emulate known Achaemenid emblems of authority. Basically the idea does not ring true.

Reanalysis in the laboratory in order to pursue questions initially posed by Gunter and Jett in 1992 establishes that the marks on the Freer \textit{phialai} are not likely to have been applied in modern times. The British Museum has reconfirmed the (ancient) contemporaneity of inscription and punch marks on their vessel as well.\textsuperscript{58} These marks, along with the inscriptions, should be evaluated as authentic ancient features of the \textit{phialai}.\textsuperscript{59} Since all four of the Artaxerxes vessels are now housed in museum environments committed to research, it will ultimately be possible to pursue the issues the marks raise further than we can here. What follows below is a brief outline of major points of discussion that emerge from a consideration of the marks as authentic elements.

The staff of the British Museum has already proposed that these are ancient marks, perhaps identifying the silversmith or his workshop.\textsuperscript{60} This is certainly an important idea. But there is no formal relationship between these tiny rectangular depressions on the \textit{phialai} and the “masons’ marks” visible on the stones of Pasargadae and Persepolis.\textsuperscript{61} Neither is a good formal relationship so far discernible between the devices punched into the Artaxerxes \textit{phialai} and the linear devices sometimes deployed in the design field of seals of the Achaemenid period (which often do resemble devices used as “masons’ marks”).\textsuperscript{62}

Interestingly, a device that is similar to some of the linear signs found as masons’ marks and as emblems in the field of numerous excavated seals and seal impressions from the Iranian heartland is found scratched on the concave underside of the \textit{omphalos} of a silver \textit{phiale} as well as on a scaraboid and a signet ring—all derived from Lydian tombs of the Persian period. This highly visible linear device is formed of a crescent intersected by the apex of a V. The \textit{phiale} and scaraboid can be traced to one or the other of the two plundered tombs at Ikiztepe, but the gold signet ring is now deprived of precise provenance within the Ikiztepe burial complex.\textsuperscript{63} It seems impossible to be absolutely sure that the \textit{phiale} and scaraboid bearing the same device came from the same burial; but it does appear probable based on the research of the scholars who have attempted to recontextualize this material. This probability supports the likelihood that the device scratched on the base of the Ikiztepe \textit{phiale} is a mark of the individual who owned the vessel (and had commissioned the scaraboid and signet ring) rather than the mark of an artisan who made it. In any case, it seems unlikely that the same artisan or workshop would be producing silver \textit{phialai} and scaraboids.\textsuperscript{64} Arguably we might consider that precious metal \textit{phialai} and gold signet rings were produced in the same working environment simply by virtue of the shared handling of raw materials; but even this is not a foregone conclusion.\textsuperscript{65}

In short, the rectangular marks on the Freer and British Museum \textit{phialai} do not resemble the linear marks of ownership or of production groups known to us so far from the Achaemenid period. They remain unique, as far as we have yet been able to determine, within the corpus of published Achaemenid metalware. This sense of their uniqueness must be qualified by the fact already mentioned that the marks may easily go unnoticed in publicatons as well as by the fact that a first-hand comprehensive survey of the entire corpus of excavated silver plate from the Achaemenid empire has not been within our means for this article.

With the thought that perhaps they were made by an ancient coin punch mark, we enlisted the assistance of Richard G. Doty, Curator of Numismatics in the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. He compared the punch mark occurring twice on the Freer \textit{phiale} with punch marks on approximately 400 coins from Achaemenid mints (including Lydia, Caria, and Persia). The coin marks he analyzed first-hand are approximately four times larger and are less finely rendered.\textsuperscript{66} Nevertheless, there is a clear kinship between coin punch marks and the devices punched into the \textit{phialai} even if the punching tool used on the \textit{phialai} cannot be linked to a particular mint mark.

Assuming that the marks on the Freer \textit{phiale} are ancient ones rather than modern export hallmarks,
we must be dealing here with a special type of ancient certification mark. The stamping of silver plate as we think of it, for example, in late antique Roman and Byzantine courtly environments may certify the standard of the metal or may speak to the authentication of the royal inscription, verification that the vessel was made in a certain royal workshop, or validation of the vessel either as royal property or as royal property now gifted to another party. But although Byzantine silver stamps are now well documented, even here the protocols involved are not entirely clear.

The fact that the Artaxerxes *phialai* are to our knowledge unique published examples of anciently stamped precious metalware of the Achaemenid period and thus the earliest examples of this practice documented for ancient times is extremely significant. It should not be taken as a suspicious fact. Rather, it seems if anything to corroborate the authenticity of the vessels on the grounds that high-class forgers would probably not invent something that would draw attention to their work as anomalous within the then-known repertoire. With these stamps, we are witnessing a feature that we might well expect of the Achaemenid empire based on its reputation in the realm of administration more generally: evidence of the systematization of control mechanisms in royal production and dissemination that actually will have provided a paradigm for later imperial systems in the greater Mediterranean region. Work on Achaemenid silver is in its infancy. Perhaps the publication here of the macrophotographically documented marks on the Freer *phiale* will encourage investigation of silver in other collections in order to pursue this important topic further.

*Modern History in a Nutshell.* The combined evidence indicates the following:

1. Herzfeld had possession of the four *phialai* in Hamadan in 1932.
2. We have no earlier record of the vessels.
3. They were retrieved illicitly as a group, but the fact that our first record of them occurs at Hamadan does not prove that they were retrieved from the ruins of Ecbatana.
4. In view of what we know of the modern antiquities trade operating around Hamadan, they could have been brought to Hamadan for sale by a dealer from anywhere in Iran.
5. It is also quite possible that Herzfeld discovered them in Persepolis, where he was excavating, secreted them, brought them to Hamadan in October 1932, and returned with them a few days later to Persepolis.
6. He may have attempted to sell them at Hamadan and found the price inadequate; but the intensity of Herzfeld’s scholarly interest in the inscriptions leads us to suppose that he would not have sold the vessels until he had published them. This conforms to his tendencies in other cases (e.g., the prehistoric stamp seals).
7. It is more likely that if he brought them from Persepolis to Hamadan, he did so in order to launder them through the antiquities trade—creating a false trail of acquisition that would divert attention from his clandestine retrieval of them in the course of the excavation of Persepolis.
8. The *phialai* appear again in the Herzfeld notebooks in July 1934—this time at Persepolis. Presumably he was then preparing his “1935” article (which actually appeared in October 1934 as Heft 1 of Band VII. Band VII also incorporates Heft 2 and Heft 3, dated March 1935).
9. The four *phialai* thus became part of what we could legitimately designate the dispersed “Herzfeld Treasure” (running the risk of putting too ironic a twist on it), which left Iran clandestinely during 1934 and on the basis of which he was dismissed from directorship of the Persepolis Expedition and expelled by the Iranian government.
10. All indications suggest that the inscriptions as well as the vessels are authentic products of the reign of Artaxerxes I. All indications also support the plausibility of the four vessels having been retrieved as a set. Laboratory analysis of the punch marks supports their interpretation as ancient devices applied contemporaneously with the inscription rather than modern hallmarkers relating to international export agency. More work needs to be done on these marks; but in either case, they do not undermine but rather support the claim of authenticity of vessel and inscription.
Post-Persepolis. Taking as a working hypothesis the notion that Herzfeld brought all four *phialai* out of Iran in 1934, let us review their subsequent history before returning to antiquity. Apparently soon after 1937, one of the vessels entered the Joseph Brummer collection and was displayed at the 1940 exhibition of Persian art in New York organized by the Iranian Institute of America. In 1947 it was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.\(^6\) Meanwhile, the other three had joined the Kevorkian collection and were then auctioned at Sotheby’s on 8 December 1970 as lots 140–42.\(^7\) One lot (140), sold in 1970 to a Mr. Mortozai, is now in the Reza Abbasi Museum in Tehran.\(^8\) Like the example in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, it had previously been displayed in a landmark exhibition of Persian art held at the Petit Palais in Paris from October 1961 to January 1962.\(^9\) The second lot (141) was subsequently sold to the Freer Gallery of Art in 1974 (74.30). The third Kevorkian *phiale* (lot 142) entered the Peter Adam collection, then was resold at auction to a private collector, and finally in 1994 was acquired by the British Museum.\(^10\)

After a long modern history of changing hands and fluctuating among clandestine treasure, publicly displayed cultural commodity, and privately owned *objets d’art*, all four of the *phialai* are now in museum collections where they can be scrutinized scientifically and mainstreamed into historical discussions.\(^11\) Concerns over their authenticity can now be put to rest. Acknowledgment of their authenticity does not, of course, signify approval of the means by which the vessels entered the modern marketplace. To refuse to discuss them because of their checkered past beginning in 1932 would, however, be to mute a set of extremely significant artifacts.\(^12\) Their modern history is, furthermore, an important piece of what archaeology has been and often still is about. It is best that we confront this history head on, even when it means acknowledging the role that some of the most distinguished archaeologists have had in the project of illicit adventure.\(^13\) In Herzfeld’s particular case, we are dealing with a complex personality who vacillated between pioneering in distinguished scholarly analysis on the one hand and willingly removing objects from public scholarly discourse (via secretive handling and sale) on the other. One is left to ponder whether perhaps Herzfeld was so invested in his own analyses that he could not imagine that any more needed to be said, that any more scrutiny would ever be wanted in order to learn the lessons either of these silver *phialai* or of other classes of artifacts (such as the prehistoric stamp seals) that he retrieved, studied in a pathbreaking way, and then allowed to drop from the public domain in order that he could realize their market value.

**Ancient History of the Freer Phiale**

The modern history of the Freer *phiale* and its companions provides an important backdrop to the questions most at issue in current scholarship about the ancient history of precious metalware (and particularly, in this instance, of *phialai*) in the Achaemenid empire. To wit: Where, under what circumstances, and for whom were such valuable objects made? And under what circumstances were they inscribed or left uninscribed? How did the site of manufacture relate to sites of ultimate retrieval across the vast imperial realm? Was manufacture closely restricted or practiced widely? What was the purpose of this type of vessel? What social/ritual/political/economic functions did it serve?

**Persepolis-Ecbatana: Ancient Histories/Modern Ironies.** As we step back from the saga of Herzfeld and the myriad issues involved in assessing authenticity, we are still left with persistent ambiguities of provenance. Our investigations clarify the probabilities even though they cannot be definitive. Because of the nature of our newly exposed archival evidence, we have seemingly revalidated the Hamadan provenance for the four Artaxerxes *phialai*. In the process, however, we have also characterized the possibility that Herzfeld actually discovered the silver vessels in Persepolis and then used modern Hamadan as a laundering point. A most interesting question is imbedded in this possible sequence: If Herzfeld discovered the *phialai* at Persepolis, exactly where were they found and what are the implications for an understanding of the archaeological history of the site during the mysterious Herzfeld era (1931–34)? This topic is reserved for another forum.\(^14\)
Leaving that issue aside, the ironies of history present us with another wrinkle as we attempt to unfold the issues surrounding the modern and ancient provenances of a set of precious metal artifacts. Even if Herzfeld actually unearthed the silver phialai at Persepolis and only laundered them through Hamadan, the fact remains that the provenance of such objects would already have been muddied. As archaeologists, we tend to be a bit sanctimonious about modern ethical behavior at sites even though we are well aware that many of the confusions caused in the data reflect ancient acts that include sacking, robbery, and forgery. The present authors prefer to err on the side of sanctimoniousness about the ethics of the antiquities trade; but we wish nevertheless to highlight the peculiarities of the material record in this particular case.

The Achaemenid city of Ecbatana (modern Hamadan) is not well documented in the textual sources any more than it is well understood archaeologically. Although it was clearly a crucial place, we have little information about what precise functions it served in the administration of the empire. We do know that its siting was critical—on the road between northern Iran and Babylon. But many questions remain.

How plausible is it that the four Artaxerxes phialai were discovered there as a set in the early 1930s? On the one hand, when Darius III fled Ecbatana in May 330, Arrian tells us that he took with him the treasure of Media, including 7,000 to 8,000 talents of gold and silver in addition to an army of 3,000 horsemen and 6,000 foot soldiers. This narrative suggests that most of the Achaemenid silver that might normally have been expected to “belong” to Ecbatana as a royal city in some sense or to have belonged to or been used by military officers stationed there would actually have been removed by the last Achaemenid king. The classical sources do not reveal exactly how much gold and silver was taken by Alexander at Ecbatana—suggesting perhaps that little was left after Darius III evacuated. On the other hand, the sources do tell us that once Alexander had taken the other heartland centers of power (Babylon, Susa, Pasargadæ, and Persepolis), he brought the booty to Ecbatana for storage. The amount of precious metal extracted from Persepolis according to the sources is truly extraordinary in itself (about 120,000 talents). The amount that we are told must have found its way to Ecbatana is about 180,000 talents. Precisely because of the close link in the Achaemenid empire between artistically worked precious metal vessels and their monetary equivalence in weight, we can assume that a significant amount of the metal tallied by the sources was in the form of plate such as the Freer phiale. Vickers and Gill lend further support to this hypothesis, pointing out that in the ancient greater Mediterranean at this time coin was essentially the “small change,” while silver and gold worked up as vessels performed the function of large-denomination paper money today.

Alexander’s actions as a conqueror have certainly contributed to the reputation of Hamadan as a site of retrieval of much precious metalwork. It is perhaps not surprising that so much precious metalwork is said to have been disgorged by this site if the classical sources are correct. Historiographically, the Persepolis-Ecbatana nexus was already fraught by 330 B.C. Herzfeld (through what he does and does not reveal) simply adds another layer to the problem.

**Date of Manufacture.** The Old Persian inscription on the Freer phiale is critical for determining date of manufacture. It can only refer to the first Artaxerxes (r. 465–425 B.C.), since no later Artaxerxes shares the stated genealogy. It is most unlikely, furthermore, that the phiale was manufactured after this Artaxerxes. In theory it is of course possible that an object might have been inscribed posthumously to honor a deceased Achaemenid ruler; but we have no independent evidence for this practice in Achaemenid times. Seals of certain important administrative offices inscribed with the names of Achaemenid kings were not taken out of circulation immediately upon the death of the kings so named. But all the evidence here so far points to continued use of an antique artifact—not new production naming a king already deceased. We are thus able to cite the Freer phiale as a closely dated example of this vessel form. It must have been produced in 465 or later; and it almost certainly was produced by 425 B.C. (before the end of the reign of Artaxerxes I).

This chronological fixed point has great potential significance since the dating of individual Achaemenid silver vessels out of context is so problematic.
Four silver bowls (including one phiale rather similar to the Freer phiale) inscribed in Aramaic from the Tell El-Maskhuta hoard have all been dated by their paleography to ca. 400 B.C. in an analysis by William Dumbrell. All four bear dedications to the goddess Ham-ilot, which further binds them together as a group. The inscription on the phiale includes the donor’s name, Qaynu, who has generally been linked with a Biblical personage whose father was contemporary with Nehemiah. This confirms the date of ca. 400 for the inscription. Despite the linkages of paleography and dedication, the four variously shaped vessels are very different in basic aesthetic and the technique of their decorative schemes. Dumbrell does not raise the possibility that the dates of manufacture of the bowls might vary considerably even though their dates of inscription and ultimate deposition as a group seem demonstrably contemporaneous. This is surely a distinct possibility, however; and it illustrates one type of difficulty in establishing dating criteria even when (as with the Qaynu phiale) an inscription seems to supply a touchstone with history. The inscription on the Qaynu phiale is not necessarily contemporary with its date of manufacture—and thus differs significantly from the inscriptions on the Achaemenid phialai in its value as a chronological indicator. Beyond this, we cannot blandly assume that formal variations in technique and program among the four inscribed vessels from Tell El-Maskhuta represent differences in regional schools rather than chronology (or some mix of the two).

At present there is a bewildering variety of shape differences even within what we would define as a phiale; and a similarly bewildering variety of known decorative programs and variations on technical repertoire is exhibited. Two silver phialai were excavated at Persepolis in the area of the Fortification by the Iranian team in 1943. Although to our knowledge no independent dating criteria have yet been cited in association with this find, the controlled discovery of these artifacts at Persepolis is of major significance. Analyses of the contents of the Treasury at Persepolis seem to indicate that few artifacts were added after the reign of Artaxerxes I. This suggests the statistical likelihood that stray finds should not date after Artaxerxes I either. In any case, the two vessels are interesting as a touchstone with Persepolis. They vary in diameter between 22.35 cm and 22.20 cm and in weight between 470 grams and 394 grams. One has a shallow star pattern on exterior and interior as well as gold overlay on the interior; the other is decorated on the exterior only. Both vessels differ in technique and aesthetic dynamic from the Artaxerxes phialai. While Abka’i-Khavari would attribute the differences to a chronological distance (with the phiale discovered in 1943 at Persepolis being “late Achaemenid”), this chronological framework may be based on too little information.

The silver phiale discovered in the sarcophagus of a wealthy woman at Susa (figs. 6–7) must be genuine; but it presents yet a different set of technical/formal features in comparison generally to other extant phialai known so far and specifically to the Artaxerxes phialai and the excavated Persepolis phialai. Coins interred with the Susa vessel indicate the sarcophagus was sealed after 350 B.C. In effect the coins suggest that the other artifacts in the grave are also late Achaemenid of the second half of the fourth century; but it is always possible that the silver phiale in particular was an heirloom when deposited (see below for more discussion of this problem). The phiale is small (diam. 18.4 cm compared to the 29.5 cm diam. of the Freer phiale) but extremely heavy for its size (562 grams compared to the Freer phiale’s 922 grams). It seems to have been formed by casting rather than hammering (as the Freer phiale was). And in a whole range of formal ways it is a very different sort of artifact while displaying equally Achaemenid decorative cues. The excavated Susa phiale and the excavated pair from Persepolis may or may not be significantly later in date of manufacture than the Artaxerxes phialai (which must have been produced between 465 and 425 B.C.).

Sources of Silver. The materials analyses performed on the Artaxerxes phialai reveal a strong compatibility consistent with the likelihood that the source of their metal was the same. Unfortunately, we are not yet in a position to establish a source fingerprint for the fabric thus analyzed. Although we can conjecture that the four vessels were made in a heartland royal workshop rather than imported from a royal workshop situated far from the central seats of the empire, we cannot move from there to a statement on what
these phialai thus demonstrate about the source of silver used at workshops in western Iran during the fifth century B.C. Ultimately such a statement may be possible—but it will depend upon the acquisition of extensive data from the many silver sources available across Egypt and western Asia during the Achaemenid empire. This type of analysis is one of the priorities of the ongoing work of Pieter Meyers, who in collaboration with Prudence Oliver Harper poses a range of questions about the production of Sasanian silver that are equally relevant for its Achaemenid predecessors:

The most basic questions relate to the production of silver, such as the types of ore used to produce the metal silver and the location of the ore sources, the procedures for smelting the ore and the location of the smelting sites, the extent to which silver was alloyed with copper and the origin of that copper, and whether or not the fineness of the silver was controlled. It should also be considered how much silver metal, if any, was obtained by trade, as tribute, or as booty. Other questions concern the distribution of the silver. By what mechanism did the silver enter the silversmith’s workshops? Was the distribution of the silver controlled or was the metal freely available to anyone who could afford it? Are there any differences between the silver used in the manufacture of objects and that used for other
purposes, such as the minting of coins? How extensively was silver smelted? The next question relates to the practices of the Sasanian silversmith. What were the methods of manufacture used to produce the silver vessels and what tools were used? Is it possible to distinguish between workshops based on methods of manufacture and use of tools? What developments took place in the production of silver metal and in the methods of manufacture of silver during the Sasanian period? Did the availability of silver change, perhaps as a result of changing political or economic situations or due to the discovery of new ore sources? Were there advances or changes in metalworking traditions?90

For the Achaemenid period we have almost no texts upon which to base discussion on the sources of silver in relation to locations of individual workshops. The so-called Susa Foundation Charter (DSI) tells us that the silver used to decorate the palace of Darius at Susa was brought there from Egypt. This text must, however, be viewed as a propagandistic statement of imperial control and command of resources. It should not be necessarily taken as a literal documentation of practices at Susa even as concerns the construction of that particular palace, much less as a statement of overarching applicability within the wider empire.97 This is not to say that silver metal was not brought to the Iranian heartland from Egypt under one or all of the conditions of export suggested by Harper and Meyers above for Sasanian silver. But major sources of argentiferous ore in Iran as well as in other parts of the Near East were under imperial control during the Achaemenid empire—particularly in Anatolia and Armenia.98 Considering the millennia-long tradition of silver working in Iran, it is plausible that some of these sources closer to hand were also exploited.

Beyond these factors, it is important to bear in mind that the melting down of silver artifacts in order to produce new artifacts was an age-old practice. This practice becomes a loose cannon in any attempt to ascertain direct genealogies for a given piece of silver, moving from ore source to finished product, for it is always possible that unknown lives of the ultimately analyzed product are hidden from our scientific scrutiny.99

The complexities of imperial appropriation of precious metal mean that places of manufacture may have been far removed from ore sources.100 The issue of place of production thus covers a range of possibilities. The fact that no smelting or metalworking locations have yet been discovered at Achaemenid royal installations in the heartland (or elsewhere for that matter) does not mean that none existed. Future research might interrogate all extant silver and gold phialai to determine what if any connections can be established among vessel profile, decorative scheme, inscription or lack thereof, dimensions, weight, and metal composition in order to link ore sources, workshop settings, and social functions. Efforts to synthesize the disparate data have not so far yielded comprehensive or complete information. Any project of this sort will need to address the limitations imposed by some of the issues we have just discussed. It should enlist the support of scholars who can provide access to material held in various areas of the empire, including Iran itself and the northern and eastern regions as well as the European museums that house relevant excavated artifacts from expeditions early in this century.

Within the triangle formed by Ecbatana, Susa, and Persepolis, we have three finds of silver phialai each with a different sort of archaeological/historical fixed point associated with it. Each find shows distinctive formal qualities. The Artaxerxes phialai (the only ones with royal inscriptions) display the deep voluptuous lobes that seem to have been a hallmark of what was considered “Achaemenid” across a vast expanse of the empire and even beyond the frontiers of its political domain.101 It is at best premature to attempt to establish formal criteria by which to distinguish local schools of silver production; and such an effort may (within the imperial context) ultimately prove to be a misleading method of inquiry. In a study of the movement patterns of the Achaemenid king and his court, Pierre Briant synthesizes the classical sources that claim the king transported vast quantities of tableware with him wherever he went and also acquired from his subjects vast quantities of metalware in his passages from place to place.102 To the extent that we can validate these testimonia as somewhat accurate reflections of court protocol, our capacity archaeologically to identify any regional style
will be severely limited. We have in any event shown that the silver holdings of Persepolis and Susa were brought to Ecbatana by Alexander, so that except for the stray find (such as the two phialai unearthed in 1943) or an as-yet-undiscovered hoard missed by Alexander in those two seats of empire, we should have a difficult time, even without factoring in the king’s behavior, establishing what was, for instance, a local Persepolitan court style in silver plate versus a local Susa or Ecbatana court style.

It remains possible that there were distinctive local court styles in Achaemenid plate in regions removed from the heartland. We are trying to express a difference here between (a) distinctive regional styles (styles that would have conveyed a particular place-identity by their look) and (b) the undeniable fact that precious vessels made during Achaemenid times had many different stylistic and technical aspects. The question is: Were these styles clustered in production into discrete regional specialties? As always, the dual problem of scant statistically eloquent data combined with the portability of silver plate, which was intrinsically as well as symbolically valuable, makes this agenda difficult as well. An anecdote transmitted in the pseudo-Demosthenic speech Against Timotheus refers to two phialai specifically of Lycian workmanship. This phrasing suggests that in classical Athens a distinction could be made between an Achaemenid phiale produced by a craftsman of Lycian tradition and one produced in any other workshop tradition. The painted representations of phialai in the fifth-century chamber tomb at Karaburun in Lycia (fig. 8) do not clarify the situation. They show lobed or leaf-patterned vessels; but we cannot discern from them a definitively distinctive regional type. Evidence from actual vessels

**FIG. 8.**
Detail from the tomb at Karaburun, showing hand of serving figure with phiale and ladle.
Courtesy Mahteld J. Mellink.
attached to specific regions of Anatolia is also inconclusive. Greek letters scratched on the base of a plain silver phiale from one of the Ikiêtepe tumuli in Lydia have been interpreted as representing a place name in eastern Lydia—perhaps the place where the vessel was produced.\textsuperscript{105} This piece of evidence suggests the tantalizing possibility that more finds of Achaemenid silver plate with graffiti indicating places may ultimately yield some pattern of information. But taken together the gold and silver plate that has emerged from these wealthy Achaemenid-period tombs in Lydia shows more variety than homogeneity.\textsuperscript{106}

Representations of Egyptian metal smiths producing Achaemenid-type vessels in the late fourth-century tomb of Petosiris have often been invoked to make the point that Achaemenid-type objects were produced at various locations across the empire and were not dependent for their look on some ethnic resonance of the artisan with the spirit of Persianness.\textsuperscript{107} It is possible, of course, that depictions of industrious Egyptian metal smiths making Persian luxury vessels on the walls of an immediately post-Persian-period tomb convey a teleology removed from the literal level of discourse we are attempting to pursue here about production centers in a polycultural empire. Even taking this factor into account, however, we must acknowledge that the tomb of Petosiris offers one significant piece of evidence among many others attesting the production of Achaemenid art at multiple centers throughout the vast empire.

\textit{State Monopoly?} The inscription on the Freer phiale clearly indicates that it was made in a royally controlled workshop; it offers not only the king’s name and genealogy but also the phrase (in Kent’s translation) “in whose royal house this silver saucer was made.” Kent’s rendering of “made” for karta seems straightforward (as this word is also used in Darius’s Susa Foundation Charter [DSf] in some contexts referring, e.g., to the “making” of gold objects).\textsuperscript{108} The word is in no sense restricted, for instance, to contexts of inscribing or to the manufacture of portable objects or commemorative objects. “Royal house” (from viΘ) seems impossible to pin down any further at this stage, since use of the term is attested in contexts implying house (as literal dwelling), as well as court and clan. Herzfeld rendered the syntax of the important qualifying phrase “for whose royal house” rather than “in whose royal house.”\textsuperscript{109} But Kent and later commentators have expressly emended this reading and have brought the similar inscriptions of Darius and Xerxes into line with it. Thus, for instance, the inscription on the lapis lazuli doorknob from Persepolis (Dpi), which bears the same phrase viΘyā karta, is rendered by Kent as “Door-knob of precious stone, made \textit{in} the house of Darius the king,” whereas Herzfeld rendered it “\textit{for} the house of Darius the king.”\textsuperscript{110}

Was the production of silver (and gold) phialai controlled by the state? It may be that the mining of certain ore sources and the trafficking of their raw materials was a monopoly of the imperial administration. This difficult question deserves more nuanced investigation.\textsuperscript{111} It seems probable that royally inscribed precious vessels were not only produced in a tightly controlled context but also used in a restricted way. The existence of punch marks on the Artaxerxes phialai may signify some individual or collective aspect of this control, much as it would on a coin. Beyond the rough analogy with coinage, we base this suggestion on an analogy with the royally inscribed seals of the empire. Analysis of the Persepolis Fortification and Treasury tablet seal impressions, in conjunction with other evidence, makes it clear that royally inscribed seals were seals of office, used by specific individuals only in their capacity as officials.\textsuperscript{112} This thesis of the restricted nature of royally inscribed vessels is borne out by the fact that no such vessels have yet been discovered in a private burial.\textsuperscript{113} The contrast between the dearth of these items in private tombs and the abundance of royally inscribed alabaster vessels stored in the Persepolis Treasury strongly suggests a royally controlled commodity intended for use exclusively as “royal tableware” in court activities and rituals.\textsuperscript{114} Such rituals involving tableware will have taken place at various sites of the empire in addition to Persepolis itself, so that the discovery of royally inscribed vessels far from the heartland need not negate the theory.\textsuperscript{115}

It may well be that such royally inscribed vessels were sometimes given to particular associates of the king or to satraps to deploy in activities for which their use was considered essential or preferred. The critical point is the thesis that these items bearing the
royal name were produced in a controlled environment and were particular commodities reserved for closely prescribed use with reference to Persian kingship and the performance of its rituals. It is noteworthy as an aside that the inscription running around the rim of the Freer phiale is carefully laid out so as to leave blank an area that presumably would be the place designated for the user to hook his thumb—without covering the royal text. The syntactical ambiguity inherent in the Artaxerxes phiale inscription at “viΩya karta” (made in [viz., Kent] or made for [viz., Herzfeld] the royal house) may blur a distinction that is in fact irrelevant. These particular items may have been made both in the royal house (i.e., in the royally controlled workshop) and for the use of the royal house (i.e., expressly for the king and his company either at a stationary installation or on the road).

In sum, then, royally inscribed phialai are likely to have been restricted in production and use. They may have been restricted in decorative form and style as well. In this they would again accord with what we know of royal name seals (as opposed to privately owned seals) of the Persian empire and the imperial (as opposed to satrapal) coin issues. The production of precious phialai or other vessels more generally does not seem to have been controlled, however. The 21st “Letter of Themistokles” documents a private order for gold and silver plate inscribed (presumably with Themistokles’ name) in “old Assyrian letters.” Nylander has demonstrated convincingly that this refers to private name inscriptions in Aramaic—a feature of several extant silver phialai.

The classical testimony generally suggest an abundance of gold and silver vessels in a range of contexts that imply widespread access to and enjoyment of luxury ware outside a restricted court milieu. The great variety of preserved forms and decorative schemes of uninscribed and non-royally inscribed phialai alone speaks also to a lively creative engagement with precious metal production in workshops that were not confined to any narrowly prescribed court style.

Social Context: Gifts from the King. Many classical texts and Biblical passages suggest the importance of gifts given by the king to honored friends. Several texts single out precious phialai as gifts given by the king. In view of the intrinsic value of a precious metal phiale combined with the beauty of the skilled artistry invested in the design of these objects, the cachet of such a gift from the Achaemenid ruler is easy to appreciate. The story of Demus’s gold phiale clearly articulates a relevant scenario. Here, the Persian king (in this case Artaxerxes II) gave the Greek naval commander Demus, son of Pyrilampes (once an ambassador to the Persian court), a symbolon in the form of a gold phiale. As Vickers points out, even the mere knowledge that Demus had been granted this symbolon seems to have carried great impact in his business dealings; and the object itself was explicitly explained as not only of intrinsic monetary value but also of extraordinary value as a kind of political/financial carte blanche throughout Asia. The phiale was a symbol of recognisable prestige, it would seem, because of the social link with the king that it apparently represented far and wide.

Social Function: Drinking and Libation. The inscription on the Freer phiale is obviously important for the nuances it both suggests and leaves open about the literal and symbolic function(s) of such vessels. Once again, Kent’s rendering of the inscription reads: “Artaxerxes the Great King, King of Kings, King of Countries, son of Xerxes the King [who was] son of Darius the King; in whose royal house this silver saucer was made.” In place of “saucer” for bātugara we must, however, supply “wine-drinking vessel,” following from the fact that bātu means “wine” and gara means “drinking.”

The Freer phiale and its mates are the only metal vessels yet known from the Achaemenid empire or contemporaneous Greek contexts that are labeled with a word that explicitly describes vessel function. Following scholarly convention, we have opted to persist in calling the Freer vessel type a phiale. But this is a Greek term, known from numerous testimonia relating to Greek and Persian vessels. These testimonia are, however, physically independent of the vessels with which we link them. What precisely is meant by the word phiale, as used in the ancient Greek texts? While Richter and Milne characterized the use of the phiale in the Greek sphere both for pouring libations and for drinking, recent scholarship has tended to restrict the definition of
the use of the *phialé* in Greek culture to the religious function of pouring libations to the gods.\(^{128}\) Certainly, Greek art has clear examples of representations depicting libations—or preparatory episodes for these activities; and these representations often show a shallow, handle-less bowl: the *phialé* (fig. 9).\(^{129}\) But Herodotus (9.80.1–2) specifically mentions "*phialai* and other drinking-vessels" among the precious objects abandoned by the Persians at Plataea. Although it could be argued that he was referring to *phialai* as drinking vessels strictly from the Persians' point of view, we are not inclined to see such a subtlety in his words.\(^{130}\)

*Phialai* with particular decorative programs are mentioned in Greek texts. *Phialai balanotai*, for instance, are decorated with acorns; *phialai Aithiopidesi* are decorated with renderings of (the faces of) Ethiopians. Actual examples of shallow handle-less vessels decorated with acorns and/or faces of Ethiopians have been preserved.\(^{131}\) These artifacts thus corroborate the link between what the name *phialé* can be understood to have connoted in terms of generic vessel form (gleaned from linkages between texts and artistic representations of libations) and the look of actual vessels conforming to the term.

From the Greek testimonia the word *phialé* is a generic term that can be qualified in a number of ways. In addition to the qualifications noted above (with acorns or with Ethiopians), we note *phialai karyotai* (with nuts), *phialai akínolai* (with rays), and *phialai balanéiomphaloi* (with acorns and omphalos). *Omphalos* in this context refers to the central boss that often protrudes convexly into the interior of these shallow bowls. Usually it is reflected on the exterior of the vessel as a concavity, although there are instances of *omphaloi* that protrude into the interior but have no corresponding concavity on the exterior. The mention in texts of *phialai* pure and simple, *phialai* with *omphaloi*, and *phialai* with *omphaloi* as well as other notable adornments suggests that none of these variable features of individual *phialai* is a *sine qua non* of what it means to be a *phialé*. The unifying feature of what the Greeks meant by a *phialé* (if we look to representations in Greek art) seems to be that it was a shallow, handle-less vessel.

Unfortunately, the seminal study of the *phialé* shape in Greece and the Near East by Heinz Luschey predetermines that a true *phialé* must have an *omphalos* that is articulated on the exterior as well as the interior of the vessel.\(^{132}\) His study incorporates as *phialai* all handle-less bowls with the doubly articulated *omphalos*, regardless of other features of profile—such as relative depth of the bowl and proportion of rim height to body height. It excludes as *phialai* strictly speaking all handle-less bowls regardless of other features of profile that do not incorporate this doubly articulated *omphalos*. Luschey thus creates a confusion: Many handle-less vessels that ought to be described as deep bowls are described instead as *phialai* simply because they incorporate a doubly

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**FIG. 9.**
Detail from a cast of the east frieze of the Parthenon, south end, showing maidens carrying *phialai*. Courtesy University of Michigan. Photo by Jeri Hollister.
articulated omphalos; and many phialai are classified as cups (Schale) even though in every respect but the doubly articulated omphalos, they conform to the shallow phiale form. This confusion carries over into more recent scholarship and has caused particular difficulty as it pertains to the Achaemenid material.

Both the handle-less shallow bowl and the handle-less deeper bowl (both of these with and without the omphalos) are ultimately of Near Eastern origin. During the Persian period, the Achaemenid bowl and the Achaemenid phiale can be seen as emerging from this long tradition and clarifying a bifurcation of forms, with each of the two branches (deep and shallow) developing in rich ways. By any standard typological criteria devised by pottery experts, the differences in shape between the Achaemenid bowl (in its range of permutations) and the Achaemenid phiale (in its range of permutations) would be considered distinctive. Yet because of the confusions first codified by Luschey but subsequently compounded in other publications, bowls are often called phialai. Thus, for instance, scholars sometimes note that phialai are carried by representatives from the subject lands on the Apadana reliefs at Persepolis (fig. 10). But in fact the vessels thus referred to in these sculptures are deep bowls of the sort Herodotus must be alluding to when he describes Persian “gold and silver round-bottomed bowls” as distinct from “phialai and other drinking vessels” (9.80.1–2). Alternatively, scholars who prefer to speak generically of Achaemenid bowls without discriminating between shallow and deep (perhaps laudably in order to avoid the complexities of using a Greek term to describe a Persian object) will sometimes allude to the representations on the Apadana as depictions of “bowls”—without characterizing what forms of bowls are shown in those sculptures.

Why does this matter? It matters in part because our understanding of the functions and meanings of various vessel forms and their subcategories is new enough that we cannot afford to overgeneralize for fear of missing some critical distinctions that may hold clues to significant nuances. The nuances may ultimately provide clues to important issues of ideology and mechanisms of social control in the Achaemenid empire. For example, no phiale is represented as a gift being brought to the king on the Apadana reliefs—possibly because the prerogative of the gifted phiale was a privilege that always went out from the king. We shall return to this issue briefly below.

FIG. 10.
Details from the Apadana reliefs at Persepolis.
After Ernst Herzfeld, Iran in the Ancient East (London, 1911), pl. LXXXIV.
It is in an attempt to counteract the problem of overly loose terminology that we use the term *phiale* to mean a handle-less shallow bowl—with or without any kind of *omphalos*. We believe that this definition adheres as closely as possible to the evidence of the Greek testimonia and visual representations. We believe, in other words, that the evidence available so far suggests that when a Greek text refers generically to a *phiale* (in either the Greek or Persian realm) a shallow handle-less vessel with or without an *omphalos* is being described. For vessels of a certain diameter and weight, the *omphalos* is a useful physical feature providing a point at which to hook the middle finger while grasping the rim with the thumb. But there are large *phialai* without the *omphalos* and small ones with it.

The practical function of the vessel certainly included drinking as well as libation pouring; and these two actions undoubtedly intersected in important areas. Drinking from a *phiale* may have connoted a heroic, reverential, or cultic context in the Greek world and in the Persian imperial sphere. Both contexts owe something to more ancient Near Eastern tradition. This duality of functions—particularly significant as it is played out in a royal cult environment—is exemplified by various neo-Assyrian reliefs. One relief of Ashurnasirpal II at Ninurta in the ninth century shows the Assyrian king holding a *phiale* as he stands by a lion he has killed in the hunt (which itself was a highly charged ritual of kingship). This scene clearly depicts a ritual and is described in scholarly discussions as a “libation scene” even though we do not literally see the act of pouring a libation here. Another type of scene involves an ostensible “banquet.” The best example dates to the reign of Ashurbanipal in the seventh century. The king and his queen hold *phialai* in the famous tableau in the queen’s quarters, for which a link between the sacred marriage rites at the new year and the celebration of military victory has been proposed.

The Freer vessel and its companions (even by Luschey’s *omphalos*-focused definition) would clearly have been described as *phialai* by a Greek. Thanks to these four inscribed artifacts, we can now verify that in the Achaemenid Persian context such vessels had an expressly articulated function as wine-drinking vessels. This does not, of course, necessarily preclude the possibility that shallow handle-less vessels of this type could be used in other ways as well. The term *bâtugara* does not allow us to determine whether the Freer *phiale* was meant to be used only in certain prescribed types or contexts of wine-drinking (i.e., in the course of a specific courtly ritual). It is important nevertheless to acknowledge that in the imperial context, dining and drinking at court will have incorporated aspects of cult. This elision of royal performance and religious cult is suggested by the Assyrian palace reliefs just cited; and it is carried to more systematic programmatic heights in Achaemenid representations of kingship. The dining rituals of the Great King projected an ideology of abundance and good fortune surrounding the royal person and available to those who cooperated. Thus the notions of drinking and *phialai* in this sphere were part of a complex web of imperial exercise that wove together cult and social life inextricably. Pierre Briant’s study of classical sources pertaining to the king’s dining customs offers a significant frame for these issues.

The tomb painting at Karaburun in Lycia provides a glimpse of a noble personage operating out of the western empire. He is engaged in some sort of banquet ritual involving use of *phialai*. The painting may depict not a *Totenmahl* scenario but rather the worldly aristocrat in life as he acted out homage to the Persian king in a drinking ritual—perhaps even using two *phialai* gifted by that ruler as a pair. The reclining personage raises up one *phiale*, while his attendant comes forward carrying in one hand an elaborate handled container (presumably holding wine) and in the other hand a *phiale* perched on the tips of his fingers and a ladle hooked around one finger (fig. 8). All the implements are carefully rendered with rich details. We can only speculate on the nature of the ritual here, as it so clearly involves the deployment of two *phialai* even though only one person is shown as a “diner.” Perhaps the ritual expressly involved a wine-drinking vessel brought forth and filled—but set aside symbolically for the absent king.

Although looted in Roman times, the Karaburun tomb may have originally held a pair of actual precious *phialai*, as well as a ladle and elaborate wine-containing vessel. It is certainly plausible that such paired *phialai* might have been gifted by the king.
Possessions gifted by the Achaemenid king seem to have shared many features with the category that anthropologist Annette Weiner has described as “inalienable.” In her words,

Whereas other alienable properties are exchanged against each other, inalienable possessions are symbolic repositories of genealogies and historical events; their unique, subjective identity gives them absolute value placing them above the exchangeability of one thing for another.\(^{145}\)

She characterizes the dynamic tension embedded in stewardship of an inalienable possession as one involving a “radiating power of keeping inalienable possessions out of exchange”; but also one with countervailing tensions such that “the challenge to give is at the same time a challenge to the ability to keep” while “the challenge to surrender the documentation of difference [the inalienable possession] . . . is a challenge to the guardianship of autonomy.”\(^{146}\)

The precious phiale in general is particularly interesting, then, because it is a commodity that seems to have been so important in the transfer of honor and privilege from the king outward. The phiale, like the animal-shaped rhyton, is a vessel type that is explicitly not depicted on the Apadana reliefs showing gift-bearing delegations from the subject lands coming toward the Great King. As suggested earlier, this may signify something very particular about a royal prerogative of gifting. If it were a royal prerogative to gift a particular phiale for the first time (so that the direction of its movement was always from the king outward), then the value of the phiale would be even more enhanced. Furthermore, its aspect as an inalienable possession replete with the tensions suggested by Weiner would be greater.

None of the testimonia refers to gifted phialai as royally inscribed. And we have already noted that the Artaxerxes phialai are among an extremely small group of such vessels. It may be that a royally gifted phiale would emphatically not have been royally inscribed. If the phiale without a royal name was a prestige gift par excellence from the Persian king—and one presupposing the performance of meaningful rituals relating to the king—then the royally inscribed phiale would be that aspect of what the phiale

exclusively in sets for the performance of a drinking ritual of homage to the ruler and celebration of allegiance to him. The Freer phiale and its companion vessels have already raised the issue of the matched set in connection with factors to be considered in assessing authenticity. The possible social meanings of sets of drinking vessels within the Achaemenid empire needs more study, which will in turn facilitate informed theorization. Analogies with the material record from other contexts where more textual records and more excavated artifacts are available might prove especially useful in raising questions.\(^{143}\)

Indeed, gold and silver phialai in the Achaemenid context have primarily been retrieved from tombs, when their provenance is firmly established at all. Burials across the empire from Africa to eastern central Asia attest the frequent removal from circulation of precious Persian phialai through deposition with the deceased.

This feature of the archaeological record is quite remarkable. It clearly implies a willingness to remove from circulation an object of major monetary value. This is a radically different situation from what we encounter in Greece at the same time. The difference is not a question of Greek disdain of silver and gold, which we now understand to have been abundant and coveted in classical Athens.\(^{144}\) It may, however, say a great deal about symbolic valuations that weighed heavily in the Persian context but were overriden by practical concerns of maintenance of estate wealth in the Greek sphere. If we credit the story of Demus at all, we must acknowledge that burial of a precious phiale that had been gifted by the king would remove from circulation a transferable symbol of carte blanche that could set in motion a whole range of social and financial opportunities. Other sources suggest that a precious object gifted by the Persian king could be regifted by its original recipient to another individual. This possibility reinforces the significance of such an object as a commodity of practical value in the social sphere precisely (if paradoxically) because of its symbolic value—because of its value as a gifted worked artifact rather than as an object simply worth a certain amount because of its weight in raw silver or gold. This in turn reinforces the significance of the removal of such an object from circulation through burial.
symbolized that was the inalienable possession of the king himself: that part of the potential of exchange that was withheld and not passed along in the trajectory of reciprocities implicit in the distributive and redistributive imperial dynamic. The royally inscribed phiale would be, then, the phiale of phialai, like the king of kings.

Achaemenid burial practices incorporating gifted phialai (and sets of phialai) suggest a society in which strong bonds of reciprocal loyalty were created between the king and his honored friends. As we move in our grasp of the Achaemenid empire from a glib dependence on tropes of oriental opulence and decadence toward a more nuanced appreciation of the culture of Achaemenid Iran, the implications of the gifted phialai will become increasingly clear. Furthermore, these implications will enlighten us on the nature of the ungifted, the royally inscribed, phiale. Altogether we perceive a situation in which symbolic values were powerful ones even as these vessels or sets of vessels had precise and frank monetary values.

In this context, the richness of forms developed for the precious phiale in the Achaemenid empire is an enticing index of layers of symbolic encoding. The plethora of formal variants is yet another factor belaying the notion that gold and silver phialai were only, or even primarily, perceived as a practical way of storing a large accumulation of wealth. Embellished and unembellished metallic phiale forms were imitated in clear glass—another precious commodity in Achaemenid society but one that did not have an evident intrinsic value like gold and silver. Some glass phialai are extraordinary tours de force pressing the technical limits of that medium. They remind us that in the Acharnians (73–75) Aristophanes describes Athenian ambassadors at Ecbatana drinking from clear glass vessels. Fragments of some twenty-four glass vessels were excavated in the Treasury at Persepolis. One of these is a deeply lobed form similar in decorative scheme to the Artaxerxes phiale.

There is a sense that these glass objects were prized in the Achaemenid context for their beauty and interest value as made things. It is probably significant that the phiale shape was the metal form most coveted in the alternative medium of clear glass. The extraordinary virtuosity of many extant silver and gold phialai and their small number of surviving glass counterparts suggest a premium placed on the contemplation of these objects and on the pleasure derived from visual and tactile engagement with them. This casts in a new light the age-old critique of the Persians as crass parvenus wantonly deploying garish wealth. It urges a reinterpretation of the numerous passages in the classical sources that allude to intriguing and beautiful things made for the Persian king and to the king’s special artists who invented and refined upon various forms of royal enjoyment. We would do well to consider the phiale in the same category as the gardens of the Persian king. There, important discussions have taken place situating the archaeology of the paradeisos within the textual tradition that documents Persian aesthetic fascination and reverence for beautiful trees and organizations of flora. Additionally, this discourse has moved in the direction of placing reverence for the beauty of the paradeisos in a more complicated aesthetic-economic ideological context. The garden is at once a beautiful idealized place and also a symbolic paradigm of dynastic and agrarian fertility—an “imaging” of the cultivation of the earth for the very practical enrichment of the imperial economy and power.

In this dynamic confluence of beautiful made environment (or thing) and symbol of a flow of power and wealth in the binding ideology of empire, the paradeisos and the phiale share some important elements. Perhaps it should not surprise us that the phiale is almost always decorated with floral forms that suggest an explicit link with the realm of paradeisos.

In the Indo-Iranian tradition passed down through the Avesta and literary testimonia such as the Iranian national epic (the Shanameh of Firdousi) beautiful objects can acquire their own farnah, their own god-given spirit. Thus, for instance, a tree acquires its own farnah in the Shahnameh. And an Arabic author documenting the new year festivities of kingship practiced in Persia of the Sasanian period includes a chapter entitled “The Beauty of Gifts.” Increasingly, scholarship on Achaemenid kingship is looking to the Indo-Iranian tradition for clues to the meaning of elements that are opaque through the classical testimonia with their obvious biases. We need to mine these sources if we are to gain access to something as subtle as a concept of aesthetic value. This subject has been notoriously difficult to approach
in the study of ancient Near Eastern art so far; but it is a topic that is gaining momentum.\textsuperscript{156} It seems fitting to close on this note—acknowledging the possibility that future work will further elucidate the nature of the \textit{phiale} as a potential manifestation of a \textit{farvah}.

The Freer \textit{phiale} has a checkered past. Its exploration leaves numerous questions only partially answered and raises new ones. Of the new ones, perhaps the most intriguing and radical is that which challenges us to consider the Barbarian as admiral of the spirit of the beautiful. □

Notes


5. A. T. Olmstead, \textit{History of the Persian Empire} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 353. The Hamadan provenance is reiterated in an anonymous article in the \textit{Illustrated London News}, 16 April 1955, 699. From then on, it has remained attached to the \textit{phialai}, qualified sometimes but not always only by a “(?)” or a “said to have been found at.”


10. E.g., Ernst E. Herzfeld, \textit{Amtliche Berichte aus Iran} (1931). Brown alludes to these finds briefly in his two encyclopedia entries cited above, n. 8, but few details seem to be known. See also, e.g., II. J. Kantor, “Achaemenid Jewelry in the Oriental Institute,” \textit{Journal of Near Eastern Studies} 16 (1957): 1–23. We do not currently have access to M. T. Mostafavi’s \textit{Hamadan: Asare Tarikhi Hamadan} (Historical Monuments of Hamadan) (Tehran, 1953). L. Vanden Berghe’s \textit{Archéologie de l’Iran ancien} (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959), 108–10, is disappointingly uncritical and does not clarify these questions.


13. Dalton, \textit{The Treasure of the Oxus}, xvii, notes wryly that “The discovery of any remarkable treasure or hoard naturally rouses speculation as to the persons who may have concealed it, and the occasion on which the deposit was made. Archaeological curiosity in such cases is rarely satisfied, and when attempts are made to reconstruct the history, too great a
strain is often placed upon the imagination." The flood epics associated with the clandestine retrieval of several Near Eastern hoards of precious objects may well contain kernels of truth relating to violent storms and what they do to the terrain. Another famous saga fairly close to the Achaemenid context is that of the "Ziwirye treasure," which is said to have been revealed when part of a hill washed away in a storm in 1947 (Vanden Berghe, Archéologie, 111–12). What we are concerned with here is the sense in which a narrative is created exploiting the flood imagery because this invests the agency of unauthorized/clandestine revelation in the powers of nature rather than the culpability of any mercenary human being. Then, the arrival of the European who removes the treasure to safety and/or attempts somehow to restore its historical validity actually casts the entire project in a heroic light.


17. Ernst Herzfeld Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives: Notebook SK-XIV, p. 17. In 1944, Herzfeld offered for sale to the Metropolitan Museum what was understood to be his entire archaeological library as well as his entire collection of drawings, journals, notebooks, etc. In fact, the material that eventually came to the Metropolitan represents only a segment of the whole. In 1946 he gave the lion's share of the same material to the Freer Gallery of Art. The double-dealing was not realized until 1974, when investigations into the agreement reached with the Metropolitan (in the course of a project to catalogue the Herzfeld papers there) made it clear that New York thought in 1944 that it was purchasing the entire lot. See Margaret Cool Root, "The Herzfeld Archive of the Metropolitan Museum of Art," Metropolitan Museum Journal 11 (1976): 119–24. Muscarella, "Excavated and Unexcavated Achaemenid Art," 31–33, offers additional insights into the ambiguities of Herzfeld's referencing of provenance.

18. Judging by the dimensions added in ink onto the pencil drawing, this does not represent the Freer *phialae* but rather one of the others.


25. Metropolitan Museum of Art 45.11.17. Herzfeld published the foot fragment in 1941 in Iran in the Ancient East, 251 and pl. LXXII, as "a fragment of a shoe from a figure of Darius," without mentioning how he knew it was from a figure of Darius. Earlier in the same essay (pp. 231–33) he discussed the Palace of Darius (*tachara*) at some length but
did not allude there to the graffiti on the foot of the royal representation. When the fragment next appeared in the scholarly literature, it had become part of the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art: Gisela M. A. Richter, “Greeks in Persia,” American Journal of Archaeology 50 (1946): fig. 26. On p. 28 n. 29, Richter simply identifies the fragment as “Now acquired by the Metropolitan Museum,” with no accession number or other information. For a good photograph showing the damage done to the relief on the western jamb of the western doorway in the northern wall of the main hall of the Palace of Darius, see Ann Britt Tilia, Studies and Restorations at Persepolis and Other Sites of Persia II (Rome: Istituto per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1978), pl. XXVIII, fig. 28. The illustration in Schmidt, Persepolis I, pl. 140 B, does not show it as clearly because of the angle.


27. Ann Britt and Giuseppe Tilia showed Margaret Root the crated objects in 1973.


29. Curtis, Cowell, and Walker, “A Silver Bowl,” 150, corroborate the findings of Gunter and Jett, with further references.


31. Important precedent for this goes back to neo-Assyrian times in the form of the “tribute bowls” (kappi maddatte) mentioned in letters and administrative texts. These bowls were made of silver and were at least sometimes of about one mina in weight, i.e., a standard unit of precious metal. See J. N. Postgate, Taxation and Conscription in the Assyrian Empire, Studia Pahl 3 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1974), 112, 127; M. Fales and J. N. Postgate, eds., Imperial and Administrative Records, Part I. Palace and Temple Administration, State Archives of Assyria 7 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1992), xxiv–xxvi.


33. The Herzfeld Papers in the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives and in the Herzfeld Archive, Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, remain a gold mine of untapped information of ethnographic interest.

34. Michael Vickers, “Shed No Tears? Three Case Studies in Ancient Metrology,” in Essays in Honor of Dietrich von Bothmer, ed. Andrew Clark and Jason Gaunt (forthcoming). We are grateful to Dr. Vickers for sharing the results of this analysis with us. These computations must factor in variation in siglos weight in order for the total gram weight to yield a precise equivalence to 600 sigloi (e.g., the weight of the siglos for the four phialai varies between 5.53 grams and 5.55). It is beyond our scope to assess the validity of the results; but they seem in line with acceptable norms of variation for such computations.


39. The Darius Vase is an Apulian volute crater presumably dating to about 330 b.c. It is the name vase for the oeuvre associated with the “Darius Painter.” For the Darius Vase in the context of the Achaemenid treasury system (as well as for extensive background on the scholarship on this famous artifact), see Marie-Christine Villanueva-Puig, “Le vase des Perses: Naples 3253 (inv. 81947),” Revue des études anciennes 91 (1989): 227–98.


41. A classic example is the Uruk Vase and its companion. Only fragments of the second vase survive, but they clearly indicate a more or less identical artifact. For the original publication of the protoliterate Uruk Vase and its fragmentary mate, see E. Heinrich, Kleinfunde aus den archaischen Tempelschichten in Uruk (Leipzig: Kommissionsverlag O. Harrassowitz,


44. E.g., Root, *King and Kingship*, 190, on implications of the replica of the Behistun monument at Babylon; and passim for more sweeping implications of the replication of official imagery across the empire.


46. Herzfeld, “Die Silberschüsseln Artaxerxes’ des I.”


50. As an example of the alternative placement of a royal inscription on a seemingly similarly shaped *phiale*, see the gold vessel published by Ghirshman as from “Hamadan” and cited as belonging to an unnamed private collection in Geneva (Ghirshman, *Arts of Ancient Iran*, fig. 310). This vessel bears the royal inscription around the exterior of the rim (given as Darius by Ghirshman in his caption to fig. 310 and by M. Abkâr-Khavari, “Die acharämenidischen Metallschalen,” *Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 21 (1988), in his list at item Z1, p. 134—although the latter does not show the placement of the inscription in his drawing). It is difficult to be sure from these publications just how similar in profile this gold *phiale* is to the four Artaxerxes *phialai* in terms of the critical aspect of horizontality of the rim. Interestingly, Abkâr-Khavari lists only seven precious metal deep or shallow bowls bearing royal inscriptions in his catalogue (114–34). The four Artaxerxes *phialai* are represented only by one example (the one in the Metropolitan Museum—his UF2e9). Thus his list should actually incorporate at least three additional examples. Excluding the Artaxerxes *phialai*, the other royally inscribed vessels he cites all bear inscriptions of Darius or Xerxes, and he categorizes every one of them as of doubtful authenticity (“Zweifelhaft”). The Artaxerxes *phiale* (sic) is the only royally inscribed example that he does not place in the “Zweifelhaft” category! In any event, the gold objects said to have come from Hamadan that are inscribed in Old Persian are all highly suspect on philological grounds. See Rüdiger Schmitt, “Eine Goldfasel mit angeblicher Darcios-Inschrift,” *Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 28 (1995–96): 269.

51. It is always possible that Herzfeld deliberately annotated his sketchbook to create a misleading impression that inscriptions that he had actually forged were instead a discovery. But in no other instance known to us did Herzfeld self-consciously manufacture elaborate evidence out of absolutely nothing. He was not above a certain degree of manipulation of data to, e.g., make a pottery join look secure when it really is not or an architectural element look clearly indicated by the archaeological record when this record has seemed counterindicative to subsequent excavators. See, e.g., Root, “The Herzfeld Archive,” and David Stronach, *Pasargadae* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 6. These frailties are, however, a far cry from what would be implied by any accusation of forgery of these vessel texts. Achaemenid metal artifacts with royal inscriptions have, of course, been forged; but we do not link any of these objects to Herzfeld’s creative handiwork. Indeed, their inscriptions tend to suffer from a lack of the philological expertise Herzfeld would have brought to such a task. Note, for instance, the problematic Old Persian text on the gold tablet reputedly from Hamadan, discussed recently by Schmitt: “Eine Goldfasel,” 269–73 (with additional references).


53. Tardy, *Les poisons de garantie internationaux pour l’argent*, 9th ed. (Paris: Tardy, 1969). The shape and dimensions of the marks on the British Museum Artaxerxes *phiale* are comparable; but macrophotography has not been performed yet to determine conclusively whether there is any
interior detailing. Examination so far has suggested that the marks are plain. Similarly, we are not able to incorporate the Metropolitan Museum’s piece or the one now in Tehran into this discussion.

54. Gunter and Jett, Ancient Iranian Metalwork, 71-72, and subsequent follow-up efforts.


56. He does not discuss them or enter them into his drawings. The excellent published photographs in Herzfeld, “Eine Silberschüssel Artaxerxes’ I,” do not show them. But neither do the sharp full-view photographs of the Freer phiale published in Gunter and Jett, Ancient Iranian Metalwork, and reproduced here! A special detail shot is necessary to reveal them at all. Macrophotography is needed to reveal the interior lines.


59. Wynyard R. T. Wilkinson, A History of Hallmarks (London: Queen Anne Press, 1975), notes that forgers often crafted hallmarks into new fabrications. But once again, it is highly improbable that any forger in the 1930s would even think of adding a hallmark to silver in order to pass it off as Achaemenid. As far as we know, the Freer phiale and its mates are the only silver vessels in which the hallmark has been discussed in print.


63. Özen and Öztürk, Heritage Recovered, nos. 40, 96, and 160.


66. More casual investigation by the authors, using standard non-macro photographs alone, was less negative. The rectangular shape (not contemplating any possible interior device) and measurements of the Freer phiale punch marks at 0.65 mm x 1.2 mm compared well to the rectangular punch mark on the reverse of a Type II Archer siglo, measuring 0.5 mm x 1.0 mm: Ian Garradice, ed., Covage and Administration in the Athenian and Persian Empires (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports International Series 343, 1987), pl. XI, 12. The punch marks on the British Museum phiale were measured at about 0.7 mm x 1.5 mm: Curtis, Cowell, and Walker, “A Silver Bowl,” 149. The apparent pattern within the Freer phiale mark is not readily visible with the naked eye even on first-hand inspection. Any further work on this topic needs to be done through first-hand inspection of all four phialai with this issue in mind, bringing in macrophotographs of the coins for comparative purposes as well.

67. Wilkinson, Hallmarks, 23, suggests that the hallmark has been discerned on Roman and Byzantine silver but not on earlier artifacts. It is, however, likely that this investigation has not attempted to probe earlier material or large categories of non-Western material for pre-Roman evidence. The locus classicus of secondary literature on the earliest recognized silver stamps is E. C. Dodd, Byzantine Silver Stamps (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Studies 7, 1961) and idem, “Byzantine Silver Stamps, Supplement II: More Treasures from Syria,” Dumbarton Oaks Papers 22 (1968): 141-49. See also D. E. Strong, Greek and Roman Gold and Silver Plate (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1966), 189-84, on silver stamping known through a few surviving vessels from the eastern regions of the Roman empire of the fourth and fifth centuries A.D.

68. See, e.g., Marla Mundell Mango, Silver from Early Byzantium: The Kaper Korao and Related Treasures (Baltimore: The Walters Art Gallery, 1986), 13-15, 42. She finds, for instance, no correlation between the stamping of specific vessels in the Kaper Korao hoard and the degree of purity of the metal of the various objects.

69. Phyllis Ackerman, Guide to the Exhibition of Persian Art (New York: The Iranian Institute, 1940), 322, no. 37;

70. Sotheby’s, Catalogue of Egyptian, Western Asiatic, Greek, and Roman Antiquities, Islamic Pottery, Metalwork, and Glass (London: Sotheby’s, 1970).

71. Curtis, Cowell, and Walker, “A Silver Bowl,” 149-53, review the modern history of the phiale and update the information available at the writing of Gunter and Jett, Ancient Iranian Metalwork. The whereabouts of the vessel now in Tehran is the final piece in the puzzle tracking the present locations of these vessels. It was still unknown to Vickers at the writing of “Shed No Tears,” where he lists it as in “New York” (i.e., a reference presumably to its previous status in the Kevorkian collection).


73. This is the vessel published in Curtis, Cowell, and Walker, “A Silver Bowl.”

74. Although we have not had an opportunity yet to examine the phiale that is now in Tehran, we look forward to the day when this will be possible.


80. Briant, Histoire, 884.


82. This amount has been computed to represent between 1.7 and 22 billion pounds sterling in Michael Vickers and David Gill, Artful Crafts: Ancient Greek Silverware and Pottery (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 69.


84. This would be analogous to the production of Egyptian scarabs inscribed posthumously with the name of the great New Kingdom expansionist Tuthmosis III. There is, however (we repeat), no totally reliable independent evidence as yet for such a practice of posthumous honorific items at the Achaemenid court. The notion that the gold plaques “from Hamadan” with an inscription of Artyaramnes is an authentic Achaemenid period “forgery” created in the reign of Artaxerxes II remains disputed (compare Brown, “Ecbatana,” Encyclopædia Iranica, 81, with Schmitt, “Eine Goldtafel.”). It is possible that some extant Sassanian silver plate depicts deceased kings in a commemorative mode analogous to special commemorative issues of Roman coins—but this phenomenon is not documented for Achaemenid times. See Prudence O. Harper and Pieter Meyers, Silver Vessels of the Sassanian Period I: Royal Imagery (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art with Princeton University Press, 1981), 138 n. 47.

It may be that sculptures of Cyrus in Palace P at Pasargadae were inscribed posthumously with his name. This is, however, a somewhat different phenomenon. See Strouach, Pasargadae, 78–106, and Root, King and Kingship, 49–58, for differing views on the probable chronological relation of the sculptures of Palace P to the building and the inscriptions to the sculptures. In either case, the Palace P situation involves an architectural monument begun in the reign of Cyrus. The posthumous inscribing of the royal representations with his name could be construed as an act of official propriety, piety, and affiliation—quite in tune with later practices at Persepolis, where buildings completed in the reign of a later king are inscribed with references to the effort of the initiating monarch.

85. Root, King and Kingship, 118–22, lists royal name seals including those inscribed with one royal name but continued in use in a later reign. Studies by Garrison and Root explicate details of the style of specific seals used on the Persepolis Fortification tablets that corroborate the continuity in use of the old seals even after the death of the named royal figure: Garrison and Root, Seal Impressions on the Persepolis Fortification Tablets; idem, “Royal-Name Seals of the Persian Empire” (with Deniz Kaptan), forthcoming.


87. William J. Dumbrell, “The Tell E-Maskhuta Bowls and

88. There is abundant evidence for the dedication and reinscription of antique artifacts in the ancient Near East.


93. Poul Fossing, “Drinking Bowls of Glass and Metal from the Achaemenid Time,” Berytus 4 (1937): 124. Harper, Aruz, and Tallon, eds., Royal City of Susa, 244 and fig. 120. For the original publication of the find, see Jacques de Morgan, “Découverte d’une sépulture achéménide à Susa,” Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse 8 (1905): 29–58. As Abkâ’i-Khavari indicates, the technical idiosyncrasies of the Susa phialae cannot be used to suggest that it therefore must be a fake: “Die achämenidische Metallschalen,” 109.


96. Harper and Meyers, Silver Vessels, 145. Volume 2 of Harper and Meyers promises to address these important questions systematically. It must be noted, however, that inability to pursue fieldwork in Iran over the last twenty years has seriously hampered inquiry relating to source fingerprinting in the heartland and eastern regions of Sasanian (or Achaemenid) purview.

97. For the complete text see Kent, Old Persian, 142–44; see Root, King and Kingship, 7–12, for discussion of its social-political message.

98. P. R. S. Moorey, in Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries, 234–35, and in Cemeteries of the First Millennium B.C. at Deve Hüyük, near Carrasum, Salvaged by T. E. Lawrence and C. L. Woolley in 1913 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports International Series 87, 1980), 30, stresses the likely importance of the Anatolian sources during the Achaemenid period. Khachatrian, “Silver Bowls,” 297–308, makes a strong case for including Armenia among silver mining and working sites during the Achaemenid empire. The eastern reaches of the empire (about which we are less well informed) may ultimately emerge as crucial in this discussion.

99. Mango, Silver from Early Byzantium, 39–41, discusses these issues. See also Vickers and Gill, Artful Crafts, 73–76, synthesizing information on the limitations and possibilities of what the fact of a hoard can mean.


101. In the cast, note for instance a Han silver vessel emulating the deep lobing distinctive of the Artaxerxes phialae: Jessica Rawson, “Tombs or Hoards: The Survival of Chinese Silver of the Tang and Song Periods, Seventh to Thirteenth Centuries A.D.,” in Pots and Pans, ed. Vickers, 32–33, fig. 1 (vessel found in Pit I near a tomb of the Xi state at Linzi Xian, Shandong Province, second century B.C.).

In the west, compare the many ceramic emulations of Achaemenid lobed metal vessels produced in Athens in the fifth century B.C.: Margaret C. Miller, “Adoption and Adaptation of Achaemenid Metalware forms in Attic Black-Gloss Ware of the Fifth Century,” Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran 26 (1993): 109–16.


103. In the Achaemenid imperial context Elspeth McIntosh Dusinberre has recently explored strategies for articulating features of the notion of a regional imperial style in the production of seal carving. Her work demonstrates the complexities of the process as well as the interest value of its results. See “Imperial Style and Constructed Identity: A ‘Graco-Persian’ Cylinder Seal from Sardis,” Ars Orientalis 27 (1997): 99–129.

104. Vickers and Gill, Artful Crafts, 47, discuss this passage ([Dem.] 49.7) in a different context.

105. Özgen, Öztürk, et al., Heritage Recovered, 50–51, 103 (no. 54).

106. Özgen, Öztürk, et al., Heritage Recovered.

107. Root, King and Kingship, passim codem, “From the Heart”; Moorey, Deve Hüyük, 30. See also Muscarella, “Unexcavated Objects and Ancient Near Eastern Art,” 195–94 n. 100. For an easily accessible illustration of the tomb relief see Muscarella, “Excavated and Unexcavated Achaemenid Art,” figs. 4–5. The commentary by Wulff, Traditional Crafts, 35, concerning metal craft specializations by fringe ethnic subgroups is relevant here. Without attempting to
press the ethnographic evidence too far in its applicability to ancient Iran, it is nevertheless interesting to note this situation in which the producers of metal implements (including religious implements) for the mainstream culture owe allegiance to a different cultural group entirely.


111. Such challenging questions are implicitly probed in important historical studies of the economy and social history of the empire such as Briant, *Rois, tributs, paysans*; Tuplin, “Administration”; and Briant and Herrenschmidt, eds., *Le tribut*.


113. Admittedly, the isolated occurrence of a royally inscribed vessel in a private tomb would not necessarily destroy the theory—since one can imagine many scenarios by which a piece of state tableware might come into the possession of a person who appropriated it for private use.

114. Erich Schmidt, *Persepolis II: Contents of the Treasury and Other Discoveries* (Chicago: Oriental Institute Publications, 1957), 81–93. Cahill, “The Treasury at Persepolis,” 382–83, discusses the curious fact that almost all the stone vessels found in the Treasury (including the fifty-three alabaster vessels inscribed with the name of Xerxes) were systematically smashed in the destruction by Alexander. Although he rejects the notion of iconoclasm, we would like to revive this explanation. If the inscribed stone tableware had been correctly perceived by Alexander’s army as a particular signifier of the royal ethos in some extremely powerful way, it then becomes quite logical that these objects would have been subject to deliberate attack. Although working along slightly different lines, Helen Sancisi-Weerdenburg approaches a similar concept in “Alexander at Persepolis,” in *Alexander the Great, Myth and Reality* (Rome: ARID Suppl. 21, 1993), 177–88. See Gunter and Jett, *Ancient Iranian Metalwork*, 70–71, for a discussion of finds of royally inscribed stone vessels elsewhere in the empire.


116. Briant, *Histoire*, 442–52, discusses the evidence of Aramaic annotations on the green chert vessels from Persepolis, reconstructing a tightly state-controlled production at Persepolis for this royal tableware.

117. Sancisi-Weerdenburg has suggested that the reference to “made in the royal house” is more likely to have been applied to an object sent out of the royal house than to one deposited within it: “Gifts in the Persian Empire,” in *Le tribut*, ed. Briant and Herrenschmidt, 134 n. 14. The main thrust of her argument, however, emphasizes the redistributive aspect of the Persian imperial economy (contra Calilh in “The Treasury at Persepolis”). While we take her point on the larger issue, we feel that a closer examination of the detail under discussion here warrants our thesis. The lapis doorknob from Persepolis with the same vēšīša karta tag seems to support our notion. We might even extend the theory to the inscribed garments of the king and crown prince displayed on reliefs at Persepolis (e.g., in the Palace of Darius). The texts say who the weavers of the garment are (whose needs the garments are meant to serve), even though we have to assume that the identity of the royal pair would be quite obvious to any contemporary observers of the royal family without aid of a garment label. For the Palace of Darius, see Root, *King and Kingship*, 76–86. The royally inscribed wares were probably used by honored guests at the king’s table and thus served an iterative function insistently invoking the royal name to an audience beyond the king himself without ever having to leave the royal headquarters where they were kept.

118. Nylander, *Assyria Grammata,* where the author demonstrates the likelihood that Aramaic is the language referred to by “old Assyrian.”

119. Miller, *Athens and Persia*, e.g., 59–61, and *passim*.


125. The inscription on a vessel said to have come from Hamadan has a lacuna at the first word—which presumably gave the name of the vessel form (in this case a kind of pitcher). See Kent, *Old Persian*, 153 (XII). Of course we do not know whether or not the missing term would have actually described vessel function.

126. Among others, Curtis, Cowell, and Walker pointedly avoid using the term *phialai* throughout their article but do not explain why.


128. E.g., Miller, *Athens and Persia*, 60: “In a Greek context, *phialai* were libation bowls, but their shape is similar to a shallow bowl used for drinking in the Near East (and actually the original model of the Greek *phialai*).” And thus Bonna Wescoat, “Wining and Dining on the Temple of Athena at Assos,” in *The Art of Interpreting*, ed. Susan C. Scott, Papers in Art History from the Pennsylvania State University 9 (1996), 293–317, esp. 297–98, must interpret the banquet frieze on the Assos Temple in Anatolia as a ritualized scene involving libation because two of the reclining figures hold shallow handle-less vessels, which she reads as *phialai*. While the Assos frieze may indeed depict a ritual event, the categorical line drawn between libation and drinking in the function of a *phialai* may not be justified as an *a priori* assumption.

129. Several women in the procession on the east side of the Parthenon frieze carry large *phialai*, for instance. They are clear among the group on the south end of the east frieze, where the exteriors of the *phialai* face the viewer and we can see that the women hold them with thumb hooked over the rim and middle finger hooked into the exterior cavity. These vessels are not articulated with decoration, which is a pity. By the hand span illustrated, we would have to postulate that the Parthenon *phialai* are somewhat smaller than, but on the same basic order as, the Freer *phialai*—in other words, very grand ones in comparison to some of the light and presumably small ones inventoried in the Parthenon holdings. For a good photograph of this rarely published panel of the frieze, see Frank Brommer, *Der Parthenonfries*, vol. 2 (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1977), pl. 166 (slab O II). *Phialai* are also clear at the north end, where the interiors are visible, complete with *emphaloi* in convex aspect. See Brommer, *Der Parthenonfries*, vol. 2, pl. 188 (slab O VIII), and fig. 14 here.

130. One interesting example that demonstrates the ambiguous function of the *phialai* is the representation apparently showing King Croesus on his pyre after the conquest by Cyrus. Here Croesus pours wine (?) from his *phialai* onto the man lighting the pyre beneath his throne. For this Type A belly amphora by Myson (from Vulci, now in the Louvre), see, e.g., John Boardman, *Athenian Red Figure Vases: The Archaic Period* (New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975), fig. 171. For another ambiguous representation, see the tondo of the cup by the Bryges Painter (also from Vulci and now in the Louvre) showing Biresis pouring wine into a *phialai* for the seated Phoinix while the sack of Troy rages around the exterior of the cup. Boardman, *Athenian Red Figure Vases*, fig. 245.1. Yet another ambiguous depiction, on a column crater by the Syriskos Painter, shows enthroned Zeus with Iris pouring wine into his *phialai*. Boardman, *Athenian Red Figure Vases*, fig. 202 (Beazley, *ARV* 260, 15, listed as in a private collection in New York). These three examples demonstrate the intriguing elision between representations of Greek epic figures and gods and an iconography drawn from the sphere of courtly life evocative of the Persian king himself.


133. Despite its inherent flaws and its need for drastic updating because of new finds, Luschey’s *Die Phiale* remains valuable for assembling much of the evidence for the Near Eastern connection.

134. The so-called Achaemenid bowl is discussed by Elspeth McIntosh Dusinberre, “Satrapal Sardis: Aspects of Empire in an Achaemenid Capital” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1997), 46–94. See also her article on this topic in the *American Journal of Archaeology*, forthcoming.

135. E.g., Wescoat, “Wining and Dining.”


with extensive interpretation.


141. A ritual celebrating the king’s birthday would be one possibility. See Sancisi-Weerdenburg, “Gifts,” 132–33; but one cannot help thinking of the cup for Elijah at Passover as well.

142. Note the silver ladle and silver phiale found in Tomb 650 at Tell Farah in Israel: Moorey, Deve Hiyük, 29 (citing W. M. F. Petrie’s Beth-Pelet I, 1930).

143. The various milieux of the Islamic middle ages and the courts of Tang and Song dynasty China might provide particularly good analogies that also have historical connections with Iranian traditions going back to Achaemenid times.

144. Vickers and Gill, Artful Crafts.


146. Weiner, Inalienable Possessions, 150.


149. Fukai, Persian Glass, 19, figs. 5 and 6, makes the comparison.


152. Briant, Histoire, 455–57, with other references.


154. On farnah see Kent, Old Persian, 208 (under Vida-farnah), and Bailey, Zoroastrian, 1–77. A. Sh. Shabazi, “Achaemenid Symbol,” 47, proposes direct Avestan inspiration for elements of Achaemenid iconography and stresses the importance of the Indo-Iranian tradition in Achaemenid rituals of kingship.

155. E.g., Wolfgang Knauth with Sejfoeddin Nadmabadi, Das Fürstenideal von Xenophon bis Firdousi (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1975), for a general study. For a more focused discussion relating to Achaemenid kingship, see Nylander, “Darius III—The Coward King.” There are, of course, historiographical issues to contend with in this approach as well. But they are perhaps not more vexed than is the critical deployment of the classical testimony. It is simply that to Western scholars of the Achaemenid empire, the Eastern sources stand outside the norms of our own traditional training. On the use of Firdousi’s Shannameh as a source, see, e.g., Dick Davis, “The Problem of Ferdowsi’s Sources,” Journal of the American Oriental Society 116 (1996): 48–57.

The Very Idea of a Portrait
A slender, poised image of a sensuous female, flawlessly cast in bronze and identified for many years as an image of the goddess Parvati, stands a meter high on a pedestal within the Freer Gallery of Art (fig. 1). Sometime ago, I proposed that the image may be read with equal validity as a portrait of the Chola queen Sembiyan Mahadevi, idealized as divinity and portrayed in the guise of a goddess. This blurring and apparent overlapping of the categories of divine and royal portraiture has led me to explore in this essay the idea of portraiture in early India in an attempt to analyze its status and value.

A revealing commentary on the Hindu concept of portraiture is contained in an ancient Sanskrit play titled Pratima-nataka (Statue-play), written by fourth-century dramatist Bhasa and structured loosely around the story of Rama. In its third act, when prince Bharata, younger brother of exiled Rama, returns to his hometown, as yet unaware of the recent death of his father King Dasaratha, he marvels over the execution of the sculpted images in a newly constructed pavilion. Wondering whether its four figures represent deities, hePrepare to bow to them, upon which the keeper informs him that he is in an ancestral chapel and that the images represent his father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather. If the audience of the play did not ridicule Bharata for failing to recognize the image of his own father, it can only be because, in the accepted style of the day, portrait images were always sculpted to bear a greater resemblance to images of the gods than to their actual counterparts. Although lively and individualistic figures often appear in genre scenes and narrative presentations, whether sculpted or painted, verisimilitude certainly was not the ruling principle in commemorative portrait figures of aristocratic or royal ancestors. These stylized portrait statues and paintings were presumably identified either by their exact placement in a chapel, monastery, or temple or by their use in specific rituals such as birthday celebrations or death anniversaries.

The earliest ancestral portrait gallery for which material evidence survives, though at its barest minimum, commemorated a group of seven members of Satavahana royalty and was carved in the first century B.C. in a cave at the head of the strategic Nanaghat Pass, located along the trade route that led down from the hills of the western ghats to the ports along the Arabian Sea. The royal portrait gallery would have been seen by merchants, traders, and other travelers who passed through Satavahana territory on their way to the west coast. Unfortunately, the stone bas-relief images themselves are damaged beyond recognition, and only the inscribed labels remain in the rock face above to apprise us of their identity.

The second such portrait gallery known to us commemorates the Kushan rulers of northern India. An ancestral chapel at Mat, just outside the town of Mathura, appears to have housed no fewer than four portrait images, much damaged today, carved from...
red sandstone, each with an identifying inscription. The single seated image is Vima Kadphises, an early Kushan ruler of the mid-first century A.D., clad in boots and tunic and seated on a lion throne with feet pendant in the position known as pralambapādāśana. The well-known standing portrait of the famous emperor Kanishka is little more than a silhouette created by the eccentric outline of his military mantle, which is also depicted in his coin portraits and was clearly his hallmark. Certainly the padded boots and woolen cloak would not have been normal garb in the hot plains of Mathura but symbolized the authority of these rulers and signified their central Asian origins. Across the lower edge of the cloak is an inscription that reads maharājā rājātirājā devaputra kanishka, or “Great king, king of kings, son of the gods, Kanishka.” A third portrait statue is identified by inscription as Kanishka’s successor Huvishka, and a fourth is an unidentified prince. While the heads of the standing statues are broken away, it is possible to reconstruct that of Kanishka from his coin portraits, which depict him clad in his military mantle and boots, with an unusually long beard and a conical central Asian cap. His attributes of boots, cloak, beard, and cap made him recognizable; the shape of his nose or jawline were secondary if not irrelevant. The shrine appears to have been constructed in Kanishka’s year 6, perhaps corresponding to the year A.D. 84, with additions during Huvishka’s reign.

One of the earliest examples of royal stone portraits from South India, sculpted in the seventh century and identified by inscribed labels, is seen in the Adivaraha cave temple at the site of Mamallapuram, some forty miles south of Madras (now Chennai). On one side wall, two queens flank the seated monarch Simhavishnu, who founded the Pallava line around 550, while on the opposite wall stands his successor Mahendravarman, who ruled from ca. 600 to 630, with two queens beside him. The two royal figures look so similar that they are almost interchangeable and may even be identified as one of a range of monarchs. Scholars have suggested that the standing figure is the later ruler Mahendravarman II and that the seated figure is his predecessor, Narasimhavarman Mamalla (ca. 630–68), who gave his name to the site. Such debates offer fair demonstration that artists did not sculpt images recognizable by their physical characteristics; rather, correct identification was possible only from inscribed labels or specific references to the sculptors’ commission.

Portraiture retained this character during the succeeding centuries of Chola rule. In the tenth century, temples began to commission a range of portable bronze images of the deities to be used in daily and weekly rituals, as well as in an increasing range of annual festivals. Though images of deities were doubtless the prime commissions, inscriptions at Rajaraja’s Great Temple of Tanjavur, completed in the year 1010, speak of the gift of no fewer than four bronze portraits of Chola royalty among its total of sixty-six bronze images. Emperor Rajaraja’s sister, Kundavai, gifted an image of her parents, King Sundara Chola and Queen Vanavan Mahadevi, while the temple manager, Adittan Suryan, gifted images of the reigning monarch Rajaraja and his chief queen Lokamahadevi. Unfortunately, these temple images of Tanjavur royalty have long since disappeared, depriving us of an invaluable source of information (or confirmation) regarding the nature of portraiture. Yet both the earlier Pallava practice just reviewed and later Vijayanagar imagery to which we shall refer would suggest that the Tanjavur images were idealized royal portraits. The Tanjavur temple contains two additional portraits of Rajaraja, one sculpted and the other painted; both portray a generic idealized figure with locks piled high in imitation of his favorite deity, Shiva. Verisimilitude appears to have been of little consequence.

While the Tanjavur temple inscriptions do not address what motivated the creation of its four bronze royal portraits, the inscriptions of Rajaraja’s grandmother, Sembiyyan Mahadevi, cast some light on this question. Queen Sembiyyan was a great patron of the arts who was active in building temples and commissioning bronzes for a period of at least sixty years; her earliest dated gift belongs to the year 941, while the latest occurred in the year 1001. Sembiyyan Mahadevi founded a town that adopted her name; she settled there a group of Chaturvedi brahmins and
also constructed the Kailasanatha temple. Sembiyan herself was commemorated in a bronze portrait statue that was probably commissioned during her lifetime, perhaps at the behest of her son Uttama Chola. A later inscription of Sembiyan's great-grandson, Emperor Rajendra, speaks of special arrangements made for the celebration of Sembiyan's royal birthday in the month of Chitirai (March-April) at the Kailasanatha temple. The inscription makes specific provisions for the worship of her portrait statue alongside the image of Rishabhavahana, or Shiva with his bull. It speaks also of a great hall within the Kailasanatha temple that took the queen's name (Sembiyan Mahadeviyar periya mandapam) and may have been used for her birthday celebrations.

In the context of idealized portraits that resemble images of deities, I would like to revisit my earlier suggestion that the evocative bronze image in the Freer Gallery is intended to portray Sembiyan Mahadevi. While conclusive proof of such a suggestion may be impossible to produce, several features seem to indicate the probability of such an identification. It has always been recognized that the image is stylistically idiosyncratic in its proportions, in the marked and even exaggerated slope of its shoulders, in the naturalistic handling of its full heavy breasts, and in its solemn, thoughtful expression. It is not a standard image of the goddess Parvati. The suggestion that its Sri Lankan origin explains its deviation from the norm does not hold up to serious scrutiny; stylistically, the image displays features that indicate its manufacture in the heart of the Chola country. Elsewhere I have spoken at length about its many features of form and decoration, which indicate it belongs to the very end of the tenth century, the date at which a portrait image of Sembiyan is likely to have been made. Additionally, some unconfirmed reports apparently suggest that the image, acquired in 1929, perhaps through C. T. Loo, was recovered from a temple tank close to the town of Sembiyan Mahadevi.

What considerations could have led Sembiyan’s son or grandson to commission a bronze sculpted image of the queen? From all that we learn about her, Queen Sembiyan was a remarkable personality. A lavish patron of the sacred arts, she contributed generous gifts of images, land, and cash endowments toward the creation of twenty-one temples. She was a woman with a remarkable sense of historic documentation, which was rare in ancient India. Her numerous temple inscriptions inform us that when she replaced brick temples with those built of stone, she ensured that all the original dedicatory inscriptions were reengraved on the new stone structures, alongside her own record. Her inscription at the Adutturai temple states:

While dismantling the earlier part-brick, part-stone structure, the inscribed stones were carefully removed and preserved for the documents engraved on them; and when the new structure was completed, all in stone, this great soul Sembiyan Mahadevi ordered that the old inscriptions recording grants, donations, etc. of all earlier kings which had been damaged or worn out, be faithfully engraved on the walls of the new structure.

At the temple of Tirukodikaval we learn that once the old inscriptions had been reengraved on the walls of the newly built stone temple, Queen Sembiyan ordered that they be discarded, as they had served their purpose.

We may assume that what inspired Sembiyan’s family to commission this first known metal portrait of Chola royalty was their appreciation of her remarkable personality, her integrity, and her sense of historical awareness, together with their desire to preserve for posterity the memory of a great queen. Perhaps the artist who sculpted the bronze image perceived in Sembiyan Mahadevi such power and eminence that he could envision her as comparable to none less than Parvati, the great goddess. Would the queen have been recognized from this image, in which queen and goddess seem to mingle and merge? Very unlikely. Is it reasonable to expect such recognition? Once again the answer is no. But when the image was carried in procession during her birthday celebrations, all would have recognized her.

Portraits of the Tamil saints provide another rich field within which to consider ideas of portraiture, and the allied concept of recognition of portraits, that prevailed in south India into the sixteenth century.
FIG. 2.
Dancing child-saint Sambandar, Chola period, twelfth century, bronze, 18 3/4 in. Courtesy Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, F76.5.
The majority of temples in the Tamil country possess a complete set of images of its saints, either the sixty-three Shaiva Nayamars or the twelve Vaishnava Alvars. Though images of child-saint Sambandar, whether dancing (fig. 2) or standing, show total lack of concern for physical likeness or visual specificity, they may be termed portraits in the sense that they are recognized by the devotee. The figure of an unclothed infant, with one hand pointing upwards and the other hand either in the gesture of dance or holding a cup, makes the image instantly recognizable. Devotees would have told one another that this was the child who was given a cup of divine milk and who, after pointing toward the heavens when questioned on the source of the milk, burst into joyous songs in praise of the godhead. The artists took hold of the essential elements of Sambandar’s life story and used them to formulate his portrait. Yet the prevailing twentieth-century confusion over images of child-saint Sambandar, mistakenly labeled in many museums as “dancing child Krishna,” points once again to the blurring of categories of divine and, in this case, saintly rather than royal. Artists apparently visualized the beloved child Sambandar in the molder of the only other child figure with which they were familiar; to them this was the standard and accepted formula. The length of Sambandar’s nose or the shape of his eyes was not important. Visual specificity and verisimilitude were likewise deemed unnecessary and irrelevant in the case of the Christian saints. One is reminded of Robert Browning’s poem “Fra Lippo Lippi,” in which Brother Lippo Lippi painted individualized figures of the Catholic saints only to be chastised by the prior, who wanted a standard type:

Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms! Rub all out, try it a second time.

Even the portraits of lesser donors on Chola temples, though displaying more individual physical traits, are nevertheless types—ecstatic devotees—rather than recognizable individuals.

Portraits that are likenesses came into vogue in northern India when the Mughal emperor Akbar himself sat for his portrait so that his likeness could be captured by artists, directing also that portraits be painted of his courtiers and nobles. The various Mughal emperors are clearly distinguishable one from the other in their painted portraits; Akbar cannot be mistaken for Jahangir, nor Jahangir for Shah Jahan. And indeed the artists took pains to portray the emperors at varying stages of their careers: as young princes, at the height of their power, and as aging monarchs. Admittedly, however, it is when Mughal artists moved away from royalty to eccentric physical types like dervishes and faqirs that they produced their most precise and vivid portraits—warts, moles, and all. An evocative drawing of a portly man relaxing with a jug of wine before him makes us feel we are encountering a specific individual (fig. 3). This freedom, which the artists enjoyed once they were released from the restrictions of portraying royal figures, is equally evident in pre-Mughal painting. Painters depicting the Buddha’s life story in the fifth-century Buddhist monastic caves at Ajanta tended to produce stylized figures; but they adopted a rich and vivid mode of depiction when they turned to portraying witches, dwarfs, and other marginal figures. Notably, literary texts suggest that wall paintings were a regular part of the decoration of monuments; but Ajanta alone survives as testimony of this ancient mode of decoration.

In southern India, where Mughal influence was peripheral, recognizable portraits came into vogue somewhat later. Portraits of the Vijayanagar rulers (1356–1565) continue to be of a stylized type. The famous bronze portraits of Emperor Krishnadevaraya and his two queens, today in the Tirumala Devasthanam at Tirupati, are generic idealized aristocratic images that could equally well be portraits of any royal or aristocratic group. It is only with the Nayaks of Madurai, once governors of the Vijayanagar emperors, that recognizable portraiture comes into its own. Emperor Tirumala Nayak (r. 1623–59) began to commission portrait statues of the entire Nayak lineage, to be carved against the granite columns of one or other hall in the temples he constructed. The result is an ancestral portrait gallery with rulers arranged in chronological order and ending with Tirumala himself, who is portrayed in temple after temple as a portly figure with his stomach rolling over his lower garment and his turbanlike headgear barely
FIG. 3.
Seated man, attrib. Basawan, Mughal period, ca. 1580-85, 3 ¾ × 3 ¾ in. Courtesy Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, F53.60.
containing the bunched hair that falls over to one side. Was this trend toward verisimilitude in portraiture to some extent due to the contact with the Portuguese, whose help Tirumala sought in his battle against the Sethupatis of adjoining Ramnad? No clear answer arises.

We may perhaps attempt a working hypothesis to explain the indifference to verisimilitude in so much of Indian portraiture. In the context of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain India, it may be necessary to reexamine, even redefine, the philosophic concept of the individual self. It could be said that the Christian and Islamic self combines self as body and self as soul, the body being indispensable for the resurrection that will occur on the final Day of Judgment. The same body in which the soul dwelt while on earth, with its specific physiognomic peculiarities, will be resurrected to contain the soul in the next world. By contrast, indigenous Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain beliefs envision a disembodied entity, a soul that returns repeatedly to earth, each time temporarily assuming a body with particular physical characteristics, only to discard it and assume a totally different body the next time around. The physical features of a body exist only for a single lifetime and not for eternity. The Bhagavad-Gita puts it succinctly:

As a man discards worn-out clothes to put on new and different ones, so the embodied self discards its worn-out bodies to take on other new ones.  

The Buddha, for instance, is believed to have assumed 550 different bodies, including that of the elephant Chaddanta, the monkey Mahakapi, an acrobat, the vaśya merchant Visahya, brahmins Sumedha and Shyama, and ksatriya princes Mahajanaka and Vessantara. Finally born as chieftain Siddhartha, he severed all bonds and achieved salvation; he discarded the body, never again to be confined in bodily form. Perhaps it is not so strange, after all, that the reproduction of physiognomic likeness held little significance in a society which believed that the physical features of the present birth would be replaced by a new set of bodily features in the next birth and that the ultimate state of salvation is the self unencumbered by a body. Furthermore, Indian religious systems upheld the suppression of the ego; figures with visual specificity may well have been seen as catering to that very quality of egoism that they sought to destroy. An idealized outer form is one distinctive answer to the demands of portraiture.

Portraits have always existed in India, though the nomenclature may be misleading to the modern reader because these stone, metal, or painted portraits paid little attention to physical resemblance. The artists' idea of portraiture, especially of royalty and sainthood, tended toward idealized visions of the quality, character, and stature of the subjects rather than a precise likeness of their physical features. If this hypothesis is valid, it is not surprising that a metal portrait of a great and revered queen was modeled on the iconography and style employed to depict the divine Parvati. □
Notes


3. Conversations with Samuel Eilenberg in 1988. We acquired the image, which had been stored in Paris, through H. Kevorkian.


Love and Marriage in
Song China: Tao
Yuanming Comes Home
Love and Marriage in Song China: Tao Yuanming Comes Home

In his personal notes, the twelfth-century critic Hong Mai 洪邇 (1123–1202) commented that “Nowadays everyone likes to write poems improvising on [Tao Yuanming’s 陶淵明 (365–427)] ‘Come Again Home’ poem.” Tracing the origin of the fact, he cited Chao Yuedao 晏以道:

My friends [and I] all love Yuanming’s “Come Again Home” prose-poem, so we made improvisations [he 和] on it together with Su Dongpo (1037–1101). In 1101, when Su’s improvisation first reached the capital, a great many of the students wrote their own poems improvising on that, each one much taken with his own work. All at once, all you could hear about was Tao Yuanming.

According to Hong Mai, the fashion extended to painting as well:

More recently those who paint the “Come Again Home” theme all regard their own version as an original masterpiece, while those who improvise on the poem, as when writing a short piece for friends about to take office, mostly miss the mark.

It may be that one of the paintings so produced now rests in the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. (fig. 1a–c). The artist broke up the poem to match the scenes he wanted to paint, placing only that much text in sections painted to look like separate strips of plain silk. Each section of text is followed by the artist’s interpretation. Because the original poem is all about “home” as Tao Yuanming conceived it in the fourth century, this scroll can tell us much about attitudes toward “home” among Song dynasty viewers familiar with Su Shi 蘇軾 and his ideals.

There is no separating the “Come Again Home” theme from Su Shi and his circle. Some years ago Thomas Lawton assigned the scroll an early twelfth-century date and placed it close to the tradition of Li Gonglin 李公麟 (1049–1106), the most prominent artist within the first generation of literati led by Su Shi. Lawton noted that the painting’s earliest colophon is signed by Li Peng 李彭 and dated 26 March 1110. The colophon associates both the theme and style of the work with a screen painting by Li Gonglin that Li Peng saw in the home of Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅. Of course, colophons can be forged, but Lawton noted a resemblance in style linking Li Peng’s calligraphy with that of the handscroll and thus suggesting a similar date for the two works. More recently, fuller documentation and even closer visual analysis by Elizabeth Brotherton all but confirms the

Fig. 1.
Anon., Tao Yuanming Returning to Seclusion, 12th century, handscroll, ink and light colors on silk. Courtesy Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 19.119; a) Tao Yuanming returning on a ferry, detail of first section; b) Tao Yuanming’s children and household servants awaiting his imminent return, second section; c) Tao Yuanming and family, third section.
date and tradition of the scroll. A late Song date seems unlikely because the scroll lacks the thick, modulated brushwork and subtle atmospheric tones normally associated with Song academic painting after Ma Yuan 马远 (late twelfth, early thirteenth centuries). On the contrary, the scroll is sparing in its use of atmospheric perspective and frequently breaks rules of spatial recession common in eleventh-century paintings such as the Xu Daoning 徐道宁 (ca. 1000–after 1066) in Kansas City (fig. 2). As Richard Barnhart has shown, the practice of citing historically antiquated manners was one of the most typical features of Li Gonglin’s style, so the self-conscious use of arcane techniques in this scroll, such as the high plane of recession in figure 6, also supports Lawton and Brotherton’s dating.

Literary evidence links the painting’s theme to Su Shi and Li Gonglin. As mentioned above, Huang Tingjian owned a screen on the theme by Li Gonglin. Shi Shanquan 释善權, a friend of Su Shi’s, wrote a colophon for another painting by Li with the same title. Huang Tingjian also wrote a colophon for another “Come Again Home” scroll. In the twelfth century, the poet Lu You 陆游 (1125–1210) purchased a painting with the same title formatted as two handscrolls. Lu recognized at once the style of Li Gonglin but understood that they were not from Li’s own hand. His colophon reads: “While traveling in Sichuan I obtained these two scrolls, most likely by a famous master. Overall the approach is that of Li Gonglin, but this artist had his own special attainments as well.” Clearly, even in Lu’s time, this theme was still associated with Li Gonglin. Finally, Hong Mai makes it clear that Su was responsible for spreading the fashion for Tao’s poem. Like others seized by the “Tao” craze, the Freer artist must have been sympathetic to Su Shi’s social and artistic ideals, for producing an improvisation on another man’s work was, in fact, an endorsement.

The improvisation, or he 和, was an important new genre that began flourishing in late Tang times. He literally means to “harmonize” or “match.” In its literary sense he is glossed as a “reply” to the work of another, but in practice it usually signaled support for that other person’s views. The title of a he usually discloses whose work has been “matched,” but matching did not require faithfulness to the original poem’s form. For this reason it seems best to translate he as “improvisation,” a free response to a previous work. Tao’s “Come Again Home,” for example, is a prose-poem, while Su wrote a set of ten short poems/shi 詩 improvising on it. Su Shi’s he uses five-character lines, while Tao’s poem uses four- and six-
character lines in alternate stanzas. Tao uses the archaic exclamation 兮，whereas Su does not. Tao’s poem is written as a narrative, but Su’s poems may allude to any one or several scenes, in any order.

What Su does do is to mull over in his own mind the same themes Tao addressed, with frequent allusions to Tao’s diction and imagery. For example, Tao reveals his open-minded social views with talk of “plowing and weeding” and in other poems speaks of chatting with local farmers. Su’s lines, in contrast, are more pointed: “Though most take no delight in farmers, I, alone, will roam together with them.”

The same expectations seem to have informed pictorial improvisation. Li Gonglin endorsed Tao’s poem with a pictorial version of the 画, and many in the capital followed suit. Like Su, Li would have been expected to allude to the scenes of Tao’s narrative, even while introducing his own personal views on the topic of “home.” Exactly the same protocol would have applied to the Freer artist, and it is evident that he was far from slavish in following Tao’s poem. On the contrary, in this short essay I hope to show that the Song artist’s view of marital relations differed markedly from those expressed centuries earlier by Tao Yuanming.

The main themes in Tao’s poem revolve around the contrast between worldly wealth and honor—construed as artificial—and a simple life with family and friends—construed as “natural.” Since he was unable to support his family with farming, Tao’s friends pulled some strings and got him a government job. But after a time he began to long for home: “Since it was I, myself, who set my soul in bondage, why should I remain discontent and sorrow alone? I know now the past is beyond repair, but the future is still before me.”

And so Tao abandoned rank, salary, and all the enticements of city life. Knowing that readers might wonder at this, his preface explains: “Why did I do it? By nature I love what is natural/ziran 何則？質性自然.” But what did he mean by “natural”? To judge from the ensuing lines, what he really meant was “independent,” living in his own space and doing whatever he pleased: “I have never been one to suit the world against my own wishes. Though stricken with hunger and cold, to go against myself would only make me sick.”

This declaration of personal independence may be one reason why Tao was so admired. Su Shi’s improvisation virtually thematizes the idea, using dulu 獨立 (independent/myself) three times, duli 獨立 (I stand alone/independent) once, and gu 孤 (alone) once. Two of Su’s poems begin respectively with the lines “I have no more to do with the world” and “The world’s business is none of mine.” But having rejected social convention, both Tao and Su had to appeal to some other authority to justify personal independence. That “authority” was the “natural,” and so, for both men, the “natural” became synonymous with personal freedom, while social constraint was treated as artifice.

In both painting and poem, the “natural” world revealed itself in imagery of clouds, garden plants, neighbors, children, and even servants. To this extent, the Freer artist appears to have “matched” Tao Yuanming. Throughout the scroll, we find charming vignettes of family gatherings or parties with neighbors, as well as solo wanderings in the garden. But that is where the resemblance ends. This artist’s “reply” to Tao shows clearly that his understanding of married life was independent of Tao’s, just as Su’s commitment to farmers went well beyond the occasional chat. Where Tao never so much as mentions his wife, the Song dynasty artist felt obliged to present conjugal relations in a more romantic light. Consider the telling scene in which the poet approaches his gate. Tao writes:

Then I see the roofs of my home; joyfully I quicken my steps. Our old servants come to bid me welcome, and my children are waiting by the gate.
Home is defined as architectural space, and that is how the artist renders it (fig. 1b). Certain people dwell within that space, people dear to the poet’s heart, like his children (fig. 3). Notice that Tao considers the servants a natural part of the family, and that is how they are shown in the painting, respectful yet relaxed and familiar (fig. 4). The only person to bow really low looks like a student. In a couple lines Tao will speak of leading the “little ones” by the hand through the gate, where he will find a welcome jar of wine awaiting him. Throughout, not a word does he say of his wife.

The Freer painting offers a rather different account of what it might mean for a maverick poet to come home. Outside the gate (fig. 3), only the children wait, but the artist has concocted a touching conceit for their mother’s absence. As we move on, we are able to peek over the fence and so find Tao’s wife in a revealing moment (fig. 5). Surprised by his arrival, she has rushed to greet him, but just before exiting she pauses to arrange her coiffure, worried, perhaps, what he might think seeing her with her hair disheveled. Unfortunately, the silk where her face was painted has worn away, but the hair and body are original. Between the two, the lively, hurried character of her gesture is fully revealed. The hidden feelings the artist provokes with this bit of voyeurism are highly nuanced and, I would argue, designed to pull at the heartstrings. Not only does the painting show a fond wife in a vulnerable moment; the fact that such a moment should be shown at all presupposes the normality of sentimental feelings between spouses.

For this claim, I offer no apology. Romantic descriptions of marital relations are known from early times but become common after the mid-Tang. Already with Du Fu 杜甫, we find conjugal affection portrayed as tender and caring, full of mundane realism yet charged with passion. By the ninth century Yuan Zhen’s 元稹 Yingying zhan 鸾鶴傳 (China’s Romeo and Juliet) had captivated readers with a powerfully romantic story of an ill-fated love affair. By Song times, writers were publishing the personal letters of separated, lovesick spouses writing poems of longing to each other. One otherwise unrecorded woman whose letter has been preserved in this way was the wife of Zhao Qiuquan 趙秋官, a Song official. The many poignant ironies in her letter may well have appealed to readers of personal notes, a group that seems to have thrived on real-life examples of throbbing “sentiment/qing情.” The opening lines situate her plight in relation to the universal human condition of being in love:

People say, if one has feelings, then surely one must dream,
but even without dreams, would the feelings be gone?
Night after night I long for you until the dawn;
How should I find a moment in which to dream?

The fourth line intimates a gentle poke at her spouse. It is like saying, “How should I find time to dream if you’re always away from home?” She clearly conceives of love as an emotion beyond the power of will to control; even should she lose hope of his return, her love would not abate. Her observation that feelings should inspire dreams is consistent with Song views of the universality of feelings. And so it is the feeling itself that justifies her expression of it. The poem ends: “I hear the sounds of the flute, note upon note, but cannot bear to listen; it is nothing more than the sound of heartbreak 箫里聲聲不忍聽，渾是斷腸聲.”

From a twentieth-century perspective it would be easy to take such a letter for granted, but we must remember that there was no literary genre for publishing personal letters from lonely wives in twelfth-century Europe, whereas many examples were published for the delectation of Song dynasty readers. The fact that a readership existed for such personal musings shows that private experience had become an object of public discourse.

It is necessary to appreciate the existence of such a readership in order to understand the Freer scroll. Generally speaking, the kind of people reading personal notes in the twelfth century were much the same as those who would be reading Su Shi’s improvisations. The artist of this scroll could appeal to a well-developed discourse of sentiment, an appreciation for those moments when personal weakness might
LOVE AND MARRIAGE IN SONG CHINA: TAO YUANMING COMES HOME

FIG. 3.
Tao Yuanming’s children waiting for him. Detail from second section of Tao Yuanming Returning to Seclusion.

FIG. 4.
Tao Yuanming’s servants and students waiting for him. Detail from second section of Tao Yuanming Returning to Seclusion.

FIG. 5.
Tao Yuanming’s wife pausing to fix her hair. Detail from second section of Tao Yuanming Returning to Seclusion.
disclose an all-too-human passion. In Song poetry the use of personal weakness to elicit compassion is common: a child’s mischief, a grandparent’s doting, a lover’s anxiety are all indulged, and this indulgence proclaims the essential humanity of human weakness. Because it is so widespread, I would suggest referring to this device as the topos of the human condition—which should not be confused with the European practice of exposing human sinfulness in order to condemn it. In Song practice, emotional weakness is seen as universal and, therefore, quintessentially human. It is precisely in moments of weakness, and in its sympathetic indulgence, that our humanity is most fully revealed.

Other explanations of the greeting scene are possible. Conceivably one might argue that the Freer artist wanted to teach wives to look nice for their husbands, but this would tell us more about Western preconceptions of Chinese culture than it would about the Song dynasty. The fact is, the topos of the human condition was not limited in use to women. As an example, consider a poem by Xin Qiji 辛棄疾 (1140–1207), which, like the scroll, dates to the twelfth century. The poem shows how anxiety about appearances could be understood as a revelation of passion, but here the genders are reversed. Xin had had a steamy relationship with a young woman. One day he had to leave, perhaps to take up an official post. They shared wine at a romantic pavilion, then parted, both thinking he would return. But that was not to be. Many years later, presumably married, he passed through Dongliu 江流 村. According to the poet’s own preface, he wrote the following poem on a public wall for all to see:

Poplar flowers fall, once more bustling Spring Festival to its end.
Maybe it was just the east wind that duped me into dreaming again.
From my pillow, chilled by clouds on a painted screen:
Winding banks, a pair of wine cups, horses beside the willows.
It was here that we parted so carelessly.
The pavilion’s empty now,
But the swallows soaring about that day could tell the tale.

Travelers would tell, too, how,
East of the flowered path, behind the bamboo blind,
A beauty would watch and wait.
Yesterday’s pain—like the spring flood;
Today’s, endless as fading hills.
Tomorrow morning, supposing
We met again, to share a cup?
But flowers in a mirror are hard to pluck;
No doubt, she’d look surprised and say:
“Goodness! So much gray hair lately!”

But the Freer artist wasn’t content to leave marriage at that. He pursued the romantic ideal in the following scene, when Tao describes his delight in coming home:

With a bottle and cup I freely pour for myself,
with a smile on my face, I enjoy trees in the yard.
I lean against the southern window to soothe my pride, and feel happy and contented in these narrow rooms.

引一觥以自酌，顧庭柯以怡顏。倚南窗以寄傲，俯容膝之易安。
This is the “common pleasures versus courtly pretense” theme. The yard, the trees, the small rooms, such humble comforts afford sufficient gratification for Tao. Though simple, they define his personal space, his own home. The presence of Tao’s children in the scene is implied, as he entered the courtyard beside them, hand in hand, but Tao offers not a word about his wife.

Again, the Freer artist seems to have found this omission intolerable, so he portrayed Tao sharing wine with his spouse, placing the two in perfect symmetry in a small enclosure (figs. 1c and 6). This type of pictorial arrangement was common from Han times through Tao Yuanming’s era but had become passé by Song times. For an art historian this is a clue. As Richard Barnhart has shown, the practice of citing antiquated manners is one of the most typical features of Li Gonglin’s style. Su’s circle was especially fond of the painting of Tao Yuanming’s period, regarding it as more direct and ingenious than the naturalistic painting of their own time. Employing such a composition would remind the viewer of that less sophisticated era when the poem was written. In keeping with the out-of-date spatial arrangement, Tao and his wife both use antique-style wine cups. Su Shi and his friends would have recognized this style as dating to a period even more ancient than Tao’s yet still a product of “antiquity/gù 古.”

But recognizing historical references is not the same as understanding their meaning. It may even be that the use of symmetry here is integral to this artist’s interpretation of marital relations. Notice that the fingers of Tao’s left hand (fig. 6), relaxed, rest lightly on the strings of his lute, as if he had just finished playing a piece. He stares into space, still rapt with the music’s mood. His wife, also, is lost in thought, a dreamy, contented look in her eyes. From this we know she, too, is able to appreciate the meaning of Tao’s music. Now the full import of the pair’s symmetrical placement becomes clear. If Tao’s wife understands his music, then she is his zhiyin 知音. Zhiyin means “the one who understands my music,” but of course its full meaning is “the one who truly understands me.” A zhiyin is a soulmate. Traditionally the term was used by men to designate their closest friends. The author of the Freer scroll implies that Tao’s wife is someone who can appreciate fine music and, presumably, other dimensions of Tao’s soul as well. The use of symmetry makes the scene into the visual equivalent of the term zhiyin.

Some might think it too much to suggest that a Chinese man could consider his wife a friend, but again, we should not allow modern stereotypes to color our understanding of history. Consider Mei Yaochen 梅堯臣 (1002–60), an older friend of Su Shi’s who shared many of the same ideals. Like Su, he wrote several fond lyrics for his wife. One of these, “Aboard a Boat at Night, Drinking with My Wife,” describes the poet sharing a cup of wine with her:

The moon appears from the mouth of the sheer bluff,
its light shining behind the boat over there.
I sit drinking alone with my wife;
So much finer than facing the regulars at the
tavern!
The moonlight slowly spreads over our mat,
dark shadows bit by bit receding.
What need is there to fetch a torch?
We’ve joy enough in this light alone.23

月出斷岸口，影照別舸背，且獨與婦飲，
頗勝俗客對。月漸上我席，顏色亦稍退，
豈必在棗爛，此景已可愛。

Nothing Heroic or Sublime here. Even the poem’s
title reveals that a mundane moment between spouses
was now thought suitable subject matter for the high
art of poetry. Just as remarkable is the fact that the two
are sharing wine. In Tang and Song times, drinking
was a form of male bonding. Wine created an atmos-
sphere of intimacy within which ideas and feelings
could be shared by like-minded men. But here, Mei
passes this moment with a woman, with his wife, as
with a friend. Mei seems aware of the situation’s
novelty, for he makes it clear that he prefers her
companionship to that of the men at the tavern. As
always in Chinese poems, the last line drives home
the main point. It could more literally be rendered
“in this scene she is already more lovable.” By
making “lovable/可愛” quite literally the last
word, he identifies his wife as the very source of
quiet and tender feelings.24

The invention of sentiment as we find it in Tang
and Song literature is a necessary prerequisite for the
Freer painting, where we find “wife” portrayed as
soulmate. And like a poet, the Freer artist used nat-
ural imagery to resonate with the romantic-couple
theme. In the lower left corner of the scene (fig. 7), a
hen tends a nest set under the eaves of Tao’s pantry.
On the roof above, a rooster peers down attentively,
as if to make certain that Mrs. Hen is all right.
Another likely reference to the romantic-couple
theme can be found in the artist’s novel use of plant
imagery. Readers of Tao’s poem will recall that he
identifies himself with the rugged pine, and the artist
portrays him that way in scene 4 (fig. 8). In both
scenes where Tao’s wife appears, and only there, we
find a flowering vine. In the “Greeting” scene (fig.
1b), the vine appears along the fence, not far from
the rugged pines and some bamboo. In the zhìyín
scene (fig. 1c), it appears outside the pantry, just
beside a flourishing stand of bamboo. In poetry,
flowering plants and bamboo often allude to a lady
and her gentleman. It is unlikely that educated Song
viewers would have missed the allusion here.

C L E A R L Y T H E A U D I E N C E for the Freer
scroll harbored very different ideals for mar-
rried life from those held by Tao Yuanming.
This new attitude toward wifehood required nothing
less than a new concept of womanhood. It would be
difficult to imagine such poems if we did not know
that women were slowly gaining access to preroga-
tives formerly exclusive to men. Laws governing in-
eritance were being debated so as to protect some
portion of property for women.25 Women of scholar
families were being educated more frequently, even if
the teacher was often a father or brother. One reason
for educating women may have been the need to
prepare sons for the competitive examinations.
Because the early stages of that preparation were in
mothers’ hands, even Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200)
regarded education as desirable in a spouse.26 In
Song times, women like Li Qingzhao 李清照 received
the kind of literary recognition generally re-
served for men. Finally, among the art critics, Huang
Tingjian felt compelled to argue not only that a
woman could paint as well as any man but that her
work could be as “manly” to boot. Writing of his
Aunt Li 李, he says:

At her quiet desk, deep in her chamber, explor-
ing with brush and ink;
Her hair is white, but a hundred pounds of force
move in her wrist.
Flourishing branches, withered twigs, each is as
it is.
Hang it in a great hall; the wind would shake the
walls!

深閨靜几試筆墨，白頭腕中百斛力。榮榮
枯枯皆本色，懸之高堂風動壁。

The choice of the term exploring hints that she is
no mere artisan. Painting, for her, is a form of play,
just as with any male literatus. Likewise, the sorts of
subjects she likes to paint—the “flourishing branches”
and "withered twigs" of pine and cypress—are conspicuously gendered as masculine. Elsewhere Huang adds: "Her paintings lack any trace of vulgur manner; this hardy woman is more than a match for any rugged mensch. 人間俗氣一點無，健婦果勝大丈夫!"27 The message is ironically encapsulated in the two characters Jianfu 健婦, for Jian (hardy/tough) is gendered as masculine, while Fu quite literally means "woman." Huang transforms what might have been an oxymoron into an attack on conventional views about women's abilities. This is not to suggest that Huang was a modern-style activist for women's rights, nor should we expect him to have been so. It does mean that he challenged conventional views holding that women could not paint as well as men.

The argument might sound patronizing in the 1990s, but in the eleventh century such claims had to be made before women could be accepted into the mainstream canon.28 From an historical perspective, the remarkable thing is that such issues were being debated at all—in print—in the eleventh century. In Europe at that time, in the absence of art critical writing, we may presume that such debates did not occur at all.29

Huang's statements should be understood in the context of a broader literary trend in which social injustices to formerly marginal groups were being explored and condemned. In the poetry of activists such as Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846), Mei Yaochen, Su Shi, or Lu You, one may read caustic expositions
of institutionalized injustice to women. About the same time, records disclose that some women could amass art collections or sue men in court. It is common in Chinese Studies to dismiss such gains as inconsequential in comparison with contemporary standards, but of course such arguments fall prey to anachronism. From an historical perspective, these gains were unprecedented anywhere on earth. Clearly, in medieval Europe, there was no valorization of social-activist poets like Liu Zongyuan (773–819) or Su Shi. Under such circumstances, prior to the invention of a concept of private self, prior to the very concept of “artist,” a tender, sentimental construction of marriage would not be expected to develop. If it had, however, historians of European culture would not fail to recognize its significance. I do not see why such a phenomenon should become insignificant simply because an artist or poet is Chinese.

An art of sentimentality does not evolve by chance. The more liberal understanding of marriage shared by Su Shi’s readers may well owe much to the new conception of person and personal feelings we find in the late Tang dynasty. As Stephen Owen observed recently:

This [the late Tang] was a moment of great importance in China’s elite culture. It marked the transition from the great medieval theme of reclusion, which defined the private purely in negative terms as the rejection of the public, to the creation of a “private sphere,” embodied in a private space that was at once within the public world while at the same time enclosed and protected from it.

Ultimately the difference between Tao Yuanming’s “home” and that of our Freer artist resides in the space of private intimacy. But intimate feelings come to life between individuals, sometimes shared and sometimes not. Tao Yuanming could construct his private space and share it with friends, neighbors, and children, but he did not require those most intimate sentiments that arise between members of a devoted couple. Du Fu, Yuan Zhen, Mei Yaochen, and Su Shi had given form and nuance to such feelings. It was this culture of sentiment that enabled the Freer painter to frame this reply to Tao’s “home.”
Notes

1. Cheng Yizhong, ed., Songren shihua waibian (A collection of "poetry chats" compiled from the personal notes of Song dynasty writers), 2 vols. (Beijing: Guoji wenhua chuban gongshe, 1996), 2:785. In her extensive study of this scroll, Elizabeth Brotherton also cites this passage and interprets bian as referring more literally to change. Given the context of the passage, I prefer to take it as the bian of critical writing, where it refers to the creation of a new line in the canon of masterworks, but Brotherton's argument is also plausible and well worth consulting. See Elizabeth Brotherton, "Li Kung-lin and Long Handscroll Illustrations of T’ao Ch’ien’s Returning Home" (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1992), 84-91. In personal correspondence, Dr. Brotherton points out that, because Chao Yuechao was acquainted with Wang Zhi, the owner of the scroll, "it is conceivable that Chao had that scroll in mind when he characterized contemporary paintings of Quículoii." Elizabeth Brotherton, personal correspondence, 13 April 1998.

2. Thomas Lawton, Chinese Figure Painting (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1973), 38-41. The best introduction to Su Shi’s life and ideas may well be Ronald C. Egan, Word, Image and Deced in the Life of Su Shi (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1994).

3. Lawton, Chinese Figure Painting, 39.


6. Li Qi, Liang song shihua shi lun (Poetic colophons about painting or painting) (Taipei: Taiwan xue sheng shu zhu, 1994), 161, 314.


8. Han Yu da cidian cites Li Ci as the earliest instance of this use of he but offers no examples from the early period. More pertinent is the next citation, from Han Yu’s Li (768-824). By Song times most major poets composed improvisations responding to the work of others.


11. For a bilingual edition and a different translation see Roland C. Fang, Gleanings from Tao Yuanming (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1980), 162-63.


13. Translation, with minor changes, by Fang, Gleanings, 164-65.


17. Yu Chaogang and Zhou Hang, eds., Liang song jinmu hao ci (A selection of the best ci poems from the two Song dynasties) (Jilin: Jilin wenshi chubanshe, 1992), 773. Yu and Zhou provide many more examples of the genre.


20. My own translation. For a sensitive reading of this poem, see Ai Zhiping’s comments in Songci jianshang cidian (A guide to appreciating Song dynasty ci), ed. He Xinhui et al. (Beijing: Beijing yiyuan chubanshe, 1987), 762-64.


22. See n. 5.

For the fourth line Watson has “how much better than facing dreary strangers.” I have opted to convey some of the casual familiarity Mei implies with a term like suke 俗客, the “regulars” at the tavern.

24. This was Mei’s second wife. His first wife, to whom he dedicated several heart-rending lyrics, had died only a year or so before.


30. Li Qingzhao’s art collection is the most notable example. The fact that her father was a friend of Su Shi’s is perhaps not entirely accidental. Guo Ruoxu 郭若虚 (late eleventh century) recounts a case in which a woman sold a painting to a man but later felt she had been shortchanged and so sued for damages at the court of the local magistrate. See A. C. Soper, trans., Kuo Jo-hsi’s Experiences in Painting (Washington, DC: American Council of Learned Societies, 1951), 85/5:16a and b.

Some Alternative Sources for Archaistic Elements in the Paintings of Qian Xuan and Zhao Mengfu
FIG. 1.
Zhao Mengfu, Sheep and Goat, short handscroll, ink on paper, 25.2 × 48.4 cm. Courtesy Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 31.4.
Some Alternative Sources for
Archaistic Elements in the Paintings
of Qian Xuan and Zhao Mengfu

This brief paper, slightly reworked from one I presented at a symposium in
Shanghai in 1995, is the outline of a study that I hope will be carried out more fully in the future, presumably by someone who moves more comfortably than I do among the historical circumstances and issues it concerns. It is based on a rather tenuous idea that I have entertained for some years, without ever having presented it before in public. The case I will argue is, admittedly, far short of being solid and provable, but I want anyway to present it in a tentative way for others to consider.

It is well recognized in the history of Chinese painting that archaistic motifs and elements of style drawn from Tang-period painting appear in works by Qian Xuan 錢選 (ca. 1235–after 1301), Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254–1322), and other early Yuan-period artists. Zhao’s famous Sheep and Goat (fig. 1) in the Freer Gallery of Art exemplifies this phenomenon. In discussing these elements we stress the desire of the artists to shun the painting styles of the Southern Song, associated as that period was in their minds with political weakness and the loss of China to foreign rule. To revert to Tang styles was to recall the glories of a period when a native Chinese dynasty had been at the peak of its power. We understand these early Yuan artists to have seen Tang paintings preserved in collections and to have copied or imitated them. The reopening of the north to painters active in the south and Zhao Mengfu’s trip in 1286 to the north, where he saw and acquired some antique paintings to bring home to Wuxing, were important events in this new access to archaic styles.

That account of the sources of Tang-derived imagery and style available to early Yuan artists is not wrong, and I certainly do not mean to try to overturn it. But it should be supplemented, I believe, by consideration of another possible source for these archaic motifs and styles. The Mongol invasion brought with it trade with the Mongol empire, as well as many peoples from the western regions (whom the Chinese called semu 色目, “colored eyes”) who worked not only in the Mongol administration but also as artisans and specialists of other kinds. The great influx of these peoples into China must have introduced works of art, along with artistic styles and motifs, from traditions and areas of production outside China. Some of these can be assumed to have preserved in some form the old images and styles originally adopted from Chinese pictorial art of the Tang. Finds in Central Asian sites, as well as surviving examples of the art of mobile, nomadic peoples such as the Khitans, testify to their (for China) retardataire perpetuation of elements of Tang art. In a way that is difficult to trace, then, these images and styles might have been reintroduced into China after, so to speak, “migrating” for several centuries around the regions between China and Western Asia.

Useful in making this argument, although themselves somewhat mysterious, are a large group of paintings preserved in four albums in the Topkapı Sarayi in Istanbul, along with a few in other collections. The albums, which were probably brought together in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, are rather haphazard in organization, as if gathered from diverse sources; the pictures in them are obviously by many hands, representing artists of different periods and traditions. Some of the leaves appear clearly to be the work of...
Chinese artists, small paintings or fragments of paintings dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Most, however, are not Chinese in execution, although older Chinese paintings certainly underlie many of them.

The Istanbul albums have inspired numerous studies from many areas of specialization—studies that diverge widely in the datings, provenances, and interpretations that they propose for the pictures. One book about them calls them "Mongol paintings," but this designation is speculative. An international symposium dedicated to these albums was held in London in 1980 and a volume of the papers published in 1985. Two of these papers by specialists in Chinese art are of special interest here since they propose how elements of Tang painting might have been preserved and transmitted. William Watson writes that the paintings demonstrate "the extraordinary long-lived tradition of sinicizing style," pointing out the close similarity of certain to eighth-century paintings found at Turfan and Dunhuang.

He writes: "It is clear that in eastern Central Asia a local version of Chinese figure painting, with the prestige of a courtly style derived originally from Metropolitan China, was perennial. He refers to certain of the paintings as "Sino-Turkic" and suggests that they might have been done in Turfan, where "in the ninth and tenth centuries a compromise between Chinese and local fashion had already found its way into art."  

Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, writing about pictures of Chinese ladies in the albums, points out that "painting based on and eventually derivative of Tang models thrived to China’s North under the Liao dynasty . . . ; to China’s Northwest and West during the reigns of various Central Asian rulers; and to China’s Northeast and East in Korea and Japan for centuries." She hypothesizes a line of transmission that involves "several intermediate stages . . . Places such as the Liao court, or the courts of the Uyghur Turks and their descendants, are likely places for one stage of the imitation to have occurred." Tang styles were mixed in these places with elements of local styles, and the mixtures "travelled westward under the guise of Chinese painting tradition," perhaps in some part with the westward migration of remnants of the Liao empire after their fall in the twelfth century; when this Western Liao or Qara Khitay culture was absorbed by the Mongols in the thirteenth century, "the images were probably further transformed or copied." The Tang-like images in the Istanbul albums, then, would be end products of this long process of transmission and transformation. And, as both Watson and Steinhardt also suggest, this repertory of old images could naturally have been reintroduced into China with the coming of the Mongols and other people from western regions in the late thirteenth century.

Lack of firm evidence makes it difficult to go beyond these hypotheses, and I do not mean to try. I want only provisionally to accept their premise and, on that basis, to make the argument of this paper: that the sudden appearance in early Yuan-period China of certain images apparently of Tang origin, images that also appear in the Istanbul albums, might best be understood through this theory of transmission over the intervening centuries in the regions west of China and reintroduction into China in the early Yuan. This theory would supplement more than replace the standard supposition that Yuan painters learned these archaic images from rediscovered Tang works, or copies of Tang works, that had been transmitted within China. For example, the image of the emaciated horse, which occurs several times in the Istanbul albums (fig. 2), is presumably based on some Tang work. It reappears in Yuan painting, for instance in an anonymous picture of that date (fig. 3), as well as in well-known works by Gong Kai 龔開 and Ren Renfa 任仁发. Similarly, the familiar image of the rolling horse, sometimes associated with the Tang master Cao Ba 曹霸, can be seen in a work called Anonymous Tang, known now only from an old reproduction (fig. 4); it reappears in a leaf of the Istanbul albums, but here it is reversed and a groom has been added (fig. 5). The rolling horse is sometimes found in later painting, for instance in a work by Qiu Ying 仇英.

Qian Xuan’s painting of a foreign king and two foreign grooms bringing a strange mastiff or lion-dog and its cub as tribute to the Chinese court is, according to the artist’s inscription, copied after a work by the Tang master Yan Liben 閻立本 (ca. 600–674), which was preserved in his time in a stone engraving.
FIG. 2.

FIG. 3.
Anonymous Yuan, Emaciated Horse and Groom, small horizontal painting, ink and colors on silk. Private collection, Japan.

FIG. 4.
Anonymous Tang (attrib.), Rolling Horse, hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk, 27.3 × 33.4 cm. After So Gen Min Shin meiga taikan (Tokyo, 1931), vol. 1, pl. 2.

FIG. 5.
(fig. 6). It finds an approximate parallel in another painting from the Istanbul albums—one that represents grooms or trainers bringing what appear to be wolves or wild dogs (fig. 7). Other parallels of this kind can be made and are made in the articles cited earlier by Watson and Steinhardt. Images of demons in the Istanbul albums, for instance, can be matched with demons in paintings by the early Yuan artist Yan Hui 顏輝.¹⁰

Since the Topkapi albums were assembled after the Yuan period, it is worth asking why we should assume that the transmission was eastward, into China, instead of the other way. That is, why not assume that Yuan-period painting was copied or imitated and transmitted westward, to appear in the Topkapi albums?¹¹ This question cannot be answered at length here; I will only say, on the basis of my own observation, that elements of Tang style and imagery appear in these albums that could not have been derived from Yuan painting, since they are not (judging from extant materials) found there or in Song painting. They must have come, by way of some transmission outside China, from pre-Song sources.

I want to concentrate briefly on a single feature of style observable in a number of works by Qian Xuan and Zhao Mengfu (including two in the Freer Gallery of Art; see figs. 1 and 15), as well as other Yuan artists. This is the device of foreshortening used to depict animals (especially horses) facing toward or away from the viewer, or at an oblique angle to the picture plane. We see it, for example, in paintings by Qian Xuan of a mounted bowman in the British Museum, dated to 1290 in the artist’s inscription (fig. 8), and in a painting by Zhao Mengfu dated 1300 in the Palace Museum, Taipei, which opens with a horse seen in profile and ends with one seen straight on, its body oddly balloon-like (fig. 9).¹² Other examples include a handscroll in the Palace Museum in Beijing, in which the foreshortening of the horses’ bodies is accomplished more convincingly (fig. 10), and a well-known picture of a horse and groom (fig. 11), painted
ALTERNATIVE SOURCES FOR ARCHAISTIC ELEMENTS IN QIAN XUAN AND ZHAO MENGFU

FIG. 8.
Qian Xuán, Young Nobleman on Horseback, dated 1290, handscroll, ink and colors on paper, 29.7 × 75.6 cm. British Museum, London (OA 1954.12-11.05 Add.286).

FIG. 9.

FIG. 10.
Zhao Mengfu, Washing Horses, detail of handscroll, ink and colors on silk, 28.5 × 154 cm. After Zhongguo lidai huilu (Beijing, 1983), vol. 4, pl. 35.

FIG. 11.
Zhao Mengfu, Horse and Groom, dated 1296, handscroll, ink and colors on paper. Metropolitan Museum of Art (former Crawford Collection).
by Zhao in 1296 and now mounted together with similar pictures by his son Zhao Yong 趙雍 and grandson Zhao Lin 趙麟 in a collective handscroll. These works have raised problems for scholars of Yuan painting: How can artists of the stature of Qian and Zhao have painted pictures in which this device is handled so clumsily? If they could not employ the technique more adroitly, why did they attempt it at all? Asserting an intentional amateurish awkwardness does not provide an adequate answer, nor does questioning the authenticity of the paintings.

Once more, we must go back to the Tang to find sources for the early Yuan artists’ attempts at foreshortening the bodies of animals; it would be difficult to locate enough examples of such foreshortening in Song painting to provide any basis for assuming a continuous use of it. A ninth-century wall painting at Dunhuang 敦煌 presents two rows of horsemen, the nearer ones facing away and the farther ones toward us; the bodies of the horses are skillfully foreshortened in varying degrees to indicate changing angles of view. Two of them, portrayed as confronting each other across an interval, exhibit the additional device of pairing the foreshortened images as an effective means of interrelating them in space.

The few cases of foreshortened bodies of animals that we do find in Song-period painting are likely to occur in pictures of nomadic scenes that draw on the Liao 辽 or Khitan tradition of painting, in which elements of Tang style are preserved, such as an album leaf representing A Hunter Truing His Arrow in the Palace Museum, Beijing, or an early and important handscroll ascribed to the Khitan artist Hu Gui 胡瓊 in the Palace Museum, Taipei.
in which the camels are symmetrically paired in this way (fig. 12).

Animals drawn with foreshortened bodies appear in a number of leaves of the Istanbul albums (fig. 13). Foreshortening belongs among those illusionistic modes of portrayal that were developed in Tang painting—shading for three-dimensional effect is another—and were generally abandoned in the Song, when the aims of leading artists shifted away from spatial and formal illusionism of these kinds. But they continued to fascinate the artists outside China who inherited them from the Tang, as well as their patrons and audience, who must have demanded them. The non-Chinese painters execute them in what the Chinese would regard as an unsophisticated manner—no air of archaistic allusiveness, no strategies for distancing oneself from the source through irony or exaggeration. Cultivated Chinese artists such as Qian Xuan and Zhao Mengfu, by contrast, could not use them in this straightforward way, both because limitations in their painting technique precluded it (they were both, after all, amateurs) and because their aesthetic refinement would not allow it. They could only “quote” them as ingratiatingly awkward-looking manifestations of the guyi 古意, or “antique spirit,” which Zhao saw as the quality most to be pursued in painting. Pairings like those in Tang and Liao (or Liao-derived) paintings are also found in the Istanbul albums, for instance in one leaf depicting a saddled horse and an unsaddled horse, both facing outward (fig. 14).

The composition of Qian Xuan’s Yang Guifei Mounting a Horse in the Freer Gallery of Art echoes this kind of symmetrical pairing (fig. 15). In the first part, Minghuang’s 明皇 horse is set diagonally facing outward (and awkwardly foreshortened); it is answered in the second half by Yang Guifei’s horse turned inward. This composition, as I point out in a study of this scroll, may well be based on a painting of the same subject by Han Gan 韓幹, which
was owned by Zhao Mengfu and could have been seen by Qian Xuan. But even if this were true, the reappearance of this old painting and the reintroduction of the Tang-derived images from the west could still be regarded as mutually reinforcing: art historians today are inclined to introduce a multiplicity of factors in accounting for any particular feature of a work instead of offering simple explanations based on single causal factors. A comparable case of a stimulus from outside the pictorial tradition reawakening interest in a long-neglected practice from its own past can be seen in the late Ming revival of the Northern Song monumental landscape type—a revival that was in some part inspired, I believe, by the Chinese artists’ sudden exposure to strikingly similar (as it must have seemed to them) landscape pictures brought from Europe.\textsuperscript{17}

Another leaf from the Istanbul albums presents a pairing of another kind, with two different creatures, a lion and a bull, opposed (fig. 16). The contrasting aspects of the two, the stalking stance of the lion and the defensive stance of the bull, are reinforced by their placement as if as segments of a circle. This powerful composition may well have had a precedent in some long-lost Tang painting; and that, in turn, may have inspired the composition of one of Zhao Mengfu’s most famous works, his \textit{Sheep and Goat} in the Freer Gallery of Art (fig. 1). The curving body of the goat at right and its stance with lowered head resemble the bull in the Istanbul painting; the sheep

\textbf{FIG. 16.}

\textit{Lion and Bull, leaf in Topkap\c{I} Sarayi album (H.2160, fol. 90v.), 36 × 51 cm. Courtesy Topkap\c{I} Sarayi M"{u}zesi, Istanbul.}

\textbf{FIG. 17.}

\textit{Autumn Landscape, leaf in Topkap\c{I} Sarayi album. Courtesy Topkap\c{I} Sarayi M"{u}zesi, Istanbul.}
is drawn in the awkwardly foreshortened manner with ballooning body. The method of interrelating the two creatures in space might have been suggested by some older pairing of the kind illustrated above. But in its essential features—the choice of subject (which may have political overtones, in a cryptic reference to the Han-period general Su Wu 蘇武), the characterization of the animals, the use of wet and dry brushwork to distinguish the thick wool of the sheep from the long hair of the angora goat—the work is entirely original with Zhao Mengfu.

I will conclude with an even riskier suggestion. Among the leaves of the Istanbul albums is a single painting of landscape, which arouses our interest immediately by raising the possibility that it transmits features of Tang landscape not easily found, at least in combination, in other surviving works (fig. 17). Among these features are two that find parallels in Liao paintings: the area of the picture in which the dense leafage of many different species of trees makes up a richly colored pattern, with the reds and yellows of autumn foliage predominating; and above this, stretching to the horizon, a pattern of neatly spaced, repeated ground plants marking a simple recession. The latter can be seen in the foreground of the rabbits-and-sparrows painting found in a tenth-century tomb in Yemaotai 葉茂臺 (and also in certain Tang wall paintings); the former in the famous pair of paintings of Deer in an Autumn Forest, now believed to be Liao works. In many areas of the Deer in an Autumn Forest pair, what must have been a heavy application of pigment has flaked off, leaving only the underdrawing of the leaves. But the whole effect of bright color and dense pattern must have been close to what we see (on a much lower artistic level) in the Istanbul leaf. Other notable features of the Istanbul landscape for which parallels can be found in Tang paintings, or copies of them, include the sky with scudding clouds, the decorative linear drawing of the water cascading over rocks at the bottom, and the drawing of the rocks themselves.

I want to call attention, however, to the basic cluster of motifs that dominates the picture: the mountain in upper right, a simple, conical form with stringy strokes shaping its surface; some middle-ground trees drawn as simple repetitions of trunks with dotted foliage; and the juxtaposition of these with the mixed grove of trees to their left in the foreground. More or less the same configuration of motifs is to be seen, in equally schematic form, in Zhao Mengfu’s Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains (fig. 18).
of 1296: the conical mountain with stringy strokes on its surface; the simple, repeated trees in middle ground, which reduce the perceived height of the mountain by their proximity to it; the dense grove of trees of diverse species to the left in the foreground. Also in common between the two paintings, and basic to their compositions, is the attempt in each to portray a continuous flat recession to a high horizon, a recession that in fact breaks into discontinuities in both pictures. In addition, then, to the stylistic sources for Zhao’s archaism (which Chu-tsing Li and others have found in paintings associated with such early masters as Wang Wei and Dong Yuan), Zhao might well have seen pictures of this kind at the Mongol court and adopted from them some Tang-derived elements of archaic landscape that he is not likely to have known about otherwise.

In fact, when we return for a last look at the Istanbul landscape in this new context, we cannot help seeing features in it that seem to foreshadow the intentional archaisms of Qian Xuan and Zhao Mengfu. It is, of course, exactly the ability of Qian and Zhao to select and combine these inherited elements of style into paintings that far surpass the models in sophistication and coherence, and their achievement in making out of such diverse sources a new direction for Yuan landscape to take, that marks them as great, original masters. □
Notes


7. Watson (“Chinese Style,” 75) writes, “It seems that artists practising this style also found their way to China” and cites the scroll of Zhong Kui once of demons in the Freer Gallery of Art by Gong Kai as an example of how this reentry “introduces a wholly exotic note in Chinese painting.” Steinhardt discusses this parallel at greater length in another article, “Siyah Qalem and Gong Kai: An Istanbul Album Painter and a Chinese Painter of the Mongolian Period,” *Mugamos* 4 (1987): 59–71. She discusses there the images of demons and of the emaciated horse.


9. The painting by Qiu Ying is titled *Hunting on the Autumn Plain*; see *Tang Song Yuan Ming Qing hua xuan* (Guangzhou: Yishu huabao she, 1963), pl. 50.

10. Comparisons of this kind are made by Steinhardt in “Siyah Qalem.”


12. I am disregarding, for the purpose of this paper, problems of authenticity; one or another of these works might, under more serious scrutiny, prove not to be a genuine work by Qian Xuan or Zhao Mengfu, but they cannot all be dismissed as forgeries because they exhibit this feature of style.


14. The passage is in *The Procession of Zhang Yujiao*, in the mid-ninth-century Cave 156 of Dunhuang; see, for instance, Terukazu Akiyama, ed., *Chikoku bijutsu* (Chinese art), vol. 2 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1969), pl. 17. Kohara Hironobu points out that the Five Oxen attributed to Han Huang is a forgery. He also includes a forward-facing, foreshortened animal: see *Gungong bowuyuan canghua*, vol. 2 (Beijing, 1964), pp. 19–21.


19. The persuasiveness of the points that follow will be much reduced by the absence of color from the reproduction; interested readers are invited to study the color reproduction in Ipsirotoglu, *Painting and Culture of the Mongols*, pl. 49.


21. For reproductions and discussions of these paintings, see Wen C. Fong and James C. Y. Watt, *Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996), 161–64, pl. 70 and detail, p. 158.

A Recent Freer Acquisition and the Question of Workshop Practices
FIG. 1. *Anon., Barbarian Pasturing a Horse, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk. Courtesy Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, F1992.40.*
A Recent Freer Acquisition and the Question of Workshop Practices

In 1992 the Freer Gallery of Art acquired a Chinese painting depicting a turbaned Central Asian groom observing a white horse tethered to a tree (fig. 1). This handsome hanging scroll, painted in ink and color on silk, measures 116 × 93 cm, or 65 3/4 × 36 3/4 inches, and represents a stout groom wearing a turban, tan robe, and boots standing with hands joined behind his back looking at a long-bodied white horse. With red tassels hanging from its bit and a red ribbon around its tail, the horse lifts its right foot and stretches up to nibble on the leaves of the tree to which it is tethered. Behind the groom stands a boy who seems to be playing a vertical flute, perhaps in harmony with the wind and the flowing water of a stream visible just beyond the figures. Short clumps of bamboo grow beside a foreground rock and along the banks of the stream, and a band of mist cuts through the upper portion of the tree.

Two labels, one pasted on the outer wrapper of the scroll and another mounted just beside the painting on the silk mounting, identify the subject as Barbarian Pasturing a Horse (Nu san ma tu 奴散馬圖) and the painter as Zhao Yan 趙巖 (died 922) of the Five Dynasties. More realistically, members of the Freer curatorial staff date the painting to the fourteenth century and identify it as an anonymous painting of the Yuan or early Ming period. A number of other paintings in a similar style, to which we will return below, are associated with the Ming court during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong 宣宗 (1399–1435; r. 1426–35) and his immediate successors, and an early fifteenth-century date may therefore be even more appropriate. In any case, the painting shows stylistic affinities not with such late Yuan horse paintings as those by Zhao Yong 趙雍 (b. 1289) or Ren Renfa 任仁發 (1254–1327) but with painters of the fifteenth century.

What is perhaps most interesting about the Freer painting is not its subject, style, or date, however, but the fact that it is almost identical to a painting that has been in the collection of the Indianapolis Museum of Art since 1985 (fig. 2). The Indianapolis picture, Barbarian Training a Horse (Huren xun ma tu 胡人訓馬圖), also painted in ink and color on silk, measures 66 × 37 inches, virtually identical with the Freer scroll. Very minor differences distinguish the two scrolls, most prominently the drawing of the foreground rocks and bamboo. But, in general, their major motifs and composition create the impression that one could have been traced from the other, or, alternatively, that both may have been made from the same cartoon or draft, the various possible forms and units of which, for convenience, we shall refer to as fenben 粉本.

While no significant differences in quality distinguish these two paintings, the Indianapolis scroll bears an inscription that is absent from the Freer version. Signed with the name of a Song painter and scholar named Lian Bu 廉布, who lived in the twelfth century, the poem written on the Indianapolis scroll refers conventionally to the “spirited” and “heroic” horse, “a true dragon” superior even to the “eight steeds” of antiquity—in other words, the kind of clichéd clap-trap that anyone might write on the subject of horses. There is no reference to the specific meaning of the subject of a Central Asian Muslim observing a beautiful white horse tethered to a tree. But, I suppose, the inscription, in the name of a distinguished (and now totally unknown) Song
FIG. 2.
painter is intended to suggest that Lian Bu was the painter of the picture.

Interestingly, in the upper left corner of the Freer painting, where the Lian Bu inscription appears on the Indianapolis scroll, a large rectangular piece of silk has been removed. It is tempting to speculate that a more-or-less identical inscription under the name of Lian Bu may have been there originally and been removed by a later owner in order to transform the fake Song painting into an even earlier fake, by Zhao Yan, the Five Dynasties painter to whom the Freer picture is presently ascribed by its labels. In any case, it is clear that the Indianapolis picture was made as a forgery, and it is possible that the Freer painting too first appeared on the market as a spurious work of the Song literati master Lian Bu.

"Kaikodo Journal" recently published correspondence among several art historians (including this writer) on the subject of multiple versions of Ming compositions, sparked by the existence of at least two other fragmentary versions of the well-known composition by Du Jin 杜堇 that was exhibited in the National Palace Museum’s grand exhibition, “Possessing the Past.” That correspondence makes quite clear that when two or more versions of the same composition exist, art historians share no consensus as to how to interpret, or understand, the significance of those multiple versions. It is equally clear that many quite different reasons can be offered for the existence of replicas, including especially the common practice of making copies and forgeries for study or for profit. In the case of the Freer and Indianapolis paintings of a white horse, I think it is easy to rule out the possibility that either was copied from the other so as to make a forgery of an “original” work of great value. Both were probably made as fake Song pictures from the start, and both appear to be of approximately the same materials and physical age.

There is also no possible reason to imagine that the painter—or painters—of these pictures was ever actually looking at anything in the real world and trying to draw it. If he had ever had anything to do with horses, he would not have depicted his wise Central Asian observer standing directly behind the white horse—the position in which it is most likely that he would be kicked between the legs by a startled horse. Nor would the painter have seen a horse with such a long body, a body drawn out like a stretch limousine, in the real world. The rocks the painter saw in the real world were also nothing like those in his picture(s), and the trees in the two pictures are just sufficiently artificial and sufficiently different as to reveal that he was not actually looking at trees when he painted his picture(s). Nor did he much care whether the roots of the tree appeared actually to dig into the ground, or whether the leaves on the tree actually appeared to belong organically to the branches to which they are attached.

If the painter was not looking at objects in the real world and trying to imitate them, what was he doing? Instead (with the help, no doubt, of assorted assistants and apprentices), he was pouncing, copying, or tracing drawings onto the silk surface from stock models of individual figures and groups, trees, rocks, and horses, carefully tracing lines in ink, filling in areas of color, reinforcing outlines, smoothing over washes of ink, neatly writing a fake inscription in the name of Lian Bu, and then turning the material over to his mounter to prepare for sale. He was manufacturing a product, and these were the routine practices of the painter’s studio. Neither he nor his potential buyers apparently cared if the horse’s raised foot and the tree roots below appeared to be all mixed up, or if the young boy blowing a flute looked like a wizened old man smoking an early form of a tobacco pipe, or if the turbaned onlooker were about to be kicked in the groin, or if the tree trunk looked a little rounded in one version or the other. Both of these paintings were made in the fifteenth century and have been successfully preserved right down to the present by a succession of owners for whom these were not interesting or even relevant issues to raise about paintings.

If at this point in five hundred continuous years of preservation and appreciation, certain American art historians want to know why the tree roots do not look very realistic, or why the man stands so close to the horse’s rear end, or why some of the branches look flat, or which of these pictures is the “original,” or which is “better,” then we have to ask what those art historians could possibly think provides any historical basis whatever for assuming that such questions should be relevant. And the only possible answer, of course, would be that these questions arise from the application of arbitrary criteria that reflect
the cultural conditions, biases, and preferences of that particular group of late twentieth-century American art historians.

What may be more interesting is to continue our exploration of the way such paintings were made in the fifteenth century. In addition to the nearly identical Freer and Indianapolis compositions, a third work is intimately related to the common prototype of the full set (the number of which is not known but could have been almost any number) and to the process of their making. A painting called Horses and Groom (Ren ma tu 马圖) was auctioned by Sotheby’s in 1980 (fig. 3). This handsome hanging scroll, measuring 153.7 × 104.7 cm, or 60 ½ × 41 ½ inches, offers a composition that is similar to, but also modifies and expands, the Freer and Indianapolis pictures. The former Sotheby’s scroll is wider than either the Freer or Indianapolis pictures but also shorter by several inches. These altered dimensions allow the painter to expand the composition slightly to the right while abandoning the foreground rock/bamboo motif. Of course it is difficult to know whether the original size of the Sotheby’s scroll has been modified over the years.

In terms of workshop practices, the former Sotheby’s picture depicts a foreign groom and boy attendant virtually identical to those in the Freer and Indianapolis paintings—probably made from the same fenben as the others but joined here by both the white horse and a second horse, seen from the rear, as well as a second attendant, who enters from the lower right corner carrying a tray. The setting is also modified substantially. The white horse nibbling willow leaves is now raising its right leg instead of its left and is not raising it as high. The former Sotheby’s composition, which in all probability derives from the same studio or workshop as both the Freer and Indianapolis paintings, also represents the use of at least one of the same fenben, together with a modified fenben for the white horse, a second for the other horse, as well as another for the second attendant. All are located in a variation of the landscape setting used in the other paintings. The slightly different placement of the groom vis-à-vis the white horse indicates how easily these paintings were composed and how little they have to do with anything other than harmonious placement and relationship. The trees in the former Sotheby’s scroll have become willows, are expanded in number, and are painted in a different manner from the trees in the other two versions, suggesting that these settings, like stage props, could be provided by any number of different people in the workshop—presumably assistants or apprentices—and easily expanded, modified, or contracted to suit specific requirements. The differences visible among these several versions of a related composition also demonstrate the adaptability and versatility of workshop practices in traditional China. Replicas were easily made, but variations and ultimately quite different forms were also routinely created.

Of course it could be argued that the former Sotheby’s picture was done in a totally different time and by a completely different painter or painters. But then the relationship among these pictures would be rendered ambiguous in ways that do not seem to me to be warranted. All three appear to be of the same approximate date and style, and their similarities suggest to me that they derive from the same materials, models, fenben, and general practices. According to the principle of Occam’s razor, then, all should come from the same time and place. Indeed, I would like to propose further that several other well-known paintings of white horses and willows are also products of this same source. These additional examples demonstrate still further some of the ways variations on the subject of white horses and grooms in the shade of overhanging trees were created from basic models, motifs, and compositional principles. And, needless to say, whether any of these paintings is “better” than any other would be entirely a matter of personal preference. That decision would have nothing whatever to do with the historical practices of painting or with any historical explanation for the making and appreciation of paintings.

Let me return now to the matter of the probable authorship of the Freer and Indianapolis paintings—and, if I am correct, the former Sotheby’s scroll, as well as others I have cited. Because the style of the paintings is similar to a number of works by fifteenth-century court artists, I have suggested that the Freer and Indianapolis scrolls were probably painted as spurious Song works
FIG. 3.
bearing the name Lian Bu by an early Ming artist such as those prominent at the Ming court. The actual painter leaps at us in the form of a signed painting in the Palace Museum, Beijing. Entitled Two Stallions in the Shade of a Willow Tree (Liyin shuangjun tu 柳藤雙駿圖), this scroll depicts not one but two long-bodied white horses with red tassels tethered to a tree (fig. 4). I have elsewhere briefly discussed Hu Cong 胡聰 as the likely painter of other pictures of this type, but here I wish to establish the essential relationship between Hu’s only known signed work and both the Freer and Indianapolis compositions. What makes this identification of all three pictures with the workshop of Hu Cong so interesting is that it indicates that court and professional painters of the early and middle Ming periods manufactured fake Song (and Yuan) pictures on a regular basis. The regularity of this type of manufacture is quite difficult to establish, as a rule, but here it seems to be proven. The confusion between Song and Ming paintings that becomes so troublesome to connoisseurship and criticism in the later Ming period is already established in the fifteenth century when painters like Hu Cong habitually manufactured fake Song pictures as an essential element in the practice of their craft. That such pictures survive in fairly large numbers may be some indication of how successful they were. □

Notes


3. See, for example, Richard Barnhart et al., Painters of the Great Ming (Dallas: Dallas Art Museum, 1993), 120 and 122.

Notes and a Reflection on
the Freer Shūbun Painting
FIG. 1.
Artist unknown,
Landscape, undated, 
attrib. Tenshō Shūbun, 
hanging scroll, ink and 
slight color on paper, 91.2 × 
35.0 cm. Courtesy Freer 
Gallery of Art, Smithsonian 
Institution, 63.5.
Notes and a Reflection on the Freer Shūbun Painting

I would like to begin this essay by jotting down some notes and comments on the Freer Shūbun painting (fig. 1). The best explanation for this procedure is to say that this is how a museum curator normally proceeds with curatorial notes and essays.

Landscape
Japanese painting, acc. no. 63.5; attributed to Shūbun
Ink and slight color on paper
No inscriptions
91.2 × 35.0 cm
Hanging scroll; mounted on panel (should be restored to original hanging scroll format)
Seal: gourd-shaped, relief, “Shūbun” (2.6 × 1.7 cm; spurious), 11.4 cm from lower edge of painting to top of seal
Physical condition: Many “wrinkles” and “cracks” spread horizontally from top to bottom. Diagonal cracks and holes, one in a zigzag pattern, visible to left of central mountain and extending to left edge of painting; another, less visible, running horizontally above the distant peaks. Most significant tear on lower right corner, below seal, in the area where a seal (of the artist) is normally stamped; measuring 9.0 cm along lower extremity and 6.0 cm along right edge, all of which can be taken as a sign of the age of the painting; that is to say, the painting is not of recent manufacture, surely not Edo or Meiji. It is shorter in length than the standard mid-fifteenth-century shigajiku (Chikusai dokusho zu) measures more than 130.00 cm). Wear and tear abundant toward top. Does this imply possible removal of inscriptions at top?

Date: Shimada Shūjirō dates the painting to second half of the fifteenth century in Zaigai shikō (1979). Broad date should be narrowed down.

In the early evening of the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month of the year 1441, the sixth Ashikaga Shōgun Yoshinori 足利義教, patron of Zen monasteries and the arts, then forty-eight years old, was assassinated in the house of a deputy in Kyoto. The assassin, Akamatsu Mitsuke 赤松満祐, who had invited the shōgun to his mansion for an evening of entertainment, subsequently fled the capital to his home province of Harima 揖宿 (in the southwestern part of present-day Hyōgo Prefecture) with a vengeful army at his heels. For nearly three months Akamatsu put up a fierce fight, but in the end he committed suicide with his own sword.

The assassination of Yoshinori was one of many ominous events of the political and social history of Japan that eventually drove the nation into the devastating Ōnin 忍仁 and Bunmei 文明 Wars of 1466–77. The eleven years of bloody warfare took their toll in the destruction of the capital Kyoto, including its major Zen monasteries. Given the circumstances, it is extraordinary that this unsettling political period in Japanese history was also one of its most creative epochs in painting. The art of ink painting developed vigorously in the environment of Zen monasteries in Kyoto. The period around the 1440s is a high point in the career of a painter named Tenshō Shūbun 天智周文 (fl. 1423–ca. 1460), with whom ink painting of the Muromachi period is invariably associated.

Muromachi ink landscape painting evolved out of three or more decades of shigajiku 詩画軸 (poetry-
painting scrolls) production by elite members of the fifteenth-century Zen monastic community.¹ The culturally elite class nurtured by Zen institutions consisted of not only learned Zen monks but also powerful military chieftains, including shōguns, deputy shōguns, and the provincial castellans who patronized them. Extolling the lofty spirit of learning for an aspiring Zen novice, who could be a scion of a powerful military house, members of this elite coterie might give Kei’in shōchiku 溪陰小築 (Cottage by a Mountain Stream) as a theme or a title for a painting on a shigajiku scroll. The scroll, depicting a humble abode by a mountain stream, would be passed around among the novice’s erudite mentors, who would each brush an appropriate poem about the picture. Such a scroll, when hung on the wall, was usually long (including the mounting, over six feet in length) and narrow (a little over a foot wide). These dimensions made it the right size to hang either in the picture-displaying alcove (tokonoma 床の間 or oshi’ita 押し台, to use the Muromachi terms) or on an unadorned wall of the monk’s apartment. In a typical shigajiku, the pictorial area is invariably confined to the lower third or fourth of its entire length. The empty area above is nearly always filled with poetic inscriptions, sometimes as many as thirty, and a long prose preface. 

Cottage by a Stream, dated to 1413, is said to be by Kichizan Minchō 吉山明昌 (1351–1431), a versatile printer-monk of the Tofukuji 東福寺 Monastery in Kyoto. This painting and Setting Sun over the River and Mountains (Kōzan Sekiyō zu 江山夕陽図), datable to no later than 1437 and attributed to Shūbun, are two of the most fully formed shigajiku paintings of the first half of the fifteenth century (figs. 2 and 3).² The first three to four decades of shigajiku development coincided with the period of activity of the painter-monk Josetsu 如拙 (fl. 1405–30) and his follower Tenshō Shūbun, both of the metropolitan Zen monastery of Shōkokuji 神倉寺. Setting Sun has been traditionally attributed to Shūbun, not only because

FIG. 2.
Artist unknown, Kei’in shōchiku zu (Cottage by a Stream), 1413, attrib. Kichizan Minchō, inscribed by Taihaku Shingen 太白真玄 (fl. 1411–15) and six other monks, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 101.5 × 34.5 cm. Konchi’in, Nanzenji, Kyoto.
FIG. 3.
*Artist unknown, Kōzan sekiyō zu (Setting Sun over the River and Mountains), also known as Kōzan no in (Retreat amidst the Rivers and Mountains), detail, ca. 1437, inscribed by Daigu Shōchi 大愚性智 (fl. 1406–39) and eleven other monks, hanging scroll, ink and slight color on paper, 130.3 × 30.3 cm. Private collection, Japan.*
of the seal “Shūbun” stamped on the lower right (now discredited as spurious) but also because of its stylistic features, which, for reasons expounded below, can be seen as characteristic of the period of Shūbun’s active career, from the 1420s through ca. 1460.

These two paintings represent successive phases in the stylistic development of Muromachi ink landscape painting. In Cottage by a Stream the intimate space of the rustic hut limits the foreground area, with a distant mountain image standing in the background. The focus is the study, the central motif of Cottage by a Stream. Setting Sun, on the other hand, emphasizes the vast lakescape—the elaborate pavilion-type buildings on and around the lake. The foreground rocks and trees and the distant peak here frame the expanse of space that opens up the view from the foreground away into the far distance and the empty space, which, in turn, merges with the space occupied by the verses in the upper portion of the scroll. The space that opens up so effectively in this painting would be articulated further, within scarcely a decade, by a group of paintings in which the empty space of the paper invariably becomes the ethereal air of nature, wrapping the landscape images in its slowly wafting mist. The dramatic and eloquent opening up of space that began in the 1430s developed further in the mid-1440s, what in Muromachi ink landscape painting as a whole can be considered the most articulate examples of Shūbun-style painting: Chikusai dokusho zu (Reading in the Bamboo Study) of ca. 1446 and Suishoku rankō zu (Color of Stream and Hue of Mountain) of 1445 (figs. 4 and 5).3

We know quite a bit about the painter Shūbun.4 His family name was Fujikura 藤倉. As a young monk, probably about twenty years of age, he spent time in Korea (1423–24) as a minor member of a Japanese diplomatic mission. Back in Kyoto, Shūbun’s monastic affiliation was with Shōkokuji, where he was Comptroller. As reported by contemporary

FIG. 4. Artist unknown, Chikusai dokusho zu (Reading in the Bamboo Study), ca. 1446, attrib. Tenshō Shūbun, preface by Jiku'un Toren dated 1446, inscribed by five other monks, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 134.8 × 33.3 cm. Tokyo National Museum.
FIG. 5.
Artist unknown, Suishoku rankō zu (Color of Stream and Hue of Mountain), attrib. Tenshō Shūbun, inscription dated 1445 by Shiude Seiha 心田清播 (1375–1447), two other inscriptions by Zen monks, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 107.5 × 32.6 cm. Fujiwara Collection, Tokyo.
Zen monks, he studied painting with Josetsu, a predecessor at Shōkokuji who was serving the shōgunate as a painter. Shūbun’s works did not elude the attention of the capital’s luminaries, and by 1437 he was well known as a sculptor and painter. He painted for the household of the Imperial Prince Fushimi no miya Sadafusa 伏見宮貞成. We also know that he was on the government payroll. His residential quarters, presumably at Shōkokuji, were called Kō’en 高遠軒 and his study Iryokusai 依禄斎. He taught Sesshū Tōyō 雲舟等楊, also of Shōkokuji, as revealed by Sesshū’s own writing (fig. 10). According to a diarist at Shōkokuji, a certain Sōtan 宗潭, another painter, succeeded to Shūbun’s administrative position in 1463. Shūbun must therefore have died before that year.

Scholarship on Shūbun during the last 70 years or more has by no means reached consensus about how to position him as an ink painter in the larger context of the history of the Muromachi period, much less about his many attributions. This lack of unanimity even extends to those works that contain epigraphic evidence (inscriptions—poems or prefacces that identify their authors and are thus datable). Other paintings, particularly those that do not contain epigraphic evidence, can only be situated through a rigorous stylistic analysis that includes comparisons with dated and datable examples. The landscape painting in the Freer Gallery of Art, attributed to Shūbun, is one such example (fig. 1). Where should the style of this painting be located within the context of fifteenth-century Japanese ink landscape history? What makes it relevant to Shūbun? The purpose of this essay is twofold. First, it attempts to date the Freer painting in the context of the stylistic development of the Shūbun tradition; second, by interpreting the Freer painting as a product of post-Shūbun stylistic diversity, this essay attempts to link the painting to the artistic activity of Sesshū before his 1467–69 trip to China.

**FROM SHŪBUN STYLE TO THE SHŪBUNESQUE**

*Suishoku rankō zu* (fig. 5) marks the high point in the Muromachi ink landscape tradition. It presents a pictorial space evocative of a lakeside mountainscape enshrouded in mist. This work, together with *Reading in the Bamboo Study*, epitomizes the style of Shūbun because in it the general stylistic features that appeared piecemeal in the various stages of prior landscape compositions are finally integrated and also because these two works spawned their own followers throughout the 1450s and 1460s. Works by Shōkei Ten’yū 松懐天遊 (fl. 1440–60) are typical examples of this generation, which for purposes of the present essay I shall call “Shūbunesque.” These Shūbunesque works, some of which will be discussed below, in turn rapidly facilitated a further development in landscape painting. While retaining their stylistic ties with Shūbun, these paintings surpassed their predecessors in their articulation of the individual component motifs as believable mountains, trees, and rocks. In this articulation of the landscape composition, the motifs are more readable because they are better defined; the spatial relations among the various topographical elements become more measurable. Two well-known landscapes by Bunsei 文清, one in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the other in the Masaki Museum, Osaka, belong to this phase. As the landscape became visually more descriptive, however, the evocative space or the pictorial void that once embraced the entire view gradually disappeared. Gone was the sense of ambiguity and with it the ability of the viewer to embark upon a poetic excursion through this evocative space. The empty space so prominent in the Shūbun style would lose its preeminence, displaced by intrusive solids. This displacement represents one marked stylistic transformation of mid-Muromachi landscape painting. It is to this phase that the Freer painting belongs. In what follows, we explore the Freer painting’s stylistic peculiarities in order to place it in the artistic context of the period.

**THE FREER PAINTING**

The pictorial organization of the Freer painting generally follows what during the first half of the fifteenth century became one tradition in ink landscape compositions. The central mountain peaks rising upward within an amorphous space are similar, for example, to those found in *Suishoku rankō zu* of 1445. The
diagonal span of space from the foreground to the far distance of the Freer painting can also be seen in Chikusai dokusho zu of ca. 1446. The composition of the Freer landscape thus resembles those of the two most frequently cited mid-fifteenth-century Murōmachi ink landscapes. In the Freer composition, however, the middle-ground mountain is defined more massively. Executed in darker ink tones and with texture dabs, the mountain gains a greater sense of physicality than the corresponding motifs in either of the examples cited above. As the current scholarly consensus has it, the above two paintings in Japan stand for what otherwise remains little known, the pictorial style of ink landscape created by Tenshō Shūbun. If these two works represent the Shūbun style, the Freer painting, for reasons that are discussed below, departs considerably from it; recognizing that this is one of the several stylistic directions that the Shūbun style took during the second half of the fifteenth century, we may call it Shūbunesque.

The foreground motifs—two rocks, one large and one small—are more solidly delineated than those in other Shūbun-attributed works, including the two examples cited above. The rocks are here depicted from a lower viewpoint; they overlap each other, with the smaller one in front. These rocks and a pair of trees above form a cluster screening off the middle-ground distant shore behind it. Here the spatial linkage of the foreground to the middle ground and beyond is effectively presented by the overlapping scheme already noted and the successful depiction of individual motifs marking the front-back articulation. What appears to be a pair of trees prominently positioned above the front boulder in fact consists of two separately spaced trees; the one on the right grows behind the large rock, while a third, closer to the hut, is depicted between the two in a paler ink tone. The mountain path to the right of the foreground rock zigzags toward the middle distance to the right. The lake, a dominant motif here, spills over the bottom of the composition, spreading out between the foreground rocks, as well as between them and the ones behind, and extending toward the rustic bridge in the right middle ground. The wide expanse of water is underscored as a dominant motif in the foreground space by the inclusion of the fishing boat with two figures seated face to face. The boat floats in a leisurely fashion, its stern pointing at the opening of a little cove behind the front boulder.

The Freer painting differs from the more typical Shūbun paintings found in Japan in the extensive and clearly defined physiognomy of its mountains, rocks, and trees. Texture dabs (small ax-cuts), for example, are used extensively for the vertical facets of the foreground rocks. The massive monolith that rises in the center of the composition has vertically drawn, clawlike strokes (or curved “nailheads”) on its bumpy shoulders. These strokes attempt to represent the serration of the rock formation, although those on the lower areas fall short of describing the rock surface; the strokes appear to cling to the face of the rock without defining its physiognomy. Nevertheless, together with the liberally applied ink washes of various tonalities, these texture strokes make for more legible forms and shapes. They are now more descriptively rendered than those in works of the 1440s. The two deciduous trees in front unambiguously fan out from the rock surface, with even contour lines for the trunks and a calculated dotting of rich ink dabs for the foliage. These attributes follow the tree type seen in the works of Xia Gui 夏圭, a name that began to appear with increasing frequency in the literary works of Japanese scholar-monks during the second half of the fifteenth century. The dominant central mountain, trees, and rocks thus defined are more than just the images so elusively suggested in Chikusai dokusho zu. The central mountain of the Freer painting is a solid mass whose peak energetically thrusts skyward; the corresponding central mountain in Suishoku rankō zu looks like a curtain suspended in mid air.

**SPACE IN THE SHŪBUNESQUE**

The Freer painting articulates spatial recession by gradually diminishing the degree of legibility of the images from the foreground to the far distance. What is near is given greater clarity and what is far, less. This effect is achieved by varying ink tonality from dark to light or by lessening the definition of the motifs, moving from descriptive to abstract. Trees and rocks in the foreground are deliberately clear; distant pavilions and roofs are elusive, floating in the mist in the far distance. The dramatic contrast in
FIG. 6.
Artist unknown, Landscape, 1460s, inscription by Jiku'un Töre, hanging scroll, ink and slight color on paper, 75.0 × 32.0 cm. Tokyo National Museum.
representation resulting from the spatial discrimination is seen in the foreground group of motifs and the filmy wash of transparent blue that casts a faint mountain silhouette against the empty space to the right of the central mountain. But in spite of this dramatic contrast, the space presented in this painting is confining. The vast opening up of space felt in works of the 1440s, and in Suishoku rankō zu in particular, is replaced by an interest in the visibility of the scene from the foreground to the middle ground, where the massive mountain surges upward with such force that our view no longer meanders in an ethereal space created in the Shūbun-attributed works. We perceive the space around the mountain mass but not beyond.

Visual evidence strongly suggests that in Shūbunesque compositions of the 1450s and 1460s clarity of the depicted landscape motifs, resulting in increased legibility, was achieved at the expense of the pervasive space found in the works of the 1440s. The Landscape (fig. 6) datable to 1455 in the Tokyo National Museum collection, inscribed by the monk Jiku'un Tōren 竹雲等連 (1383–1471) who wrote the preface to Reading in the Bamboo Study, underscores the rapid stylistic change in the Shūbunesque tradition already taking place a decade before Shūbun presumably died (ca. 1460). Here a clearly legible landscape spreads before the viewer, while the overall compositional type has evolved out of the Shūbunesque. The prominent surge of the massive middleground mountain in this work may be compared to the corresponding one in the Freer Landscape.

THE ROZAN (LUSHAN) IMAGES IN THE SHŪBUNESQUE

The prominent mountain form of the middle distance in the Freer painting, intrusively blocking the spatial movement into the far distance, may have been shaped by a particular late-fifteenth-century convention in landscape composition. That composition is seen in three works with a similar mountain motif that, according to inscriptions on the paintings, alludes to Lushan 虹山 (Japanese: Rozan). The three examples are: Shikiro'an zu 變纖庵図, in the collection of the Zen monastery of Eigenji 永源寺 in Shiga, datable to 1473 by inscriptions (fig. 7); another, in the Agata 阿形 collection, which carries a verse brushed by Ōsen Keisan 橫川景三 (1429–93), datable to 1478; a third, inscribed in the seventeenth century, in the Nezu Institute of Art in Tokyo. All three paintings bear similar compositional elements, suggesting that they share a common compositional or thematic model.

The composition and spatial orientation of these three landscapes, two of which are datable to the 1470s, recall the Landscape in the Tokyo National Museum collection (fig. 6). All of these paintings follow an organizational formula: Rocks and trees are placed in the foreground, a mountain thrusts vertically upward in the middle ground, and the spatial recession—a deep distance—is conveyed around and to the left of the mountain. This formula conforms to the skeletal composition of Shūbun’s Reading in the Bamboo Study. But in the Lushan paintings the individual motifs are given greater clarity of form and assertiveness, which we also observe in the Freer painting. What distinguishes the Freer painting from the others is the angle of depiction: While in the Freer painting the viewer looks straight ahead at the foreground motifs and up toward the middle-distance mountain, the Lushan group situates the viewer high above the foreground, rendering the spreading landscape visible from a bird’s-eye view. The difference in the angle of depiction, then, further differentiates the Freer painting from the Lushan group, if only to underscore the complexity of the stylistic directions within the Shūbunesque tradition.

The Freer painting presents the middle-distance mountain as a massive entity surging upward in the center of composition. The effect of the upright movement of the giant monolith is dramatic if the foreground landscape is first savored fully. Behind the foreground rocks are the wide river and the shore, both functioning as the horizontal axis of the whole composition, which is offset by the vertical thrust of the mountain in the center. In general, this composition is a distant relative of the Suishoku rankō zu, a
Shūbun-style landscape type with a central mountain (fig. 5). What makes the Freer painting different from the earlier work is the abruptness of the vertical thrust in the center of the composition, denying a view of the recession into the distance. Though based on Shūbun’s compositional formula of the 1440s, the Shūbun style had already been transformed by the time of the Freer Landscape. When did this transformation begin to take place? The 1460s, in the last few years of Shūbun’s life? Or the 1470s, only a decade or so after the painter’s presumed date of death?

Visual evidence, however, suggests that the Shūbun style began to disintegrate much earlier, particularly in the compositional tradition that highlights a central mountain. A landscape painting entitled Getsuya sansui zu 月夜山水図 (Moonlit Landscape) in a private collection in Japan (fig. 8) is inscribed by Kisei Reigen 希世霊彦 (1403-88) and thus can be dated, according to the anthology of his literary works, to 1457. 12 Moonlit Landscape already has every noticeable formal characteristic of the Freer painting: the same low angle of vision and abrupt thrust upward of the central mountain. This upward thrust jolts the viewer whose vision, unable to move into the distance, must bounce back to the foreground lake over which floats, at the bottom of the picture, a solitary angler in a boat. The painter must surely have known Suishoku rankō zu, which by then was more than a decade old. The high viewpoint that gave the Shūbun painting such a vast space is now changed to a lower viewpoint that faces the rocks and trees in the foreground straight on. The foreground group of motifs in turn overlaps the waterside hamlet and the bamboo grove behind it, much as do the corresponding motifs in the Freer painting. Further shrinking of Shūbun’s space into that of the Shūbunesque would be achieved by Sesshū Tōyō. According to contemporary Zen adepts, Sesshū was an acknowledged pupil of Shūbun, 13 but in the stylistic history of landscape painting, he was anything but. Indeed Sesshū’s style was anti-Shūbun, as we shall see.

**FIG. 8.** Artist unknown, Getsuya sansui zu (Moonlit Landscape), inscription datable to 1457 by Kisei Reigen, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 89.0 × 32.3 cm. Private collection, Japan.
NOTES AND A REFLECTION ON THE FREER SHUBUN PAINTING

ANTI-SHUBUN: SESSHŪ TŌYŌ (1420–1506)

A painting known by its generic title Sansuizu or Landscape, and bearing Sesshū’s signature and seal in its lower right-hand corner, is inscribed by Ryōkō Shinkei 龍巌真圭 (fl. 1459–67), a familiar name among the eminent Gozan monks who came to know this painter (fig. 9). Like Sesshū, Shinkei had close ties with the Yamaguchi 山口 of Ōtō 周防 Province, the base of the powerful Ōuchi 大内 house. As early as 1433 he brushed a seven-character quatrain verse on the painting Chōshōken zu 順松軒図 (Listening to the Pines Study), a shigajiku dedicated to a young monk at the Zen temple of Jöfukuji 乘福寺 in Yamaguchi. What is important is the connection between Shinkei the Zen monk and Sesshū the artist, since Shinkei wrote a colophon for Sesshū explicating the two-character “Sesshū (Setsu Shū)” or “Snow Boat” on a large piece of calligraphy in the artist’s possession. Sesshū claimed that this piece was brushed by the eminent Chinese Zen monk Chushi Fanqi 楚石梵琦 (1296–1370), whom the Japanese pilgrim-monks in China a century earlier had come to know intimately as a patriarch of extraordinary erudition.

We also know that in 1462 Shinkei relinquished his tenure as the 192nd abbot of Nanzenji and was elevated to the office of Sōrokushi 僧録司, or Registrar Major, the highest administrative position in the Muromachi government. In this capacity he had the authority to administer clerical appointments such as the abbacies at major Zen temples. The Sōrokushi office was located in the Rokun’inn 鹿苑院 sub-temple of Shōkokuji. Shinkei remained in this office for five years until 1466, when the winds of the Ōnin civil war began to blow ominously through the capital. Whether because of a brush with the shōgunate, political infighting within the Zen establishment, or simply the imminent danger of civil war threatening his official abode at Shōkokuji, Shinkei left the capital unbeknownst to the shōgunate in the twelfth month of 1466 and went to the Ōuchi house in Ōtō. At that time the Ōuchi house was led by the powerful Masahiro 政弘 (1446–95), oldest son of the mighty Ōuchi Norihiro 政弘 (1420–65), a powerful shugo daimyō 守護大名 of several provinces on the western edge of Honshū and northern Kyushū who

FIG. 9.
Sesshū Tōyō, Landscape, ca. 1466, inscription by Ryōkō Shinkei, hanging scroll, ink and slight color on paper, 80.8 x 32.7 cm. Private collection, Japan.
zealously promoted trade with Korea and Ming China. Sesshū's connection with Yamaguchi is thought to have been through Norihiro, whose untimely death in 1465 made Masahiro the governor of Suō and commander-in-chief of the joint forces of the Yamana and Ōuchi houses, which entered Kyoto in the eighth month of 1467. Earlier, in the third month of 1467, Sesshū had joined the entourage of a diplomatic mission to Ming China, boarding a ship that had been dispatched by the Ōuchi family.  

The Sesshū Landscape is remarkably Shūbunesque in its compositional organization. It follows an oblong, shigajiku-type format: the foreground rocks and trees lead the viewer into the lakeside mountainscape, reached by crossing an expanse of water where a boat with two figures floats. A mountain path zigzags to the right of the foreground rocks, leading to a couple of rustic houses of which only the grass roofs are visible. It is not difficult to recognize that this section of the painting is organized in remarkably similar fashion to the corresponding area in the Freer Landscape (fig. 1). Though the Sesshū painting juggles certain motifs—the cluster of trees is now divided among three separate areas, including the single tree atop the front boulder and the two clusters on the embankment beyond, while the boat is heading into the cove farther away from us—the Sesshū composition is based on the Freer Shūbunesque painting.

Let us take the comparison further by noting the equally important differences. In the Sesshū painting, the middle-ground mountain mass in the Freer painting is now split into two parts, one above the other, the lower precipice crowned with a tall, vertical growth of trees with a pavilion above them, the upper mountain peak rising vertically. In the Freer painting the pavilion is to the right of the mountain mass. The mountain path of the foreground in Sesshū is picked up again high on the craggy rock cropping, whose shape looks very much like the right shoulder of the monolith in the Freer painting. More importantly, in Sesshū’s work the mountain peak appears as a separate depiction, soaring higher than the peak in the Freer painting. The space does not penetrate any farther than this. The filmy silhouette of the distant peaks no longer draws the viewer into the remote distance to the point where the visual penetration from the foreground to the middle ground, and from there up toward the sky, is made more dramatic and compelling.

The structural principle we see in Sesshū’s Landscape emphasizes a rapid visual movement from the foreground to the middle distance by piling up solid forms along a central axis, with the middle ground pushing up the vertical peak. To the extent that the centrally grouped rock masses form the skeletal axis of the painting, Sesshū is aware of the composition in Suishoku rankō zu (fig. 5). What is radically different from the Shūbun style is, first, the well-spaced overlapping of solid motifs along the central axis and, second, the gradual changing of ink tonality from dark to pale applied in a calculated manner to the zigzagging forms from the foreground to the far distance. This remarkable technique renders the tonally changing but physically interconnected areas of ink as a rapid progression of solid landscape motifs. Though executed in a different mode, Sesshū’s most famous painting, the Haboku 破墨 Landscape of 1495, recalls, exactly three decades later, this architectonic accretion of inked images (fig. 10).

The somewhat circuitously described relationship between the Freer Shūbunesque Landscape and the Sesshū Landscape establishes important stylistic connections between them—connections that are often more cursorily mentioned on the basis of the written account of the master-pupil relationship between Shūbun and Sesshū. This account of "Sesshū’s teacher Shūbun; Shūbun’s teacher Josetsu" is rarely supported by rigorous stylistic comparison. Here I consider the Freer painting as a direct model for Sesshū’s Landscape, for the following reasons: They share common motifs with similar thematic and formal permutations, such as the strong foreground rocks capped with trees, the boat with two figures on water, the zigzagging mountain path, the displacement of the all-pervasive space with intrusive middle-ground motifs, and so on. Even more crucial are the particular brush strokes applied on the middle-ground.

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**Fig. 10.**

Sesshū Tōyō, Landscape (or Haboku Landscape), dated 1495 by Sesshū’s own preface, inscriptions by six other Zen monks, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 149.1 x 31.7 cm. Tokyo National Museum.
mountain. The peculiar “bent nail” shape of the brush strokes on the frontal faces of the middle-ground monolith in the Freer Shūbun have already been noted. Similar strokes appear repeatedly in the left flank of the middle-ground precipice and, surmounted by an inverted U-shaped stroke, symmetrically on the lower face of the peak above in Sesshū’s painting. These correspondences cannot be simply coincidental. On the other hand, they do not suggest that the Sesshū painting is a close copy of the Freer work. The most acceptable interpretation of the stylistic relationship between these two works is that Sesshū, evolving as he did from Shūbun, saw the Freer composition, possibly while he was still at Shōkokuji in the early 1460s. He then remembered it some years later, that is to say around 1466 when he was in Yamaguchi, along with Shinkei, who had just fled Kyoto for the Ōuchi house. If accurate, the information concerning the movements of Shinkei and Sesshū dates the painting to before the summer of 1467, about the time Sesshū was in Yamaguchi waiting to board a trade ship to China.

The political map of Japan at this time began to be redrawn as the result of power struggles among the contentious daimyō houses rebelling against the shōgunal authority in Kyoto. These struggles resulted in the eleven-year armed conflict of the Ōnin and Bunnei eras (1467–77). Ōuchi Masahiro waged war against the Hosokawa 细川 and the shōgunate, siding with the Yamana clan with whom he came to control Chikuzen 筑前 and Buzen 豊前 in northern Kyūshū. This area included both Moji 鳥取 and Hakata 博多, the key ports of entry for the lucrative foreign trade with Korea and China. In the eighth month of 1467 the allied forces of the Yamana and Ōuchi, or the western army, said to be 111,000 strong under the command of Masahiro, entered Kyoto and encamped in the present-day Nishijin 西陣 district, while the opposing eastern army of the Hosokawa house camped near Hana no gosho 花の御所, the Ashikaga house’s mansion in the Muromachi district. With the exception of a brief military campaign against his own uncle’s abortive coup in Kyūshū in 1471, Masahiro would remain in Kyoto for the next ten years, until he finally returned to his home province in 1477.

Ryōkō Shinkei’s inscription at the top of the
Sesshū’s Landscape lauds the protruding peak that is the mark of the composition:

The sea and mountains raise high the Star-picking Tower,
Which, I hear, has a commanding view of King Yu’s Nine Provinces,
Clouds fast disperse like snakes along the mountain path,
As I reach the very top of the summit to savor the autumn.  

Could not Shinkei have compared the Ōuchi chieftains Norihiro and Masahiro to the legendary King Yu 禹 (of China), who ruled the Nine Provinces (jiūzhou 九州 or Kyūshū), which might have also meant the Island of Kyūshū? Could not the clouds dispersing like scuttling snakes along the mountain path refer to the rise of the Ōuchi house under Masahiro, the patron, without foes in the southwestern regions surrounding his own home province, Suō?

By the summer of 1467 Sesshū had already arrived in China, where he remained until the fall of 1469. His stint as Primate (shūzo 首座) at the T’ienungshan 天童山 Zen Monastery in Ningpo 宁波 and his journeys to Beijing, where he executed a wall painting, and to the Jiangnan region via the Yangtze are matters of record. More importantly, Sesshū’s artistic experience with Ming painters, Li Zai 李在 among them, made him realize, in his own words, that “those painters whose works were pure and of outstanding quality were few.” This sentiment underscores Sesshū’s reevaluation of his artistic training, long after his return to Japan from the momentous trip to China. In his preface to the famous Haboku Landscape of 1495 (fig. 10), to be given to his disciple Sō’en 宗園, Sesshū remarked, “Since my return I have come to realize that the works of two old men, of Josetsu and Shūbun, my forebears in painting, are not in the least inferior to those others [I saw in China]. The more I traveled through China and Japan, the more I revered the hearts of the two masters, and realized how tremendous and lofty they were.”

If, in Sesshū’s Landscape, Shinkei’s poem about the vertical thrust of the peak in the painting can be read as an auspicious sign of the rise of the Ōuchi house, then the inscription must have been written in Yamaguchi precisely in 1467, just before Masahiro’s expeditionary forces left for Kyoto in the eighth month of that year. That is to say, the Landscape by Sesshū, complete with Shinkei’s poem written above its prominent peak, materialized in Suō before the eleven-year armed conflict would fully engulf the nation in a civil war. The Freer Landscape, a Shūbunesque work possibly from the late 1450s or early 1460s when the Shūbun style was being differentiated into the various compositions, would then in all probability be the prototype for Sesshū’s Landscape, retrieved through Sesshū’s memory and the actual execution. On the eve of his departure for China, Sesshū, evolving out of the Shōkokují artistic milieu, made a note of his artistic base in Shūbun. He would eventually depart from this foundation, but for now he wanted to remember where he came from. The Freer Landscape, therefore, is an important link between the Shūbunesque and what would become an anti-Shūbun style developed by Sesshū toward the end of the fifteenth century.
Notes


2. *Cottage by a Stream* is in the Konchi’in 金地院 Collection, Kyoto, thoroughly discussed in Shimada Shūjirō and Iriya Yoshitaka, eds., *Zenrin gasan* (Tokyo: Mainichi Press, 1987), 216-23; the 1413 date is that of Taihaku Shingen’s preface, which is translated with annotation in English in Parker, “Playful Nonduality,” 309-14. *Setting Sun over the River and Mountains* (also called *Kôza no in* in 山之陰 [Retreat amidst the Rivers and Mountains]) is in a private collection in Japan; best reproduced in Tanaka Ichimatsu and Yonezawa Yoshihiko, *Suibokuga*, vol. 11 of *Genshoku nihon no bijutsu* (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1970), pls. 48 and 49. This *shigajiku*, inscribed by twelve Zen scholar-monks, was made for a certain pre-Ichikawa Takanori named “Shun’in ōji 聖仁童子” of *Erin* 慈林. The *Erin* is likely to designate the subtemple *tachū* 塔頭 Erin’in of Shōkōji. The 1437 date is determined from the dates of Daigu Shōchi, first to die among the twelve inscribers. Daigu died at more than eighty years of age in 1439. His inscription on this painting, the first one on the upper right, was done when he was seventy-nine years old, that is, about 1437. For a thorough discussion of this painting see Shimada and Iriya, eds., *Zenrin gasan*, 238-45.

3. *Chikusai dokusho zu* and *Suishoku ranke zu* are thoroughly discussed in Shimada and Iriya, eds., *Zenrin gasan*, 248-54 and 316-19; in English: Shimizu and Wheelwright, eds., *Japanese Ink Paintings*, 29-30. An important study of the development of Muromachi landscape painting from ca. 1430 to the time of these two paintings is F. Richard Stanley-Baker’s paper, “New Initiative in Late 15th Century Japanese Painting,” *International Symposium on the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Property: Interregional Influences in East Asian Art History* (Tokyo: Tokyo National Research Institute of Cultural Properties, 1982), 199-211. The complex stylistic history of Muromachi landscape painting leading to the Shūbun style is further complicated by the following factors: the new importation of Chinese/Korean paintings after the resumption of the tally trade with Ming China in 1433; the shaping of collections of Chinese paintings by some members of the ruling classes as manifested, for example, in *Muremachi-dono gyōki okazari ki* 室町殿行幸御賜記, dated to 1437; and the growing familiarity of Japanese painters with the new stylistic directions taken in the newly imported models.


5. Sesshū’s own preface to the famous *Haboku Landscape* of 1495 in the Tokyo National Museum mentions “waga so Jōsotsu Shūbun no ryōō 吾祖如鏡周文Locator” (two venerable old men, Jōsotsu and Shūbun, my forebears [in painting]).

6. Before entering the Freer collection, the painting was in the Baron (Danskalu) Kuki Ryūitchi and Ohashi Kanji collections in Japan. Published in Shimada Shūjirō, Akiyama Terukazu, and Yamane Yūzō, eds., *Suibokuga*, vol. 3 of *Zaigai nihon no shigai* (Tokyo: Mainichi Press, 1979), pl. 30.


8. Bunsei is discussed in the context of Shūbun and Shōkei Ten’yū in David Sensabaugh’s essay, cited in n. 7.

9. The popularity of the Lushan theme from about the 1430s is demonstrated by the following story in a preface by the Zen poet-monk Kisei Reigen (1403-88) to a painting entitled *Rozan*: A priest by the name of Chin 禪 who had never visited China took a Lushan landscape, painted by a Japanese painter who had likewise never been to China, to Kisei Reigen. He requested an inscription in which the poet praised the painting as a consoling substitute for a view of the actual scenery. The poet-monk demurred, protesting that he had never seen the famous mountain. The owner explained that it was precisely for that reason that the monk, as well as he himself and the painter, could understand the essence of the spot in his heart. Kisei then wrote the inscription. For this see “Kisei Reigen sakuhin shūi” in *Tamatara Takeji, Geian bunagaku shinshū*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1968), 515; also see Shimizu and Wheelwright, *Japanese Ink Paintings*, 27-28.

10. The *Eigenji version* is published in Yanagida Seizan and Seki Yūhō, *Eigenji*, vol. 8 of *Koji jinrei*, Ōm (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 1980), pl. 37. The Agata Collection version has not been published, but a photograph is in the photographic archives of the Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University. The Neko Institute of Art version, inscribed by
the Daitokuji monk Kōsetsu Sōyū 江雪宗立 (1595–1666), dated 1652, is published in Kokka 645 (1944).

11. Published as being by Shūbun in Kokka 70 (1895); as by an anonymous painter in Shimada and Iriya, Zenrin gason, 328–30.


17. For accounts of the name Sesshū see, for example, Tanaka and Nakamura, eds., Sesshū. Sesson, 43–44.

18. For a description of the various Zen monasteries' administrative positions, the Sōrokushi in particular, see Martin Collcutt, Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan (Cambridge, MA, and London: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1981).


22. See n. 11.


24. My thanks to Dr. Sun Zhixin for rendering Shinkei's poem into English.


26. In Sesshū's preface written on his Haboku Landscape painting of 1495, illustrated in fig. 10. For modern transcription and translation, see Shimada and Iriya, Zenrin gason, 206–7.

27. The anti-Shūbun style of Sesshū is best seen in the Landscape in the Ōbara Collection, believed to have been painted shortly before his death. Reproduced in Tanaka and Nakamura, eds., Sesshū. Sesson, pl. 12. It carries two inscriptions: an undated one by Bokushō Shūsei 牧松周省 (fl. late 15th century), a close friend of Sesshū, and another by Ryō'an Keigo 浅井桂信 (1425–1514) dated to 1507. Ryō'an Keigo reveals in his inscription what he found when he visited Sesshū's studio Unkokutan 花谷庵. "Bokushō has left his poem behind, and Sesshū is dead." It is from this date that the date of Sesshū's death, 1506, has been surmised.
Discovering Shaykh-Muḥammad in the Freer Ẓāmī
FIG. 1.
Mašnavī heading folio of Yūsuf u Zulaykha, illuminated by ʿAbdullāh al-Shirāzī, in the Haft awrang of Jāmi, 964/1557, Iran, Mashhad. Courtesy Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 46.12, folio 84b.

FIG. 2.
Detail of fig. 1, with signature of ʿAbdullāh al-Shirāzī. Courtesy Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution.
Discovering Shaykh-Muḥammad in the Freer Jāmī

Among the many splendid works in the Freer Gallery's extensive collection of Islamic manuscripts is a deluxe volume made for Sultan Ibrāhīm Mirzâ (946–84/1540–77), a prince of the Safavid dynasty, which ruled Iran during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Entitled the Ḥaft awrang (Seven thrones) and commonly known as the Freer Jāmī, the volume contains a series of seven poems, or ṭūfānīs, written by the famous mystical author ʿAbdul-Raḥmān Jāmī (817–98/1414–92). Sultan Ibrāhīm Mirzā's copy of Jāmī's poems is lavishly decorated, with extensive and intricate illumination throughout its 304 folios, including elaborate headings or title pieces at the start of the individual ṭūfānīs and twenty-eight beautiful full-page compositions illustrating specific text passages.

While elaborate programs of illumination and illustration are by no means uncommon in sixteenth-century Persian manuscripts, especially those made for members of the Safavid family, the Freer Jāmī stands out for the unprecedented amount of information it provides about its patronage and production. Each of the major sections of the Ḥaft awrang text concludes with a colophon, giving key data about its transcription. From the collective record of these scribal codas we learn that the manuscript was copied by five calligraphers (Shāh-Mahmūd al-Nishāpūrī, Rustam-ʿAli, Muḥibb-ʿAli, Malik al-Daylamī, and ʿAyshī ibn Ishrāṭī) working in three different cities (Mashhād, Qazvin, and Herat) over a nine-year period (963–972/1556–65). From the colophon documentation as well as other inscriptions incorporated into several illustrations, we also know that the manuscript was made by order of Sultan Ibrāhīm Mirzā's kitābhāna, an institution combining the functions of artistic atelier and library that flourished in Iran under high-level sponsorship from at least the fourteenth century onward. It is the cumulative effect of superb quality, princely patronage, renowned artists (all five calligraphers are known to have worked for the Safavid court), detailed documentation, and complex production that has led to the Freer Jāmī's reputation as a masterpiece of Safavid-period art.

In contrast to the evident pride with which the Freer Jāmī calligraphers documented their work, the many other artists who would have been involved in the protracted process of the manuscript's illumination and illustration were extremely modest about their contributions. The decoration of the 304 folios' written surfaces and margins alone would have occupied several—if not multiple—teams of artists, all highly trained in the diverse and specialized arts of manuscript illumination. Yet the name of only a single individual engaged in this artist-intensive aspect of the project appears in the manuscript: ʿAbdullāh al-Shīrāzī (active 1550s–80s), a Safavid artist long recognized from primary sources as having been in the employ of Sultan Ibrāhīm Mirzā, signed his name in minuscule cursive script—approximately the height of two eyelashes laid side by side—within the title piece at the head of the Yāsun fū ṣulaykhā ṭūfānī (folio 84b; figs. 1 and 2). His signature follows a short poem written in the gold medallion at the center of the heading. The verse, which does not come from Jāmī's text, evokes the beauty of the poem's imagery and its divine message. Its four

Ars Orientalis, volume XXVIII (1998)
lines are framed with small pink and green flowers and signed in the narrow band below:

Illuminated by ʿAbdullāh al-Shirāzī
مذهب عبدالله الشيرازي

The way ʿAbdullāh worded his signature suggests that at the very least he was responsible for the modest floral embellishments surrounding the poem. His recorded oeuvre, comprising signed frontispiece illuminations as well as paintings in other Safavid manuscripts, leads to the further supposition that he actually illuminated the entire Yūsuf u Zulaykhā heading. Although ʿAbdullāh’s corpus contains no signed manuscripts or calligraphies, it is also possible that the artist copied and possibly even composed the poetic inscription within the masnavi title piece.⁴

Whatever the artist’s exact role in the execution of this particular illumination, the unusual size and placement of his signature recur in several of his other known works and could be considered a personal idiosyncrasy. The recent discovery of another, small and well-hidden signature in the Freer Jāmī suggests, however, that this penchant for the minute might not have been the exclusive predilection of a single artist but rather an artistic practice of the time. More importantly, the newly discovered signature confirms the participation of another Safavid artist in the creation of Sultān Ibrāhīm Mirzā’s Haft awrang.

The various primary sources that help us to reconstruct the artistic circle around prince Sultān Ibrāhīm Mirzā all include the name of Shaykh-Muḥammad (active 1530s–90s) and extol his talents as a calligrapher, painter, illuminator, and outliner.⁵ Beyond this consensus on the artist’s status and areas of expertise, the sources hold different views as to the noteworthy characteristics of his work. One contemporary chronicler notes Shaykh-Muḥammad’s “Chinese” painting style, apparently meaning that he worked in a linear, calligraphic mode, while another praises his ability at imitating and popularizing European painting, suggesting perhaps a more realistic than idealistic approach to representation. Likewise the sources differ as to exactly where Shaykh-Muḥammad served Sultān Ibrāhīm Mirzā. One specifies Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Province in northeastern Iran, which the prince governed over a thirteen-year period (962/1554–55 to 970/1562–63 and 973/1565–66 to 974/1566–67) and where at least three sections of his Haft awrang manuscript were copied. Another source places Sultān Ibrāhīm Mirzā and Shaykh-Muḥammad together in Sabzvār, also in Khorasan, to the west of Mashhad. This small town happened to be Shaykh-Muḥammad’s birthplace, and Sultān Ibrāhīm Mirzā spent eight or so less-than-enthralling years there after he was removed from his gubernatorial office in Mashhad in 974/1566–67. Given the apparently close association between prince and artist, it is quite possible that Shaykh Muḥammad accompanied Sultān Ibrāhīm Mirzā from Mashhad to his native Sabzvār, and again from Sabzvār to the Safavid capital of Qazvin when Ibrāhīm Mirzā was recalled to court in Ramadan 982/December 1574.

Shaykh-Muḥammad’s documented oeuvre consists of more than a dozen signed calligraphies, tinted drawings, and paintings, including a splendid composition of a camel and its keeper signed and dated by the artist in 964/1556–57. Scholars long have speculated that many of the illustrations in the Freer Jāmī also were by the hand of Shaykh-Muḥammad and have proposed a variety of specific attributions.⁶ Among the scenes attributed to Shaykh-Muḥammad are several in the Yūsuf u Zulaykhā poem for which ʿAbdullāh al-Shirāzī executed (in whole or in part) the opening illumination.

Jāmī’s version of this famous love story (better known outside the Near East as the tale of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife) was extremely popular in sixteenth-century Iran, and hundreds of illustrated copies of the text survive today.⁷ The illustrated cycle of Yūsuf u Zulaykhā in the Freer Jāmī depicts six key episodes in Jāmī’s long and complicated narrative, beginning with the arrival of Zulaykhā in Egypt (folio 100b) and ending with a royal banquet given by Yūsuf in honor of his impending marriage to Zulaykhā (folio 132b). The penultimate illustration in the series represents the moment, approximately halfway through the story, when Zulaykhā accuses Yūsuf of trying to seduce her (actually it was the other way around) and convinces her husband, the ʿazīz (governor) of Misr (Egypt) that the young man should be thrown into prison (folio 120a, fig. 3).⁸ The palace
FIG. 3.
The Infant Witness Testifies to Yusuf’s Innocence, in the Haft awrang of Jami, 963–72/1556–65, Iran. Courtesy Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 46.12, folio 120a.
guards are in the process of binding the hapless youth and leading him away when a three-month-old baby, the son of one of Zulaykhâ’s attendants, suddenly proclaims Yüsuf’s innocence and warns the ʿazīz against punishing the youth without just cause. The baby urges the dumbfounded ʿazīz to check the tear in Yüsuf’s shirt: if it is torn in front, then Yüsuf clearly had attempted to attack Zulaykhâ; if it is torn from behind, then Zulaykhâ was trying to prevent Yüsuf’s escape. An examination of Yüsuf’s garment reveals it to have been torn from behind and points to the falseness of Zulaykhâ’s accusations. The ʿazīz then curses his wife for lying and releases Yüsuf, asking him to remain silent about the whole incident.

This dramatic revelation of innocence and slander occurs in front of Zulaykhâ’s palace, with the ʿazīz standing beneath a large arched ivān, or entryway, and listening intently to the babe held in his mother’s arms while another woman looks on from the right. Meanwhile at the left side of the palace terrace two guards have already started to remove Yüsuf, his head encircled in the flames signifying his sanctity (and, by extension, his innocence). Three other personages, including a bare-legged standard bearer holding his insignia of office and two elegant courtiers, occupy the rest of the terrace. Zulaykhâ is not so easily identifiable, although she is likely to be one of the two women gazing down at the terrace from upper-story windows.

At first glance, Zulaykhâ’s palace resembles the structures found throughout sixteenth-century Persian painting, with its central ivān and two flanking wings. Its materials of construction and decoration also are typical for architectural representations of the period (brick, glazed tile, and latticework). The overall impression of this flat facade (with a glimpse through the open doorway to a garden beyond) suggests that Zulaykhâ’s palace functions primarily as the setting or backdrop for the drama being enacted on center stage. That the building plays a more active role is suggested by the inscriptions worked into its decor. These epigraphs do not come from Jāmī’s Haft awrang text, although their sentiment is comparable.9 The verse written (in two rhyming hemistiches) over the right and left doors, for instance, sounds as if the palace were talking and recalls the imagery that Jāmī uses to describe Zulaykhâ’s palace, particularly the isolated inner chamber in which Zulaykhâ attempted to seduce Yüsuf:

Tear [open] my breast [and] enter here.
It is a most private place of seclusion, open the door and come in.

The large, rectangular inscription above the ivān is even more self-referential, since it likens an arched eyebrow, a clear allusion to the building’s central archway, to a qibla niche, also generally arched or recessed, which indicates the direction of prayer in a mosque.

May [no] eye be graceless without [the sight of] your face;
The arch of your eyebrow is the qibla of the people.

Like the couplet over the side doors, this one also relates to Yüsuf and particularly to his future status as a prophet. The first hemistich is particularly telling in terms of the inscription’s overall panegyric function since it echoes the light images that Jāmī uses throughout the Yüsuf u Zulaykhâ maṣnawi to describe his hero, particularly when stressing that joy and beauty are eclipsed whenever Yüsuf is confined.

Besides enriching the pictorial and literary content of the illustration, this verse points to an unexpected epigraphic feature of potentially greater significance within the Freer Jāmī manuscript as a whole. Written in bright orange ink on a black ground, the inscription over the ivān is set off by a single row of beige bricks in a continuation of the framing device that defines the entire central section of the palace facade. Whereas the majority of these bricks are thin and rectilinear (either horizontal or vertical depending on their orientation), those that mark the points where the ivān’s frame makes a right angle are nearly double-size and square, and they are further delineated with a small, interior square. Recent close
Calligraphers, for instance, commonly began their colophons, both in manuscripts and qīˈt as, with the verb katabahu (written by) or mashaqahu (copied by) and sometimes with barrarahu (outlined by) and qāˈt nhā (cut out by).\footnote{1} Shaykh-Muḥammad’s oeuvre contains one manuscript, dated 943/1536–37, as well as several dated and many undated calligraphies. Contrary to normal Safavid practice, Shaykh-Muḥammad rarely used a verb form in signing these works; when he did, it was with mashaqahu rather than katabahu as in his Freer Jāmī signature. So we cannot say that the signature in folio 120a is consistent with the signature formulations in Shaykh-Muḥammad’s other recorded calligraphic works. On the other hand and to the best of my knowledge, the verb katabahu was used by sixteenth-century artists to sign only manuscripts and calligraphies, not illuminations or paintings. That general rule suggests that what the artist signed was his transcription of the īvān inscription. Certainly Shaykh-Muḥammad’s placement of his signature right next to the inscription, as well as his reputation as a calligrapher, reinforces such a conclusion.

But could Shaykh-Muḥammad actually have been documenting his responsibility for the entire composition and not just one small section? It should be significant in this regard that Shaykh-Muḥammad followed his name with the term musavvir, a nisba, or professional designation, meaning painter. As it happens, however, Shaykh-Muḥammad never used musavvir in signing any of his known paintings or drawings, preferring instead words such as raqamahu (penned or drawn by) and amal (work of). Curiously—and perhaps significantly—the only other work that Shaykh-Muḥammad signed with the nisba musavvir is a calligraphic sample, or qīˈt, copied in 970/1562–63 in Mashhad (Topkapi Sarayi Müzesi, H. 2137, folio 18b).\footnote{12} Again we are confronted with seeming incongruity in Shaykh-Muḥammad’s oeuvre. However peculiar it now may seem to use the term “painter” in signing a piece of calligraphy, this may have been Shaykh-Muḥammad’s way of simultaneously showing off his elegant hand and reminding his audience that he was a painter as well as a calligrapher by profession. Furthermore, the fact that he styled himself musavvir in a calligraphy made

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**FIG. 4.**
Detail of fig. 3, with signature of Shaykh-Muḥammad. Courtesy Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution.

scrutiny of the lower left corner of the inscription panel reveals that its punctuating brick encloses an additional element: the signature of the artist Shaykh-Muḥammad written in black ink around the small, interior square (fig. 4).

Written by Shaykh-Muḥammad [the] painter\footnote{10}

كتبه شيخ محمد مصور

The presence of this microscopic signature in a space measuring 2 mm square clinches the involvement of Shaykh-Muḥammad in the creation of the Freer Jāmī, as scholars long have imagined given the artist’s connection with Sultān Ibrāhīm Mirzā. The signature also distinguishes The Infant Witness Testifying to Yūsuf’s Innocence as the only signed painting in the Haft awrang manuscript—or at least as the only painting in which a signature so far has been found! But, as with ʿAbdullāh’s signature in the opening title piece of the Yūsuf u Zulaykhā maṣnawi, we are left to speculate about what Shaykh-Muḥammad actually executed here.

The ambiguity rests in part on how and where the artist signed his name. Sixteenth-century artists generally signed their works in formulaic terms and often started off their signatures with one of various verb forms characterizing the nature of their work.
in a specific time (970/1562-63) and locale (Mashhad) may have been a signal that, at this point and place in his career, he was actively engaged both in calligraphy and painting.

As it happens, Shaykh-Muhammād’s execution of this particular calligraphy occurred during the last year of Sultan Ibrāhīm Mirzā’s original appointment as governor of Mashhad and during the continuing production of his Haft awrang manuscript. And, extending the interpretation of the 970/1562-63 calligraphy, his signature in folio 120a of the prince’s masterpiece—using both a term normally reserved for calligraphy (katabahu) and a term exclusively associated with painting (mansawir)—may mean that Shaykh-Muhammād was explicitly proclaiming a dual role in this Freer Jami illustration as both the writer of the ivān inscription and the painter of the illustration.

Let us assume for a moment that Shaykh-Muhammād did paint the scene of The Infant Witness Testifies to Yūsuf’s Innocence. What are the stylistic characteristics of this illustration, and how do they compare with the style of other works signed by Shaykh-Muhammād?

Folio 120a reads essentially as a theatrical composition, a kind of suspended tableau-vivant with, as suggested above, Zulaykhā’s palace acting as a backdrop for the performers in the foreground. The “stage set” is almost perfectly symmetrical, balanced around a central ivān flanked by two wings, each punctuated by similar architectural elements, including a window opening from which a woman leans outward to look down at the scene unfolding on the terrace below. The symmetry of the upper part of the composition even extends to the arrangement of the tree branches rising up from behind the facade and to the placement of the text blocks in the upper right and left corners.

The figures on the palace terrace are also disposed in more-or-less symmetrical groupings: the ‘azīz and the standard bearer stand within the frame of the central ivān, the two women and two couriers align with the ivān’s right frame and the palace’s right wing, and Yūsuf and the two escort guards occupy the equivalent position at the left. All this is not to say that the illustration consists of a completely rigid compositional orientation. Subtle breaks in the general symmetry and rectilinearity occur, for instance, on the left side of the scene where the building and the lead guard project slightly into the margin, breaking the rulings that delineate the other sides of the composition. The staggered placement of the figures on the terrace also provides variety, while the ‘azīz’s backward-leaning stance and diagonal staff (an angle continued by his turban ṭūj) indicate the overall movement of the figures toward the left.

With the exception of the three guards, the actors in this drama are tall, slim, flat-chested, sloped-shouldered, and long-lined. The outer contours of their bodies (actually their clothes) are outlined in dark curving lines, which enhance the slightly swayed pose of the figures’ lower extremities and the outward “flip” of their garments toward the right. Yūsuf, the ‘azīz, and the two courtiers have long faces and necks; the faces of the four women are much rounder. All these figures have slanting eyes, composed of two lines that do not meet at the outer corners, with high dots for pupils, and arched eyebrows rendered in a prominent V-shape. Their noses are thin and straight, and their lips are of the “bee-stung” variety, emphasized by a notch in the chin. Ears come in for more unusual treatment; they look like a flap of skin pinned back with a stud. The profile pose of certain hand gestures, including that of Yūsuf, the pair of women, and the pair of courtiers, is also noteworthy from an anatomical perspective: thin thumb held straight out, long forefinger curved outward, and the middle finger raised up behind. Yūsuf also holds up his ring finger. On the other three figures, only the joints of the ring and pinkie fingers are visible.

The three guards are smaller and stockier in stature than the other figures and have rounder faces, shorter necks, wider eyes, flatter eyebrows, and broader noses. The central guard grasping onto Yūsuf has particularly distinctive facial features, including “inverted” eyebrows (that is, they curve downward) and a long, bumpy nose that looks as if it had been broken in a fight. Like the ‘azīz, the guards are bearded, although their beards and mustaches are not as full and well-trimmed.

The difference in social status conveyed by the
varied appearance of the guards and the other figures in the scene also extends to the clothing. The four upper-class males (Yūsuf, the 'azīz, and the two courtiers) wear the brightly colored and elegant attire typical of Safavid-period painting, including long robes with long sleeves that either button down the front or cross over the front to fasten at the side. The 'azīz and the right-hand courtier also have short-sleeved cloaks over their robes, and the courtier has, in addition, partially pulled up his robe to reveal a gold-patterned underskirt. All four men are cinched at the waist with either belts or sashes; the left-hand courtier has a pen-knife dangling from his sash. All four also wear the standard Safavid twelve-gore turban wrapped high around a cap with a projecting colored baton (known as the tāj-i Haydari) and, in the case of the two courtiers, further embellished with gold chains and brushes. Finally, they are shod in boots with black slippers and brightly colored uppers. The women wear similar long and layered garments with loosely flowing (as opposed to cinched) cloaks, robes that fasten at the top and open down the middle, underskirts, pantaloons (as opposed to high boots), and black slippers. Their head coverings are more distinctive, consisting of several pieces of cloth held in place with a kind of fillet and, in two cases (including the woman leaning out of the left-hand window), ornamented with long feathers.

The guards wear shorter, less elaborate versions of this standard attire. The standard bearer offers the greatest sartorial contrast, with his robe largely unbuttoned over his chest and his legs and feet totally bare beneath pedal-pusher-length pantaloons. Both he and the guard closest to Yūsuf wear cloth turbans wound low and wide, with the loose end flapping from the top. Instead of a turban, the lead guard has on a floppy, furry cap. And whereas accessories are at a minimum among the other male figures, these three characters are equipped with swords and other implements that are clearly meant for serious business.

One small but noteworthy feature characterizes the dress, whether full-length or to the knees, of both males and females, except for the mother holding the infant witness, in this scene. Just above the hem line, the right edge of each garment opening or slit flips back in a kind of tall, narrow triangular fold. This allows the garment's lining to show: white in most instances and dark pink in the case of the woman at the far right. Both the 'azīz's yellow robe and patterned cloak have such turned-back flips, including a long fold at the cloak's edge. Finally, the pronounced slit in the green cloak of the right-hand courtier reveals what appears to be a fur lining. The regularity of these flips, and especially the repetition of the white lining in the six figures ranged across the terrace, gives a kind of staccato rhythm to the scene, albeit in a rather minor key.

Folio 120a is dominated by bright tones of red, orange, and yellow, with accents of blue and green. This vivid palette is employed primarily in the figures' clothing and in the ivān decoration. By contrast, the architecture itself, including the brick façade and tile terrace, is painted in muted tones, coloristically reinforcing the palace's role as a foil for the Jāmī narrative.

The recorded corpus of Shaykh-Muḥammad's signed paintings and tinted drawings, to which we may now compare The Infant Witness Testifies to Yūsuf's Innocence, consists exclusively of figure studies made for insertion in albums. The best-known and most expansive composition is the Camel and Its Keeper, also belonging to the Freer Gallery (37.21), which Shaykh-Muḥammad painted in 964/1556-57, as he has recorded in the two square panels that punctuate the surrounding inscription frame (fig. 5). Like folio 120a, the scene is deliberately although not rigorously balanced, with the high-horizoned landscape, rendered in pale colors, serving as a flat backdrop for the two protagonists standing in the foreground. Furthermore, the painting has a rather static quality, with virtually no action. But the level of tension is much higher, as the cameleer pauses in his spinning to gaze with wrinkled brow at the large beast towering above him. Although tethered, the camel gives sign of being ready to break free: he raises his right, chained leg, arches his neck, and stiffens his entire body, including the tail. His bared teeth, lolling tongue, and upward-piercing eye also suggest a creature with the intention of creating trouble. Little wonder that its keeper appears concerned! Whatever the extent of the cameleer's consternation, his face
bears a strong resemblance to that of the guard who holds onto Yūsuf in folio 120a; the inverted bend of the eyebrows and the crooked nose of the two figures are particularly comparable. Likewise, the cameleer’s brown furry cap is similar to the one worn by the lead guard in folio 120a. On the other hand, the keeper is tall and slim like Yūsuf, the ‘aziz, and the two courtiers, although not as swayed in pose or as sloped in shoulder. His robe, fastened down the front with gold buttons, has the same cut as the one worn by the ‘aziz. Furthermore, it has the same outward “flip” to the side, and the front split of his robe folds back at the hemline to show the white lining as in all the folio 120a figures.

On the basis of these specific correlations, it could be argued that Shaykh-Muhammad designed the *mise en scène* and painted a figure or two in *The Infant Witness Testifies to Yūsuf’s Innocence*. The difference in the overall feel of the two works, however, and especially their emotional “charge,” does not really lend weight to the argument that the artist who so prominently proclaimed his authorship of the album painting is the same as the artist who tried so hard to conceal his involvement in the Freer Jāmi illustration.

A series of single figure studies signed by Shaykh-Muhammad provides an additional check of the artist’s style *vis-à-vis* the Freer Jāmi composition. Of particular relevance are three kneeling youths (Musée du Louvre, K3427; Topkapı Sarayi Müzesi, H. 2166, folio 9b; Freer Gallery of Art, 37.23) and a portly gentleman leaning on a staff (Topkapı Sarayi Müzesi, H. 2161, folio 172a). As with the *Camel and Its Keeper*, these works share certain facial features (notably the youths’ eyes, eyebrows, and ears) and sartorial accessories (such as the youths’ pen-knives and the gentleman’s staff) that have counterparts in folio 120a. But again, the comparisons are selective and subtle, and they do not provide the kind of match on which a convincing attribution can be made.

In the final analysis, the identification of Shaykh-Muhammad as the painter of folio 120a can be given only a qualified endorsement. His minute signature next to the *īvān* inscription thus seems to have been
deliberately placed to signify that it was precisely this part of the scene that he executed.

But why did Shaykh-Muḥammad bother signing his name at all and in such an inconspicuous fashion? While small, his other known signatures, for instance on the three kneeling youths, are relatively easy to find and perfectly legible. It may be that Shaykh-Muḥammad was trying to emulate his colleague ʿAbdullāh al-Shirāzī and perhaps even to go ʿAbdullāh one better by writing his own signature smaller and within a square. Or perhaps he was playing hide-and-seek with Sultān Ibrāhīm Mirzā, taunting his patron to find his name—like a sixteenth-century counterpart of Al Hirschfeld in The New York Times. He may not even have told the prince and left his minute signature a secret, waiting for the moment when Sultān Ibrāhīm Mirzā would spy the name and let out a great eureka of astonishment at the artist’s cleverness.

Whether indulging in one-upmanship or intending unexpected delight, Shaykh-Muḥammad undoubtedly wanted his surprise to be discovered eventually. We can only speculate how, when, and even whether the discovery took place in the artist’s lifetime. That it (re)occurred over four centuries later confirms two art-historical truisms: that the presence of a great artist endures, even when his specific contributions remain elusive, and that a masterpiece such as Sultān Ibrāhīm Mirzā’s Haft awrang reveals itself very, very slowly. □
Notes


2. The identification of the Freer Jāmi artists, and particularly the attribution of the manuscript’s twenty-eight compositions to specific Safavid court artists, has been a dominant theme of traditional scholarship and scholarly discussions of the Freer Jāmi. For a review of this approach, see Simpson, “Haft awrang,” appendix B, pp. 365–68.


4. For ‘ Abdullāh’s life and career and contribution to the Freer Jāmi, see Simpson, “Haft awrang,” 300–307, including a close-up reproduction of the signature on folio 84b (fig. 203). For the artist’s œuvre, including other works with hidden signatures, see “Haft awrang,” appendix E, pp. 420–21. ‘ Abdullāh’s signature in the Yūsuf u Zulaykha title piece was first noticed by Priscilla P. Soucek and discussed in “Abdallāh Shirāzī,” Encyclopaedia Iranica 1 (1985): 205–7.


10. Cramped in the corner and with its four letters appearing quickly formed, the name Muḥammad is more difficult to make out than the three other words in the artist’s signature. See Simpson, “Haft awrang,” 141; also Marianna Shreve Simpson, Persian Poetry, Painting and Patronage: Illustrations in a Sixteenth-Century Masterpiece (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 41.

11. Signature formulations have not been frequently studied. For a few remarks see Simpson, “Haft awrang,” 252.


13. This frame, also containing cartouches with four verses, is part of the sheet of paper on which the composition is painted; thus the two panels containing Shaykh-Muhammad’s name (bottom panel) and date (upper panel) can be accepted as by the artist’s hand and not a subsequent addition. The four verses relate to the painting, as demonstrated by Chahryar Adle; see Simpson, “Haft awrang,” 312.


Book Reviews


This book has been long in preparation, parts of it dating to Oleg Grabar’s 1957 seminal article on the Dome of the Rock and even earlier to his doctoral thesis of 1953. Grabar defines his book as “a reconstruction of [his] own searches for Jerusalem’s past” and “also an essay on the rather unusual range of ways in which the city has been and can be interpreted.” In other words, the book not only encapsulates the author’s lifetime involvement with Jerusalem but also presents the changing modalities of architectural interpretation in the second half of the twentieth century, including his own, as they affected the study of early Islamic Jerusalem. Indeed, in reading this book, one can trace the author’s own development as an Orientalist and art historian, from his early foundations in the Annales school, to his ground-breaking epigraphic studies, to his more recent involvement in semiotics and poststructuralist theory. Fortunately, the methodological conversion is never complete, and Grabar demonstrates an uncanny ability to apply method to the task at hand, thereby giving structure and a sense of development to the book and its various chapters.

In his typically gracious manner, Grabar acknowledges his indebtedness to numerous scholars—young, old, and long-deceased—from a wide variety of disciplines and with varying degrees of specialization. Indeed, Jerusalem has had more than its share of meticulous archaeological and historical studies, detailed and full of new discoveries, as well as glossy picture books, with grand gestures and little significance. Grabar situates his study in this vast middle ground, once again demonstrating his masterful ability to create a work of synthesis, whose erudition and sophistication are accentuated by a sense of compassion for his subject.

The book consists of a methodological and historiographic introduction and four chapters that deal with the Christian and early Muslim city, the Dome of the Rock, the Haram enclosure, and the Fatimid city. But despite its long temporal range and wide geographical extent, it is primarily a book about Umayyad Jerusalem—even the Haram enclosure—framed by one chapter that provides the historical and topographical setting and another that describes tenth- and eleventh-century restorations of the sanctuary and discusses prevailing interpretations of its main monuments.

In many respects, therefore, the Haram enclosure is a book within the book, with the Dome of the Rock as the focus of investigation and point of departure for various detailed discussions of topography, architecture, ornament, and epigraphy. Grabar begins his discussion with the inscriptions of the Dome of the Rock, which, despite their visually inaccessible location and nearly illegible script, still constitute some of the longest monumental inscriptions in Islamic architecture and the earliest known Qur’anic writing, predating the first parchment fragments by about two centuries. He concludes that these Qur’anic passages follow a pattern previously established by Christianity, or even Judaism, that includes prayer, praise, revelation, and salvation. Following a traditional mode of religious expression and avoiding the more anti-Christian allegorical and symbolic representations of Sassanian and Byzantine crowns around the Rock, or the showy architecture and decoration of the Dome, Grabar seems to tone down his earlier polarized, largely anti-Christian, interpretation of these features, redolent, as he puts it, with the confrontational attitudes so often encountered “during the decades of the Cold War.” “In the relatively more irenic times of today,” he continues “it is easier to posit competition without necessary conquest or even assumption of superiority as a more accurate interpretation.” While no one can fault Grabar for his mental agility or his honesty in admitting the
impact of the prevailing political atmosphere, such a relativistic, even postmodern, stance does inevitably validate various politically motivated interpretations with little concern for historical objectivity.

Of course, any vision is by definition circumscribed, and even Grabar’s comprehensive, nuanced, and deeply compassionate vision of the Dome of the Rock and the Haram cannot escape certain positive parameters that give it shape and coherence while placing other possibilities outside its boundary. Grabar keeps the gates of interpretation open but circumscribes his discourse within Byzantine and Jewish modes of expression. Thus, the Dome of the Rock is variously interpreted as a recreation of the Temple of Solomon, as “a monument to Muslim eschatological thought through the remembrance of God’s creation,” or as Paradise at the end of time. While all these interpretations are quite plausible and are in fact supported by internal and external evidence, they all demonstrate a reticence to acknowledge the rootedness of the Dome and the Rock in pre-Islamic or early Islamic Arabic practices. A great deal is said about the Dome, very little about the Rock. The connection between the Dome of the Rock and the Ka‘ba is barely discussed despite the fact that, according to Grabar, the early Arab shrine “has been mentioned more than once as a parallel to the Dome of the Rock.” Indeed, both shrines venerate holy rocks that were anointed in sacred rituals; both are centrally located within an open area; both are heavily decorated, one with tapestries, the other with tapestries in stone; and both contain inscriptions. Is it not possible, even likely, that the early Muslims would have carried with them the image of Ka‘ba to Jerusalem, recreating it there as a more developed and elaborate shrine? Could the Ka‘ba not be construed as the mnemonic and emotive focus of the early Muslims, recreated in Jerusalem and elsewhere for much the same reasons that Jews recreated the Heavenly Jerusalem wherever they went?

The last chapter, on the Fatimids’ restorations and interpretations of the Haram area, sheds an entirely new light on these little-studied restorations of the Haram and the accretion of later meanings to its monuments. A succession of Fatimid caliphs enclosed the Haram within porticos and monumental arched entrances and, under the reign of Caliph al-Zahir (1021–36), completed an important restoration of the Aqsa mosque. The Haram was thereby converted into “an orderly sequence of sacred and secular events and memories,” becoming an important center for Muslim commemoration and pilgrimage. Interestingly, the Persian traveler Nasir-i Khusraw (ca. 1047) refers to it as a hazira, which in Iran generally indicates a funerary enclosure centered on the shrine of a Shi‘i saint. Grabar concludes convincingly that this enhanced piety, in which the Prophet’s Ascension plays a central role, is accompanied by loss of the original meaning of the space. “A memory has been lost, . . . but a space exists, which because of its physical presence, its esthetic quality, and its location, demands an explanation, if no longer a justification.”

The book is rather lavishly, though unevenly, illustrated with color photographs and computer-generated images. Nuseibeh’s photographs of the Haram, which are more fully published in a companion volume to this one, go a long way toward providing a visual anchor for the book. They are uniformly sharp and clear, with an inner radiance that beautifully conveys the brilliance of the golden mosaics. While this kind of photography works exceptionally well for the mosaic details, it is slightly less successful for general interior views, where the equalized lighting deprives the spaces of some of their mystery.

The computer-generated images, on the other hand, are a travesty. With their jet-black sky, red and orange walls, and green buildings with yellow domes, they produce garish, desolate, and otherworldly landscapes that resemble outmoded computer games. They do not simulate any topographic, spatial, or volumetric effects that could not have been more convincingly conveyed through conventional graphic means. Indeed, perhaps what is most jarring about them is precisely their lack of convention: they look nothing like the normatively “neutral” representations of three-dimensional objects. At best, these images should have been stored on a CD-ROM, tucked away in the jacket. As they are, they detract from the enormous assets of the book, and the author would have been far better served with traditional line drawings.

YASSER TABBA

This is the work of a mature scholar. Its author has taught, traveled, and thought a great deal about medieval Islamod and its architecture. It is high praise in my mind to say that Professor Tabbaa, while not stinting the complexities, contradictions, and lacunae of his subject matter, has written a work clear in its structure, thoughtful in its engagement of many issues and types of evidence, and nonobfuscatory in its prose, making a book that I, for one, will recommend to undergraduate and graduate students alike.

The author calls the contents of his book “interpretive essays” (p. 2) and a “series of essays” (p. 6). Whether considered chapters or cross-referential essays, the eight sections center on and work out of (both chronologically and geographically) buildings built in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries under the Ayyubid dynasty. The Ayyubids are most famous as the dynasty founded by Saladin (d. 1193), but most of these monuments postdate his bellicose reign, having been erected during the relative peace and commercial prosperity of the first half of the thirteenth century.

The eight chapters/essays of the book are bunched under three headings. After a brief historical introduction and a consideration of the structure of society and of patronage under the Ayyubids entitled “Contexts,” Tabbaa divides essays examining his architectural corpus into two unequal sections. The first is entitled “Constructions of Power,” the second and longer section “Constructions of Piety.”

Thus, the major consideration of the section on “Constructions of Power” is, as might be expected, the citadel at Aleppo, perhaps the best-known medieval Islamic citadel thanks to its spectacular location and the excellent preservation of its gatehouse and fortifications. In fact, after the spectacle of the citadel as seen from the city below and passage through the elaborate, twisting entranceway, today’s visitor finds the interior of the citadel a puzzling and largely unrewarding space, poked with excavation trenches as well as small-scale and partially restored buildings.

To relate the citadel to the city below, Tabbaa draws on his knowledge of texts and inscriptions, linking it through the area below the citadel (taht al-qal‘a) with the rest of the city. Through the skillful reading of contemporaneous sources, he illuminates the practices and rituals that represented governance to both rulers and ruled and their physical expression in gates, ways, and buildings. The fortification and change in orientation of the citadel are linked to larger urban developments under the master builder of Ayyubid rulers of Aleppo, al-Zahir Ghazi (d. 1216).

The lion’s share of the book, however, is devoted to the architectural patronage of pietistic monuments, especially shrines and madrasas. Here Tabbaa deftly situates the shift of patronage from the mosques of the early Islamic period to these smaller, more numerous monuments in the context of the Sunni-Shi’i and Islamic-Crusader conflicts that preoccupied the medieval Levant. He shows how building became a sign of piety and explores how the (largely anonymous) masons and craftsmen of Aleppo, in a happy confluence of patronage and talent, responded by creating some of the most soberly beautiful buildings in the medieval Mediterranean.

Formal aspects of that building are not neglected. These essayistic chapters themselves harbor mini-excursuses on the startling design development of stone muqarnas in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Syria, on fountains, pools, and the use of water, and on another hallmark of Aleppine architecture in this period, the use of bichrome or polychrome marble decoration. The aesthetic that allowed for the sobriety of unadorned ashlar limestone surfaces to be punctuated by coloristic and sculptural displays, ones integrating decoration and structure in precise and proportionate technical mastery, is discussed and documented by photographs and drawings.

In this reviewer’s opinion, the best of Tabbaa’s excursuses, along with an earlier one on the medieval palace, is on the madrasa, the medieval Sunni Islamic educational institution over which so much ink has been spilled. He is fortunate here to be paired with some of the best (and earliest) surviving buildings of this type. In his examination of their situation, patronage, and use, he summarizes decades of scholarship concisely. More tellingly for Aleppo, he discusses the rise and spread of these Sunni “colleges”
in relation to the still-large Shīʿī population of the city, as well as the construction and prestige of Shīʿī shrines in Aleppo.

Although restrained by a typological approach to discussing mosque, shrine, and madrasa separately, Tabbaa’s separate chapters constantly refer to each other. In a final chapter, he breaks free of these self-imposed constraints to relate inscriptive content, built form, patronage, and piety in the Firdaws madrasa/khānqāh (1235). This building, justly celebrated as a masterpiece of medieval architecture, is shown by Tabbaa to be a Sufi convent by virtue of a long courtyard inscription that hitherto has not been properly analyzed.

As part of his fair-minded and comprehensive consideration of textual and physical evidence, Tabbaa deals with a large array of material, published and unpublished, built and un/rebuilt. Be that as it may, the book may be seen as a dialogue primarily with just one source, the shade of Ernst Herzfeld, the polyglot and polymath scholar of, among other things, Islamic architecture. Herzfeld’s Inscriptions et monuments d’Alepp (3 vols., 1954–56) and his essays in the 1940s in Annales islamologiques are parried, praised, and chided regularly on these pages; his drawings are reproduced; his arguments are held up to light. With the addition of scholars like Sauvaget (1941) and Gaube and Wirth (1984), who wrote on its urban development, Aleppo has been fortunate to find assayers of its value, but here it is Herzfeld’s influence that is most evident.

It is unfair, perhaps, both to praise and to chide an author for his thoroughness and evenhandedness, but in this reader’s opinion, there is just a whiff of rustiness in this book. One wishes that the author could have shaken off the shackles of typology and filiation and aired his own voice more on issues like the relation among form, decoration, and meaning, the intent of and audience for inscriptions, and patterns of patronage, among others.

Another minor criticism concerns the context of these monuments. The author no doubt thought that, with Gaube and Wirth’s book relatively recently published, he could address larger issues of the urban history of Aleppo glancingly. This reader, selfishly, would have liked to know more of the “contexts” of these buildings within the growth of the Ayyubid city; the efflorescence (literal and figurative) of the suburb of al-Maqamat, site of so many extraordinary buildings discussed here, the relationship of buildings to one another and the urban and physical landscape, and the elite and holy quarters and buildings (like the Maḥbāḥ al-ʿAjami) to patterns of development of the city as a whole.

Yasser Tabbaa has written a book that will cast its own shadow, creating excitement and anxiety in its turn for future students of medieval Islamdom. In this book he has rightfully chosen to analyze and celebrate a set of buildings extraordinary not for its size or flashiness but for excellence of construction, innovative design, subtlety, and variety. In his choice of subject matter he has been true; this book serves to turn a critical eye on these buildings and the city they served and celebrated.

SCOTT REDFORD


Like other volumes in the series devoted to cataloging the wide-ranging collection of Nasser D. Khalili, this volume on calligraphy is beautifully designed and produced, as well as richly documented with exquisite color photographs. The photographs present the works at their very best, as forceful statements of the aesthetic power of beautiful writing and of the heights to which it rose within the Islamic world.

The book’s organization is broadly typological and not chronological. Calligraphies are subdivided according to rough contextual/functional, and often also formal, distinctions. After an all-too-brief introduction, the catalogue proper begins with a section on albums assembled from mufradāt exercises.
(literally “single, detached letters,” understood as exercises beginning with single letters followed by their combined forms); then follow sections on karâlamâ and siyâh mashq (practice sheets); ijażám (calligrapher’s licenses); hilyâhs (“verbal images” of the Prophet Muḥammad); albums of muraqqâ‘ât; qîtâ‘ h (calligraphies composed of short poetic or prose texts); kalâps, lekhâs (pounces and “framed inscriptions or pictures,” respectively), and the art of composition; ghubâr (miniature calligraphy); découpage (cut-out paper calligraphy); and golden leaves. Each of these sections is prefaced by a short essay in which basic information is supplied: technical issues, terminology, and some historical background.

Between these short essays are the catalogued materials. The object entries include extensive descriptive notes, translations of selected portions of each specimen, and pertinent bibliographic apparatus. Absent, however, is any information on provenance, which would augment our understanding of the materials’ origins and previous owners. Indeed, one might also have hoped for a more consistent discussion of the physical condition and context of the calligraphies. Occasional references do offer broad suggestions of the time when a piece was incorporated into an album, the date of margins, or when illumination may have been executed on and around the calligraphy. Given that many of the materials constitute the traces of a very tangible history of collecting in diverse forms (an ongoing history in whose modern moment Khalîlî himself participates), discussion of the material could have provided a perfect venue for an extensive consideration of collecting practices. Safwat does give brief synopses here and there, most notably in the essays titled “Albums of Mufradât Exercises” and “Albums of Muraqqâ‘ât,” where he touches on the subject of collecting, as required by the subject matter. His discussion of one of the earliest album (muraqqâ‘) collections is not without some inaccuracies, however. For example, in the discussion of album H. 2310, assembled for Bâysunghur b. Shâhrûkh b. Timûr between ca. 1427 and 1433 (Topkâpî Palace Museum library, Istanbul), he notes that it contains calligraphies by Yâqût al-Musta‘simî, his pupils, “together with later 14th and 15th century masters.” But this is not the case. This album collection is defined by pedagogy; calligraphies by Yâqût are joined by those of his “six pupils.” No example by a fifteenth-century master is included, making it distinct from other Timurid-period albums that connect early fifteenth-century masters to a pedagogical sequence (siyâh: literally “chain”; or isnâd, literally “chain of authorities”) leading back to Yâqût. In a note Safwat signals pages published by Şevket Rado (Türk Hattâtlar [Istanbul, 1984]), which he claims are reproduced from album H. 2310. In fact, album H. 2310 does not presently hold any of these pages.1 Paradoxically, Safwat’s larger discussion on album making is more confident when dealing with albums assembled from paintings, drawings, and calligraphies. He hesitates on the chronology of assembling exclusively calligraphic albums. The tradition of making such calligraphy albums continued into the sixteenth century throughout Safavid Iran as well as Ottoman Turkey.

The catalogue entries are readable and full of treasures, albeit hidden—alas, the problem of integrating catalogue with critical essays seems insurmountable. Here the author reveals his extensive research of secondary sources. Perhaps most valuable among the readings are those of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish scholarly publications, a rich tradition that Safwat draws on to flesh out historical detail; especially useful is the biographic tradition recorded in Turkey throughout the Ottoman period, which is incorporated into the secondary literature. Limited, or circumscribed, linguistic competence has tended to occlude this secondary literature from scholars in the wider field. Both reader and specialist gain a more comprehensive understanding of a range of research accomplished within the field of Islamic art. The catalogue ends with two appendices, by Julian Raby (on “The Nayrizi Tradition: Naskh in Safavid and Qajar Iran”) and Mohamed Zakariya (“A Compendium of Arabic Scripts”).

Reflecting the substance of this calligraphic portion of Khalîlî’s collection, and also the author’s personal interests, is the focus on calligraphers’ practices and the mechanisms that they used for transmitting knowledge and technical “know-how.” Such a focus is all too rare in the study of Islamic calligraphy, since the concern of the art-historical literature with broad cultural and historical issues often displaces an emphasis on the materiality of the works. Despite publication of numerous technical treatises
and other primary sources composed by calligraphers, what such texts could offer with regard to "reconstructable" processes, as well as the physical remains of the process of writing on paper, remains unexplored and rarely imagined. Through the catalogue the reader begins to understand a wide variety of calligraphies ("calligraphic genres")—demonstrating, among other things, different degrees of finish—and how each one might be connected to a particular functional context or related to processes of training, practicing, or teaching (e.g., the role played by the mufradāt). Occasionally, Safwat's description of calligraphy opens up for the nonspecialist some sense of the thrilling engagement between viewer and object, as an approximation of an aesthetic experience that conveys in words the swelling then thinning shapes of letters, the movement of words across the page, a sense of weight and rhythm.

In his foreword, Khalili discusses Safwat's approach and emphasis, commenting: "This unique arrangement of the material tells the story of Islamic calligraphy from the point of view of the practitioner of art, rather than that of the Western art historian" (p. 8). This strong claim is reinforced by the catalogue's title, which at least implies comprehensive coverage. If we examine Safwat's text alone, he does emphasize the role played by the practitioner, and coupled with an aesthetic sensitivity to calligraphy, he makes a forceful and original contribution. But there remains an underlying problem that turns on the question of history. It goes without saying that different people bring varied experiences and bodies of knowledge to bear on their subject matter. Khalili's statement implies that the practitioner tells a different story from the historian (understood, presumably, as theoretician). Indeed, this is true, and we will return to it below. Moreover, Safwat's catalogue and the collection that it documents are unable to present the history of Islamic calligraphy as seamlessly or as fully as is claimed. Three reasons might account for this. First, the editorial decision was made to divide "calligraphic genres" associated with the calligrapher's practice of training and teaching from other products of the calligrapher—for example, the first four volumes of the Nasser D. Khalili collection, which document Qur'āns dating to between the Abbasid and modern periods. Second, this portion of the collection is dominated by objects made between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries in Ottoman Turkey. And third, the primary sources used in this volume focus on an extensive literature from the Ottoman art tradition. Ultimately, a history of Islamic calligraphy is told, but through an Ottoman filter or point of view, dictated partly by the subset of the Nasser D. Khalili Collection documented in this volume but also by the nature of sources used.

Some examples might help to highlight these problems. Many of the "calligraphic genres" discussed in the volume represent the formalization, even institutionalization, of the practice of calligraphy within an Ottoman cultural milieu. Examples include the ijāsā, a certificate serving as testimony of a student's achievement and granting him/her the right to practice independently, and the mufradāt album, exercises of single and connected letters bound into an album (usually horizontal). Safwat's discussion does not entirely clarify whether comparable practices are found in other regional traditions, in parallel or transformed varieties. This result reinforces a problematic, because ahistorical, impression of timeless and unchanging practices in Islamic calligraphy. Such a synoptic view of the tradition has been held, paradoxically, by practitioners who seek to connect themselves with the historical masters of Islamic calligraphy. To quote Safwat, "The mufradāt albums give physical form to a chain of transmission which stretches from earliest times to the present" (p. 13). Genealogy always plays an ideological role, and thus the practitioner also has constructed a story, much like any (Western?) art historian.

These issues notwithstanding, Safwat's catalogue is a welcome addition to the study of calligraphy. One hopes that it will help to set a new objective: a scholarship that sees calligraphy from diverse methodological perspectives and unites them into a more fully integrated picture.

NOTE


DAVID J. ROXBURGH

Matthews’s important comprehensive study of third-millennium glyptic will serve both as a firm point of reference for the documentary evidence he has assembled, especially from Tell Brak in northeastern Syria, and as a stimulating springboard for questions of chronology and methodology. In addition to the introduction and conclusions, the volume is divided into three major sections: “Chronology” (II), “Glyptic of Syria in the Early Bronze Age” (III), “Glyptic of Tell Brak” (IV). As a background to this major study of the Tell Brak seals and sealings and the wider picture of third-millennium glyptic in Syria, Matthews tackles the thorny questions of third-millennium chronology in Syria based on the ceramics and glyptic sequence of southern Mesopotamia and their links with Syria (p. 5). From this platform he takes up the glyptic of Early Bronze Syria, starting with the Uruk tradition and its influence on later styles in Syria. Next he discusses what he terms native Syrian Early Bronze glyptic, followed by a section on the Early Dynastic and Akkadian glyptic in Syria. The primary interest of the volume is in the last section: the seals and seal impressions excavated in Brak during the seasons conducted by Max Mallowan (1937 and 1938) and subsequently by David and Joan Oates (1976–93). Since these campaigns the Brak excavations have continued to yield seal impressions; the major examples from the excavations of Roger J. Matthews were published in Iraq 56, 57, and 58, but these could only be utilized indirectly in Donald Matthews’s volume.

The major portion of the volume focuses on the excavated seals and seal impressions from Brak. The corpus numbers nearly 800 objects, including 577 individual seal designs (p. 173). For some of the categories there is a close correspondence between original seals and the number of seal designs. So, for instance, in the Archaic and Fired Steatite categories there are five seals and seven and eight (respectively) individual designs from seal impressions. For most periods there is a much higher proportion of seal designs from impressions than from cylinder seals themselves. For the three largest categories the proportions are 1:10 for the Early Dynastic corpus (total 105), 1:40 for the Brak Style (total 83), 1:6 for the Akkadian period (total 134).

The section on chronology includes a masterful review of the literature on excavated pottery, which the author combines with glyptic data to establish his chronology. The numerous problems inherent in the data are recognized by the author but may perhaps be articulated more specifically as follows. For many sites the exact stratigraphic context of the pottery as published is uncertain, either because it was not clear to the excavators or because it was not published in a form that allowed the reader to analyze this type of information. In many cases, while the general stratigraphy is known, the context is not. For example, in excavations of step trenches or narrow exposures, neither the wider stratigraphic context nor the functional context of the floors can be determined. Another major problem is that of regional differences; for much of third-millennium Syria, regional differences have not been assessed either in the geographical or in the chronological sense (an exception is the work on ceramics by Mazzoni in BASOR 4 [1985]). Therefore it is not clear whether a ceramic sequence from well-stratified contexts reflects functional spatial (intrarsite and/or intersite differences) or chronological differences. Many other problems are associated with the ceramic corpus, not the least of which is the lack of standardization in describing wares. Matthews certainly is aware of these problems, as shown in this volume (see especially pp. 4–5) and by his remarks in a subsequent article on the Early Dynastic–Akkadian transition (Iraq 59 [1997]: 1–7). In this article he gives precedence, for chronological determination of the Akkadian period, to the glyptic found in the period: “I will suggest that the Akkadian pottery should be calibrated by ultimate reference to the glyptic sequence” (Iraq 59:1).

But relying on glyptic evidence for chronology poses special problems. Seal cutters can easily travel since their tools and raw materials are relatively small and portable. They can thus follow the vagaries of their markets, taking with them of course their own training, technical expertise, and creative sensitivity.
What of the tastes of the local market, which can be significant in the case of elite patrons (see the Urkesh examples cited below)? In addition, glyptic studies poses problems with respect to regional styles, longevity of styles due to purely local factors, and the chronology of specific seal designs proposed by various art historians. A wide variety of seal styles can be in use at the same time. This is certainly true for the stratified seal impressions from Brak and Urkesh. (Readers of this journal will note similar problems creatively addressed in the work of Root and Garrison on the seal impressions on the Persepolis Fortification tablets; see for instance *Ars Orientalis* 21 [1991]: 1–29.) In addition, Syria in the Early Dynastic and Akkadian periods developed major stylistic centers of seal cutting, which Matthews includes under the categories of “Chuera Style” (pp. 115–17), “Brak Style” (pp. 117–20, 136–37), and “Ebla Style” (pp. 120–21). Now there is also the Urkesh Dynastic Style.

One point where my assessment of the evidence would differ concerns the reciprocal importance of Syria and Mesopotamia. From the very beginning of his volume, Matthews stresses the role of Mesopotamia as the primary stimulus: “The dominant factor in the history of Early Bronze Age glyptic in Syria is the stylistic influence of Mesopotamia. This was very strong at some periods, and weaker at others; Syria did not exert an influence back on Mesopotamia” (p. 2). And later in that same paragraph: “When the Syrians of the later third millennium adopted the Early Dynastic style instead of developing their own traditions, they were expressing something profound about their society and its dependence on foreign symbolism.” Certainly Syria participated in the broader cultural milieu of third-millennium Syro-Mesopotamia, but to negate Syrian creativity in the glyptic sphere misses the beginnings of a northern style that profoundly affected the later art produced in the north (see below). A case in point is Matthews’s “Brak Style,” which he characterizes as one of the “Syrian derivatives of the Early Dynastic style” (p. 10). Subsequently he states: “It used the same elements as southern ED IIIA seals, but with quite different principles of composition” (p. 136). A little later on the same page: “We may speculate that a few seals of this kind were imported for a Syrian workshop in ED IIIA, perhaps as part of an administrative reform which utilized southern models, and that the local craftsmen gave them their own interpretation.”

I would argue instead that Syria provided the setting for strong glyptic traditions, which are neither secondary nor provincial. Here I will only look briefly at two such examples: the “Brak Style,” which carried over into the Nuzi period, and the Urkesh Dynastic Style. In my opinion it is clear that what Matthews terms the Brak Style was a very important northern style in use during the Akkadian period. I argue elsewhere that it was the most important northern style, which subsequently had a profound influence on northern art in the Nuzi period and later (see Kelly-Buccellati, *Nuzi Studies* 8). Brak Style seals and similar seals from Urkesh and elsewhere show continuity with the later Nuzi seal corpus in the following elements: 1) the small size of many of the seals, 2) frequency of double register compositions, 3) use of borders both animal and geometric, 4) discrete heads, 5) the guilloche, 6) drillings in the field, and 7) some aspects of the so-called Syrian Ritual scene. In addition, both show a cultivated sensitivity to geometric patterns that is missing in the art of the south. Even given a certain southern influence during the ED III, could not the influence also have gone the other way? In a Mesopotamian-centered world view local craftsmen are not seen to have invented such a style, even though Matthews does admit that they could invent different compositional schemes!

Recently published evidence from our excavations at Urkesh has shown that a new and different iconography and style were invented there to fulfill the dynastic concerns of the ruling Hurrian dynasty (*Archiv für Orientforschung* [1996], 1–32; *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* [1996], 75–100); of course this material was not available to Matthews, but it is pertinent to the larger argument I am advancing). The Urkesh dynastic program as carried out through seals of the queen (Uqnitum) and the king (Tukish) was expressed through a wide variety of iconographic and stylistic inventions. The subtle juxtaposition of the main figures to each other and to a prominent lion figure creates an atmosphere of harmony and power. This extends to the royal children, who are depicted as dependent on, and

The great palaces of the Mughals have been thoroughly stripped of their furnishings, a process starting with Nādir Shāh’s sack of Delhi in 1739 and continuing with dreary regularity until the final collapse of the dynasty in 1858. We see them now as magnificent skeletons, but once they were full of precious fabrics and objects, including pile carpets made in Iran and India that were used to cover the floors of audience halls and pavilions. They were used too in tents and in gardens and were an essential element of life at court. Some existing Rajput palaces still give a sense of the original uses of these magnificent carpets, but even so the overlay of recent history intrudes, and the observer must have a vivid imagination to recreate scenes familiar to us from Mughal and other miniatures and illustrated manuscripts. A recent exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, “Flowers Underfoot: Indian Carpets of the Mughal Era” (27 November 1997–1 March 1998) now is “one with Ninevah and Tyre,” but fortunately Daniel Walker’s publication of the same name is not a conventional catalogue of an ephemeral show, though it includes the complete exhibition checklist (pp. 163–74) of forty-four whole or fragmentary carpets (of about 500 known to survive in collections in Asia, Europe, and North America). Walker’s work goes far beyond the carpets included in the splendid show he curated and provides a comprehensive study that stands on its own.

An admirable aspect of the book is reflected in the title. The author deliberately (and refreshingly) uses the phrase “Mughal era” in its broadest sense (he discusses the choice on p. xvii) to allow him to include carpets made in places other than the imperial workshops (specifically eighteenth-century workshops in the Deccan) and for patrons other than the emperors. In this he echoes a similarly broad-ranging and much neglected classic work on Mughal painting, Ivan Stchoukine’s monumental La peinture indienne à l’époque des grands Moghols (Paris, 1929)
and follows the master’s lead in challenging the easy reliance on dynastic classification and resulting distortion of the role of the patron that pervades the study of Indian art in general and of the arts of the Mughal period (1526–1858) in particular. An interesting and useful introduction (pp. xv–xviii) briefly surveys scholarship on Indian carpets from the late nineteenth century to the present. Walker sensitively traces the slow growth of knowledge on this material and is most generous in acknowledging important work done by his predecessors and colleagues. Indeed, a remarkable characteristic of the book as a whole is that the author is astonishingly ready to remind us of his own errors. His willingness, even eagerness, to point out and correct his previous mistakes earns him the full trust of the reader. The first chapter is a brief historical survey of Mughal India. In chapter 2, Walker presents an overview of the international scope of the carpet trade, reminding us that many of the “Turkey carpets” so prized in Europe were actually of Indian origin, and includes discussions of the famous Girdlers’ (figs. 11 and 62; cat. no. 14) and Frenlin (fig. 49) carpets commissioned by Englishmen in the 1630s and the early 1640s, respectively. A very interesting dimension of this international trade is the export of Indian carpets to Japan in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, principally by the Dutch, the only Europeans allowed to trade with the Japanese after 1640. Carpets owned by the Gion Matsuri Preservation Associations in Kyoto are still used to decorate association floats pulled in processions.

Chapters 3 and 4 are the most important sections of the book. Chapter 3 outlines the technical characteristics of Indian and other pile carpets made between about 1580 and 1800, the terminus ad quem chosen to avoid the increasingly commercialized production of nineteenth-century India. The author boldly attempts to use technical data to distinguish Lahore-made Mughal carpets from those at the other imperial workshop sites of Fatehpur Sikri and Agra (p. 21) and clarifies the differences between Indian and Persian pile weaves. More specific technical information is included in the appendices and the exhibition checklist (pp. 151–74). The fourth chapter is devoted to the carpets themselves, and Walker arranges them clearly by type, date, and place of production. The precise identification and dating of carpets are difficult matters, and the author makes excellent use not only of what limited documentary material there is but also of the evidence of miniature paintings and decorative objects. He is ever aware of the pitfalls of over-reliance on motif analysis in dating.

Even so admirable a work has failings. Chapter 1, “India during the Mughal Era,” is too much a poted history containing some regrettable slips. Walker undermines himself when he states, for example, that the A’in-i Akbari of Abū al-Fażl was “compiled about 1590.” It is clear from the text that the work, a part of the great history of Akbar’s rule, the Akbarnāma, was begun in 1590/91 but not completed until the forty-second year of the reign (1597/98) after seven years of preparation, with additions in 1598/99 after the conquest of Berar. Walker might also better follow John Seyller’s convincing redating of the Victoria and Albert Akbarnāma illustrations to ca. 1586/87, thus predating the text they were used later to illustrate, rather than ca. 1590. The earlier date is supported by physical, inscriptive, and textual evidence and also helps solve the stylistic problem of presumed “archaisms” in the manuscript’s illustrations. These may seem like small points, but precision is important and mistakes gain credence when presented in what is otherwise an authoritative work. And who is responsible for the idiosyncratic use of “folios” on p. xiii when referring to catalogue numbers? Fortunately, these slips do not compromise the major importance of this welcome study of Indian pile carpets, and this beautiful volume will find a significant place in every South Asia library collection.

**Note**


**Daniel Ehnbom**

A comprehensive historiography of the ninth-century Central Javanese temple complex of Prambanan has at last been published. Roy E. Jordaan’s In Praise of Prambanan provides a wealth of information about the temple also known as Candi Loro Jonggrang in this assembled scholarship of its “discovery,” excavation, and restoration. For those less familiar with Javanese art history, Candi Loro Jonggrang denotes a compound of 240 magnificent structures situated in ricefields dense with thousands of other volcanic stone temples that were built in the eighth and ninth centuries. Not a few scholars in the last century have been drawn to study this particular complex, which centers on the 47-meter-tall Candi Śiva, but many published their findings only in Dutch journals. Jordaan’s own research, enhanced by his familiarity with the early Dutch material, is situated in a lengthy “updated introduction” to the monument. Jordaan guides the reader through extensive scholarly discussions on Prambanan, often highlighting long-neglected works. This comprehensive introduction allows the eight articles selected for the second half of the book not simply to sum up but instead to stimulate a deeper consideration of the fascinating puzzle of Prambanan. Some of these selections are excerpted from larger works, and all are provided in excellent translations by Rosemary Robson-McKillop and Ria van Yperen. The material is of such interest that no serious student of South and Southeast Asian art history, archaeology, anthropology, religion, or history will want to be without this valuable work.

In the first part of the book, Jordaan sets out a number of riddles yet to be solved in the search for the meaning of Prambanan. Lack of extant texts, building manuals, or many other written records has made the reconstruction of the complex difficult, resulting in a number of conflicting readings, some inspired and others less so. In order to clarify these readings, Jordaan exhumes scholars’ past biases and misguided remarks, as well as the early archaeological errors that further slowed the progress of research. Against this mix of scholarship, he posits several interesting theories. He concurs that the so-called vihara temples opposite the temples dedicated to Brahmā and Viṣṇu do not adhere to the Hindu tradition but instead were smaller Śiva temples. Jordaan also argues that the complex functioned as a “substructure” (p. 84) to the Candi Sewu complex nearby, firmly establishing Prambanan’s Buddhist allegiance. In fact, he suggests that the etymology of Prambanan explicates the Unitarian mentality of the Javanese, who accepted both the Buddhist and Saivaite sects. Additionally, following Stutterheim’s early scholarship, Jordaan opines that the Rāmāyana reliefs carved on the Candi Śiva had astronomical relationships and followed an Indic folk version of the text.

Jordaan’s effort is not without agenda; it could well be titled “In Defense of Prambanan.” Throughout the book, the author challenges de Casparis’s “conflict model,” which casts Prambanan as the politico-religious competitor to Candi Borobudur: Saṅjaya versus Śailendra dynasty, Śaivaite versus Mahāyāna Buddhist, transcendent temple versus funerary complex. Jordaan insists on revising the “archaeological dogma” of this polarity and also quarrels with the view of Prambanan as an aesthetic bridge between Central and East Javanese style. Conversely, he argues that there is “no true unity” (30) in Central Javanese art, alluding to its dependence on Indic traditions, and instead champions the art of East Java as the true art of Java. Thus, Jordaan attempts to establish a different view of Prambanan, the other “pinnacle” of early Javanese culture. He sees it as a moment involving multivalent purposes and meanings not at odds with Borobudur and following no coherent progression of style. In many ways, this study follows a natural trajectory from Jordaan’s earlier book, Imagine Buddha in Prambanan (1993), which discusses the Buddhist and Saivaite fusion in this sacred structure, as well as his controversial assertion of the use of the inner courtyard as a literal representation of the Milky Ocean (p. 54).

Part II of Jordaan’s book serves as an extensive appendix of supporting materials for part I. Arranged so that the reader begins literally below the temples (the excavations of the pits) in the first article, the book progresses to discussion of various interpretive
theories about parts of the complex, then to the struggles and discoveries involved in the reconstruction of the main temple of Siva, taken up in the last two articles. The first article, authored by Ijzerman, on the first excavation of the central courtyard and temples in 1885, is unfortunately a very truncated excerpt, which leaves the reader with many questions unanswered. The pits underneath the sixteen central temples revealed some amazing items, some of which are only loosely described. Was the human skeleton found under Candi B male or female? The same question may be asked about the dog found under Candi A, or were there two dogs? The pit underneath Candi Nandi gave up the remains of a huge antecater (Manis javanica) and a number of other animal parts, suggesting countless questions that will remain unanswered until more research is published.

Interpretative excerpts follow: Vogel discusses the first panel of the Rāmāyaṇa bas-relief series in an article published in 1921. Based on just this one panel, he attempts to determine which text the Javanese sculptors used to guide their carving. Krom explores the Prambanan statues in an excerpt from his important text Inleiding tot de Hindoe-Javaansche kunst of 1923. (A number of the smaller sculptures he mentions are no longer in situ and a few may well be “lost.”) Bosch takes on the reliefs carved on the body of the Brahmā temple just above eye level as one walks around the ambulatory passageway. He suggests that these figures are twenty-seven Veda-vyāsa, editors of the Vedas, assigning Brahmā the post of chief Veda editor. B. de Haan, a lesser-known archaeologist due to his untimely death, discusses his theory of the three eastern shrines, long accepted as vāhana candi. Published in 1927, this essay is discussed at length by Jordaan in the first part of the book. Stutterheim’s article of 1928 details his analysis of the Rāmāyaṇa reliefs of the Siva temples (only the first half of the narrative panels; the second half, which wrap around the body of the Brahmā temple, are not addressed). Stutterheim posits that the panels relate to the solar cycle and supplies supporting Balinese data.

V. R. van Romondt, head of the architectural department of the Netherlands Indies Archaeological Service in the late 1930s, narrates the fascinating story of the early reconstruction of the Siva temple. Lastly, Bernet Kempers recounts the story of the completed reconstruction. Celebrated at the end of 1953, this project had consumed eight years, not counting the initial years of refitting the non-uniform stones, many fits and starts, and a few regrettable errors of judgment.

Although in this excellent study Jordaan reexamines many issues important to furthering our understanding of this early period and this great temple, several questions remain: I hesitate to agree that the two smaller candi flanking the Nandi temple are Siva temples. Nor does Jordaan explain why the complex functioned if, as he suggests, the central courtyard was filled with water. Also, why would such a huge complex (240 candi by my count) be a “sub-structure” to a complex only slightly larger (250 candi) and a half mile or so away? Nevertheless, the most exciting question posed remains: How was Candi Loro Jonggrang incorporated into a larger whole?

A few minor editorial problems can be mentioned: Stutterheim’s article would benefit from a map of the panels; in a few places the change of font is confusing; and in the de Haan article the layout of a chart (p. 158) seems to be in error. On the other hand, the glossary is extensive and the bibliography a veritable goldmine.

All things considered, In Praise of Prambanan is a tremendous contribution to a field in which more fine studies like this are so much needed. □

MARY-LOUISE TOTTON


ON THE EVE of the solar eclipse visible over parts of Asia in October 1995, thousands of people gathered at the temple of Angkor in Cambodia to watch as the sun temporarily vanished from the sky. Many were tourists who found the temple a suitably magical place for such a magical
event. Most were Cambodians, regular visitors to the temple, who believe in Angkor Wat’s power to communicate with celestial spheres. It was an auspicious place to receive fortune, magic, and blessing on an auspicious day. But the correlation between Angkor Wat and a cosmological phenomenon is not a modern coincidence. From its ambitious inception by King Suryavarman II (r. 1113–ca. 1150), Angkor Wat was designed to embody the transition from the ordinary world to the sacred world. And as Eleanor Mannikka’s book reveals, it was designed to record, contain, and visualize the movement of time and its astrological symbols. How Angkor Wat displayed these symbols is not something that most visitors to the site would notice. Although its relief carvings, architectural motifs, and other “outside” elements have been analyzed by numerous art historians since the site was first “discovered” in the nineteenth century, none until now had looked into the monument’s “inner” essence, the place where these symbols most mattered in the workings of the temple—its measurements.

In looking at the measurements of Angkor, Mannikka discovered exactly how closely connected the temple structure was to astrological symbols, for these measurements match numbers in Hindu concepts of time and space. She thus uncovered another facet of Suryavarman II’s prowess: he could control the universe by designing a temple that controlled the movement of time and space. The Kali, Krta, Treta, and Dvaapara Yugas, or time cycles, are present through measurement and made visible metaphorically through the architecture. But these numbers do more than reveal Khmer architects’ intimate knowledge of Hindu astronomy. According to Mannikka, they provide evidence of Suryavarman II’s rise to power and disclose the symbols of kingship of the ancient Khmer kings. In studying the position of Angkor Wat vis-à-vis the rotation of the earth around the sun, Mannikka has concluded that the temple is a solar one and reveals aspects of the cult of Devaraja, which is based in indigenous Khmer cults of ancestors.

Mannikka leaves no aspect of the temple unmeasured. The more closely she examines the figures, the more they reveal. This book is a testimony to the author’s fascination, bordering on obsession, for the temple’s measurements and indeed for Angkor Wat itself. Her text is interwoven with endless counts of cubits, phyeams, units, degrees, years, months, days; it is richly photographed and illustrated with detailed diagrams, figures, and plans. The result of more than two decades of research, her study goes far beyond mere art-historical analysis. In fact many of her discoveries would elude most art historians, for they are based in physics, astronomy, numerology, and mathematics. Although the greatest disadvantage of this book may thus be that it is “unreadable” to non-number-oriented art historians, Mannikka is to be congratulated on the tremendous scholarly achievement of bringing to light the measurement scheme that holds the temple together, physically and symbolically. As she states in her preface: “If researchers are armed with the knowledge that astronomy, history, cosmology, and politics might partially, jointly, or wholly determine a structure’s format and dimensions, then new possibilities open up for the study of other temples as well” (p. xi).

Historians of science would find the numerology and the references to astronomy absorbing. Historians of ancient Cambodia would scrutinize Mannikka’s analysis of Suryavarman II’s rule and his intent in building the temple. Art historians, on the other hand, would perhaps be interested in what the measurements mean for the way that the monument and its iconography are read or perceived. Yet Mannikka’s analysis does not always clarify this important aspect of the meaning of the measurements. Instead, the reader is sometimes lost in a sea of numbers, unsure why a particular measurement seems to carry so much meaning beyond its architectural necessity. The book’s preface sets the tone for the remainder of the book: “When I first saw the precise measurements of Angkor Wat’s central galleries in print in 1972, I was astonished to find that the north and south sides of the third gallery were exactly 202.14 m each” (p. vii). One is left wondering what is so important about this number. Further, to take a random example, she discusses the axial lengths and perimeters or circumferences of the temple, concluding that “[o]nce again, it would appear that the three most distinctive numerical components of the architectural mandala 12, 27/28 and 32 are intended in the axes and the perimeter of Angkor Wat’s outer border. Yet this may not have been the primary
intent of the architects. Axial lengths are whole numbers in the rest of the temple, and so the total for these axes (27.64 + 32.37, or 60.01 units) may have been the objective all along—especially since this number matches the exact 120.02-unit distance of the perimeter so well” (p. 57). Such number-infused language is often difficult for the uninitiated to follow and makes it hard to gauge how useful Mannikka’s information can be for art historians not familiar with the meaning of the numbers.

With some perseverance, however, the reader discovers very enlightening passages in which Mannikka reveals how a study of the measurements provides a new interpretation of the temple’s relief structure. Fortunately, in view of the complexity of the measurement system, knowledge of the numbers is not a prerequisite for understanding the temple’s imagery.

Mannikka is most successful in conveying the relation between the building’s measurements and its iconography in a section devoted to the depiction of the churning of the milk ocean. The theme of Vishnu supporting the pivot that churns the milk ocean—with devas and asuras on either side pulling Vasuki, the serpent, wrapped around the axis—is illustrated in a number of ways at the temple. Here, as Mannikka explains, the Angkor architects followed Hindu mythology to the number. The 54 devas and asuras are literally and symbolically represented in the temple. As half of 108, 54 becomes a sacred number, and the 54/54 pairing of the devas and asuras is reproduced several times. The threshold to the western entrance bridge measures 54 cubits; the relief panel representing Indra and 20 other gods on the northern part of the third gallery measures 54 phyeams; and the circumambulation paths around the main entrances measure 54 phyeams, to name a few examples. The importance of the churning of the milk ocean in the overall scheme of the temple is revealed in the important role that the number 54 plays in its measurements. In analyzing the measurements, Mannikka also discloses how the configuration of this scene parallels the earth’s orbit around the sun. “The ‘pulling’ on the snake Vasuki causes the sun and moon to move back and forth, north and south, each year, covering a 54-degree maximum arc every 6 months” (p. 37). The churning of the milk ocean acts as a metaphor for Angkor’s conceptual center of the universe with the “king himself tied to the symbolism of the solstice-equinox movement” (p. 43).

Mannikka’s book is not an easy read. Given the difficulty of the measurement scheme, this volume might have been more useful if it had begun with Mannikka’s reading of the building’s layout and iconography, adducing the measurements for support, rather than using the imagery to support her measurement theory. Such an organization would have made it easier for nonspecialists to follow the evolution of her argument. It would be difficult to recommend this book as presently organized to newcomers to Angkor. But the wealth of information enclosed in its pages is worth the trouble for those who persevere. Clearly, Mannikka knows the temple of Angkor thoroughly. She has undoubtedly made the most significant contribution so far to the study of Angkorian architecture in relation to Hindu cosmology and the nature of Khmer kingship.

NORA A. TAYLOR


RICHARD MARTIN and Harold Koda, art historians with an unquenchable interest in fashion traditions, have produced a captivating slim volume for general audiences that is also a useful overview for scholars of modern costume and fashion history. The authors’ focus on Orientalist trends—singling out and defining a major area of Orientalist discourse in popular culture—should make this exhibition catalogue of particular interest to readers of Ars Orientalis.

Careful to distinguish between various regionally inspired Orientalisms in the costumes they present, Martin and Koda have organized their presentation into sections devoted to China, India, the Near East and Middle East, Japan, and Southeast
Asia (listed in order of appearance). This organization allows them to direct attention to historical moments of direct influence, with focused discussion beginning in the eighteenth century. In addition, this organization permits consideration of subsequent culturally complicated interpretations and successive cross-fertilizations, through the “mod and early hippie period” up to the present day. Less successful is the authors’ general introduction, which provides a simplistic and, ironically, exoticized prologue to their main theme:

It is not our purpose to judge colonialism or its international commerce. “These tides of men,” to borrow a phrase from the legendary early-twentieth-century Orientalist adventurer T. E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia), embody vast and valid concerns broader and more complex than our modest interests here. Nor do we suspend judgment to endorse touristic enthusiasms, such as the late-nineteenth-century writer Lafcadio Hearn’s for Japan’s “every relation . . . governed by altruism, every action directed by duty and every object shaped by art.” Rather we offer a first inspection of the West’s need for and assimilation of the East as evident in apparel.” (p. 10)


First inspection” is the operative phrase here: there are no close readings of subjects, suggestions for future scholarly approaches, or arguments for what interpretations they do offer. This book merely identifies an important trend in Western fashion while advertising the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s costume collection as the richest collection of Western Orientalist costume in the world. It is, now, certainly the best published such collection, albeit with extremely brief essays (from two to five pages of text, no footnotes and no bibliography) written in a style that is accessible to the general public. Extensive captions rather than catalogue entries provide commentary for the many black-and-white and spectacular color illustrations. □

Thelma K. Thomas

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“aesthetic reclusion,” with its implications of *communitas*, scholarly pastimes, appreciation of nature, and elegant rusticity, as an important element of such discourse that comes to full flowering in the Momoyama period. He convincingly demonstrates the validity of this claim throughout the remainder of the book.

The second chapter surveys early literary works to show the development of reclusion imagery and, more importantly, Japanese *reinterpretation* rather than *misinterpretation* of their Chinese sources. The works he addresses range from a poem by Yoshinime Yasuyo (735–830) through Heian prose and medieval reclusion literature to Gozan poetry and linked verse of the early sixteenth century. Through examples such as the transformation of Bo Juyi into a symbol of the Chinese poet-recluse in *Tale of Genji* and other Heian writings, he argues that Japanese authors deployed Chinese figures as “paradigmatic examples of some characteristic or ideal central to their text” (p. 19). In regard to the Seven Sages and the Four Graybeards, the author observes, “If this is indeed the case, Japanese writers engaged in a highly selective adaptation of the two subjects, choosing those aspects which suited their purpose and ignoring those which did not” (p. 20). By the end of the chapter, the reader should certainly agree that Japanese meanings radically different from Chinese ones could exist.

The third chapter introduces and develops the major theoretical underpinnings of Brown’s text. Fully acknowledging his sources, the author draws heavily upon Victor Turner’s work on West African religious ceremonies and builds upon Theodore Ludwig’s bold application of Turner’s theories to the case of Japanese tea practices.\(^1\) Most important is Turner’s interpretation of certain ceremonial gatherings of men of varied social ranks as ritual antistructures. Brown views multfigure reclusion themes as a pictorial complement to *wabi* tea practices, which signify the espousal of an “alternate social order” emphasizing *communitas* and the repression of the hierarchical relationships of the “normative social order.” Brown notes that those on the peripheries of power could deploy that espousal as implicit criticism of the status quo, but he rightly focuses much greater attention on the more frequent use of such imagery by the rulers themselves. Aesthetic reclusion combined two ancient tropes of virtuous government in China: the reluctant participation of the sage in governance when his wisdom was needed and the recognition of the importance of cultural pursuits by the virtuous ruler. The former addresses the Confucian imperative to recruit worthy men into government service, while the latter offers a time-honored means of legitimizing an authority actually gained by warfare and political intrigue.

Chapter 4 most directly addresses the author’s main subject matter: paintings of the Four Graybeards and Seven Sages in the Momoyama and early Edo periods. As Brown notes, the paucity of extant examples with clear attributions and provenances makes a detailed look at variation by date, school, or patron impossible. Instead he organizes his discussion around the four aspects of aesthetic reclusion first introduced in chapter 1 and the transformation of Chinese tradition. He deftly shows how figure groups with almost antithetical implications in China could be deployed together to espouse the ideal of aesthetic reclusion. The negation or denial of Chinese implications created by the juxtapositions provided rhetorical space for the more relevant theme to stand out. Brown does address two specific examples of the Momoyama deployment of reclusion themes on room paintings: one at the long-destroyed Azuchi Castle and the other at the still-extant Taimensho of Nishi Honganji. The latter offers the most detailed and historically particular reading of a painting in the book.

The fifth chapter once again disperses the pictorial focus finally reached in chapter 4 back out into the larger cultural sphere of tea, actual reclusion, and politics, primarily in the early Edo period. It discusses aesthetic reclusion as a mantle of virtue by which the politically ambitious could hope to attain distinction or as a guise by which the politically compromised could escape severe sanctions. In either case, the reclusion of the Seven Sages and the Four Graybeards served as a practical template and tea as a ritual expression. In his examination of specific cases, Brown pays greatest attention to figures at the peripheries of power—Kinoshita Chōshōshi (1569–1649), Shôkado Shojô (1584–1639), and Ishikawa Jôzan (1583–1672)—along with the reclusive neo-
Confucian and would-be sage, Fujiwara Seika (1561–1619). The chapter concludes by returning to Chinese antiquity to look at the relationship between Taoism and Confucianism as partially explaining why the image of the cultivated man in nature came to be so compelling.

Brown’s work will probably meet criticisms on certain methodological grounds. For example, he goes to considerable trouble to demonstrate that Japanese paintings on Chinese themes can represent more than solutions to formal problems. To many scholars, including myself, it seems a matter of course that narratives and images take on new meanings in new cultural circumstances. But Brown’s particular rhetorical strategy reflects the encounters of many younger scholars with a Japanese art-historical establishment, to some degree in the United States but especially in Japan, in which discussion of meaning is usually treated with deep suspicion. This orientation also explains the author’s tendency to emphasize authorial intention as the locus of meaning and largely ignore contemporary work in the area of reception theory. After all, his goal is to give Japanese painting a sense of intellectual intention often denied it. In a more general vein, the brevity of the study permits only a cursory treatment of the several centuries it covers in addition to the Momoyama period. For example, he treats Ōsen Keisan as a generic Gozan monk, when, in fact, he was an unusually close advisor to the Ashikaga shōgunate. As a scholar of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, my reaction to this passage was to feel that the case warranted much more detailed attention. Yet complaining about what the author did not pursue diverts attention away from his real accomplishment: a text of readable length that opens the way for the specialist and general reader to develop a deeper understanding of a very important group of figure subjects in Japanese painting and poetry.

NOTE

QUITMAN EUGENE PHILLIPS
ARS ORIENTALIS
Ars Orientalis solicits scholarly manuscripts on the art and archaeology of Asia, including the ancient Near East and the Islamic world. The journal welcomes a broad range of themes and approaches. Articles of interest to scholars in diverse fields or disciplines are particularly sought, as are suggestions for occasional thematic issues and reviews of important books in Western or Asian languages. Brief research notes and responses to articles in previous issues of Ars Orientalis will also be considered. Submissions must be in English, with all non-English quotations provided in translation. Authors are asked to follow The Chicago Manual of Style, 14th ed. A style sheet is available from the managing editor or at the Ars Orientalis home page.

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Tao Yuanming’s Sashes: Or, The Gendering of Immortality

ABSTRACT

A visual image based on a literary text, it is generally understood, is not just an illustration but an interpretation—a particular construction of the text. Such a visual interpretation may be considered a nonverbal form of literary criticism, parallel to written commentaries; and some striking correspondences between contemporary written and visual interpretations of literary texts—between poetry criticism and poetry illustration—have been explored in recent studies. This essay calls attention to a less well recognized phenomenon: the degree to which pictorial interpretations of written texts may diverge from the corpus of written commentary. A familiar image of the poet Tao Yuanming, originating in Song and often replicated in later times, serves here as a case in point. This construction of Tao’s likeness, which incorporates Buddhist, Daoist, and feminine imagery, has inflected the pictorial traditions surrounding him with meanings quite distinct from the themes emphasized in written commentaries.
FIG. 1.
Liang Kai, Scholar of the Eastern Fence, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 71.5 × 36.7 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

FIG. 2.
Detail of fig. 1.
Tao Yuanming's Sashes: Or, The Gendering of Immortality

Since the Song dynasty (960–1279) if not before, a distinctive pictorial convention has been used for representing the great Eastern Jin poet and recluse Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (Tao Qian 陶潜, 365–427). A well-known painting by the Song court artist Liang Kai 梁楷 of around 1200 now in the National Palace Museum in Taipei, The Scholar of the Eastern Fence (Dongli gaoshi 東篱高士), is an example of the type (figs. 1, 2).1 A goodlooking smooth-featured man of young middle age, the poet is shown in three-quarter view striding to the left, a walking stick in one hand, a chrysanthemum in the other. His dress is elegant and informal: a long outer robe tied across his chest, a short fur cape, sandals, a loose scarf on his head. Clothes and sashes swish and flutter behind him. He holds his flower up at face level, but his attention seems directed to some object in the distance ahead. Pictures of Tao in a standing posture almost always have several of the attributes or characteristics seen here: chrysanthemum, headscarf, staff, mobile stance, trailing robes and sashes, lifted chin and distant gaze. This is a standard Tao Yuanming image, and—with various backgrounds and settings or with none, silhouetted against a blank ground—functions as his portrait in the visual tradition (figs. 3–5).2

These Tao Yuanming portraits stand apart from the main traditions of representing distinguished men in portrait-like guises that had become established by the Song dynasty. The portraits of twenty-four estimable officials (Gongchen 功臣) that adorned the Lingyan 涼飴 Hall in the Tang capital city of Chang’an, painted by Yan Liben 閻立本 (d. 673) with eulogies written by Emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 626–49), represent an important early model for the genre. Though the originals are lost, stone engravings made after them in 1090 show them to be a row of sober, dignified standing figures.3 Northern Song portraits of writers and scholars are in the same mode; a fine extant example is the anonymous album of portraits of five Northern Song scholars-officials, all octogenarians, who gathered in Nanjing in the 1050s. The work goes by the name of the Five Old Men of Suiyang (Suiyang wulao 睿陽五老); it was executed before 1056, the date of the earliest colophon. Feng Ping 風平, typical of them all, is illustrated here (fig. 6).4 Scant of setting, action, and emotion, the image projects a model Confucian sobriety. His posture is enclosed, with restrained gestures, elbows close to the body, and shoulders slightly hunched forward, as if burdened by responsibility or deferring to a superior; his clothing is proper and just so, his demeanor and expression composed and severe. Considering that at the moment he is supposed to be at ease, his decorum is all the more revealing and meaningful. The twelfth-century portrait in the Cleveland Museum of Dazhi 大智 (1048–1116), a priest of the Lü (Vinaya) sect of Buddhism, though belonging to a somewhat different genre and serving a ceremonial function, represents the same impressive, reassuring ideal (fig. 7). A laudatory inscription by Liu Tao 劉操 (late 11th–early 12th centuries) emphasizes his air of dignity and composure:

Uprightness and gravity he possessed in full,
His countenance was like his mind;
Preeminent in the strictness of his morality
His mind was like his countenance.⁵

Men famous as poets rather than as officials or prelates are commonly treated with the same air of institutional sobriety, as in an anonymous picture of the poet Bo Juyi 白居易 (772–846) in the Muto collection in Japan, inscribed in 1284 by the monk Wuxue Zuyuan 無學祖元 (1226–86) (fig. 8).⁶ An even more pronounced stolidity characterizes pictures of the poet Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340–278 B.C.E.) (fig. 9). According to tradition, Qu was the author or compiler of the Songs of Chu (Chuci 楚辭), a collection of early shamanistic poetry, and his portrait often accompanies illustrations of a suite of stanzas from that collection known as the Nine Songs (Jiuge
FIG. 7 (LEFT).
Portrait of Priest Dazhi, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 92.5 × 40.5 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art.

FIG. 8 (RIGHT).
Portrait of Bo Juyi, before 1284, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 94.8 × 43.7 cm. Muto Collection, Japan. After Suiboku bijutsu taisei (Tokyo, 1973–78), 5:pl. 3.

FIG. 9 (LEFT).
After Zhao Mengfu, Nine Songs, portrait of Qu Yuan, album painting, ink on paper, 26.5 × 15.8 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

FIG. 10 (RIGHT).
After Zhao Mengfu, Nine Songs, the Princess of Xiang, album painting, ink on paper, 26.5 × 15.8 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Several handscrolls and albums illustrating this text are extant, associated with the late Northern Song painter Li Gonglin 李公麟 (ca. 1041–1106) and with later artists working in his tradition. The Nine Songs tell of deities and spirits—the Greater and Lesser Masters of Fate, the Princess and Lady of the Xiang River, and others—and their celestial roamings and divine passions. In the illustrations these exotic divinities coast and soar among clouds and waves, robes swishing and sashes tracing the breeze. The Princess of the Xiang (Xiangjun 湘侯), for one, flower in hand, walks on water; her stance, in a drift of coiling scarves, is spirited and elegant (fig. 10).Qu Yuan appears as a frontispiece to these compositions, and in sharp contrast with them: standing with shoulders burdened and arms thoroughly sleeved, only a finger or two protruding, an image of the workaday, here-and-now literatur.

Liang Kai’s Tao Yuanming presents an image entirely unlike this—indeed, he resembles the divine Princess of the Xiang River rather more than he does his fellow poet Qu Yuan. His smooth features and light, mobile silhouette recall other types from Chinese pictorial art as well: flying immortals, gracefully beribboned Buddhist divinities (figs. 11–14). In terms of the familiar, established forms of traditional Chinese pictorial art, Tao’s portrait situates itself not only with the literati but among girls and goddesses, Daoist transcendents, and bodhisattvas.

The present essay is an inquiry into this curious fact. I will argue that these feminine and divine allusions represent an interpretation of Tao’s thought—they are, in other words, a kind of literary criticism or exegesis in visual form. This visually proffered interpretation does not dwell on the ideas of reclusion, simplicity, contentment, and Confucian virtue usually associated with him—the themes that pervade the written traditions of Tao Yuanming criticism. Rather, it emphasizes other aspects of the poet’s writing: preoccupations with death, thoughts of escape or transcendence, unconsummated yearnings. This is an interesting alternative way of looking at Tao Yuanming, his works, and his legacy. It is also interesting as evidence of the visual artist’s measure of independence from the traditions of literary commentary—even when treating a literary subject.

I have paired the concepts of femininity and divinity here; the overlapping of the two in the Chinese visual tradition, though sometimes recognized, remains an important subject for investigation, and aspects of it will be considered here.

OTHERWORLDLY THOUGHTS

Liang Kai’s Scholar of the Eastern Fence is not simply a picture of the man, for there is a narrative subsumed within the image. Tao is shown at a moment he described in one of his best-known poems, the fifth in his suite of Drinking Wine: Twenty Poems (Yinjiu ershi shou 飲酒二十首), which, he tells us in a preface, he wrote in the evenings “all alone with my shadow” over some excellent wine. The poem opens with a quatrain about the hubbub of local traffic passing by his cottage—traffic that he does not hear; in the world of his mind—his “detached mind”—he is in a remote, unpeopled place. He goes on to describe it:

Gathering chrysanthemums by the eastern fence
I catch sight of South Mountain in the distance;
The mountain air is lovely as the sun sets
And flocks of flying birds return together.

There’s an essential meaning in all this—I
Would explain it but can’t find the words.¹⁰

It is the central couplet that is visualized in Liang Kai’s painting: “Gathering chrysanthemums by the eastern fence / I catch sight of South Mountain in the distance.”

Chrysanthemums were believed to have medicinal properties. Following a custom traditionally practiced on the “Double Ninth,” the ninth day of the ninth lunar month, Tao used to steep their petals in wine for a longevity potion. This autumnal custom is often associated in his poetry with thoughts of mortality and oblivion, and as he gathers chrysanthemums in the fifth Drinking poem Tao is indeed thinking about wanings and endings. The day, like the season, is declining; it is evening, with the birds returning to their roost. As for South Mountain—a name for nearby Mount Lu, in northern Jiangxi
FIG. 11 (LEFT).

FIG. 12 (RIGHT).
Bodhisattva on the Tamamushi shrine (overall height of shrine: 233.3 cm), Hōryūji, Nara.

FIG. 13 (LEFT).
Kichijōden, eighth century, colors on hemp, 53.3 x 32 cm, Yakushiji, Nara.

FIG. 14 (RIGHT).
Guanyin from Dazu, Sichuan. After Dazu Rock Carvings of China (Chongqing, 1991), pl. 19.
Province—Tao’s glimpse of it caps and clinches the valedictory mood. Mount Lu was famous as a hermits’ retreat and an immortals’ abode, and Tao elsewhere speaks of it metaphorically as his final resting place. Its sight moves him to transmundane imaginings to which he alludes with a haunting elusiveness, “losing” or “forgetting the words” (wangyan 忘言) to describe them. Liang Kai has pictured Tao poised in this moment of serene awareness, lifting his chrysanthemum as if saluting the numinous mountain, his robes quivering as if to express his state of mind. That is in fact what they are doing. Tao’s silhouette—posture, gesture, dress—represents an interpretation of the nature of his insights at this moment.

For Tao’s figure here, Liang Kai has drawn on an earlier portrayal of the poet: Li Gonglin’s illustration of another of Tao’s poems, the great “Returning Home” (Guiquailai 餑去來) prose-poem in which Tao describes his decision to leave his official job and return home to a life of privacy and independence in which he could be himself. Li’s handscroll illustration of “Returning Home” was well known at court in the Southern Song; a version in the Freer Gallery, Yuannming Returning to Seclusion (Yuanming guiyuin 清明歸隱), is generally judged to be an early and close copy of Li Gonglin’s composition. It presents a series of scenes alternating with sections of the text, with Tao’s figure appearing eight times, engaged in various activities he described in the prose-poem. The seventh Tao figure in Li’s scroll is the prototype for Liang’s image (fig. 15). Tao appears here on a hilltop overlooking a stretch of water with a cliff and clouds beyond. As in Liang Kai’s painting, he is shown in three-quarter view, walking by a tree, staff in hand, facing a distant prospect, clothes blowing behind him.

It was not by chance that Liang Kai appropriated this particular Tao figure, for it expresses an idea well suited to his purposes. The corresponding section of the “Returning Home” text—the closing lines—is, like the central couplet of the fifth Drinking poem, a valedictory image:

So little time are we granted human form in the world! Let us then follow the inclinations of the heart... Rather on some fine morning to walk alone, Now planting my staff to take up a hoe, Or climbing the east hill and whistling long Or composing verses beside the clear stream: So I manage to accept my lot until the ultimate homecoming. Rejoicing in Heaven’s command, what is there to doubt?12
Li Gonglin’s staff-holding, windblown Tao on the east hill is an image of the poet engaged in thoughts of death and release. His long whistle, a practice aiming at communication with spirits and alignment with nature, orients him away from human concerns. His mind is turned to the next, the “ultimate homecoming”; his forward momentum has an air of lightness and freedom, as if passing from a state of Confucian eremitism to a more footloose Daoist disengagement. His agitated clothing, suggestive of whistling, of flight, and of faraway thoughts, is the medium for this message. It is a message very much in keeping with Tao’s experience at the eastern fence. By invoking Li Gonglin’s image of the poet contemplating death and release, Liang Kai amplifies his own of Tao catching sight of South Mountain.

The generalized airiness seen in these figures is pervasive throughout Tao Yuanming pictorial imagery: a breeze follows him even where, in terms of the material world around him, it seems to make little sense. Though just two of the Tao Yuanming figures in the Freer Returning to Seclusion scroll—one of him arriving by boat at the beginning, in addition to the east hill image near the end—have trailing garments, in many later illustrations of the poem most or all of them do. In a copy of the Freer handscroll in the National Palace Museum in Taipei, every one of the Tao Yuanming figures from one end of the scroll to the other has been zapped by the wind. Those walking around out of doors all have streaming sashes and puffed-out sleeves; even those that are seated or indoors have short scarf-ends fluttering edgily around them—as, for example, in the scene of a drinking party where Tao’s sashes twitch while those of his companions lie inert (fig. 16). Tao’s sashes also wriggle or fly throughout many of the scenes in a collaborative Ming Returning Home scroll in Liaoning (fig. 17) and in a late version attributed to Qiu Ying 仇英 (ca. 1495–1552) in the National Palace Museum. It is only Tao whose clothing is agitated in this way; friends, family, and servants occupying the same spaces are unaffected. Similarly, in the Scholar of the Eastern Fence, to judge from the foliage it is not a windy day, nor does Tao’s stride look brisk enough to account for the broad swish and flutter of his clothes. Simply put, the air around his body seems dynamic; it is an aura, and imputes to him a measure of divinity.
Man huabian

FIG. 18.
Man riding a dragon from Changsha, ca. third century B.C.E., ink and color on silk, 37.5 x 28 cm. Hunan Provincial Museum. After Zhongguo meishu quanji: Huihua bian (Shanghai and Beijing, 1987-89), 1:pl. 44.

The pictorial semiotics here is by no means exclusive to China. Anne Hollander has discussed similar effects in European painting “when an otherworldly wind begins to assert its power on the garment for aesthetic purposes other than showing motion or gravitation”:

Flemish and German artists of the Late Gothic period show how the drapery of figures may by itself invest an image with visionary force, as when the cloth is made to whip up and swirl without any apparent physical force exerted on it. Certain scenes from this period will combine the mundane figures of donors, whose clothes hang and lie in folds, with those of saints and angels, whose garments fly, subject to fits of inexplicable energy... It clearly seemed appropriate to the creators and beholders of such paintings that celestial drapery float but that earthly clothing... obey the common law of gravity.\textsuperscript{14}

It is such a “visionary force” (\textit{qi} 虚, in the Chinese context) that often seems to envelop the earthly garments of Tao Yuanming.

ROAMING WITH THE IMMORTALS

Tao’s breezy silhouette associates him with Chinese divinities of many sorts that have been pictured in a stream of divine energy: goddesses and river nymphs, traveling shamans and wonder-working sages, bodhisattvas and angels—seekers and finders of immortality or enlightenment. Underlying the airiness of all of them is the idea of celestial flight, a human fantasy that knows few regional or cultural bounds. In the Chinese tradition, flight has been an accomplishment reserved for immortal beings, and at the same time a route toward the prize of immortality—overlapping ideas that may be said to acknowledge the quasi-sexual coexistence of fulfillment and desire.

A magic voyage is the subject of one of the earliest Chinese paintings extant, a painting on silk of around the third century B.C.E. found in the Changsha region in the then state of Chu (fig. 18). A standing male figure rides on the deeply curved, boat-shaped spine of a dragon. A fish swims along beneath the dragon while a crested bird perches on its tail, demarking the aqueous and aerial realms.\textsuperscript{15} Seen in profile and slightly from the rear, robed and capped, the man carries at his waist a rodlike object—perhaps the long staff or sword mentioned as a shaman’s attribute in the \textit{Nine Songs} of roughly the same time and region as the painting.\textsuperscript{16} His feet are not quite planted on the dragon’s back; he appears to hover above it, and an umbrellalike canopy likewise hovers above his head, neither supported nor hanging by any visible device. The voyage is evidently a rapid one; the pendant tassels of the canopy stream backwards, and the figure’s capstrings fly back behind his neck too. The scene suggests the voyage by dragon-mount or dragon-boat described in one of the \textit{Nine Songs}:
The stream runs fast through the stony shallows
And my flying dragon wings swiftly above it.  

Flying robes and sashes are common in Han dynasty pictures of humanlike sprites who whiz around in the qi-filled realms—the cosmic force fields—depicted on coffin surfaces and tomb walls.\(^\text{18}\) They are also characteristic of the anthropomorphic immortals of various kinds pictured in Six Dynasties art, such as the flying angels (apsaras) of the Buddhist cave-temples at Yungang, Longmen, and Dunhuang, or the flying celestials of the Xishanqiao and Dengxian tombs.\(^\text{19}\) Fluttering sashes remain a primary pictorial device for representing divinity throughout later times. A hanging scroll in Taipei by Liang Kai’s contemporary Ma Yuan 马远 (fl. ca. 1190–1230) of an immortal riding a dragon through space, sashes flying, is a latter-day version of the Chu picture of 1500 years earlier (fig. 19).\(^\text{20}\) The idea of flight is expressed here in a complexly spatial and dynamic way, and the scene throbs with supernatural energy. The sage and his dragon twist and flex as they course through the clouds, while a gnome-servant speeds toward his master bringing his potent dragon-headed staff. Every part of the figures’ clothes, the staff’s trimmings, or the dragon’s body that can curl, swish, or snap in the air is doing so.

The dragon-boat poem belongs to a body of poetry on “roaming immortals” or “roaming with the immortals” (youxian shi 游仙诗); the lines quoted are from the “Princess of the Xiang” section of the Nine Songs. Visions of celestial journeys appear in other poems in the Songs of Chu collection too, among them “Traveling Afar” (Yuanyou 遠游), “Heavenly Questions” (Tianwen 天問), and others of the Nine Songs.\(^\text{21}\) The “roaming immortals” genre was particularly popular in the early Southern Dynasties period. The literary elite of those days were preoccupied with the notions of immortality and divine flight, and many of them took drugs and practiced exercises aimed at the extension of life and the attainment of special powers. Among the powers they aspired to was flight, and various drugs believed to bring about the lightening of body weight—an important part of the process of becoming an airworthy immortal—were much sought after.\(^\text{22}\)

FIG. 19.
Ma Yuan, Riding a Dragon, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 108.1 × 52.6 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

In time these preoccupations subsided, and “roaming with the immortals” poetry yielded place to other literary modes.\(^\text{23}\) But the language and imagery of celestial beings and magic journeys proved to have a very long half-life; they remain common throughout later writing, even in texts only
tentatively connected with immortality ideas. David Hawkes has remarked on this phenomenon:

the patterns of thought associated with what one might call the cosmological approach to art became so ingrained that they affected all literature, not only those kinds whose themes suggested it.

As an example he cites Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303), who, in his “Prose-poem on Literature” (Wenfu 文賦), moves in a few lines from the reasonable “the writer contemplates the mystery of the universe” to the fantastical “his spirit gallops to the eight ends of the universe . . . Floating on the heavenly lake, he swims along; plunging into the nether spring, he immerses himself.” As Hawkes explains it, “The metaphor . . . treats the creative writer as a magician who moves through the universe like the mystics and shamans of old in their celestial journeys.” Supernatural imagery, as he says elsewhere, “formed part of the stock-in-trade of all Chinese poets.”

And so it remained long after Lu Ji’s time, indeed throughout the entire history of traditional Chinese literature. After all, the supernatural was immanent, for longevity and immortality were viewed as a continuum rather than as pertaining to clearly distinct realms. Wolfgang Bauer has described this continuum in connection with the life-conserving practice of eremitism. The process begins, so to speak, with Tao Yuanming; that is, with the hermit’s resignation from leading posts, combined with a preference for living in smaller towns or villages rather than in the busy capital. As a next step, the hermit might leave the town or village and choose to dwell in the countryside. . . . He may then go even further, abandoning his family and fleeing into wholly uncultivated areas, dwelling alone in the mountains and marshes. . . . The subsequent steps are imaginative rather than real: the hermit bids farewell to mankind altogether, vanishing into distant, fabulous countries or islands. . . . Many of the Chinese immortals (hsien) may be counted among such “hermits” (“earthly hermits” ti-hsien). The final stage . . . is reached when the hermit leaves the world entirely, when he ascends to heaven. . . . This stage is necessarily associated with the idea of death, although this is rarely expressed; or it may even be interpreted, by means of inversion, as an overcoming of death.26

Given the porous borders between mortal life and immortality in Chinese thought, beings could be imagined as belonging to, or between, both realms, and the visual imagery of immortals in the later Six Dynasties period bespeaks just such an understanding. Just as Lu Ji’s hero was at once philosopher and magician, pictured figures might combine mortal and supernatural features. As Audrey Spiro has shown, transcendent beings in Six Dynasties funerary relics shed the feathers and wings of their more archaic manifestations and took on portraitlike faces, while the figures of eminent historical gentlemen such as those portrayed in the Xishanqiao tomb near Nanjing developed the lightness and insubstantiality of ethereal beings. Eulogistic language about real people might use the imagery of spiritlike airiness: in Liu Yiqing’s 劉義慶 “New Account of Tales of the World” (Shishuo xinyu 世說新語), Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–61) and other luminaries are described as drifting like clouds, light and graceful, airily soaring. In the Southern Dynasties imagination, in other words, praiseworthy mortals were sometimes portrayed as the light-bodied transcendent many of them aspired to become, and recluses who went off in quest of immortality might be pictured as if they had arrived at their goal.

Hawkes speaks of such imagined celestial journeys as flights to prolong life,28 and Helmut Wilhelm calls them “wanderings of the spirit on the lookout for another life, for continuing in another way, another place.”29 It goes without saying that, for all their pipe-dream exoticism and the endless sensual elaborations in which some of them indulge, “roaming with the immortals” poems reflect entirely natural, urgent human anxieties about life and death.

Tao Yuanming’s own poetic voice was very different from that of the “roaming immortals” poets of
his own and earlier times and indeed came to supplant it; his oeuvre stands at the beginning of the long later tradition of writing about real landscapes and personal feelings in simple, natural language. All the same, death was much on his mind, and he too sometimes entertained fanciful visions of divine flight. His parable about the secret utopia of the “Peach Blossom Spring” (Taohua yuan 桃花源) ends with this image:

I want to tread upon the thin thin air
And rise up high to find my own kind.50

In “Drinking Alone in the Rainy Season” (Lianyu duyin 連雨獨飲), after musing on drinking and on death, Tao writes:

Is heaven so far from this after all?
Nothing tops the one who trusts the True.
The cloud-high crane with wonderful wings
Can reach the ends of the earth in a moment of time.

The cloud-high crane is Tao’s image of drunken immortality, though he was aware that immortality was not his lot.31 Elsewhere he wrote about leaving for South Mountain, associated with transcendence and immortality: “On and on, where should I wish to go? / My old home is there on South Mountain.”

These lines suggest a transmundane spirit journey, and Tao’s airily poised attitude as he faces South Mountain in Liang Kai’s painting is entirely consistent with such an idea. Desire or aspiration is here expressed as a projection of a wishfully fulfilled self-image: the visual metaphor of flight presents him as a poet contemplating transcendent matters, like the sage in Lu Ji’s “Prose-poem on Literature.” Supernatural imagery, clearly enough, was part of the stock-in-trade of the pictorial artist as well as the poet.

LOVE OBJECTS

The language and visual imagery to which Audrey Spiro directs our attention, casting mortal sages as “light and airy” divinities, is distinctly feminine imagery; and indeed, one of the most striking and curious things about Tao Yuanming’s portrait is its femininity. He drifts lightly across the ground with sashes silkily trailing, a flower in his delicately pointed fingers; his silhouette resembles nothing so much as that of the court beauty presenting herself to her prince in Gu Kaizhi’s 魯迅之 (ca. 344–406) Admonitions of the Ladies’ Instructress (Nushi zhen 女史箴) scroll (fig. 20).32 She, too, glides hopefully leftward, sashes trailing behind and curling in front of her; her torso and head are similarly tilted, chin
lifted and shoulders set elegantly back. Again, the male dignitary in the scene—the sober, demurring prince—resembles Tao less than she does.

Also Tao-like is the beauty in another composition traditionally attributed to Gu Kaizhi, a handscroll illustrating the prose-poem “The Nymph of the Luo River” (Luoshen fu 洛神賦) (fig. 21). The poem, written in 222 by Cao Zhi 曹植 (192-232), tells a story of unfulfilled romance between a prince and a ravishing river fairy. Several versions of this composition are extant today; none of them antedates the Song dynasty, but they retain many elements of Six Dynasties style.\(^5\) In the section shown here, from the version in Beijing, the nymph appears surrounded by a dragon, a hazy moon, chrysanthemums and a miniature pine tree—attributes that, along with the whispy lightness of her figure, are meant to illustrate Cao Zhi’s poetic description:

Her body soars lightly like a startled swan,
Gracefully, like a dragon in flight,
In splendor brighter than the autumn chrysanthemum,
In bloom more flourishing than the pine in spring;
Dim as the moon mantled in filmy clouds,
Restless as snow whirled by the driving wind.\(^5\)

Both grace and flight are suggested by the airy motion of the goddess’s sleeves and skirts, and especially by the ribbonlike sashes that detach themselves from her frame and open it out to the space around.

The poetic imagery underlying Gu Kaizhi’s conception of femininity goes back well before Cao Zhi’s time to such sources as the ethereal dancing girls in Fu Yi’s 傳佚 (ca. 35-ca. 90) “Rhapsody on the Dance”:

Colored jackets with flying sashes are adorned with dainty gauze. . . .
With every puff of a gentle breeze
They send forth the sweet scent of pollia. . . .
Gossamer gowns blow in the breeze,
Long sleeves tangle and twine together . . .
They flutter about like hovering swallows,
And soar into the air like startled swans.\(^5\)

Earlier still, there are the dancing beauties of Sima Xiangru’s 司馬相如 (179-117 b.c.e.) verses, weightless dream lovers like the goddesses of the Xiang and Luo Rivers. Their fluttering, drifting scarves and ribbons seem almost to be amorously fingering the viewer’s imagination:

Long and trailing, full and flowing . . .
Flying aprons and dangling sashes,
Flap and flutter, swirl and sway,  
Surge and billow, rustle and swish,  
Grazing thoroughwort and basil below,  
Brushing feathered canopies above . . .  
Vaguely visualized, dimly described,  
Apparitions, it seems, of goddesses.  

From Gu Kaizhi's time on, dream girls and river nymphs—filmy, sylphlike beings—have been pictured in the wafting clothes and lightsome attitudes described in early texts like these. Lightly breasting the wind, the Eastern Fence scholar has the same ethereal air; and the coincidentally shared imagery of chrysanthemum and pine adds a further, uncanny correspondence between the poet and the Luo River nymph. Were it not for the matter of gender (implicit anyway, given the gender-free Chinese syntax), Cao Zhi's description of the nymph quoted above—and Gu Kaizhi's illustration—would be only a few removes into the empyrean from the buoyant girlish figure of Liang Kai's Tao Yuanming.

After the Six Dynasties period the delineation of figures in general became more corporeal, and the drapery of beautiful women came to conform more closely to the shape of the body within and the tug of gravity without. The court ladies painted on the walls in early eighth-century tombs near Xi'an or on a screen in the Shōsōin in Nara have real mass; so do those in a copy of a scroll by the court painter Zhou Fang (fl. ca. 740–800), Ladies with Flowers in Their Hair (Zanhua shī'nu 卓花仕女) in the Liaoning Provincial Museum. Their robes have palpable mass too, draped over shoulders and arms and hanging earthward. But these more substantial women still share posture and gesture with Tao—particularly the central figure in Zhou Fang's scroll, as she contemplates the blossom in her hand (fig. 22). Rare is the painting of a mortal male figure—poet, scholar, official—whose physical articulation resembles that of the Eastern Fence poet as closely as does this beauty in her garden. And it should be noted that divine women continue to wear floating sashes in the Tang, keeping much of their transparent airiness as their mortal sisters put on weight. The eighth-century Tang-style painting of Kichijōten, goddess of beauty and prosperity, at Yakushiji in Nara is a celestial counterpart to the palace lady in Zhou Fang's garden scene, or to the beauties on the Shōsōin screen: similar in physique and posture, as her body and attention center on the symbolic treasure in her hand (fig. 13). The mysterious energies flowing through her trailing scarves, though, proclaim her divine status. By the time Liang Kai painted Tao's picture, the feminine and divine implications of the fluttering silhouette were very clearly established.

Along with his sashes, Tao's chrysanthemum is a common feature of his iconography, to be found in bust-length portraits and in paintings that show him seated as well as standing, such as an anonymous Yuan painting in the Palace Museum in Taibei; a small picture by Lu Zhi 陸治 (1496–1576) of himself
in a Tao-like guise in the same collection; and the many scrolls of *Tao Yuanming Stories or Episodes in the Life of Tao Yuanming* (*Tao Yuanming gushi* 陶淵明故事) (figs. 23, 24). This flower in Tao’s hand is another attribute that allies him with representations of women and divinities.

To be sure, scholars appreciated flowers too—their beauty and the virtues or values that many of them symbolized—and many paintings show gentlemen meditating thoughtfully on flowers. In most cases, though, the flowers are growing in a garden or arranged in a vase, and the man admires them at a distance, without touching them. Indeed, the appreciation of flowers is most commonly suggested through paintings of the flower alone, without figure or setting—paintings that are themselves objects of hands-off visual appreciation—with the scholar’s responses conveyed in the form of inscribed musings. Pictures of scholars other than Tao actually handling flowers are unusual, and most of them date from Qing times; an example is the painting Luo Ping 羅聘 did for his friend Yi’an 義善 in 1798 of a man holding and sniffing a spray of plum blossoms (fig. 25). This gentleman cuts an odd figure with his jaded, distracted air, moodily ugly and heavy of stance in his stiff robe, posed by a bizarre shell of hollowed rock. His physical contact with the flower is a further eccentricity.

Holding a flower, in other words, is characteristically feminine or devotional, and there is also a distinctly feminine or devout manner of doing so: stem held lightly between thumb and forefinger in a delicate pinching gesture. This is the way women, immortals, and Buddhist figures generally hold their various floral attributes; it is the gesture Tao invariably uses, very different from the blunt grip flower-holding gentlemen like Luo Ping’s...
plum fancier have on their blossoms. Held this way, a flower does not speak of scholarly virtues and gentleman gardeners but of other spheres of meaning, ones consonant with themes of divinity and desire. In the hand of a worldly charmer such as the central figure in Zhou Fang’s scroll, it is a metaphor both for the perfection of her beauty and for its fragility (fig. 22). The sprig held by the ageless, immortal Princess of the Xiang is a metaphor for transcendence (fig. 10)—as in the Nine Songs passage where the seeker, “twisting a spray of cassia,” aches for union with the deity. Herb-gathering transcendent of Daoist lore lucky enough to find a lingzhi, the mushroom of immortality, hold it up the same way (fig. 26). Donors and worshipers in Buddhist painting are frequently pictured approaching a divine being with flower in hand in a gesture of offering or praise, using the thumb-and-forefinger gesture—as does the monk from a cave at Kizil in Central Asia of around the fifth century in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, or the king in the Five Dynasties cave no. 98 at Dunhuang (fig. 27). As an expression of votive sentiment, the small drawing of a hand holding a flower Tao’s way, between two fingers—a fragment of a Buddhist painting on silk of the eighth or ninth
centuries from Toyok—is eloquent enough (fig. 28).

SEX AND IMMORTALITY

The dragon-boat voyage in the Nine Songs mentioned above was undertaken with a specific purpose: the seeker is in quest of a divine woman, and the text is thick with the language of amorous longing. To quote further:

Skimming the water in my cassia boat . . .
I look for the goddess, but she does not come yet . . .
North I go, drawn by my flying dragon . . .
I waft my magic across the Great River.
I waft my magic, but it does not reach her.
The lady is sad, and sighs for me;
And my tears run down over cheeks and chin: I am choked with longing for my lady . . .
The stream runs fast through the stony shallows
And my flying dragon wings swiftly above it. 49

These verses on the “Princess of the Xiang River” and Cao Zhi’s “Nymph of the Luo River” quoted above are early and influential poems in the tradition of cantos on river goddesses, a genre of sensual poetry about the amours of nymphs and princes. Airy and breezy images, such as the winds that spin the snowdrifts in Cao Zhi’s poem, pervade these verses and have an insistent presence in the cantos of later times as well. They suggest cosmic harmonies and divine flight; but there is also an erotic side to them for, as these poems make abundantly clear, the associations of wind in Chinese culture include the idea of the winds of passion.

Wind is the ray of desire beamed by the beauty: “The wind pulled at her precious clothes”; “Wind from her netted gauze underskirt stirs up a light dust”; “In front of the railing, the wind sends off a pervasive fragrance”; “Cold and pink, blown upward by the wind: peach flower petals.” It is the lover’s lust and its consummation: “Willow belts [a sign of the king] shaking in the wind”; “Moon color threads through the hanging screen; wind enters the bamboo”; “blinded by pleasure, his heart proved inadequate, / The wind blows.” Wind is also the shiver of frustration and loss: “the pillow [is] cold,/ The wind is delicate, rain falls in a misty veil”;

Songs and flute airs from the jade storied building,/ Their sound severed, have already followed the wind”;

In green aspens, the wind grows still, concealing my idle resentment”;

“My fleeting life’s lengthy resentments whirl up like tumbleweed.” 49

Love poetry of this sort is a specialized genre, to be sure; but the theme of erotic yearning found there, expressed in the Luo River nymph’s wind-ruffled silhouette, is not altogether incompatible with the yearning of the windblown scholar of the Eastern Fence. The bridge between them—between transcendental and sexual longing—is crossed by the Song poet Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1084-ca. 1151) in a well-known lyric, “Drunk in the Flowery Shade” (Zui huayin 番花陰). This poem is a play on Tao’s fifth Drinking poem that gives it a distinctly erotic twist. Li is writing, she tells us, on the Double Ninth; it is twilight, and she raises a cup at the eastern fence. Her mind, though, is not on South Mountain, but on incense, her jade pillow, and silk bedcurtains stirred by the west wind—an emanation
of her absent lover. Overcome with yearning, she feels “more fragile than the yellow chrysanthemum.” To picture Li Qingzhao’s variation on the theme of Tao Yuanming’s fifth Drinking poem, it would take but a slight variation on the painting of the Scholar of the Eastern Fence. The substitution for Tao of a figure like the Luo River fairy or the woman from the Admonitions scroll would do it (figs. 21, 20): lightly erect in posture, her hems, sleeves, and scarves floating up and out around her—“cold and pink, blown upward by the wind: peach flower petals.”

Let us pursue a bit further our hypothetical transformation of Tao Yuanming into Li Qingzhao at the eastern fence. Li Qingzhao’s distant gaze is fixed not on South Mountain, symbol of otherworldly yearnings, but on a far-off object of amorous desire. The differences between the mountain and the lover are not as absolute as they may at first appear, for love objects had long been a metaphor for transcendental aspirations, and the trajectory of the seeker’s desire a metaphor for the journey to the realms of the immortals.

David Hawkes has elucidated the correspondences between the male shaman’s vain pursuit, “choked with longing,” of the river goddess in his dragon-drawn boat in the “Princess of the Xiang” and magic flights undertaken with the aim of transcending mortality such as that described in Sima Xiangru’s “Great Man” prose-poem (Daren fu 大人賦) of the second century B.C.E. Mystic journeys were often associated with the “quest of the goddess,” and the beauty herself stands for the journey’s fulfillment. After all, the erotic climax, petite mort, has modeled death and immortality in many traditions, as drunken ecstasy did for Tao Yuanming (“I forget heaven,” he wrote, drunk, “but is heaven so far from this after all?”). Finding and uniting with the goddess was to be the poet’s own transfiguration. The cult of Xiwangmu 西王母, the Queen Mother of the West, as Suzanne Cahill sums it up, centered on the conjoined longing for eternal life and perfect love. Donald Holzman explains Ruan Ji’s 叔夜 (210–63) poems of yearning for beautiful immortals in terms of a thwarted fantasy of becoming one with them: “The sadness he feels because he is not able to unite with them is, on one level, sadness for his own mortality.” And the love he feels for them is love for the immortality that these divine females represent in their very bodies. The goddess-like silhouette of the far-gazing Tao Yuanming expresses this fancied union. Tao’s image in the Eastern Fence painting—on the one hand voyaging, on the other feminized—conflates the seeker and the goal.

Indeed, a gender shift is implicit in the courtship between men and divine women; as Stephen Bokenkamp has shown, since human seekers stand in a subordinate relation to divinities, the mortal male suitor of a goddess assumes a feminine role. Though he may pursue her, he will also learn womanly ways of attending, waiting, and receiving. There is a feminine dimension to the very practice of retirement itself: separated from the outside world within the “closed gate” of the reclusive home and garden, the hermit adopts the sheltered inward life of the neiren 内人, the wife or “inside person.”

THE BODHISATTVA

The image of the feminized transcendent goes back at least to the graceful, maidenly flying immortal described in the Zhuangzi 庄子:

there is a Holy Man living on faraway Ku-she Mountain, with skin like ice or snow, and gentle and shy like a young girl. He doesn’t eat the five grains, but sucks the wind, drinks the dew, climbs up on the clouds and mist, rides a flying dragon, and wanders beyond the four seas.

The Daoist vision of the silky flying adept found a place in the culture of Southern Dynasties Buddhism, where the practices of mountain travel and mountain contemplation, suffused with old ideas about shamanistic spirit voyages, were promoted as Buddhist disciplines by the monk Huiyuan 慧遠 (344–416) at his Mount Lu temple community. In his “Treatise Illuminating the Buddha” (Mingfo huan 明佛論) Huiyuan’s adherent Zong Bing 宗炳 (375–443) writes of sages traveling to the ends of the earth like shamans, gaining Buddhist insights and perspectives into cosmic realms. In another essay,
“Introduction on Painting Landscape” (Hua shanshui xu 畫山水序), Zong described the journeys of the imagination he made himself while looking at landscape paintings; these were undertaken in the pursuit of Buddhist enlightenment as well.\(^5^7\)

The imagery of flight and femininity permeates Buddhist art. The flying angels of the cave-temples at Dunhuang might be the Gushe transcendent converted to Buddhism, and the gracious silhouette of the standing bodhisattva also often seems airily adrift. One from an early Tang cave at Dunhuang glides forward with an offering tray; one from a panel of the seventh-century Tamamushi shrine at Hōryūji in Nara holds a lotus with a thoughtful air (figs. 11, 12). Svelte, fringed with swaying scarves and curling hair ribbons, their bodies look fluid and weightless.\(^5^8\) Like goddesses and river nymphs, these standing Buddhist divinities give the impression of having just alit or materialized out of the air. Some are actually engaged in a narrative of flight, like the cloud-borne Guanyin 觀音 as the “guide of souls” coming to gather up the souls of the deserving dead and conduct them back to heaven, a scene represented on silk banners from Dunhuang.\(^5^9\)

Always androgynous, the Chinese bodhisattva image became increasingly feminine in Song, as in the relief of Guanyin holding a rosary at Dazu in Sichuan—a winsome girlish figure facing slightly to the left, scarves trailing behind and curling in front, body lightly arched (fig. 14).\(^6^0\) The description of Guanyin in the sixteenth-century novel Journey to the West (Xiyou ji 西游記) is very much like those of the sexy girls and goddesses invoked by Sima Xiangru, Fu Yi, and Cao Zhi in passages quoted above:

Fringes of dangling pearls and jade,
Scented bracelets set with lustrous treasures,
Dark hair piled smoothly in a coiled-dragon bun,
And elegant sashes lightly fluttering as phoenix quills . . .

Her velvet skirt and golden cords
Wrapped by hallowed air.
With brows of new moon shape
And eyes like two bright stars,
Her jadelike face beams with natural joy,
And her ruddy lips seem a flash of red.\(^6^1\)

The sexual metamorphosis of the bodhisattva has long been recognized, though its causes—and the eroticism of the imagery—are just beginning to be investigated.\(^6^2\) As we have seen, feminine imagery invokes the ideas of revelation, divine wisdom, or immortality modeled by the goddess in early literature. Chinese bodhisattvas—like Tao Yuanming—owe their feminine forms partly to the ancient identification of women with spiritual realization and the hope of heaven.

The similarity of Tao Yuanming’s silhouette to images such as the Dazu bodhisattva is alight with meaning. In so nearly approximating this well-established, familiar Buddhist figure type, Tao’s image presents itself as participating in some way or degree in the meanings represented by the bodhisattva.

It would not be surprising to find Buddhist perceptions in Tao Yuanming’s writings, or at least affinities with Buddhist thought. Buddhism was very much part of the intellectual life of the Eastern Jin period and the Mount Lu region, and many of Tao’s contemporaries were involved and conversant with it. On two occasions Tao himself spoke of “illusion,” a central Buddhist term and concept: the term liuhuan 流幻 “flowing illusion” appears in his poem on “Returning to My Former Residence,” and menghuan 梦幻 “dream-illusion,” a phrase found in the Vimalakirti-nirdeśa sūtra, in the eighth of his Drinking Wine poems.\(^6^3\) The sentiments of disillusionment he sometimes expressed are also compatible with a Buddhist worldview. But such ideas lie at the interface of Buddhist and Daoist thought, and Tao’s commentators have been strongly inclined to locate them in the latter camp. They recognize in his writings a mix of Confucian and Daoist ideas and debate at length—sometimes contentiously—the relative weight of his allegiance to those two schools. Buddhism has rarely been brought into the discussion.

If the written commentaries on Tao for the most part ignore Buddhism, though, the visual record has vigorously engaged with it, drawing unmistakable connections between the poet and Buddhist imagery and ideas. The pose Tao assumes at the eastern fence, facing the numinous Mount Lu, is very close to the classic pose of the bodhisattva in attendance on a central image—like the ones on the Tamamushi
shrine, which adorn the doors to the icon within (fig. 12): the three-quarter view, the tilt of the face, the position of the feet, the curling of the sashes, and the flower-raising gesture.

Indeed, the close similarity between Tao’s pose and that of the bodhisattva Guanyin as Padmapāni—carrying a lotus, symbol of rebirth in the paradise of the Pure Land—implies an equivalence between their two floral attributes. To be sure, the benefits offered by Tao’s medicinal chrysanthemum are trivial compared to those represented by the bodhisattva’s lotus. Since longevity is linked in Chinese thought with transcendence and immortality, though, both flowers ultimately symbolize otherworldly aspirations, and Tao’s bodhisattva-like pose expresses the hope of a lotuslike transcendence and release.

It also draws on other familiar Buddhist stories of lifted flowers that stand for the teaching and its truth. One popularized in the collection Wumen guan 無門関 (The Gateless Pass, 1228) is known as “raising the flower and smiling slightly” (niānhuā weixiao 拔花微笑). It tells of the moment during his sermon on Vulture Peak when Śākyamuni “held up a flower and displayed it to the assembled multitude” as a symbol of ultimate truth.\(^6^1\) A painting dated 1426 by the Japanese artist Kichizan Minchō 吉山明兆 (1352-1431) is a rare illustration of this event, and there is reason to believe it was modeled on a Chinese prototype (fig. 29). Seated on a lotus throne in the clouds, Śākyamuni holds a flower in his right hand in front of his bared chest; his eyes, like Tao’s, seem to be looking through rather than at it. His disciple Kāśyapa stands to the right, clasping his hands in delight while a smile of understanding spreads over his ugly, likable face.\(^6^5\)

The raised flower as wordless symbol of truth plays an active role in another well-known episode recounted in the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa sūtra, during the great philosophical debate between the sage Vimalakīrti and the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī.\(^6^6\) The text tells of a “heavenly woman” (tiānu 天女, goddess or deva) taking part with Vimalakīrti to argue the case for the doctrine of nonduality. She is herself an extremely advanced being, having been in the service of 92 million billion Buddhas and having attained “irreversibility”—the point of no return in her progress toward salvation. In the course of the debate, she makes a point by scattering flowers on the monk Śāriputra. The flowers stand for human attachments, which Śāriputra, as yet not enlightened, is unable to shake off. Though these sticky flowers are illusions, at the same time they are instruments of revelation, part of the argument by which truth is taught. (Indeed, gender itself is an illusion, as the goddess goes on to demonstrate by swapping genders with the monk—who thus in fact becomes, albeit under protest, a feminized seeker.) From an

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**FIG. 29.**
Kichizan Minchō, Śākyamuni “raising the flower and smiling slightly,” 1426, central panel from a seven-painting set. Rokōin, Kyoto.
After Nihon bijutsu taiseki, vol. 4 (Tokyo, 1959-61).
FIG. 30.  
Liu Songnian, Goddess Offering Flowers, detail of an album painting, ink and color on silk, 26.6 × 51.4 cm. National Palace Museum, Taibei.

The general guise of a gliding, breeze-lightened figure holding a single sprig daintily aloft, whether to contemplate, scatter, offer, or display, is a well-established idiom bringing together concepts of femininity, purity, salvation, and transcendence. Tao Yuanming at the eastern fence is an image constructed to suggest these ideas. It represents a visual commentary on Tao’s thoughts about an “ultimate homecoming” on the east hill or at his eastern fence, interpreting them as transcendental aspirations. The language of this commentary involved allusions to divine women who represented these aspirations in early literature—the poet/shaman’s love object and the goal of his impassioned quest. Though this equation of sex and transcendence slipped to the fringes of later literature, it became embedded in the pictorial tradition, offering a feminine form for the concept of divine aspirations and of immortality itself. The erotic object fixed in the seeker’s mind is made manifest in the shape assumed by his person.

The Buddhist analogies of Tao’s silhouette functioned in much the same way. Tao may well have been entirely unaffected by contemporary Buddhism, as later writers have generally supposed; but the visual devices used to depict Buddhist donors and bodhisattvas provided familiar, strongly evocative formulas for representing minds fixed on otherworldly ideals, and Tao’s image-makers had recourse to them.

What, then, of the disjunction between these otherworldly, questing, feminine images and the written traditions of Tao Yuanming criticism with their emphasis on his rustic contentment and personal integrity? The enormous privilege that written discourse and verbal texts have enjoyed in China over history is not in question, nor should we imagine that the illustrators of texts were any less sensible than everyone else to these cultural tropisms. But visual metaphors in Chinese art are not to be explained simply as pictorial versions of verbal discourse, nor is there a corresponding written text for every pictorial invention. What we are accustomed to speaking of as textual illustration should rather be seen as a corpus of visual or pictorial commentary on texts, with access to a vocabulary of meaningful forms of its own—forms that have to be parsed on

early date Vimalakirti’s debate was a very popular subject for illustration, and the goddess with her flowers often figures in the scene. In a fragmentary but particularly fine example, Goddess Offering Flowers (Tiānu xianhua 天女獻花) by Liu Songnian 刘松年 (ca. 1150–after 1225, a contemporary of Liang Kai’s in the late Song Academy), the scarf-lightened, flower-presenting frame of the alluring bodhisattva-goddess is, again, much like Tao Yuanming’s (fig. 30).
their own extratextual terms. When an idea—in this case, the idea of Tao's otherworldly preoccupations—finds expression in a particularly powerful and dynamic visual formulation, it takes on its own kind of momentum and force. The metaphoric use of such forms circulates meanings through the image world, crisscrossing boundaries of subject matter and genre, importing and recharging concept, value, and affect. Tao Yuanming's sashes function metaphorically in this way, inflecting his figure with ideas of flight, divinity, and desire and contributing dimensions to his historical image that cannot be explained within the compass of the written tradition, broad as that compass may be. □

Notes

I'm very much indebted to Stephen Bokenkamp, Robert Ford Campany, Robert Eno, Robert E. Harrist, Jr., and Martin J. Powers for their advice on earlier drafts of this paper.

1. For a color reproduction, see Yuanming yishi tehan tu (Tao Yuanming's Poetry as the Painter's Muse) (Taipei: Guoli Gugong bowuyuan, 1988), fig. 1 and cover. The early history of the painting is not known. In the sixteenth century it was in the collection of Xiang Yuanbian 项元汴 (1515-90) and in the seventeenth that of Liang Qinghao 梁清標 (1620-91). By the middle of the eighteenth century it belonged to the imperial family and is recorded in the first series of the catalogue of the imperial collection, published in 1745 (Shiqu baoji 史渠寶笈 [rpt. Taipei: Guoli Gugong bowuyuan, 1971], 1104-5).

2. Zhao Mengfu's painting is reproduced in color in Yuanming yishi, fig. 14; Du Jin's, in Richard Barnhart, Painters of the Great Ming: The Imperial Court and the Zhe School (Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art, 1993), fig. 143. For other examples of this Tao Yuanming portrait type in various settings or circumstances, see pictures of him raising a wine cup as he sits on an elegant terrace in a Yuan fan in Beijing (reproduced in Ellen Laing, "Six Late Yuan Dynasty Figure Paintings," Oriental Art 20.3 [Autumn 1974]: fig. 3); walking with an open scroll, by the early Ming painter Wang Zhongyu 王仲又; also in Beijing (Zhangguo meishu quanjie: Huaxia bian [Shanghai and Beijing: Wenwu chubu, 1987-89], 6:no. 7); glancing back at a servant carrying a chrysanthemum vase, attributed to Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470-1523), in Taipei (Yuanming yishi, fig. 4); and as a part of a triptych by the fifteenth-century Japanese painter Chû'an Shinkô 仲安真乗, in the Sansô Collection in Claremont, California (Yoshiaki Shimizu and Carolyn Wheelwright, eds., Japanese Ink Paintings [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976], no. 6).


4. In color in Thomas Lawton, Chinese Figure Painting (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1973), see nos. 41 and 42. The leaves are now divided up among the Freer Gallery of Art, the Y Heater Art Gallery, and the Metropolitans Museum of Art in New York. Some of the numerous original inscriptions have been lost, but many are extant in the Shanghai and Metropolitan museums. For notes on the colophons and a sketch of the painting’s history, see Li Junjie, "Songren Suiyung wuxiao tu ji qi tiba" in Shanghai bowuyuan cangba tu (Shanghai, 1989), 155-57. See also Li Lin-ts' an, National Palace Museum Bulletin 8.5 (November-December 1973); and Wen Fong, Beyond Representation: Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, 8th-14th Century (New York, New Haven, and London: Yale University Press, 1992), pl. 7, pp. 44-46.


6. For a color reproduction see Suiboku bijutsu taikai (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1973-78), 5:pl. 3. Founder of the great Zen temple Engaku-ji in Kamakura, Zayuan left China for Japan in 1280 at the fall of Song, perhaps bringing the scroll with him. Other Song pictures of standing gentlemen in stately or formal guises include portraits of Confucius’ seventy-two disciples (Shengxian tu 生賢圖) engraved in stone in 1144 and placed, with Song Gaogong’s 翁巖宗 (r. 1127-62) encomia, at the Imperial University at Hangzhou in 1157; see Julia Murray, “The Hangzhou Portraits of Confucius and Seventy-Two Disciples (Shengxian tu): Art in the Service of Politics,” Art Bulletin 74.1 (March 1992): 7-18, notably Yan Hui 阮惠 with his hunched shoulders and respectful posture (fig. 3). There are some exceptions to the conventional severity of these portraits; a notable example is Liang Kai’s ink sketch of the Tang poet Li Bo 李白 (701-62), rendered with a Tao-like lightness and dynamism (Suiboku bijutsu taikai: color pl. 5).

7. The version illustrated here, evidently a copy after Zhao Mengfu, is in the New York Metropolitan Museum. On Nine Songs illustrations see Deborah Del Gais Muller, “Li Kung-lin’s Ch’ü-ko tu: A Study of the ‘Nine Songs’ Handscrolls in the Sung and Yuan Dynasties” (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1981), and “Chang Wu: Study of a Fourteenth-Century Figure Painter,” Artibus Asiae 47:1 (1986): 5-30; Zhang Wu 張渥 (ca. 1300-65), who painted several versions of this set of...
illustrations, was said to have studied Liang Kai as well as Li Gonglin. According to record, he also painted a "small portrait of Tao Qian" on paper in the baimiao (plain drawing) style; to judge from the description, it seems to have been of the standard airily walking Tao type. See Bian Yongyu 卞永譽, Shigutang shuhua hukao 无锡堂书画考 (preface 1682; Taipei: Zhenghong shuju, 1958), 4:233, and Wu Sheng 吴升, Daguan lu 大观錄 (preface 1712; Taipei: Guoli zhongyang tushuguan, 1970), 4:2287 (scroll 18, p. 58a).


9. For an ample overview of Tao criticism see the two-volume compendium Tao Yuannming yanjiu ziliao hui bian (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962). The themes of death and restless yearning in Tao’s writing are occasionally acknowledged in these commentaries but rarely emphasized.  


11. A colophon by Li Peng 李彭, who transcribed the text on the scroll, is dated 1110. For the Freer scroll see Lawton, Chinese Figure Painting, 38–41; and Elizabeth Brotherton, “Li Kung-lin and Long Handscroll Illustrations of Tao Ch‘ien’s ‘Returning Home’” (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1992).

12. Jingjie xiansheng ji, 5:6a–8b; trans. Hightower, Tao Ch‘ien, 270. The preceding and following Tao figures (the sixth and eighth) in Li Gonglin’s scroll are shown tending to the fields and “composing poetry beside the clear stream,” rounding out the imagery of the passage.

13. See Yuannming yizhi for reproductions of the complete Taibei scroll (no. 13, pp. 20–21 and 72–79) and the Qiu Ying attribution (no. 15, pp. 24–24 and 80–85). For the Liaoning scroll, see Liaoning sheng bowuguan canghua ji (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1962), 2pl. 8–14.


15. In color in Zhongguo meishu quanzhi: Huihua bian, 1: no. 44. The same device for distinguishing water from air is found in the Wu Family offering shrines of the second century C.E.; see Wu Hung, The Wu Liang Shrine: The Ideology of Early Chinese Pictorial Art (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), figs. 31 and 32.


18. See Martin J. Powers, Art and Political Expression in Early China (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pl. 2 and figs. 110, 114, 146; Wu Hung, Wu Liang Shrine, fig. 41.


23. The genre, however, continued to flourish in the Tang. Edward Schafer has written extensively on the subject; see, inter alia, his Pacing the Void (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977). For a recent study see Yan Jinxiong, Tangdai youxian shi yanjiu (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1996).


30. Jingji xiansheng ji, 6.2b; trans. Hightower, Tao Ch’ien, 256.

31. Jingji xiansheng ji, 2.11b–12a; trans. Hightower, Tao Ch’ien, 71. Tao’s verses on reading an illustrated edition of the Shanhai jing (山海经—the Classic of Mountains and Seas), a compendium of ancient folklore, are (naturally enough) full of fantastic imagery. See Jingji xiansheng ji, 4.12, and Hightower’s translation and commentary, pp. 229–48.

32. The extant Admonitions scroll (reproduced in color in Zhongguo meishu quanjji: Huihua bian, 1:no. 93) is a copy perhaps of Tang date, but it reflects the figure style of Gu’s time as represented by authentic dated or datable works such as the painted lacquer fragments found in the tomb of Sima Jinlong 司馬金龍 (d. 484 C.E.) at Datong (no. 100 in the same volume).


37. The virtuous wife has sometimes served in Chinese literature as a metaphor for the loyal official, whether appreciated or (like Qu Yuan) neglected, but I have not seen this metaphor used in reference to Tao Yuanming, nor have I found anything in the literature on Tao that seems to correspond to this visually proposed femininity.

38. Zhou Fang’s painting is reproduced in color in Zhongguo meishu quanjji: Huihua bian, 2:no. 23.

39. Guardian figures and other virile male divinities are commonly shown with flying sashes too, but theirs tend to have a snapping, nooselike shape quite distinct from the smoother, undulating patterns of the goddesses—and Tao Yuanming’s.

40. Color reproductions of the examples illustrated here can be found in Yuanming yishi, figs. 5 and 6. See also the opening scene of Chen Hongshou’s 陳洪綬 scroll of episodes from Tao’s life, illustrated in color in Hongnam Kim, The Life of a Patron: Zhou Lianggong (1612–1672) and the Painters of Seventeenth-Century China (New York: China Institute in America, 1996), fig. 37. Other “episodes” scrolls are reproduced and discussed in Kohara Hironobu, “Rō Shubaku hitsu To Enmei jisekuzukan” (On “Scroll Paintings of Chinese Poet ‘T’ao Yuan-ming’s Deeds” by Li Tsung-mo), Yanato banka 67 (February 1981): 33–63.

41. See, for instance, Ma Yuan’s fan paintings of viewing plum blossoms reproduced in Maggie Bickford et al., Bones of Jade, Soul of Ice: The Flowering Plum in Chinese Art (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1989), figs. 9–11; one of these is reproduced in color in Richard Barnhart, Peach Blossom Spring: Gardens and Flowers in Chinese Paintings (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983), no. 4. See also the pictures of Lin Bu 林逋 (965–1026), a great admirer of plum blossoms, reproduced in Stephen Little’s “Dimensions of a

42. Richard Vinograd thinks the painting is a self-portrait; see Boundaries of the Self: Chinese Portraits, 1600–1900 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 124. The painting is reproduced in color in pl. 16. Luo Ping’s chrysanthemum-holding Yuan Mei 易枚 uses the same masculine hand gesture (Vinograd, Boundaries, color pl. 12, printed in reverse). Eighteenth-century scholars often had themselves painted standing and holding objects with which they wished to be identified. Popular choices were books, scrolls, writing brushes, and their own beards; a very few chose flowers. See Qu Guanqun and Hua Rende, eds., Zhongguo lidai mingren tujuan, 2 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1989).

43. See Bickford, Bones of Jade, on “The Plum-Blossom Beauty” (18–22), and for a selection of poems on blossoms, beauties, and the passage of time translated by Hans Frankel.

44. From the “Greater Master of Fate” Dasiming 大司命 (Hawkes, Ch’u T’zu, 40). Passionate floral offerings to the riverine lady-love are also described in the “Lady of the Xiang” Xiang juren 江夫人 (Hawkes, “Quest of the Goddess,” 74, and Ch’u T’zu, 39)—a gesture again at once amorous and votive. Much of the flower and plant imagery that pervades the Nine Songs is associated with spiritual quest and union. And divinities may indeed respond to the lure of flowers; drawn by their fragrance, in the “Lady of the Xiang,” “like clouds in number the spirits come thronging.”

45. The painting, judged to be of the Liao dynasty (tenth-twelfth centuries), is reproduced in color in Zhongguo meishu quanjji: Huixia bian, 3pl. 53. See also the female “mountain spirit” shanggu 叔姑 wearing a grass cape, riding a leopard, and holding up a flower in a handscrew illustrating the Nine Songs in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Wu Tung, Tales from the Land of Dragons [Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1997], no. 91, pp. 194–96).

46. For a color reproduction of the king see Chigoku sekkotsu: Tonkō bakkōkutsu (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1980–82), 5pl. 13. Long-stemmed flowers were sometimes added later to pictures of donors and worshipers, curving up from the cuffs of the figures’ sleeved wrists; examples of this practice are associated with Uighur and Xixia patrons. See Tonkō bakkōkutsu, 5pl. 134, and Along the Ancient Silk Routes: Central Asian Art from the West Berlin State Museums (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1982), nos. 108–9. The flowers evidently represented wishes for rebirth in certain paradises or states (Ancient Silk Routes, 169).

47. Reproduced in color in Ancient Silk Routes, no. 132.


52. “Drinking Alone in the Rainy Season,” Lianyu duyin, trans. Hightower, Tao Ch’ien, 71. “Stillling the Passions” Xianqing fu 凡情賦 (263–67) is Tao’s own unique venture into amorous verse.

53. Cahill describes this “divine passion” as “the desire of deities and humans for mutual union and communication.” “The marriage, often described in the most sensual of metaphors, was meant to leave sexuality behind and concentrate on the spiritual advancement of both parties” (Transcendence and Divine Passion: The Queen Mother of the West in Medieval China [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993], 3).


58. Like the Kichijōten and the ladies on the Shōsōin screen mentioned above, the paintings on the Tamamushi shrine are of Japanese facture but very close to contemporary Tang Chinese styles. The Dunhuang painting, from cave no. 401, is reproduced in color in Tenkō bakkōkutsu, 3pl. 7. See also the ninth-century bodhisattva offering a flower from cave no. 199, in Roderick Whitfield and Anne Farrer, Caves of the Thousand Buddhas: Chinese Art from the Silk Route (New York: Braziller, 1990), 19.

59. For color reproductions of ninth- and tenth-century examples see Whitfield and Farrer, Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, figs. 14 and 15.


63. Hightower calls attention to these instances (T’ao Chi’en, 116-17 and 136-37). For possible Buddhist elements in “Substance, Shadow, Spirit,” see Hightower’s notes on pp. 44-45 and references there to studies by Lu Qili and Chen Yinke. Yoshioka Yoshitoyo has seen Pure Land Buddhist ideas, motivated by Tao’s mourning for his sister, in “Returning Home” Guiyului; see “Kiyorai no ji to Bukkyō” (The “Returning Home” Poem and Buddhism), Ishihama sensei koki kinen Tōyōgaku ronsō (Osaka, 1958), 610-22.

64. The sixth case or example (gòng’ián 公業) in the collection; Heinrich Dumoulin, trans., Wu-men-qual: Der Pass ohne Tor (Tokyo, 1953), 17ff. The verb nian, “to raise or hold up,” also means “to twist, toy with, finger”—it is a fingering kind of verb.


67. Li Gonglin is said to have painted it, and a number of extant versions in the “plain drawing” style associated with him, dating from the late Song and Yuan periods, are still extant. See, for example, a scroll in Beijing attributed to Ma Yunqing 马雲卿, a Jin court painter active around 1250, said to be based on an original by Li Gonglin; it is reproduced in color in Zhongguo meishu quanjí: Huishu bian, 4pl. 138. Another version in the Hague collection is attributed to Li himsélf but probably fourteenth century in date of execution; see Suiboku bijutsu taisei, 4pl. 12. Many pre-Song depictions of this scene are also extant.

68. The painting is superbly reproduced in color in Songdai shuhua ceye mingpin tezhan (Famous Album Leaves of the Sung Dynasty) (Taibei: Guoli Gugong bowuguan, 1995), no. 46, and discussed by Li Yumin on pp. 279-80. In this fragment, as Li notes, the usual composition is reversed: Mañjuśrī is to the right, attended by monks and lions, and Vimalakirti, now missing, to the left.
Astronomical Tomb Paintings from Xuanhua: Maṇḍalas?

ABSTRACT

While the popularity of cremation in China between the tenth and thirteenth centuries is well documented, archaeological evidence for the Buddhist impact on the practice has been lacking. A group of Liao dynasty (907–1125) tombs from the Xuanhua district in Hebei Province, belonging to Chinese residents, provides significant visual testimony to the application of Buddhist rituals in disposing of the dead by cremation. The paintings of celestial objects, drawn on tomb ceilings and framed with Buddhist motifs, show striking similarities to esoteric Star Maṇḍalas and demonstrate the acceptance of Buddhist horoscopic astrology by the laity. Executed during the Liao-Jin transition period, the Xuanhua astronomical paintings include the earliest illustrations yet known of zodiacal symbols in the popular pantheon of East Asia. The paintings are important clues to the synthesis of Buddhist and Chinese views of, and the ways to deal with, life after death.
FIG. 1.
The Xuanhua tombs. After Wenwu 1996.9:14, fig. 1.

FIG. 2.
Astronomical painting from tomb M1. After Wenwu 1975.8:44.

FIG. 3.
Astronomical painting from tomb M2. After Wenwu 1990.10:5, fig. 17.

FIG. 4.
Astronomical Tomb Paintings
from Xuanhua: Manḍalas?

THE AIM OF THIS PAPER IS TO ANALYZE THE ASTRONOMICAL PAINTINGS FOUND ON THE CEILINGS OF A GROUP OF LIAO DYNASTY (907–1125) TOMBS FROM THE XUANHUA DISTRICT, HEBEI PROVINCE, AND DISCUSS THEIR RELEVANCE TO CONTEMPORARY ASTRONOMICAL AND BUDDHIST DRAWINGS. PREVIOUS STUDIES HAVE DESCRIBED THESE PAINTINGS AS STAR MAPS (xingtu 星圖) OR "UNUSUAL FLOWER DEPICTION(S)." BUT ARE THESE REALLY STAR MAPS—MAPS OF THE SKY AS THE PEOPLE LIVING IN THE LIAO KINGDOM SAW IT? ARE THEY "UNUSUAL"?

IN THIS ESSAY I SHALL ATTEMPT TO SHOW THAT BUDDHIST HOROSCOPIC ASTROLOGY AND ESOTERIC MANḍALAS, POPULAR IN EAST ASIA BETWEEN THE TENTH AND THIRTEENTH CENTURIES, INSPIRED THE DRAWINGS ON XUANHUA TOMB CEILINGS. CONTRARY TO CURRENT INTERPRETATIONS, SCIENTIFIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE UNIVERSE, I WILL CONTEND, HAD LITTLE TO DO WITH THE EXECUTION OF THE XUANHUA PAINTINGS. IN ORDER TO PRESENT MY ARGUMENTS, I SHALL FIRST DISCUSS THE SOCIAL STATUS OF THE OCCUPANTS OF THE XUANHUA TOMBS AND EXAMINE THE SINO-BUDDHIST MORTUARY TRADITION PRACTICED BY THEM. NEXT, I WILL COMPARE THE XUANHUA PAINTINGS TO OTHER IMPORTANT ASTRONOMICAL DIAGRAMS FOUND IN CHINESE TOMBS. I SHALL, THEN, DEMONSTRATE THE STRIKING SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE XUANHUA PAINTINGS AND THE ESOTERIC STAR MANḍALAS FOUND IN CHINA AND JAPAN. THE XUANHUA ASTRONOMICAL PAINTINGS, I ARGUE, ATTEST TO THE IMPACT OF TANTRIC BUDDHISM ON LIAO FUNERAL RITES RATHER THAN REVEALING ANY ADVANCES IN THE ACCURATE MAPPING OF THE SKY. THESE PAINTINGS ARE CLOSELY RELATED TO THE PATRONS' BELIEF IN AN AFTERLIFE AS WELL AS THEIR WISH TO ESCAPE THE TORMENTS OF HELL AND ACHIEVE REBIRTH IN FORTUNATE REALMS.

THE XUANHUA TOMBS AND THEIR OCCUPANTS

THE SUBTERRANEAN TOMBS CONTAINING THE ASTRONOMICAL PAINTINGS ARE LOCATED IN THE XIABALI VILLAGE OF THE XUANHUA DISTRICT (FIG. 1), NEAR THE MODERN CITY OF ZHANGJIAKOU 張家口市. DURING THE LIAO DYNASTY, FOUNDED BY THE SEMINOMADIC QIDAN TRIBE, THIS REGION WAS KNOWN AS GUIHUA PREFECTURE (GUIHUA ZHOU 隨化州), BELONGING TO THE QINGHE COMMANDERY (QINGHE JUN 清河郡) IN THE LIAO WESTERN CAPITAL CIRCUIT (XIJING DAO 西京道).

THE FIRST TOMB, NUMBERED M1, WAS EXCAVATED IN 1971. THE MAIN CHAMBER OF THIS TWIN-CHAMBERED TOMB IS 6.8 METERS LONG, 3.10 METERS WIDE, AND 4.40 METERS HIGH. AMONG OBJECTS FOUND INSIDE WERE A FUNERARY INSCRIPTION, VARIOUS CLAY FIGURINES, AND STONE STATUES OF LIONS. THE WALLS OF THE TOMB ARE PAINTED WITH FIGURES OF MUSICIANS AND SCENES FROM DAILY LIFE. THE ASTRONOMICAL PAINTING (FIG. 2), DESCRIBED BELOW, IS DRAWN ON THE CEILING ABOVE THE COFFIN.


THE FUNERARY INSCRIPTION NOTES THAT SHIQING RECEIVED THE TITLES OF YOUBAN DIANZHI 右班殿直 (PALACE EUNUCH ON THE RIGHT DUTY GROUP), YINQING RONGLU DAFU 銀青榮祿大夫 (GRAND MASTER FOR GLORIOUS HAPPINESS WITH SILVER SEAL AND BLUE RIBBON),
jianjiao guozi jiju 檢校國子祭酒 (acting chancellor of the National University), jiancha yushi 監察御史 (investigating censor), and yunqiwei 雲騎尉 (commandant of Fleet-as-clouds Cavalry) because he donated food to the government during the famine of the Da'an 大安 period (1085–95). The inscription also points out that his grandson, Zhang Shen 張伸, married a woman from the Yelü 耶律 clan.7

In March 1989 two single-chambered tombs, numbered M2 and M3, were discovered near Zhang Shiqing’s grave.8 Located a few meters north of M1, tomb M2 contains a hexagonal chamber measuring 2.9 meters long, 2.4 meters wide, and 1.8 meters high. Objects found inside the tomb include a funerary inscription, earthenware, porcelain vases and bowls, and metal utensils. The walls, like those of Zhang Shiqing’s tomb, are painted with scenes from daily life. The astronomical painting (fig. 3) is likewise drawn on the ceiling above the coffin. The occupant of this tomb, according to the funerary inscription, is Zhang Gongyou 張恭誇, who died in the third year of the Tianqing era (1113) at the age of 45 sui. Gongyou was cremated in the seventh year of the same reign era (1117).

The underground chamber of tomb M3, located 40 meters southeast of tomb M1, is circular in shape. Although only 2.64 meters in diameter, the tomb holds a large number of funerary objects, including an inscription, earthenware, porcelain and metal utensils, and wooden furniture. The walls of the tomb are painted with floral motifs and pictures of birds.9 The eastern and western walls feature paintings of a woman in what seems to be a study room.10 The astronomical painting (fig. 4) in this tomb, as in the previous two, is drawn on the ceiling above the coffin.

The funerary inscription from M3 reveals that the tomb belonged to Zhang Shiben 張世本, who died in the fourth year of the Da’an era (1088).11 Shiben’s cremation took place five years later. His wife, bearing the surname Jiao 焦, died in the third year of the Huangtong 皇統 era (1143) of the Jin dynasty (1115–1234). She was then 93 sui. After her cremation a year later, her mortal remains were placed alongside her husband’s.

By the time of née Jiao’s death, the Jurchens had overthrown the Liao kingdom and established another non-Chinese dynasty in northern China. Also by that time, the grandsons of Zhang Shiben, according to his funerary inscription (re-)written in 1144, held the prestigious jinshi 进士 degrees.12

The occupant of tomb M4 is Han Shixun 韓師訓. The tomb, excavated in 1990, is situated furthest from the three above.13 This is perhaps because Han Shixun was not related to the Zhangs and therefore occupied a different site in the cemetery. Yet, like the Zhangs, his body was incinerated.

Due to gravediggers only a few of the funerary objects originally placed in Shixun’s twin-chambered tomb have survived. According to his funerary inscription, Shixun died in the tenth year of the Qiantong 乾統 era (1110) at the age of 68 sui and was cremated a year later. The inscription also discloses that Han Shixun was a merchant. On the western wall is a painting of a man leading a horse, a motif found in Zhang Shiquing’s tomb and common to other Liao tombs as well, which may represent Han Shixun’s profession. An astronomical painting was also drawn in this tomb, as can be discerned in the faded images on the ceiling. But severe water leakage reportedly damaged the ceiling and the painting.14

In 1993, excavation of six more tombs in the area was undertaken. The first of these tombs, numbered M5, is located about 18 meters southwest of tomb M1. The hexagonal main chamber of this tomb measures 2.7 by 3.16 by 2.49 meters. The funerary inscription notes that the occupant, Zhang Shigu 張世古, died in the eighth year of the Qiantong era (1108). Shigu, 59 sui at the time of his death, was cremated almost ten years later, in the seventh year of the Tianqing era (1117).15

Tomb M6, whose octagonal main chamber is 3.2 meters long, 3.22 meters wide, and 3.4 meters high, is as yet undated.16 The proximity of the tomb to the already identified Zhang family graves indicates that the occupant of M6 was probably a member of the Zhang family. And, as shall be argued later, the occupant may have been cremated around the same time as the Zhangs who occupy tombs M3 and M7.

Tomb M7 belongs to Zhang Wenzao 張文藻, who died in the tenth year of the Xianyong 昔雍 era
(1074) at the age of 46 sui. Wenzao and his wife, née Jia 賈, were cremated in the ninth year of the Da’an era (1093). The main chamber of this tomb is 2.7 meters when measured north to south and 2.89 meters east to west. The well-preserved artifacts and paintings in tombs M5, M6, and M7, including their astronomical paintings (figs. 5, 6, and 7), are examined below.

The number M8 has been assigned to a completely ruined tomb in the Xuanhua cemetery. According to the excavators, almost nothing of the tomb chamber or the funerary artifacts has survived. Similarly, the ceiling of tomb M9, located 5 meters south of tomb M7 and 12 meters southeast of tomb M6, is totally destroyed. Also, portions of front and back chambers, as well as the wall paintings, have been partially damaged. Lack of funerary inscription, furthermore, prevents the identification of the occupant and dating of the tomb.

Tomb M10, on the other hand, is well preserved. Funerary artifacts, the epitaph, the vivid pictures of daily life (including that of a tea ceremony), musicians, and the astronomical painting (fig. 8) on the ceiling have survived the pillaging of gravediggers and ravages of nature. The occupant of this tomb, according to the funerary inscription, is Zhang Kuangzheng 張匡正, who died in the fourth year of the Qingning 清寧 era (1058) at the age of 75 sui. Kuangzheng was cremated thirty-five years later in the ninth year of the Da’an period (1093).

Funerary inscriptions help identify the relationships among the occupants of tombs M1, M2, M5, M7, and M10. The eldest member of the Zhang family found in the Xuanhua cemetery is Zhang...
Kuangzheng, the occupant of tomb M10. The remains of his son, Zhang Wenzao, are preserved in tomb M7. Tomb M5 belongs to Wenzao’s son Shigu—the father of Gongyou of tomb M2. Moreover, Zhang Kuangzheng’s funerary inscription suggests that Zhang Shiqing of tomb M1 was his great-nephew. Zhang Shiben, of tomb M3, cannot be definitively linked to any of the Zhangs. Diagram 1 illustrates the kinship relation among the Zhangs entombed in the Xuanhua cemetery.

It seems that the Guihua Zhangs, who lived and died during the reign of Qidans, did not hold any bureaucratic positions. The funerary inscriptions would have mentioned the official posts held by the tomb occupants. Even Zhang Shiqing, who is noted to have received a number of titles from the Liao court, probably was given official designations without any actual administrative posts or authority. Nonetheless, the Zhangs were wealthy and influential residents of the Guihua prefecture. The lavish display of funerary artifacts, the decorated tombs, and the facts that Zhang Shiqing could donate large quantities of grain to the government and, at the same time, afford to spend money on Buddhist monks and monasteries demonstrate the family’s affluence. Much of their wealth (perhaps acquired through commerce) and fame may have been accumulated during the time of Zhang Shiqing. Shiqing seems to have provided funds for, and perhaps also oversaw, the cremation of Zhang Kuangzheng and his son Wenzao. This may be why Shiqing’s name, accompanied by one of his titulary offices (the palace eunuch on the Right Duty Group), is inscribed on the epitaphs of both Kuangzheng and Wenzao.

Shiqing’s wealth and reputation may have even laid the foundation for the ultimate change, by the early Jin dynasty, in the social status of the Zhang family from commercial specialists to degree and office holders.

THE MORTUARY TRADITION OF THE ZHANGS

Even after the change in their social status and the fall of the Liao kingdom, the mortuary beliefs of the Zhangs seem to have remained unchanged. From Zhang Kuangzheng, entombed in 1093, to née Jiao, the wife of Zhang Shiben who died in 1144, the Zhangs followed the method, increasingly popular in East Asia, of disposing of the dead by cremation.

Promoted by the Buddhists, cremation was common among Chinese and non-Chinese people living in Central and Eastern Asia between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. Patricia Ebrey estimates that during the Song dynasty (960–1279) about 10 to 30 percent of the deceased were cremated. More than seventy crematory tombs, dating from the tenth to twelfth centuries, excavated from Beijing, Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning, Hebei, Shanxi, and Inner Mongolia indicate that the Buddhist custom was prevalent in Liao and Jin territories as well.

The connection between Buddhist beliefs and cremation in the Xuanhua cemetery is clearly recorded in Zhang Shiqing’s funerary inscription. The “Chāpī rìtú of the Western Heaven [i.e., India]” (xiān chāpī lǐ 西天茶毗禮), according to the inscription, was employed to cremate his body. Chāpī (Jp. dābi), a transliteration of the Pāli word
jāpeti (Sk. dhyāpayati), was originally the manner in which the ksāpayatis (kings) in South Asia, and later the Buddha, were cremated.25

“Cremation,” as Bernard Faure points out, “was perceived by Indian Buddhists as dissociation/annihilation, and/or as re-creation/reincorporation.”26 In China, however, people believed not only in preserving dead bodies and delaying their decay but also in the existence of souls of the dead that needed nourishment from their living descendants.27 Indeed, the idea of the existence of souls seems to have had a great impact on the Buddhist teachings of anattā (no self) in China.28 As a result, we find indigenous Chinese Buddhist texts, such as the Yulanpen jing 孟蘭盆經 (Āvalambana Sūtra)29 and Guanding jing 況頂經 (Consecration Sūtra),30 acknowledging the importance of offering food to the spirits of the dead and consenting to the Chinese custom of entombing the dead.31 One Tantric master, Yixing 一行 (673?–727) of the Tang dynasty (618–907), even ventured to write several books on geomancy.32

The mixing of Buddhist and Chinese beliefs in an afterlife is manifested in the practice of cremation followed by the burial of mortal remains in decorated tombs. In this regard, the Xuanhua tombs are important examples because they provide visual and written evidence linking the practice of cremation in East Asia to Buddhist ideas, something Ebrey finds to be rare in cremation burials.33 In fact, the Xuanhua tombs indicate that the residents of Guihua pre-

feature were strongly influenced by Buddhist teachings. Zhang Shiqing, for example, may have been a lay Buddhist. He is, in his funerary inscription, noted to have donated money to Buddhist monasteries, invited Buddhist monks and nuns to build an altar (daochang 道場) in his manor, recited (song 諦) the Fahuajing 法華經 (Saddharmapundarika Sūtra) one hundred times and read (du 預) the Jinguangmingjing 金光明經 (Suvarga-prabhāsottama Sūtra) two thousand times, and had a dhāraṇī pillar (beita 碑塔) erected in the western suburb of his town. Moreover, one of the paintings in his tomb depicts the Buddhist sūtras Jingangjing 金剛經 (Vajracchedikā [prajñāpāramitā] Sūtra) and Changqingjingjing 常青淨經 (Prāśādika Sūtra) being prepared for reading.

Tombs M5, M7, and M10 also display a significant impact from Buddhism. The wooden coffins of Zhang Shigu, Zhang Wenzao, and Zhang Kuangzheng, who occupy these three tombs, are decorated with various dhāraṇīs (incantations) written in both Chinese and Sanskrit (fig. 9). On the left side of the coffin covers appear the five bija syllables: om, ram, a, am, van.34 The other three sides have Chinese graphs that may be translated as follows:

The dhāraṇī coffin, with its reflective powers, will hopefully relieve the soul [from hell?] and [help] it return. It is unheard of that hell keeps heavenly [bound] bodies forever. [We] trust that

FIG. 9.
Dhāraṇī coffin, tomb M7.
After Wenwu 1996.9:pl. 9.3.
particularly Tantric teachings, on Liao funerary rites extended throughout the kingdom. Dhāraṇīs, such as the Foshuo shengtian tuoluoni 佛說生天陀羅尼 (The Dhārṇī [for those Seeking Re]birth in Heaven as Spoken by the Buddha), and Zhuansheng jingtu tuoluoni 轉生浹土陀羅尼 (The Dhārṇī for Rebirth in the Pure Land), found on the inscribed funerary bells and in the Xuanhua tombs, suggest that a certain number, if not a majority, of people living in the Liao territory, including Han Shixun and the Zhangs of Guihua prefecture, believed that Tantric magical spells could help the dead escape from hell and achieve rebirth in fortunate realms.\(^{38}\)

THE ASTRONOMICAL PAINTINGS

Iconographically and chronologically the seven extant astronomical paintings from the Xuanhua tombs can be divided into three groups.\(^{39}\) The paintings in the first group, found in tombs M3, M6, M7, and M10, consist of four concentric circles. The innermost circles have drawings of lotus. Ornamented circular bronze mirrors, all of which have now dropped to the tomb floors, were originally placed in the center of the lotus in each of the paintings. Surrounding the lotus, in the second circle, are the Sun, Moon, and illustrations of the twenty-eight lunar lodges in the form of star diagrams. The outer two circles, which are divided into eight sections, have drawings of flowers and leaves.

We know from the funerary inscriptions found in tombs M3, M7, and M10 that their occupants, Zhang Shiben, Zhang Wenzao, and Zhang Kuangzheng, were all cremated in 1093. Lack of funerary inscription or any dated material from tomb M6, as noted above, makes it difficult to date the tomb and, as a result, the astronomical painting. But the similarities in the layout of the astronomical drawings and the motifs used to paint the walls of tomb M6 and the other three indicate that these four tombs may have been constructed at the same time. It is conceivable that the wall paintings, including the astronomical drawings, in this group of tombs were all executed by the same artist(s).\(^{40}\)

The astronomical painting in Zhang Shiqing’s M1 tomb is, as yet, the sole representative of a second
group. In the center of this painting, perhaps drawn just before Shiqing’s cremation in 1116, is a nine-petal lotus. An unornamented circular mirror, as in the above paintings of the first group, was initially placed in the center of the lotus. The lotus is surrounded by the nine luminaries: Sun, Moon, Mars, Jupiter, Mercury, Venus, Saturn, and the two imaginary planets Râhu and Ketu. The Big Dipper (Ursa Major, or the beidou 北極星) is located in the northwest. The twenty-eight lunar lodges, in the form of star diagrams, encircle the luminaries. The outer circle is illustrated with twelve Western zodiacal signs (shier gong 十二辰).

The astronomical paintings from tombs M2 and M5, occupied respectively by Zhang Shigu and Zhang Gongyou (both cremated in 1117), can be classified into a third group. These two paintings, like the drawings discussed above, consist of lotus and mirror in the center. The twelve zodiacal signs, instead of being in the outer circle, now encircle the lotus. The twenty-eight lunar lodges (in the form of star diagrams) and the Sun and the Moon come next. The twelve calendrical animals (duodenary series) in human form, which are usually found on epitaphs, enclose the painting. It seems that the calendrical animals, which are drawn separately within two circles, were not part of the core diagram but may have been added to emphasize the patrons’ belief in cosmic forces.

There are, however, appreciable differences between the two paintings belonging to the third group: (1) the circle to enclose the lotus in tomb M2 is not used in M5; and (2) the Big Dipper drawn in the M5 painting is absent from M2. These discrepancies may have resulted from the fact that the two paintings were drawn by different hands. In fact, when compared, the images of the zodiacal signs and the duodenary series in the two paintings show two distinctive styles. For example, the gowns worn by the human figures representing the duodenary series in the painting from M2 have pointed edges (fig. 11a), but in the case of M5 they are rounded (fig. 11b). While the images of calendrical animals in M2 are represented in the form of caps, the animals in tomb M5 are drawn inside the caps. Moreover, the zodiacal signs in tomb M2 bear distinct “v” marks that are not found in other drawings.

The painting from tomb M1 seems to indicate that all the above astronomical drawings were meant to be drawn facing the sky and not the floor of the tombs. This way (fig. 12) not only do the twenty-eight lunar lodges correspond to the four directional animals, but the Sun and the Moon also occupy...
their proper positions (Sun in the east and Moon in the west), and the zodiacal signs follow their normal clockwise position. A major disparity among the three groups of astronomical paintings, apart from the addition of new motifs, is in the number of lotus petals. The painting in tomb M1 has nine, M2 has eight, M3 six, M5 (part of which is destroyed) may have had either eleven or twelve, and the lotus in tomb M7 has seven petals. A possible explanation for this incongruity is offered below.

CURRENT INTERPRETATION OF THE XUANHUA ASTRONOMICAL PAINTINGS

The use of celestial symbols is not unique to the Xuanhua tombs. The earliest evidence indicating the use of celestial motifs in Chinese mortuary tradition can be traced to a tomb from Xishuipo 西水坡, near Puyang city 濮陽市 in Henan. The tomb is carbon 14 dated to between 4510 and 3850 B.C.E.⁴³ According to Feng Shi 風時 and other Chinese scholars who have commented on this tomb, the figures of a dragon and a white tiger (two of the four directional animals) and the Big Dipper represented inside the tomb imply the application of the twenty-eight lunar lodges concept. Feng Shi points out the similarity between the astronomical layout in the Puyang tomb and a diagram found on a lacquer box in the tomb of Marquis Yi 曾侯乙, who lived in what is now Sui county 隨縣, Hubei, during the Warring States period (403–221 B.C.E.).⁴⁴ The graphs for the Big Dipper, on the box, are drawn in the center of the diagram. The names of the twenty-eight lunar lodges encircle the above two graphs. On the opposite sides of the lunar lodges are figures of a dragon and a tiger. This diagram, and the concept of drawing celestial objects in tombs, Feng concludes, developed from the pattern depicted in the Xishuipo tomb. The two diagrams, according to him, are “solid representations of the hemispherical dome theory” (gaitian yuzhouhun de liti biaoxian 大天宇宙論的立體表現).⁴⁵

According to Sima Qian’s 司馬遷 Shiji 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian), an astronomical diagram is also painted on the ceiling of Emperor Qinshihuang’s 秦始皇 (r. 221–210 B.C.E.) tomb.⁴⁶ It is only after the First Emperor’s tomb is excavated that we can verify the above record. Yet a tomb from Luoyang confirms that the concept of drawing celestial objects on tomb ceilings was fully developed by the Western Han period (202 B.C.E.–9 C.E.). The paintings in the Luoyang tomb include the Big Dipper in the form of a star diagram, and the Sun (with a raven in the center) and Moon (with a tortoise in the center).⁴⁷ Astronomical diagrams continued to be drawn on tomb ceilings during the Northern Wei (386–535), Tang, and Five Dynasties (907–60) periods⁴⁸ and can even be found in some Korean tombs.⁴⁹

It is possible that some of the above diagrams may have influenced the Xuanhua paintings. The diagrams (see, for example, fig. 13) found in tombs belonging to members of the royal Qian 棋 family of the Wuyue kingdom (907–78), for example, are chronologically close forerunners to the Xuanhua astronomical paintings.⁵⁰ Given the evidence of flourishing political and commercial relations between the Qidans and the Wuyue kingdom in Zhejiang,⁵¹ it is conceivable that either the pictorial design or the concept of representing the universe
on tomb ceilings, or both the design and concept, were transmitted to the Liao territory. The Bohai sea-faring traders, who frequented the Liao territories and Zhejiang,\(^2\) and the fact that a considerable number of Bohai households were transplanted to Xuanhua by Abaoji 阿保機 (Emperor Taizu 太祖, r. 907–26), make the connection between Zhejiang and Xuanhua plausible.\(^3\) Similar arguments can also be made for the Korean paintings. As will be argued below, however, if the Wuyue and Korean diagrams were an inspiration at all, they may not have been the only one for the people who conceived the Xuanhua paintings.\(^4\)

Chinese scholars who have analyzed the paintings from Xuanhua have focused only on their relevance to the development of astronomical knowledge in ancient China.\(^5\) One of their major concerns is to prove that the concept of twenty-eight lunar lodges existed in China earlier than anywhere else. As a consequence, scholars such as Xia Nai 夏鼐 have answered mathematical questions rather than explaining what the paintings may have meant to the occupants of the Xuanhua tombs.\(^6\) Although recent Chinese works on Liao society have also considered the Xuanhua paintings to be "scientific" renderings of astronomical bodies,\(^7\) the fact remains that these paintings are iconographically very different from any of the star maps and cosmic symbols found in China. First, none of the other star maps, including those found in the Wuyue tombs, employs the Western zodiacal signs, lotus, or the two imaginary planets—Rāhu and Ketu. Secondly, whereas the star maps, such as the Suzhou star map 蘇州星圖 (fig. 14), are divided into time or angle segments, the Xuanhua paintings are not.\(^8\)

Scholars who have stressed the scientific value of the Xuanhua astronomical paintings have often pointed out various "mistakes" in the representation of lunar lodges. The number of stars in some lunar lodges, according to them, does not tally with contemporary works on astronomy.\(^9\) It should be noted that the highly stylized Xuanhua paintings are definitely not maps of the actual sky. They were probably used for their symbolic rather than scientific value. Hence, the number of stars in a particular lunar lodge mattered less than the fact that all twenty-eight lunar lodges were represented.

**MANDALAS?**

Despite the overwhelming evidence from the Xuanhua tombs that testifies to the popularity of Buddhism, especially that of Tantric teachings, in Guihua prefecture, the prospect of Buddhist ideas influencing the Xuanhua astronomical paintings has never been fully explored. Since the occupants of the Xuanhua tombs, some of whom may have been lay Buddhists, practiced Buddhist-style funerary rites, had Buddhist dhāraṇīs written on their coffins, and used drawings with Buddhist motifs in their tombs, it is conceivable that the astronomical paintings were also drawn to express their faith in or conform to a specific aspect of Buddhist teaching.

All the motifs depicted in the Xuanhua astronomical paintings—mirror, lotus, the twelve zodiacal signs, the nine planets, the twenty-eight lunar
lodges, and the calendrical animals—are, in fact, also found in Buddhist paintings. While the lotus, the zodiacal signs, and the concept of two imaginary planets, Rāhu and Ketu, entered China with the translation of Buddhist texts, the use of mirrors and calendrical animals can be found in pre-Buddhist Chinese art. The idea of lunar lodges, on the other hand, was common to both Indian and Chinese astronomical traditions. Is it possible, then, that the Xuanhua paintings, like the practice of cremation followed by burial, resulted from the mixing
of Chinese and Buddhist beliefs in an afterlife? The answer, as discussed below, is an emphatic yes.

**Lotus.** The tomb ceiling in China, as has been noted by Judy Chungwa Ho, symbolizes Heaven based on the gaitian theory, while the floor, often rectangular or square, forms the Earth. “With additional painted imagery the ceiling,” she writes, “easily created the illusion of cosmic totality.”

61 The use of lotus, the zodiacal signs, and the two imaginary planets makes it evident that Buddhist doctrines exercised significant influence on the “cosmic totality” of the Xuanhua tomb ceilings.

Lotus (*padma*), an important motif in Mahāyāna cosmology, can represent enlightenment, rebirth, and sometimes even the Buddha himself.62 It is frequently found painted on the ceilings of cave-temples in India, Central Asia, and China. Yet lotus surrounded by celestial objects is not a common theme in Buddhist cave ceilings. In a unique painting found in Sengim, near Turfan in Xinjiang Autonomous Region,63 a multilayered, multipetaled lotus, with the Buddha on a white horse (an allusion to the Great Renunciation) in the center (fig. 15a), is surrounded by anthropomorphic images of lunar lodges (fig. 15b).64 The names of each of these lunar lodges is written in Chinese and Uighur scripts. Probably dating from the ninth or tenth century, when the Uighurs in the northern Silk Road area converted to Buddhism,65 the painting shows traces of Tantric influence. In esoteric Buddhist tradition, lotus forms the core of mandalas, the map of the Tantric universe.66 Employed in esoteric rituals, mandalas are supposed to unite the patrons with the reality of the universe.67 This universe is often conceived in the siddham letter a ॐ on a lotus (fig. 16) in the center of mandalas.68 In some versions of the Tejaprabhā (Ch. Zhishengguang 燎盛光) and Big Dipper mandalas the A-syllable on a lotus is surrounded by letters (or images) representing the luminaries, zodiacs, and twenty-eight lunar lodges (figs. 17 and 18). This depiction of the universe, in

**FIG. 18.**

*Big Dipper Mandala with Sanskrit letters. After Tōji no mandara zu (English title: Universe of Mandalas: Buddhist Divinities in Shingon Esoteric Buddhism) (Kyoto, 1995), 82, pl. 23.*
The Horâ Diagram, Tôji. After Universe of Mañjulâs, 76, pl. 10.

terms of content, is very similar to the Sengim and Xuanhua paintings.

The use of lotus itself, it must be pointed out, is not limited to the ceilings of Xuanhua tombs. Two Liao tombs from the Beijing area, for example, have the flower painted on their ceilings. The Buddhist symbol is also used to decorate the ceiling of a Song dynasty tomb from Baisha 白沙, Henan. All the above tombs, it seems, belong to Buddhist patrons.

What is unusual about the lotus in the Xuanhua paintings, however, is the variation in the number of petals. As noted above, the number of lotus petals in the Xuanhua paintings ranges from six to twelve. Usually in Buddhist iconography, lotus is depicted as having four, eight, or twelve petals. The inconsistency in the number of lotus petals represented in the Xuanhua paintings may have been intentional rather than erroneous.

Although speculative, an explanation may be found in the horoscopic astrology popular when the Xuanhua tombs were being built. In both Daoist and Buddhist astrological traditions the time of birth of an individual is an important factor. Burial dates in the Daoist tradition are calculated according to the year, month, day, and hour of birth of the deceased. Moreover, the tail of the Big Dipper, represented at the burial sites, points to a direction that represents the moment of the individual’s birth. Similarly, for the Buddhists “the point of departure,” as noted by Shigeru Nakayama, “was the moment of birth of the individual. Each part of the human body was said to be influenced by a particular constellation.” It can be seen from the astronomical paintings in tombs M1 and M5, in which the Big Dipper is clearly represented, that the tails of the Big Dipper point to different zodiac signs (Scorpio in the case of M1 and Capricorn in the case of M5) and lunar lodges (between xin 心 [heart] and fang 房 [chamber] lodges in the case of M1, and the niu 牛 [ox] lodge in the case of M5). It seems that the Big Dippers in the Xuanhua paintings were, following existing custom (whether Daoist, Buddhist, or Buddh-Daoist), drawn to imply a particular period in time, perhaps the moment of birth of the individual. The varying number of lotus petals in each of the Xuanhua paintings may, similarly, correspond to a specific time or period, most likely the month in which the deceased was born. Yet it is not clear what would happen if the individual were born in the first, second, or third lunar months. The traditional number of lotus petals may have been employed in such cases.

The Zodiacaal Signs and Horoscope Astrology. The zodiacal symbols in the Xuanhua tombs are the earliest evidence yet known of their application in the
popular pantheon of East Asia. They are additional, if not convincing, proof of Buddhist influences on the Xuanhua astronomical paintings.

The zodiacal signs have been known to the Chinese at least since the seventh century. Texts such as the Wenshushili Pusa ji zhu xian suoshuo jixiong shi ri shan e xiuyao jing 文殊師利菩薩及諸仙所說吉凶時日善惡宿曜經 (Sūtra on the Auspicious and Inauspicious Times and Days and the Good and Evil [Influences] of the Lunar Lodges and the Luminaries as Spoken by the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī and Various Other Immortals; T. 1299) compiled by the Indo-Sogdian monk Bukong 不空 (Amoghavajra, 705–74) in 759, Qiyao rang sai jue 七曜攔災決 (Ways to Avoid the Calamities Caused by the Seven Luminaries; T. 1308) translated by the Indian Brahmin Jinjuzha 金俱吒 (Suvarṇakūṭa?), and Fantian huoluo jiuyao 梵天火羅九曜 (The Indian Art of Horoscopy [based on the effects of] the Nine Luminaries; T. 1311) attributed to the Chinese Buddhist astronomer Yixing explain the use of the zodiacs for prognostication. The above astrological treatises are based on Brahmanical and Hellenistic horoscopical traditions, written within the Buddhist framework and interspersed with Chinese beliefs. Certainly the interest of Tang emperors, especially emperors Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–56), Suzong 肅宗 (r. 756–62), and Daizong 代宗 (r. 762–79), in Tantric rituals and preachers may have contributed immensely to the popularity of Buddhist horoscopical astrology in China. In fact, a majority of Chinese Buddhist astrological treatises were translated or composed under these three Tang emperors. Horoscopes from Japan, magic circles found in the Xi Xia territory, and the zodiacal signs in the Xuanhua tombs attest to the widespread use of Buddhist horoscopical astrology in East Asia even after the fall of the Tang dynasty.

To simplify the complicated arrangement of multicultural astrological traditions, Tantric preachers seem to have created manuals for those who practiced Buddhist horoscopical astrology. The Horā 火羅 Diagram (fig. 19), housed at Kyoto’s Tōji 東寺 temple, is an example of such a manual. The diagram explains auspicious and inauspicious dates and the influences of various celestial objects with pictures. The text in the diagram, copied from an earlier work in Jison-in 慈尊院 in the second year of the Eiman 永万 era (1166), is taken from Yixing’s Fantian huoluo jiuyao. Another set of diagrams that emerged due to the popularity of Buddhist horoscopical astrology and esoteric rituals is the Star Maṇḍalas (Xing maṇḍalas 星曼陀羅, Jp. Hoshi mandara). The Tejaprabhā and Big Dipper maṇḍalas and the painting in Sengim, mentioned above, are examples of such diagrams.

**Star Maṇḍalas and the Xuanhua Astronomical Paintings.** The earliest extant version of the Star Maṇḍala dates from 897. The painting (fig. 20), found in Dunhuang by Sir Aurel Stein, depicts Tejaprabhā Buddha on an ox-drawn cart surrounded by five planetary deities. Similar paintings, although frequently with nine planetary deities,
have also been found in Khara Khoto (fig. 21), Yingxian county in Shanxi (fig. 22), and a number of Japanese temples. These paintings, as pointed out by Takeda Kazuaki 武田和昭, constitute visual representations of Amoghavajra’s Zhishengguang
dha; T. 963) and are therefore known as Tejaprabhā Mandalas. In fact, a Song edition of the above text has a drawing of Tejaprabhā Buddha surrounded by the luminaries, zodiacal signs, twenty-eight lunar lodges, and the calendrical animals (fig. 23).\(^1\)

The Big Dipper Mandalas, Takeda notes, evolved from the Tejaprabhā diagrams and Tantric works such as *Xinyao yigui* 宿曜儀軌 (Rites of Lunar Lodges and Luminaries; T. 1304), *Beidou qixing hunmo fa* 北斗七星護摩法 (Goma Rites of the Seven Stars of the Big Dipper; T. 1310), *Fan-tian huluojinyao* compiled by Yixing, and *Beidou qixing niansong yigui* 北斗七星念誦儀軌 (Rites to Read and Recite [the Mantras] of the Seven Stars of the Big Dipper; T. 1305), translated by the Indian monk Jingangzhi 金剛智 (Vajrabodhi, 671–741).\(^1\)

As the name suggests, Big Dipper Mandalas have an added emphasis on the seven stars of Ursa Major. The “Tang edition of the Big Dipper Mandala” (*Tôhon hokudo mandara* 唐本北斗曼荼羅, fig. 24) housed in Tokyo College of Arts, although copied in 1148, indicates that Big Dipper Mandalas were already in use during the Tang dynasty.

The extant Big Dipper Mandalas, which date from the twelfth century and later, are found in both circular and quadrilateral forms. Circular Big Dipper Mandalas are housed in temples including Hōryūji 法隆寺 in Nara (fig. 25) and Ninna-ji 仁和寺 in Kyoto. Some of the angular versions are preserved
and Daigoji  templ es in Kyoto. Celestial objects in the Big Dipper Maṇḍalas are represented in the form of personified deities or star diagrams, in Sanskrit letters or Chinese graphs, or in some combination of these. It may have been left to the patron to select the iconographic form.

The Tantric texts from which the Tejabrabha and Big Dipper maṇḍalas originate explain the methods of invoking the celestial objects to cure illnesses, avoid natural calamities, win wars, and achieve rebirth in the fortunate realms. The seven stars of the Big Dipper are especially important in this respect because they were thought to control the life and death of individuals. Listening to or reading the Tantric texts on the Big Dipper, as the work Foshuo beidou qixing yanming jing 佛說北斗七星延命經 (The Sūtra to Extend Life-span Based on the Seven Stars of the Big Dipper as Spoken by the Buddha) reveals, helped the patron, his/her ancestors, and future generations achieve rebirth in heaven. Moreover, it was accepted that making an offering to the seven stars of the Big Dipper might pacify hungry ghosts, enabling the dead to escape from hell and achieve rebirth in the Land of Highest Joy (jile shijie 極樂世界, Sukhāvati). Other texts, such as the Dasheng Miaojixiang Pusa shuo chuzai jiaolíng falun 大乘妙吉祥菩薩說出災教令法輪 (T. 966), describe ways to draw (hua 画) and establish (jianli 建立) the Big Dipper and various celestial objects in the form of maṇḍalas, suggesting that these diagrams (tu 図) and altars (daochang 道場) were often used to make offerings to the stars and planets.

The similarities between the Xuanhua astronomical paintings and the Star Maṇḍalas, especially the circular Big Dipper Maṇḍalas, are remarkably striking. Like the Big Dipper Maṇḍalas, the Xuanhua astronomical paintings are composed of twenty-eight lunar lodges, zodiacal signs, luminaries, Big Dipper, and lotus. While the outer circles have exactly the same motifs, the difference is in the core of the two diagrams. Instead of the image of the Buddha or the siddham letter a, unornamented mirrors occupy the central position in the Xuanhua astronomical paintings. Since these mirrors are found inside a Buddhist symbol (lotus), and because they differ from the ornamented Chinese mirrors, it is reasonable to address the problem of mirrors from a Buddhist perspective.

Mirrors, in the Buddhist context, have multiple meanings and usages. There is, for example, a maṇḍala called Yuanjing mantuoluo 圆鏡曼陀羅 (Circular Mirror Maṇḍala) that could be used to “understand the meaning of the dharmacakra-pravartana (the teachings of the Buddha) [found] in the esoteric pitaka (jie nimi zang zhong chuan falun 菩解秘密藏中轉法輪).” A mirror is also used as a metaphor for emptiness, human mind, and the
wisdom of the Buddha. Moreover, in the following passage from the Buddhist text Da Piluzhena fo shenbian jia chi jing 大毘盧遮那佛師僧加持經 (Commentary on Mahāvairocana Sūtra) the Moon is compared to a mirror: “The lotus is dazzling. Inside is a full circular Moon, dustless like a bright mirror (yueman yuehun zhong, wugou ru jingjing 圓滿月輪中，無垢如淨鏡).”

In the esoteric A-syllable visualization technique, the siddham letter ₐ on top of the lotus is drawn inside a moon disk. The Japanese tantric text Ajikan yōin kuketsu 阿字觀用心口決 (Record of Oral Instruction on the A-Syllable Visualization) notes: “The eight-petalled [sic] lotus is the heart [karita, corporeal heart] mind. This is form. The mind [shitta, spiritual mind] dwells in this lotus. These two minds do not separate for even a moment, and therefore you should visualize the moon disk above the lotus. . . . The seed syllable of the lotus is the A-syllable. Therefore you should visualize the A-syllable within the moon disk.”

By visualizing the symbol, according to Shingon teachings, a patron can become one with the Buddha. Moreover, the visualization of the A-syllable was seen as an important part of the esoteric Buddhist mortuary tradition. The Indian monk Shanwuwei 善無畏 (Śubhākarasimha, 637–735) in his Foding zunsheng xin podiyu zhuanye zhangchui sanjie mimi sanshen fuguo sanzhongxidi shenyan yigui 佛頂尊勝心破地獄轉業障出三界秘密三身佛國三種悉地真言儀軌, perhaps the source of the “Zhiju rulai xin podiyu dhāraṇī 智炬如來心破地獄陀羅尼 written on the coffins in Xuanhua tombs, explains that by visualizing the A-syllable, one could escape various levels of hell and achieve rebirth in the Pure Land.

The image of a moon disk with the A-syllable on top of a lotus, as noted above, forms the core of some Star Maṇḍalas. In fact, an instruction to draw the Pole Star Maṇḍala (Miaojian mantuolu 妙見曼陀羅) notes:

The Rites of the Divine Star King says: In the center [of the maṇḍala] draw a great circular Moon. Inside [the Moon] draw the figure of the Bodhisattva [of the Pole Star]. In the left hand [the Bodhisattva] carries a lotus. On [top of] the lotus make the figures of the seven stars of the Big Dipper.

The mirrors in the Xuanhua paintings occupy the same position as the Moon does in the Big Dipper Maṇḍalas—inside the lotus. It seems, given the overall similarities between the Xuanhua astronomical paintings and the Star Maṇḍalas, that the mirrors within the lotus in the Xuanhua paintings symbolized the moon disk. It is possible that the mirrors placed inside the lotus may have even had the Buddhist symbol for the universe (the A-syllable) written on them.

The maṇḍalic representation of the universe on the Xuanhua ceilings not only conforms to the esoteric mortuary beliefs expressed inside the tombs but is also consistent with the popular funeral practices of the period. In eleventh-century Japan, for instance, Iri 曹 履 Maṇḍalas were used to cover the body of the deceased before cremation. These maṇḍalas, with images of lotus, dhāraṇīs, and the bija syllables (fig. 27), were to help the dead dislodge...
bad karma and hence be reborn in paradise. This, as we have seen, echoes the written wishes of the occupants of the Xuanhua tombs and may thus explain the reason for drawing a mandala on the canopy above the remains of the deceased.

CONCLUSION

Wu Hung ascribes the frequent representation of the universe in Chinese mortuary art to the concepts of Heaven’s will and the mandate of Heaven that developed during the Han dynasty. “Heaven,” he writes, “manifests itself as concrete signs or omens on the ceiling, a decorative position denoting the physical existence of Heaven in space. It is ‘above’ and opposite to Earth below, in accordance with the assertion of Dong Zhongshu, the founder of Han Confucianism: ‘Heaven covers all.’”

Celestial symbols were also often used by the Daoists. The Dipper constellation, for example, occupies an important position in the Daoist liturgical tradition. Kristofer Schipper points out that the Dipper constellation is the “Controller of Destiny.” It is, he writes, “present everywhere in Taoist [Daoist] ritual: its image is engraved on swords to scare off demons; as a receptacle filled with rice, the dipper is a pure and purifying container where ritual instruments and sacred writings are placed and protect them against evil influences.” The Big Dipper, as Livia Kohn explains, also “represents the Tao [Dao] or the One in the center of the sky and is thus parallel to Mount Kunlun on Earth,” a paradise where immortals reside. Such Daoist beliefs in and representation of celestial objects, as Xiao Dengfu 蕭登福 has shown, contributed immensely to the development of Chinese Buddhist horoscopic astrology and esoteric iconography. Although the belief in cosmic forces was already a notable aspect of Tantrism before it reached China, the focus on the Big Dipper may have been an outcome of Tantric-Daoist syncretism. In fact, it seems that the Tantric texts on the Big Dipper were all composed in China. Similarly, the Star Maṇḍalas that are based on the Chinese esoteric texts may have been the creation of the Tantric masters in East Asia rather than imports from India.

Some scholars have already suggested that Vajrayāna maṇḍalas are of non-Indic origin. Schuyler Cammann, for example, has argued that the Chinese T-L-V mirrors contributed to the development of Tibetan maṇḍalas. Edward Conze, on the other hand, has pointed out the Central Asian origin of maṇḍalas. And recently Todd Gibson has emphasized the impact of an “Indo-Iranian contact zone” in the rise of maṇḍalic symbolism, especially because “there is no proof that it [maṇḍalic symbolism] was widespread in India any earlier than in Inner Asia.”

While Gibson’s argument may not be entirely convincing, since we do find Kautalya, as early as the fourth century B.C.E., using maṇḍala as a geopolitical concept, the Star Maṇḍalas, which are a fusion of Indian and Chinese symbolism, may have actually originated in either Inner or Eastern Asia. Perhaps the diagrams were conceived in the early ninth century, soon after the Chinese Tantric texts on horoscopic astrology were compiled. The attractive magical powers of esoteric Buddhism and the Huichang persecution of Buddhism in 842–45 may have catalyzed the outflow of Tantric monks and texts, and with them the concept of horoscopic astrology, from Tang China to the surrounding regions. Thereafter, esoteric Buddhism flourished in places such as Dunhuang, Dali, Xi Xia, and Liao kingdoms, and Japan. In some of these places, Dali, Liao, and Japan, for example, Tantric mantras and maṇḍalas seem to have become an integral part of the native mortuary practices. The dhāraṇī coffins and pillars, Iri Maṇḍalas, and the astronomical paintings from Xuanhua are all indicative of this process of amalgamation.

Finally, a distinction must be made between those who engaged themselves in the empirical study of the sky and those who were primarily interested in prognostication. The difference between the two has already been pointed out in the works of Shigeru Nakayama and Nathan Sivin. They have called the former style “potent” or “judicial” astrology and the latter “horoscopic” astrology. Similarly, a distinction must also be made between the iconographic representations of the sky by these two groups. The first group struggled to produce diagrams of the sky
in a correct ephemeris. The second group, on the other hand, was more interested in the symbolic representation of the sky. While the Suzhou star map is an example from the judicial astrological tradition, the Star Maṇḍalas, including those found in the Xuanhua tombs, are related to peoples' belief in life after death and the options available to deal with it. The Xuanhua tombs, the artifacts accompanying the occupants, and the maṇḍalas paintings on the ceilings illustrate the synthesis of Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist, and geomantic beliefs rather than pointing to any breakthrough in the mathematical understanding of the cosmos. □

Notes

The connection between the Xuanhua paintings and the Star Maṇḍalas was first examined in a term paper written for the Seminar on Liao Art taught by Nancy Steinhardt at the University of Pennsylvania in the spring of 1991. Some of the points discussed in that paper can be found in Steinhardt's Liao Architecture (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1997), 342-47, and in her recent article “Liao Archaeology: Tombs and Ideology along the Northern Frontier of China,” Asian Perspectives 37.2 (1998): 224-44. I would like to thank Nancy for her support and encouragement throughout this project. I would also like to thank Victor H. Mair, Nathan Sivin, Paul Goldin, Chang Che-chia, Valerie Hansen, Zhang Guangda, and Alan DiGaetano for comments and suggestions on various drafts. Research in Japan was graciously funded by a grant from Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai. In Japan, I am indebted to Professors Yoritomi Motohiro, Kuwayama Shōshin, Antonino Forte, Toru Funayama, and the staff at the Italian School of East Asian Studies. Resigned time for research awarded by the Dean of the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences, Baruch College, paved the way for the completion of the final draft.


4. A clear copy of Sháqing’s funerary inscription can be found in Quan Liaowen (Complete Prose Literature of the Liao [Dynasty]), ed. Chen Shu (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, n.d.), 326-27.

5. Translations of official titles in this paper are based on Charles O. Hucker’s A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).

6. In the third year of the Da’an period (1087) famine and other natural disasters were rife in the Shangjing (Supreme Capital), Zhongjing (Central Capital), and Nanjing (Southern Capital) circuits of the Liao territory. Emperor Hongji 洪基 (Daozong 優宗, r. 1055-1101), as a result, not only exempted people in the affected regions from various taxes but also instituted the scheme of exchanging grain for official titles. See Liao Shi (Dy- nastic History of the Liao), Dazong 5 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974): 295-305. For various forms of relief measures undertaken by the Liao court to tackle the effects of natural disasters, including famines, see Karl A. Wittfogel and Feng Chia-sheng, History of Chinese Society: Liao (907-1125), Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, n.s., 36 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1949), 375-97.

7. It is not clear whether Zhang Shen married a member of the ruling Yelü clan, a woman from a distant and poor branch of the Yelü, or a daughter of a Han Chinese official who received the honorific title form the Liao rulers. For a study of the Yelü clan, its branches, and Han officials who were given the royal name, see Wittfogel and Feng, History of Chinese Society: Liao, 191-213.


11. It is difficult to figure out how long Shiben lived because the
portion of the funerary inscription that may have noted his age at the time of death is blurry.


19. The late cremation dates, as is seen in tombs M3 (four years), M5 (nine years), M7 (nineteen years), and M10 (thirty-five years), may have been a result of current geomantic practices. For geomancy and its connection to late burial dates, see Patricia Buckley Ebrey, “The Response of the Sung State to Popular Funeral Practices,” in Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China, ed. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 209–39.

20. The generation name Shi seems to suggest that Shiben may have been a cousin of Shigu and Shiqing.

21. See the following section.

22. Kuangzheng’s epitaph records that he and his “grandson” (sunnan 孫男) Shiqing were “friends-from-heart” (yì xīn xiàngyǒu 以心相友). Wenzao’s epitaph, on the other hand, notes: “[Zhang] Shiqing, the palace eunuch on the Right Duty Group, mourns him just as a son [would do]” 猶子右班殿直世卿追念其事. See, Wenwu chunqiu 28.2 (1995): 15; and Wenwu 1996.9:45. Kuangzheng was probably Shiqing’s great-uncle, and Wenzao his uncle. Shiqing could have also provided funds for the burial of Zhang Shiben, another Zhang family member whose cremation took place in 1093. Yet the author of Shiben’s new epitaph, written in 1144, chose not to mention Shiqing. Instead, the focus is on the grandsons of Shiben who successfully passed the prestigious jinshi exams and may have financed the new epitaph upon the death of their grandmother.


30. This text is examined by Michel Strickmann in “The Consecration Sūtra: A Buddhist Book of Spells,” in Chinese Buddhist
Astronomical Tomb Paintings from Xuanhua


34. Bīja, or seed, syllables, according to esoteric Buddhist tradition, are the source of all dharmas.


36. Inscriptions on some of these dhāraṇī pillars and funerary bells can be found in the Quan Laiwen. See especially 81–82, 117–18, 171, 187, 196–97, 243–44, and 280–81.


38. This view was also popular among the people who lived in the Kingdom of Dali (937–1253) in Yunnan. The common factor between the two regions was the prevailing influence of esoteric Buddhism. See Angela F. Howard, “The Dhāraṇī Pillar of Kunning, Yunnan: A Legacy of Esoteric Buddhism and Burial Rites of the Bai People in the Kingdom of Dali (937–1253),” Artibus Asiae 62:1–2 (1997): 33–72.


40. The use of the same group of artists to decorate multiple tombs, especially those constructed for a specific kin group, was not unusual in the Liao territory. Best examples are tombs 27, 28, and 29 from Shiliupu. See Kaogu 1960:10:42; and Laing, “Patterns and Problems,” 9.


42. The lunar lodges jiao 角 (horn), kang 觊 (gullet), di 角 (base), fang 房 (chamber), xin 心 (heart), wei 胃 (tail), and jì 脈 (winnower), usually depicted in the east, represent the green dragon; dou 斗 (dipper), niú 牛 (ox), nì 女 (woman), xu 相 (barrens), wei 兀 (roof), shì 人 (house), and bì 脣 (wall), in the north, represent the turtle; kui 鬼 (stradeller), lóu 楼 (harvester), wei 胃 (stomach), mào 貓 (mane), bì 脣 (neck), xì 背 (back), and can 眉 (triaster), in the west, portray the white tiger; jīng 凤 (well), guī 鬼 (ghost), lín 藤 (willow), xìng 星 (star), zhàng 張 (spread), yì 翼 (wing), and shēn 身 (axletree), in the south denote the peacock. The names of lunar lodges are translated according to Edward H. Schafer’s Pacing the Void: Tang Approaches to the Stars (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).


51. White porcelain ware with the graphs guan 官 (official) and xin guan 新官 (new official) found in both Wuye and Liao tombs, as has been pointed out by modern scholars, are evidence of commercial relations between the two kingdoms. See Kaogu 1975.3:186–94; and Chen Shu, Qidan shehui jingji shi gao (Draft History of Qidan Society and Economy) (rpt. Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1978), 146. For trade between the Wuye kingdom and the Qidan, see Denis Twitchett and Klaus-Peter Tietze, “The Liao,” The Cambridge History of China, 6:71–72; and Wittfogel and Feng, History of Chinese Society: Liao, 346–51.

52. Chen Shu, Qidan shehui jingji shi gao, 146.


54. Although astronomical drawings have also been found in other Liao tombs, they are significantly different from the Xuanhua tomb paintings. See Li Dajun, “Chaoyang Goumenzi Liao mu qingli jianbao” (A Brief Report on the Excavation of a Liao Tomb from Goumenzi, Chaoyang [County], Liaohai wenwu xuekan 23.1 (1997): 30–36; and Li Zhenghui, Liao Chengguo gongshu mu (The Tomb of the Liao Princess Chengguo) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1993).


59. See, for example, Yi Shitong, Wenwu 1990.10:20–24. Yi Shitong compares the number of stars in the lunar lodges depicted in tombs M1, M2, and M3 to those mentioned in Wang Ximing’s 王義明 (fl. seventh century) Bu tian ge 步天歌 (The Song of Walking on the Heaven). He concludes by saying that “the artists of the [Xuanhua] paintings were not familiar with celestial objects” (21). The artists who drew astronomical paintings on Xuanhua ceilings may not have been familiar with scientific knowledge of stars and planets, but as the Song work Xuanhe huapu 宣和畫譜 (Catalogue of Paintings [Compiled during the] Xuanhe [Regin Period]) indicates, one could find painters expert in drawing celestial objects and the Buddhist images of Rāhu and Ketu. See Schaefer, Facing the Void, 278–80.
60. Hayashi Minao, however, has argued that the lotus was a popular motif in pre-Buddhist Chinese art. See “Chūgoku kodai ni okeru ren no ke no shōchō” (Symbolism of Lotus in Ancient China), Tōhō Gakuhō 59 (March 1987): 1–61.


64. A painting with similar motif, with lotus and anthropomorphic images of lunar lodges, has also been found on the ceiling of a Buddhist shrine in the nearby Toyuk region. See P. Banerjee, “Naksatras on the Ceiling of a Buddhist Shrine in [Toyuk],” New Light on Central Asian Art and Iconography (New Delhi: Ahba Prakashan, 1992), 7–15.


70. See Su Bai, Baisha Song nu (Song [Dynasty] Tombs from Baisha [County]) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1957).


73. The earliest extant work to mention the zodiacal system in China is the Buddhist text Dasheng dafang deng riseng jing 大乘大方等日藏經 (Mahāyāna Mahāvihāra Sūrayagarbha Sūtra; T. 397). The work was translated into Chinese by the Indian monk Nalantīlyīṣeskharṣa नलतिदेवशेष (d. 589) (Narendrayāsa?) in the later half of the sixth century.


78. The diagram is discussed in detail in Raoul Birnbaum’s “Introduction,” and by Angela Howard in “Planet Worship.” A clear plate of the diagram can be found in Tojī no manda ra (English title: Universe of Manjulas: Buddhist Divinities in Shingon Esoteric Buddhism) (Kyoto: Museum of Tojī Temple, 1995).

80. A colophon on the text notes that it was copied in the fifth year of the Kaibao era (972). The scroll is now housed in Kami-nobu, Nara, Japan.


82. T. 1307:426a.

83. T. 966:342b–344c.

84. T. 1796:670c.

85. T. 848:40c.


96. Yixing’s *Beidou gixing houmu fa*, which includes a section called “Important Rites of Tejaprabhā” (Zhishengguang yaofa 炫盛光要法), for example, is noted to have been “compiled” (xuan 迴) rather than “translated” (yi 译). See T. 1310:457b.


Emperor Ningzong’s Night Banquet

ABSTRACT

Although unsigned, the hanging scroll Night Banquet (Huadeng shiyan) in Taipei’s National Palace Museum is generally recognized as being a painting by Ma Yuan himself. It carries further authority because of a poetry inscription by his imperial patron, Empress Yang. Indeed, it appears further to represent an historical event held by Emperor Ningzong in honor of the empress’s adopted family. With such foundations the article attempts to explore more exactly the visual meaning, style and content, of a painting that transforms earlier sources in both poetry (Du Fu) and painting (Tang and Five Dynasties) into a secure, well-wrought expression supporting understanding of Ma Yuan’s art between 1207 and 1219.
FIG. 1 (NEAR RIGHT).
Ma Yuan,
Night Banquet,
hanging scroll in ink
and touches of color on
silk, 111.9 × 53.5 cm.
National Palace
Museum, Taiwan.

FIG. 2 (FAR RIGHT).
Ma Yuan,
Dongshan,
hanging scroll in ink
and slight color on
silk, 77.6 × 33 cm.
Tokyo National
Museum.

FIG. 3.
Ma Yuan,
detail of fig. 1,
close view of palace.
Emperor Ningzong’s Night Banquet

The late Song painting Night Banquet (Huadeng shiyuan 华镫侍宴), now in Taipei’s National Palace Museum, is generally accepted, despite a lack of signature, as by the hand of the famous Hangzhou painter Ma Yuan 馬遠. It depicts in a single skillful hanging scroll a landscape that embraces both architecture and human figures—figures, however minuscule, that suggest an historical event—and thus appears to be datable close to the second decade of the thirteenth century (fig. 1). It is both of a specific time in the early thirteenth century and an implied extension beyond that time. It reflects an understanding of the past and implies continuities with the future—both as to the nature of imperial power and in helping to define a style different from ordinary academic painters that, along with a selected few other surviving works by the artist, echoes as the so-called Ma style across several centuries.

The proportions of its silk format (111.9 × 53.5 cm), along with the forms placed upon it, are not unique to this scroll. They relate to other paintings by Ma Yuan, specifically three slightly smaller hanging scrolls now in Japan depicting Buddhist Chan sages of the ninth and tenth centuries in encounters of enlightenment. Dimensions on these scrolls range from 81 × 38.6 cm to 77.6 × 33 cm. One, showing Dongshan 洞山 as he crosses a stream and hence with the greatest concern for landscape, is reproduced here (fig. 2). The others, however, follow a similar pattern, but with the Chan pupils Yumen 雲門 and Fayan 法眼 each confronting his teacher.

Compositions are subtly anchored to either right or left. In them, as well as in Night Banquet, significant drawn-out vertical space permits an important block of calligraphy to be brushed above the scenes below. In all cases the calligraphy, reflecting the same high-level patronage, is considered to be that of Ma Yuan’s imperial patron, Ningzong’s 宋寧宗 Empress Yang 楊皇后. In keeping with the foreground prominence of the figures, it is more forcefully present in the Buddhist pictures. In Night Banquet the written characters are less obtrusive in deference to the atmospheric depths of its landscape. The next block of seven characters in each of eight ordered lines hangs, not unlike the lingering edge of a rolled-up bamboo curtain, far above the earthly scene below.

To return more exactly to Night Banquet (figs. 1 and 3), out of an otherwise open sky, definition is increasingly gathered into the lower half of the scroll and its tipped level land. While dependence on a one-sided, or one-cornered, composition is muted by the horizontal extension of architecture—its open platform and the rectangular framing of forward plum tree plantings—the setting refuses to discard an angular mode. Thus plum trees fade toward a leftward dark. The architecture is not full-face but angled to reveal its right wall and part of a covered corridor extending to that same side. Finally, in the further rise toward vertical tree and mountain peak, the significance of an oblique anchoring is all the more apparent. A single pine towers high yet gestures down in benediction, the mountain an echoing righthand shape to carry the message both higher and toward dark distance.

In contrast to Ma Yuan’s other figural subjects, the numerous figures here, sixteen on the open stage and ten within, are minuscule. They must defer to the grandeur of a towering palace and the surrounding
FIG. 5.
Dong Yuan (attributed), Xiao and Xiang (detail), Song copy (?), handscroll in ink and color on silk. National Palace Museum, Beijing.

presence of flowering plum and thickets of bamboo (fig. 3), while beyond is the even greater loftiness of rising land and extended darkening distance, nature’s implied embrace.

The exaggerated miniature of these figures, however, has deeper roots. On the contemporary level it brings us to another beautifully crafted architectural study in the same museum, somewhat erroneously, even ironically, titled Palace Pleasures (Gongzhong xingle 宮中行樂). Unsigned, it must be considered an anonymous painting by a late Song Academy artist not too far from Ma Yuan’s own time (fig. 4). Precisely detailed palace architecture both surrounds and towers over pigmented miniature human activity placed, not unlike Ma Yuan, on a smoothly tipped-up courtyard platform before an extensive horizontal stretch of building. It is also a scene of night, as two yellow circles of lantern that guide the action suggest, along with a broader conventional glowing brightness emanating from the palace interior. While it has an ambitious attribution to the tenth-century painter Guo Zhongshu 郭忠恕 (910–77), famous for his detailed architectural studies classed as “boundary painting” (jiehua 界畫), the identification of Guo’s hand is historically untenable. The name, however, has the value of suggesting an important tradition. It helps link the late Song to an earlier time. In this case the tradition can be more exactly related to Guo’s southern contemporary, the painter-hero Dong Yuan 東原 (937–75) of the same historical period—Five Dynasties slipping into the Northern Song. Although apparently an obscure park official in his own time, Dong Yuan had been elevated to aesthetic prominence in the late Northern Song. At least as it currently survives, one important segment of Dong Yuan’s style was to place such miniature pigmented figures, active but dwarfed, upon an expansive landscape (fig. 5). This can best be explained as a retention of the carefully drawn and precisely colored men and women so important in Tang court painting, this early not to be rejected despite growing interest in the landscape but to be directly transferred, along with narrative implications, to grace open expanses of mountain and water. There they inevitably acquired a scale appropriate to such natural grandeur. The next step, of course, was to fuse their depiction more harmoniously within the increasing desire for direct, spatial extension.
Anonymous, late twelfth century (?), Emperor Minghuang’s Flight to Shu (Sichuan), album leaf, rounded fan in ink and color on silk, detail of central portion. National Palace Museum, Taiwan.

FIG. 6.
Detail of figs. 1 and 3.
peak echo such gestures. Even the architecture, although lofty in scale, is reduced to linear repetition (fig. 3). Forget the intricacies of extensive bracket supports. Parallel lines suffice for roof tiles and foundation masonry, while flat squares of lattice work complement the generous invitation of a thin facade, its openess in which there is still one more linear detail—a thread-fine pattern of crossing lines that indicate the building’s tile floor. Finally, sensitive washes infuse Ma Yuan’s characteristic spaces with their brooding message of night.

Yet a narrative, concealed as it may be in lofty architecture and night’s embrace, is important—as in a traditional view of Dong Yuan or an attribution recalling Guo Zhongshu. Partially screened by branches of the flowering plum, sixteen tiny slender women offer reciprocal poses of dance and music on the forward terrace. Within are additional figures, six in the center space and two in each of the two open wings. The latter are placed left and right, a tiny but significant figural order not unlike a framing balance often found on rare surviving Tang handscroll compositions.

Indeed the ordering of interior space provides a contrast to Ma Yuan’s dominant angularity. This order is not only set by the flanking attendants but begins with the two balancing three-step stairways that present access to the interior. The stairways lead to furniture, tables, and screens. On each side these are consciously angled so as to define a parallel receding perspective aimed not toward a single point but toward a centered unseen focus somewhere deep within. This, too, is an echo of Tang forms as they may be seen in the arrangement of palace architecture in Buddhist paradises of that time (fig. 7). Thus an intrusion of architectural stability, an ordered central arrangement, implies balance and control toward all around it. In paradise scenes it is the Buddha who presides at such a focal point. Here the emperor is implied. That this stability runs counter to the painting’s dominant impact of shifting angularity, including the rightward-facing and bowing guests (fig. 3), only affirms Ma Yuan’s skill at complexity. He conceals an implied statement of traditional stability—imperial order—within the surrounding depiction of what can only be described as
a scene infused with temporal vitality. The moment is far more than a moment.

In her analysis of the painting’s content, Hui-shu Lee has convincingly suggested a direct relation to Ningzong’s Empress Yang and her adopted family, her brother and nephews: Yang Cishan 楊次山 and his two sons, Yang Gu 楊谷 and Yang Shi 楊石. She broadens the validity of this argument by pointing to similar relationships in the courts of the earlier Hangzhou 杭州 emperors, a pattern in Southern Song imperial art: “confirmation of the imperial honor that is specifically directed toward the clan of the empress.” 56

Although older by twenty-four years, Yang Cishan, with a significant military background, appears to have been adopted by the gifted beauty to lend a legitimate family tree to her obscure life origins. As a result, both Yang Cishan and his sons became a vital, necessary support for her political rise from honored consort in 1200 to Ningzong’s empress in 1202. 7 Their identification in the painting begins with its inscription, attributable to Empress Yang. Her calligraphy and its content is, as often, present to grace—not without a touch of bombast—the art of her favorite painter:

Back from his dawn audience the Imperial Commissioner proclaims official summons:
Honor to father and sons to attend
an imperial banquet.
Raise the wine cups—prayers for great blessings
Heard in the Han Hall, music—movement
and joyful sound
The budding plum in precious vases a thousand branches bloom
Of jade and coral splendid lanterns,
ten thousand brightly lit.
They say to urge a poem one must await the rain
A line of cloud, the great hall in the rain
the poetry complete

朝廷中使傳宣命，父子同班侍宴榮
酒捧倪觴折景福，樂聞漢殿動聲聲
寶瓶梅蕊千枝綻，玉褥華燈萬盞明
人道催詩須待雨，片雲聞雨果詩成

Enough of the poet’s imagery is paralleled by the painting to draw word and image together. Thus dark lines of wash suggest cloud and mist, although the open-air music and dance deny the actual presence of rain. Rather it is the warm embracing damp of Hangzhou’s spring night, the kind of air you can touch, still so characteristic of southern China, that carries the inevitable promise of the poem’s completion. Similarly, within the hall the straightforward narrative is both clear and suggestive. Three men, the foremost larger than the other two, bow reverently toward long banquet tables and beyond. Behind them are three women dressed in auspicious red (fig. 6). Thus we see father and sons outlined in imperial favor before a physical presence yet to be revealed—the emperor’s bounty and power, as with the imminence of promised rain, the surer, the more powerful from what takes place around him, what is about to be. As James Cahill has neatly suggested, “From the periphery of an event we infer the event itself.” Anchored to a moment in space and time, meaning extends into the enduring world of idea.

The personal identification for the scene also helps elucidate history. It is logical to place the painting within the time of the political ascendancy of Yang Cishan as well as his two sons. Thus it must fall between 1207 and 1219, years that bracket Yang Cishan’s life from the time when both he and his sons received significant official promotions until the father’s death in 1219. For example, Yang Cishan received the title of taibao 太保 (grand guardian) in 1210. This dating leaves little doubt but that the scroll coincides with Ma Yuan’s maturity as an artist and his recognized importance for the Yang family. His twelve Water studies of 1222, now in Beijing’s Palace Museum, were directed to the elder son, Yang Gu. In them are similar effects of sensitive atmospheric wash combined with forward linear play, as exemplified in Lake Glow, Rain Suffused (fig. 8).

Somewhat hidden in Ma Yuan’s integration of pictorial elements into physically believable architecture, festival, and night is the fact that plantings gracing the scene are specific. In order of their appearance, from foreground into depth, is the precise presentation of plum, pine, and bamboo. The pine is the most obvious, appearing to carry out Guo Xi’s late eleventh-century instructions for its symbolic meaning: “A tall pine stands erect . . . a noble man dazzling in his time, all lesser men in service, no insolence or oppression.” To recognize the three, however, is to realize further depths of auspiciousness that pervade the whole. These are no less than the “Three Friends of the Cold Season” (Suihan sanyou 塵寒三友), here opening into spring. To mention the theme in late Song art is to recall the beauty of its isolated selection on an album-leaf format by the late Song artist Zhao Mengjian 趙孟堅 (1199–1267). The painting is in the same Taipei Museum (fig. 9). Zhao was a jinshi 进士 graduate of 1226 who filled official posts as well as being intimate with prominent intellectuals in the Hangzhou area. His lifetime thus overlapped that of Ma Yuan, and he can be considered a close contemporary of Ma Yuan’s son, Ma Lin 马麟. Zhao, however, was an aristocrat, carrying the name of the Song royal house along with the social status of a literatus. Here one need not dwell on stylistic difference, but it should be noted that both artists, each in his own way, depend on the subtleties of brush, of line and wash. Yet there is a clear reversal of traditionally accepted roles. Maggie Bickford has described the jewel-like album painting: “Its monochrome, linearity, and significant stylization notwithstanding, the polished presentation and impeccable execution of Zhao’s work here exhibit deep affinities with and affection for the courtly art of flower painting . . . the same self-possessed, now and forever pictorial finality that characterizes the finest work in the Academy tradition of poetic realism.” In contrast, the brush of Ma Yuan is here the one that is animated with suggestive touches that carry intention well beyond “pictorial finality.” Yet, as subject, the
meaning of plum, pine, and bamboo is a constant, and it is a popular theme, having been found woven into contemporary textiles. Professor Bickford speculates on Zhao’s offering: an emblem of virtue, a token for the New Year or a birthday, for a scholar’s retirement, a favorite lady, a statesman. The last, along with the promise of seasonal return, anchors Ma Yuan’s vision, but there are enough good wishes here to imagine wider blessings, all stemming from imperial bounty.\textsuperscript{13}

With all its complex weight of seasonal auspiciousness and imperial benevolence, its narrative, its symbols, Ma Yuan’s larger intention will not allow such content to overbalance the embracing significance of a landscape. It is possible that he had in mind a specific view. Hui-shu Lee suggests a pavilion in the Rear Garden, where some thousand plum trees were to be found as well as two pavilions called Meigang 梅岗 (Plum Ridge) and Binghua 冰花 (Ice Flower).\textsuperscript{14} If this hypothesis is correct, the painting
is hardly a photograph, which brings us to viewpoints.

By Ma Yuan’s time it was clear in the literature, from writings by Guo Xi (eleventh century) and Han Zhuo 韓拙 (act. ca. 1095–1123), that the Chinese passion for order had produced an attempt to define the complexities of visual perspective in terms of six so-called distances (yuan 运). Three defined in the later eleventh century were described as “high” (gao 高), “deep” (shen 深), and “level” (ping 平). To these in the early twelfth century were added “broad” (kuo 宽), “hidden” (mi 迷), and “obscure” (you 幽). The first three can be described as essentially psychological in moving the observer as on a shifting mental elevator: high, the better to see mountain peaks; mid-level, the better to see directly into the scene; and level, the ability to look down upon flat land or water to be able to examine such surfaces. In Ma Yuan’s Banquet landscape all three are evident. We look down upon the terrace and the floor of the pavilion. We look directly at plum trees, facade, human figures, bamboo. Pine top and mountain crests require, in turn, a raised vision, the clearing away of anything close that might obscure them. The other three “distances” are significant because they do not rely on such adjustments but on what it is possible to see from a stable position in the physical world. In such an experience, “broad” is conceived as a spacious sweep toward far mountains; “hidden” applies to mists and fog that conceal what might otherwise be seen; and the related “obscure” designates objects that, though still visible, are reduced to atmospheric suggestiveness.

In effect, dependence on the physical eye creates its own limitation. Observation of what is near suggests surrender of what is far. The mind must take over. In this, however, there is no contradiction. The eye’s surrender it is not. What happens is simply continuation of physical fact. Now it is the observed facts of atmosphere and distance, obscurity and concealment, that must be shown.

What happens when we return to the Banquet (fig. 1)? First there is impression of the psychological distances. We catch all three, but they are relaxed. They easily run together. Most effective is the lowering of the implied horizon line, releasing the top of the scroll to a high sky. Mountain peaks slip down to enfold the pine. The sense of a coherent direct view is also caught below. Architecture conceals much of what is behind it. The foreground plum branches partially screen the view of dance and music. The look into the palace interior is generous, even if not complete. The rightward anchoring of visible forms then allows the atmospheric damp and dark of leftward night to hide what clear day might have revealed. The corollary to this focused space is focused time, the setting for a specific narrative about to unfold.

Here it is necessary to return to the poem calligraphy of Empress Yang and its somewhat puzzling last lines:

They say to urge a poem one must await the rain
A line of cloud, the great hall in the rain
the poetry complete

These are a direct play on the ending of the first of two poems, spilling over to the second, written by the Tang poet Du Fu 杜甫—eight lines of regulated verse but in five-character lines as opposed to the empress’s seven-character extension. He was inspired by an experience in his early years, also at the capital, then Chang’an 長安 (present-day Xi’an 西安). The actual site was some fifteen Chinese miles (li 里) to the south, a summer outing on the Zhangba Canal 丈八河. It, too, had its own aura of elegance, an evening in summer with “young aristocrats and courtesans,” an evening ending abruptly in a rain storm:

With setting sun delights of the united boat
The light breeze stirs lazy waves
Deep in bamboo a place for guests to linger
Pure lotuses the time now fresh and cool.
Dandies stir iced drinks
Beauties shred the lotus roots
A line of cloud black above our heads
Surely the rain is hastening a poem.

落日放船好，輕風生浪遲。
竹深留客處，荷淨納涼時。
From what has survived, Du Fu’s poem had special significance for another late Song painting. The middle lines, “Deep in bamboo a place for guests to linger / Pure lotuses the time now fresh and cool,” have been captured in a handscroll now in the Shanghai Museum. The painting was brushed by the thirteenth-century military official Zhao Kui 趙葵 (1185–1266), like his contemporary Zhao Mengjian a member of the royal clan, also holder of official posts with literati tastes and abilities, but little known as a painter. Zhao Kui’s interpretation of the outing is that of an individual, no longer young, who is hidden in a rustic retreat (fig. 10). He is waited upon by a fan-protecting servant as he contemplates, perhaps as a poet, the lotus-dotted waters before him. Two “guests” leading their mounts (not shown here) approach distantly on a bright path through sheltering bamboo groves. Empress Yang and Ma Yuan had other purposes. The flavor of assembled aristocracy is, of course, closer to Du Fu’s original experience. Now, however, it is raised to the highest social level. Curious the nature of significant poetry—for one, a quiet solitary retreat, for another imperial pleasure, an emperor’s benevolent reward.

Much of the poet’s imagery—both Du Fu’s and Empress Yang’s—is paralleled by Ma Yuan’s painting. While not of summer, bamboo groves behind the palace are significant for its setting, and the ink washes of night do not neglect the dark cloud overhead. It is, however, knowledge of Du Fu’s second poem that completes the experience, a poem most certainly known to both the empress and Ma Yuan. Anyone concerned with the first must also be aware of the second:

Rain arrives, seating mats are drenched
A sudden wind then strikes boat’s bow
The beauties of Yue, their red skirts soaked
The courtesans of Yan, their penciled brows weep
Mooring ropes tangled in willows
Curtains sprayed by curling foam
The way home faces the soughing of the wind
Embankments in a fifth-month autumn.

Thus is the summer of the first poem transformed into an unexpected other season.

At first reading the second poem may appear to have little importance for Ma Yuan’s painting, especially as one must substitute a welcoming palace for
Du Fu’s struggling chilled pleasure boat. That, however, is exactly what the empress does by placing “the great hall in the rain.” More exact, however, is the clarification of one specific point. The tiny figures dressed in red, especially the three placed behind the three honored guests (fig. 6), clearly become identified from the second poem as the red-skirted “beauties of Yue,” the ancient Yue 越 meaning the South and specifically Zhejiang, now with its focus on Hangzhou itself (Yang 燕, the contrasting North).

Naturally, Ma Yuan’s auspicious painting is not one to suggest Du Fu’s troubled outcome. But in a less specific sense, his poem has further reverberations. Du Fu takes us to another season. Such extension is paralleled in Ma Yuan’s painting. An auspicious early spring evening must grow to other times. It is the very nature of Ma Yuan’s corner or one-sided compositions to open such a path. By limiting what the eye may surely grasp, he is asking us to view what it cannot. The search at hand is linked to the search without. It joins a long-established painting tradition in which the human figure is important not because of a looming presence but because of a close relation to a far wider world. The near view becomes the far view. Ma Yuan thus presents an invitation to the mind, a mind not separate from but continually joined to physical experience. The moment extends. What is completed in Empress Yang’s “great hall in the rain” is spring’s welcome nurturing in the presence, no less of, plum, pine and bamboo. It cannot help but augur continuing blessings— all seasons, an embracing imperial gift. As enfolding night extends, it is appropriate to suggest yet another line from Du Fu, whose poetry was noted for going beyond pure description. Written from Chengdu 成都 in China’s southwest, this line relates to another, though differing, festival time, the ninth of the ninth lunar month, when it was the custom to climb to high places, in this case a city wall:

Across distances, seasons run together.¹⁸

Notes

The author would like to express gratitude to the National Palace Museum in Taipei for permission to publish photographs of paintings in their collection that appear in this essay. In addition, particular gratitude for skillful help with illustrations goes to Wendy Holden, curator of Asian Art Archives, and Patrick Young, photographer, both of the Department of the History of Art, University of Michigan.


2. *Night Banquet* has often been published, the earliest for the West in *The International Exhibition of Chinese Art in London* (London and Shanghai: Royal Academy of Arts, Burlington House, 1936), 123. I have altered the title from its usual Banquet by Lantern Light for simplification and because, while there is a subtle glow in the foreground, there is no obvious display of lanterns, and atmospheric darkness is a dominating factor.


3. For what is still a most important discussion of Dong Yuan (Tung Yuan) see Richard M. Barnhart, “Marriage of the Lord of the River: A Lost Landscape by Tung Yuan,” *Artibus Asiae*,...
suppl. 27 (Ascona, 1970). Also Barnhart et al., *To Gen, Kyonen* (Tung Yuan, Chü-yan) *Bunjinga Suiken* (Essence of Literati Painting), vol. 2 (Tokyo, 1977). A full color reproduction of the so-called *Xiao and Xiang* from which I have illustrated only a detail can be found in *Zhongguo lidai huahua: Gugong bowen yuan canghua ji*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1978), 98–100.


5. An example of this formal “framing” is found in the Boston Museum’s Song copy of a T’ang original attributed to Huizong, *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk*. Wu Tung, *Tales from the Land of Dragons*, 141–43.


11. For the complete series see Robert Maeda, “The ‘Water’ Theme in Chinese Painting,” *Artibus Asiae* 33.4 (1971): 254–57, pls. 7a–7i. Four of the scenes are also reproduced and the scroll discussed in *Zhongguo meishu quanji*, Painting 4: *Liang Song huihua* 2 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1998), 33, pls. 60, 61. The authors, quoting Wang Shizhen, suggest the recipient may be both of the empress’s nephews but conclude that further examination of the question is needed. There is also a colophon reproduction from China, including all colophon (on my copy n.p., n.d.). This reproduction shows ambiguity in the Wang Shizhen colophon, with the name Gu apparently erased by the brush line and the name Shi inserted beside it.


Problems in Reconstructing the Life of Qiu Ying

ABSTRACT

When so little survives in the standard biographical documents about famous artists, scholars hope to generate additional biographical information from other sources, and any sliver of information assumes utmost importance in reconstructing biography. It is, however, imperative that every seeming source be exhaustively scrutinized to establish its credibility before any such new data are accepted as valid. Today conjecture about the life of the sixteenth-century painter Qiu Ying abounds. This study is primarily a critique of the documents used and the conclusions reached by scholars who have endeavored to shed light on Qiu Ying’s life. It reveals exactly how fragile and precarious is some of the biographical detail that has accrued to Qiu Ying’s name as fact.
FIG. 1.
Anonymous, Portrait of Qiu Ying, date uncertain, present location unknown. Photo after Meishu shenghuo 37 (April 1937).
Problems in Reconstructing the Life of Qiu Ying

Along with Shen Zhou 沈周 (1427-1509), Wen Zhengming 文徵明 (1470-1559), and Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470-1524), the sixteenth-century artist Qiu Ying 仇英 (fig. 1) was honored as one of the Four Great Masters of the Ming dynasty. All four men lived in the Suzhou area of southeast China, and three of them—Shen Zhou, Wen Zhengming, and Tang Yin—were members of the literati and gentry classes. In addition to painting, these three engaged in the usual upper-class literati pursuits: writing poetry, enjoying wine parties, practicing calligraphy. Each of the three left a corpus of written materials; all three are frequently mentioned in the social writings of their peers; and all three received full biographical treatment by their contemporaries. These miscellaneous records are rich in accurate data and were used by Richard Edwards and Anne Clapp as primary sources for their biographies of these three men.¹

In contrast, Qiu Ying remains remarkably enigmatic.² The precise dates of his birth and death are unknown. He left no corpus of literary works, and no one prepared a full biography or a tomb inscription for him—the normal sources of information about an individual in China. Although Qiu must have been acquainted with most of the cultural elite in Suzhou and its neighboring towns, his name, unlike those of Shen Zhou, Wen Zhengming, and T’ang Yin, never appears in the social writings of these elites, and, in contrast to the wealth of information available for the other three great masters, contemporaneous written documentation for Qiu Ying is exceedingly sparse.

Two sixteenth-century writings, one by Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526-90) and one by Wang Zhi-
documents. Before the data about the artist that appear on extant paintings can be accepted, the painting must first be authenticated. If the painting is determined to be spurious, then the signature and seals and any inscription by the putative artist must also be spurious, and additional commentary by others that might appear on the painting must be treated with great caution. If the painting is lost, but a record of its inscriptions and other ancillary writings is preserved in some form, such as in a collector’s catalogue, there is no way to verify the authenticity of the painting, and, given the vast number of faked and forged scrolls, the data derived from lost paintings must also be considered with extreme care. Finally, information that first appears in the record a century or more after the time of the artist is always suspect. Spurious sources invalidate would-be fact.

This article is primarily a critique of the documents used and the conclusions reached by scholars who have endeavored to shed light on Qiu Ying’s life. It also addresses questions about Qiu’s family and his artistic activities. Such a study reveals exactly how fragile and precarious is some of the biographical detail that has accrued to Qiu Ying’s name as fact.

BIRTH AND DEATH DATES

Qiu Ying’s birth and death dates are nowhere recorded, and controversy surrounding these dates engages the attention of present-day Chinese scholars in particular. A lack of consensus about Qiu’s dates is a consequence of interpreting the same data in different ways, of ignoring data cited by others, of using unreliable sources. Several sets of alternate dates have been proposed.

In 1946, Wen Zhaotong began his attempt to provide reasonable dates for Qiu’s birth and death by noting a comment made by the influential landscapist and art theorist Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555–1636). Dong claimed that Qiu Ying did not enjoy a long life and compared him with the Yuan painter Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254–1322). As Wen points out, however, Zhao Mengfu in fact lived to the ripe old age of sixty-nine; consequently, Wen figures, Qiu Ying must also have lived a similarly long life of about sixty-nine years. With this as one “fact,” Wen then turns to an entry for a scroll recorded in a painting collection catalogue first published in 1904: a collaborative work by Shen Zhou, Wen Zhengming, Tang Yin, Zhou Chen, and Qiu Ying designed as a birthday present for an unidentified recipient. The scroll was dated by inscription to the year 1509—the earliest date associated with the name Qiu Ying. Wen Zhaotong believes that Qiu Ying was less than twenty years old when he contributed to this scroll and was perhaps about sixteen when he began to study with Zhou Chen. Wen reminds us that extreme youthfulness does not cast doubt on his hypothesis since Tang Yin, for example, was already acclaimed for his artistic abilities at the age of seventeen. On the basis of these interpretations, Wen Zhaotong estimates that Qiu Ying was born about the year 1494. A worrisome point, not addressed by Wen, is the fact that this birthday-present handscroll is nowhere mentioned prior to its inclusion in the 1904 catalogue; it thus appears very late in the written legacy. Today, the 1509 collaborative painting is lost, and there is no way to validate its authenticity.

Wen Zhaotong’s effort to establish Qiu’s death date is undermined by conflicting information contained in a colophon by Peng Nian 彭年 (1505–66). In his colophon dated 1552/53 inscribed on a Qiu Ying handscroll representing Tribute Bearers (Palace Museum, Beijing), Peng made three important statements: first, Qiu Ying stayed with Chen Guan 程觀 in his mountain villa; second, after Zhou Chen’s death, Qiu Ying held forth in South China for twenty years; and third, one could no longer obtain paintings by Qiu Ying, implying that Qiu was dead by the time of this writing (1552/53). Wen Zhaotong was aware of this colophon but ignored the last part of it. Instead, he endeavored to ascertain the year of Qiu Ying’s death by addressing the question of the death date of Qiu’s painting teacher, Zhou Chen. Although Zhou’s death date is unrecorded, Wen argues that Zhou died about 1535; thus, according to Wen Zhaotong’s calculations, Qiu Ying must have lived another twenty years or so, dying about the year 1555. Yet, Wen observes, if one relies on another piece of evidence, a colophon by Xiang Shengbiao 習聲表, the grandson of Xiang Yuanbian, Qiu stayed with Yuanbian for thirty or forty years. Since Xiang Yuanbian was born in 1525, it is unlikely that he had contact with Qiu Ying before Qiu was in his forties—that is, about 1555. Wen estimates
that if Qiu really stayed with Xiang for three or four decades, Qiu would have died at the age of about ninety in 1584. Wen Zhaotong, however, questions the precision of Xiang Shengbiao’s statement, saying that since there are twenty-nine years between 1555 and 1584, Xiang simply reduced this to an approximation, a generalization common in Chinese writing. Wen Zhaotong ultimately proposes that Qiu Ying died about the year 1561 at the age of sixty-eight.

In 1957 the eminent scholar and connoisseur Xu Bangda interpreted some of these same sources differently. He did not use the data from the 1509 scroll but did refer to a colophon by Wen Jia (1501–83) on a Qiu Ying painting that is now lost but was recorded in a book published in 1712. In this colophon, Wen Jia claimed that Qiu Ying died in middle age (shengnian 盛年, generally taken to be about thirty to forty years of age—certainly not over fifty). Xu coupled this colophon with Dong Qichang’s assertion that Qiu Ying had a short life. Xu does not follow through on the comparison with Zhao Mengfu, which would have negated the notion of a short life span for these two artists. Instead he accepts Peng Nian’s comment that by 1552–53 Qiu Ying was dead, and, allotting Qiu a lifetime of fifty years, he proposes that Qiu was born about 1502 and died about 1552.

In the early 1980s Hu Yi examined dated inscriptions written on lost Qiu Ying paintings recorded in the catalogue of the Imperial Qing painting and calligraphy collection. On the basis of these dated inscriptions, Hu asserts that Qiu was born in 1482 and died in 1559, enjoying a long life. The weakness in Hu’s argument is one that underlies all instances in which the source of the data is an inscription on a painting that no longer exists: there is no way to prove the authenticity of either the painting or its accompanying calligraphy. In addition, many paintings supposedly by famous artists and supplied with false signatures and dates entered the Imperial collection. Hu’s data remain in limbo, to be accepted only with great caution.

Zhou Daozhen, also writing in the early 1980s, turned to another piece of evidence, a colophon (dated 1517) inscribed by Wen Zhengming in which he refers to Qiu Ying as a one-time collaborator. (This painting is discussed below under the heading “Collaboration.”) Zhou suggests that Qiu might have been eighteen years old (seventeen by Western count) in 1517 and thus would have been born in 1500; he recognized 1552 as Qiu’s death date. In 1993, Shan Guolin reassessed the data and decided that Qiu Ying must have been about twenty years old when he participated with Shen Zhou, Wen Zhengming, and the others in creating the 1509 scroll. Shan proposes that Qiu was born in 1498 and died in 1552.

Stephen Little notes that a colophon by Wu Kuan (1435–1504) appears on a painting attributed to Qiu Ying now in the Japanese Imperial Household collection. Since Wu died in 1504, Little submits that Qiu Ying possibly was already active by that year. This colophon, however, is inscribed not directly on the painting but on a separate sheet of paper. Further, Wu Kuan’s colophon omits any mention of Qiu Ying. An unscrupulous dealer or mounter could easily have transferred Wu’s colophon to its present position from a different painting by a different artist. Wu’s colophon cannot be admitted as evidence for ascertaining Qiu Ying’s dates.

Although current Western opinion accepts 1494 as the possible year of Qiu Ying’s birth and the year 1552 as that of his death, Mette Siggstedt wisely warns that all of the proposed dates are arrived at arbitrarily.

**BIRTHPLACE**

In contrast to all statements in sixteenth-century sources indicating that Qiu Ying was born in Taicang, Stephen Little advances the idea that Qiu Ying’s ancestral home may have been Nanyang 南陽 in Hubei Province. But the evidence, derived from seals and signatures, is erratic and inconclusive. It is further obfuscated by questions about the genuineness of some of the paintings on which the seals and signatures appear, about whether Nanyang is to be understood as a place name or an alternate name, and about whether it should be associated with Qiu Ying or with someone else. A rectangular seal reading “Nanyang” appears on several scrolls attributed to Qiu Ying, some of dubious authenticity, some of quality. One is a hanging scroll, dated 1540, of ducks on a landspit (Shanghai Museum), a work that the connoisseur Fu Xinian does not consider a bona fide scroll by Qiu Ying.
seal appears beneath Qiu Ying’s name, in the place usually reserved for seals bearing an artist’s zi 字 or hao 号, on the handscroll Tribute Bearers (Palace Museum, Beijing) and in the upper left corner of the beautiful handscroll Picking Lotus (formerly belonging to C. T. Loo, New York City; present location unknown). A problem arises from the fact that the identical seal is also impressed after the name of the Suzhou landscape painter Lu Zhi 隆治 (1496–1576), who wrote the first in a series of poems now attached to Qiu Ying’s handscroll A Beauty in Spring Thoughts (National Palace Museum, Taipei). There is no other record of Lu Zhi using a Nanyang seal. The presence of the identical Nanyang seal after Qiu Ying’s name on the Tribute Bearers and in the upper left corner of the Picking Lotus raises the possibility that the artist had other people sign his name for him, a question to be addressed below.

A signature reading “brushed by Qiu Ying, Nanyang” (Nanyang Qiu Ying xie 南陽仇英寫) appears on a fan painting depicting A Scholar and an Attendant in a Landscape (Asian Art Museum, San Francisco). But again, this is not unimpeachable evidence because the comparatively large scale of the characters of the signature and its conspicuous location are incompatible with sixteenth-century artistic practices and are also unlike Qiu Ying’s usual habits of using small characters suitable for a small format and modestly placing his signature to one side of the imagery. In addition, the painting proper, the brushwork is dry, and the general execution of the painting is dull, quite unlike the characteristics of Qiu Ying’s hand in his delicate style. These observations cast doubt on this fan as a credible source of documentation. Qiu is credited with a painting entitled Thatched Cottage at Nanyang, but nothing more specific is recorded about the subject.

There is, then, no compelling proof confirming that Qiu’s family homestead was in Hubei Province.

ARTISAN ORIGIN

In the 1960s, the assertion that Qiu Ying started his career as a lacquer artisan began to appear in articles on Qiu published by Chinese scholars. Yang Zongrong was perhaps the first to mention this assertion, although he provided no source for it. (As will be discussed below, the claim was first made by Zhang Chao 張潮 in his book titled Yu Chu xinzhi 虞初新志.) Unchallenged, the notion that Qiu Ying began as a lacquer craftsman spread and in the ensuing decades was repeated in both Chinese and Western accounts of the artist. It played a central role in a largely fictional (unfortunately posing as a scholarly) account of Qiu Ying’s life published in 1982.

These articles always simply claimed that “Qiu Ying began as a lacquer craftsman.” Accepted uncritically, this claim seems to imply that Qiu Ying painted the decorations on lacquer-ware trays and boxes, or perhaps designed or even carved scenes on lacquer-ware objects. It is thus understood by the modern scholar Zhu Qiqian 朱啟钤 in his magnum opus on lacquers, as well as by others. Craig Clunas has pointed out the close connections between paintings and carved lacquer scenes, noting that in at least two instances similar images appear in both media and suggesting that they had a similar purpose. Views of a man on horseback leaving a villa, whether represented in a painted scroll or on a carved lacquer dish, might be a suitable present for an official departing to take up his next assignment; scenes of two men in a pavilion garden, again as either a painted scroll or a carved lacquer dish, might have been intended as a gift to commemorate a visit from one scholar to another. The latter imagery was common among Suzhou painters by Qiu Ying’s time, so the existence of at least one scroll by him, Eastern Grove (National Palace Museum, Taipei), in this mode is insufficient to proclaim his lacquer origins; he was simply following an established painting tradition.

The original comment on Qiu Ying as lacquer craftsman appeared in Yu Chu’s New Records (Yu Chu xinzhi) by Zhang Chao (1625–94), published in 1683. A closer look at this comment reveals that it is more specific. What Zhang actually says, in part, is: “In Ming painting history there is also Qiu Ying; he started as a lacquer craftsman and also did colored decorations in houses (beams and rafters) for people; later he undertook the profession of painter.” Analysis of this statement suggests something quite different from casting Qiu Ying as a worker in a lacquer-ware factory.
Instead, it is logical to interpret Zhang’s statement as meaning that Qiu Ying was first in the building trades as a craftsman who, for example, might have applied the lacquer to doors or treated exposed wooden members of houses and pavilions with the multiple layers of tong oil or lacquer and hemp necessary to help preserve them; in addition, he painted beams and rafters with the colorful geometric and intricate representational motifs for which Suzhou was famous. The pigments used for these beam and rafter paintings, however, had as a binder not lacquer but glue, albumen, peach resin, or tong oil. Glue was the same binder used by the scroll painter. This interpretation, despite the inaccuracies concerning media, keeps Qiu Ying in a single physical venue—the building—rather than moving him from lacquer-ware factory to private residence.

Since Zhang Chao’s is the earliest statement that Qiu was a lacquer artisan, and since it first appeared nearly 150 years after Qiu’s lifetime, the trustworthiness of the source must be established. Born in Anhui Province, Zhang Chao became a junior archivist in the Hanlin Academy; he was respected as a poet and especially as an anthologist. In the late seventeenth century Zhang lived in Yangzhou, where he forged a close friendship with a descendant of Confucius, the dramatist Kong Shangren 孔尚任 (1648–1718). Kong had a wide circle of acquaintances: royal princes, scholars, officials, painters, collectors, actors, and musicians. Zhang presided over Kong’s first gathering of poets in his official residence in Yangzhou in 1686 and included two of Kong’s works in one of his huge anthologies.

Aside from his anthologies, Zhang Chao was esteemed for his maxims on the cultured life. One collection of his epigrams is entitled Quiet Dream Visions (Youmengying 幽夢影). David Roy characterizes this book as “an entertaining collection of . . . aphoristic remarks on the art of life.” Roy further explains: “This work was circulated in manuscript among his friends before it was published, and he solicited their comments on it. . . . their comments on his original aphorisms as well as on each other’s remarks were included in [the publication].” Among the friends who commented on Zhang’s aphorisms were three artists: Cha Shibiao 查士樞 (1615–98), who also hailed from Anhui; Gong Xian 郭贊 (d. 1689), who lived in nearby Nanjing; and Shitao 石濤 (1642–1707), who also had Anhui connections. Zhang was also acquainted with Zhu Da 朱耷 (Bada Shanren 八大山人, 1625–1705). Clearly, Quiet Dream Visions was seen not as a scholarly effort but as a witty pastime—perhaps, as David Ralston suggests, sort of a parlor game. Quiet Dream Visions, however, appealed greatly to the early twentieth-century interpreter of Chinese cultural ideas for Westerners, Lin Yutang, who translated almost all of it in his book The Importance of Living: A Personal Guide to Enjoyment. One important feature of Zhang’s original adages is that they are more often than not stated in parallel. Here are two samples. The first: “North, south, east and west have fixed locations; front, back, right and left are without fixed locations.” The second, as translated by Judith Zeitlin, who sees it as an example of seventeenth-century appreciation of “obsession”: “Flowers must have butterflies, mountains must have streams, rocks must have moss, water must have seaweed, old trees must have creepers, and people must have obsessions.”

The critical book by Zhang Chao to be scrutinized here is Yu Chu’s New Records, which contains the reference to Qiu Ying being a lacquer craftsman. The phrase “New Records” signifies an imitative continuation, a supplement, to an original compilation, known as Yu chu’s Records (Yu chu zhi 釵初志), a Ming dynasty collection of stories. The famous Ming dynasty playwright Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550–1616) supposedly composed a preface for Yu Chu’s Records stating its value: “to read it opens the heart and releases the soul, stirring the senses to astonishment.” Zhang Chao, in his preface to his New Records, explains why he made his own anthology: “Reading this book will make people feel joy and astonishment; it will make them want to sing and want to cry, all for no reason.” Zhang Chao’s assemblage of the strange and unusual consists principally of biographies along with a smattering of other types of material all copied from other sources, to which Zhang appended his own personal comments. He seems to have selected the biographies with a special purpose in mind: that of allowing him to associate strange people or events of the past with those of his own day or experiences, those that lend
themselves on a personal level to the savoring of an emotional involvement. For example, after the biog-
raphy of someone noted for strange behavior, he reports: “there is someone just like this in my district.” The
purpose of Zhang Chao’s New Records is to inspire sympathetic resonance with the human condition, not
historical scholarship.

One of Zhang’s transcriptions in his New Records is the biography of the early Ming artist Dai Jin 戴進
(1388–1462) composed by Mao Xianshu 毛先舒 (1620–88). Mao’s biography of Dai contains the state-
ment that, when young, Dai was a silversmith and later became a court artist. To this biography, Zhang ap-
pended the observation, “In Ming painting history there is also Qiu Ying; he started as a lacquer crafts-
man and also did colored decorations in houses (beams and rafters) for people; later he followed the
profession of painter.” Zhang goes on to say that he had seen paintings by Qiu Ying and that they all had a
“craftsmanlike quality” and were not as good as those by Dai Jin.

Some scholars wonder whether Dai Jin was really a silversmith, noting that nearly 200 years elapsed be-
tween the lifetime of the painter Dai and that of the biog-
ographer Mao. There is also a long period, roughly
150 years, between the lifetimes of Qiu Ying and
Zhang Chao. Zhang Chao’s predilection for parallels in Quiet Dream Visions also characterized historians and biographers, who liked to establish antithetical pairs. Such a practice might underlie Zhang’s com-
ments on Qiu Ying. The idea that Dai Jin originally
was a silversmith perhaps inspired Zhang to invent a
similar, but different, craft beginning for Qiu Ying, thereby creating a biographical parallel.

Judith Zeitlin, discussing Zhang in the context of
another of his publication ventures, notes that he “was unconcerned with the possibility that the edition was a fraud.” Jonathan Hay sees Zhang Chao’s interests as being “a sort of anthropology of modern life, academic and frivolous by turns. . . . [his] importance for a future histoire des mentalités and, more broadly, the social history of the early Qing period, can hardly be overesti-
mated.” Zhang is a gauge of contemporary seven-
teenth-century social and cultural attitudes. He was
neither an antiquarian nor a historian.

The twentieth-century lacquer scholar Zhu Qing carefully assembled all references to lacquer arti-
sans he could locate and was unable to find another reference to substantiate Zhang’s claim that Qiu Ying
began his artistic life as a lacquer craftsman. Zhu claims that Zhang’s statement was probably mere
guesswork. On the basis of Zhu’s opinion, Craig Clu-
as agrees that the view that Qiu Ying began his ca-
reer as a lacquerer was “a later tradition, probably
apocryphal.”

It is also possible that Zhang Chao was simply re-
peating a rumor—which, given his disposition (sug-
gested above), would not be out of character. James Watt reports that architectural decoration in homes in
the New Territories in the mid-seventies was some-
times based on famous paintings; one house appar-
ently had a copy of the dragon scroll by the thirteenth-
century Chen Rong 陳容 (Museum of Fine Arts, Bos-
ton) ornamenting a beam. A rendition of the Night
Banquet in the Peach and Plum Garden, a theme often
associated with Qiu Ying, was painted in color above
a door of one of the buildings of a private academy in
Guangdong. Such circumstances, in which famous
compositions and themes trickle down to popular lev-
els, Watt suggests, might help explain how such a rumor
originated.

More doubt about the authenticity of Zhang Chao’s assertion is raised by the fact that in the early
Ming period carpenters, sawyers, bricklayers, tong oil
painters, and lacquers, as well as others in the build-
ing trades, were required to register (originally for cor-
vee labor in the capitals Beijing and Nanjing and later primarily for tax purposes). Such artisans were not
allowed to change their professions, the trades being her-
editary. Although the system began to disintegrate in
the late fifteenth century, it was not until the late six-
teenth century, after 1562 (that is, nearly ten years af-
afterQiu’s presumable death in 1552), that artisans were
finally permitted to pay off their service in cash instead
of labor.

Finally, the idea that Qiu Ying was a lacquer worker or an interior decorator apparently was not
widely known. In 1901, it was suggested that Qiu be-
gan his artistic life as a ceramic artisan in Raozhou, the
location of the famous porcelain kilns at Jingdezhen. Since it is even further removed in time from his life-
time, this assertion is even more suspect.
HOME IN SUZhou

Evidence from Qiu Ying’s signatures and seals suggests that he lived in the same area of Suzhou as did Tang Yin: the Peach Blossom Bank (Taohua Wu 桃花坞), located in the northwest corner of Suzhou, where Tang built his famous Peach Blossom Cottage. This testimony comes from signatures and seals on paintings supposedly by Qiu Ying, but as in the case of Nanyang discussed above, questions of authenticity compromise the evidence from such sources.

One extant painting (National History Museum, Beijing) bears the following signature purporting to be Qiu Ying’s: “made by Qiu Ying of the Peach Blossom Bank” (Taohua Wu Qiu Ying zhi 桃花坞仇英製). Sadly abused, this handscroll preserves the four palace scenes depicting the story of Su Hui 蘇蕙, who composed and embroidered a palindrome to regain her absent husband’s affections. The Beijing scroll, identified only as palace scenes, is discussed as a genuine early work by Qiu Ying despite its weak brushwork and lackluster appearance.

Seals reading “Family at Peach Blossom Bank” (Taohua Wu li renjia 桃花坞里人家) are also affiliated with the name Qiu Ying. This seal as impressed on Hunting in the Shanglin Park is registered in Shigu tang shuhua huikao 式古堂書畫彙考 by Bian Yongyu 毕永譽; published in 1682. This monumental record of paintings and calligraphy is accepted as one of the most reputable sources for painting. The same seal legend appears on The Jian Pass, as recorded in a painting collection catalogue published in 1915. The Shigu tang shuhua huikao entry has a good chance of being correct. This seal legend is also impressed on two extant paintings ascribed to Qiu Ying, neither of top quality: A Scholar Resting on a Qin under a Willow (Shanghai Museum) and Discussing Painting by a Pine Stream (Jilin Museum). Bian’s Shigu tang shuhua huikao was well known to art lovers and dealers in the nineteenth century. It was the forger’s friend in two ways. First, a forger could use it as a source for authentic seal legends. Second, a forger could refer potential buyers of a forged scroll to Bian’s compendium to reassure them that a scroll was “genuine” because it bore the same seals as those recorded in Bian’s book.

It was conjectured that Qiu Ying used the signature “made by Qiu Ying of the Peach Blossom Bank” when a young man and that he employed seals with the Peach Blossom Bank legend after his reputation was established as a means of remembering his first years of success as a painter. This is an entirely logical proposal since Taohua Wu was a commercial and artistic hub in sixteenth-century Suzhou. But it remains unclear whether this is true or whether this phrase is a fabrication of Suzhou forgers familiar with the city and its districts.

OTHER NAMES

As Qiu Ying’s artistic livelihood developed, he took the alternate names of Shifu and Shizhou (Shizhou means “Ten Continents,” referring to the ten continents of Daoist immortals and giving Qiu Ying a mild Daoist link). These two names are well attested in sixteenth-century biographical sketches of the artist and pose no problem. Three Qiu Ying seals bearing the legend “The Immortal Master of Shizhou” (Shizhou xianshi 十洲仙史) represent an extension of the same Daoist idea. These seal legends, however, did not come to light until the eighteenth century when recorded by the famous collector An Qi. It is possible that such a seal belonged to Qiu Ying and knowledge of it was common in Suzhou, where, later, the legend was impressed upon several leaves of a dubious Qiu Ying album of figures now in the Palace Museum in Beijing. Whether Nanyang was another name used by Qiu Ying was discussed above.

Close examination of seals on Qiu Ying paintings has led to the discovery that he may have used a seal of the xianzhang 簡章 type. Legends carved on xianzhang seals are mottoes or even literary phrases but do not include the owner’s personal names or other designations that might be easily associated with him. Such seals were sometimes impressed at the top right of an inscription to balance the seals following the signature at the lower left of the writing. The impression of a seal reading “Hanzao” 賢藻 appears on several Qiu Ying paintings, but again there are puzzling circumstances surrounding the usage of this seal legend.

An oval seal with the legend Hanzao appears in
independent of major collectors because Wen Jia in a colophon on a scroll by Qiu Ying says he and his friends Wang Guxiang 项士祥 (1501–68) and Lu Shi went to “the dwelling of Qiu Ying.” Yet in the original Chinese text of Wen Jia’s colophon, the character used for “dwelling” is shú, meaning simply “dwelling” or “place” but does not carry the idea of a studio or a special place; these concepts are usually designated by one of the series of names listed above.

LITERACY AND SOCIAL STATUS

Like many other professional painters, such as the earlier Dai Jin and Qiu’s own teacher Zhou Chen, Qiu Ying certainly did not have the classical education that could lead him to officialdom, and, although he was entirely capable of writing, he was not adept at composing essays or poetry. Instead, his creative talents were channeled into the visual arts.

No writer questioned Qiu Ying’s literacy until the year 1804, when Guo Jie 郭籍 commented in a colophon on the Qiu Ying landscape after Li Tang 李唐 (now in the Freer Gallery of Art) that, according to legend, Qiu Ying often asked others to inscribe his signature for him. This statement may have been based upon the note by the early eighteenth-century Wu Sheng that the signature on a Qiu Ying painting of Wax-plum, Narcissus, and Pine had been written by Xiang Yuanbian. Guo Jie’s remark apparently launched the idea that Qiu Ying was illiterate and incapable of even writing his own name—major issues in twentieth-century Qiu Ying studies.

Stephen Little disproves Qiu’s illiteracy, pointing to extant examples of Qiu’s handwriting on his pictures and in a personal letter. But there is even further evidence that Qiu Ying could write. It must be noted, for example, that the earliest reference to Zhou Chen (written in 1519 when Zhou was still alive) remarks that Zhou composed poetry. Tang Yin, Zhou Chen’s pupil and perhaps a good friend of Qiu Ying, was a well-educated and respected poet who was denied an official career because of a trumped-up scandal in the civil-service examinations. It is difficult to believe that Zhou Chen, as Qiu Ying’s painting mentor, and Tang Yin, as one of his older associates, would not
have taught Qiu Ying at least the rudiments of literacy: writing and reading. Indeed, in 1873, a certain Yang Qinglin 楊慶麟 believed that Qiu wrote a credible hand and claimed that several lines of Qiu’s script (“ellegant and having the flavor of Jin calligraphy masters”) were included among the calligraphy models in the *Huanxiang tang fatie* 環香堂法帖. Unfortunately, this claim appears to be inaccurate since neither of the two available copies of this rare calligraphy model book contains anything by Qiu Ying. What does appear in this calligraphy model book is a reproduction of an otherwise unrecorded colophon by Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558–1639) claiming that Qiu Ying possessed literary talent (ya yu wenzao 雅於文藻). Despite Chen’s assertion, the current position on this question is that Qiu could write but could not compose poems or essays.

It is unnecessary to be as narrow-minded as the pedant Zhu Tingzhen 朱廷珍 (1841–1903), who, discussing the poetry of the Wu school painters, bluntly asserted of Qiu Ying: “he could not write poetry; he was simply a painter and nothing more.” In reality, however, the issue is not so much whether Qiu was literate but whether he could participate in the social world of the elite. A major question is: Why does Qiu Ying’s name not appear in the social writings of his contemporaries? A study of early Ming Suzhou by Michael Marmé offers some answers. Marmé discerns four factors determining acceptance among the elite: relatives, family, and marriage; cultural level; wealth; and virtue, demonstrated in recorded acts of filiality and brotherliness. According to Marmé, every member of the elite would ideally possess all four of these elements, but in reality an individual who possessed only two could be “recognized as belonging to the elite—but only marginally and as an individual.” He continues, “Possessing one and only one of these qualities (be it wealth in the case of a merchant or landlord, virtue in the case of a chaste widow) appears never to have been a sufficient basis for inclusion.”

Qiu Ying had neither family nor wealth; although he might have possessed “virtue,” it is nowhere recorded, and he lacked the distinctive ingredient of “cultural level.” Two of Marmé’s keys to “cultural level” were cultural sophistication and examination success: an educated man not only could read the canonical words, he had them by heart. Ability to hold one’s own in the poetry-writing parties which bulked so large in elite social life was unquestionably an asset yet, in practice, a less rigorous standard seems to have been applied. At a minimum, “culture” involved an “acquaintance with—and commitment to—the classical tradition.”

Inability to compose was a major drawback in the literati world of sixteenth-century China, where gentlemen and scholars, in addition to any writings done for official or personal reasons, were regularly called upon to formulate all manner of public and semipublic compositions, sometimes prose, sometimes poetry: tomb inscriptions, epitaphs, birthday congratulations, biographies, book prefaces, farewells, reminiscences. These men communicated with one another through prose letters, often of belletristic quality; their social life often centered on banquets, wine parties, or other meetings where participants wrote poems, sometimes formally, sometimes casually. Examples of such compositions abound in the collected works of sixteenth-century Chinese literati. Although Qiu Ying may have been acquainted with the cultural and social elite, he simply was incapable of participating in their world on their terms. Not being recognized as their social equal, he is not named in their writings. While Shen Zhou, Wen Zhengming, and Tang Yin are noted for their literary compositions as well as their painting, Qiu Ying alone of the Four Masters is known only through his art, on which he relied exclusively for his living.

**PATRONS**

Qiu Ying’s reputation brought him commissions from patrons in Suzhou as well as in Nanjing, Wuxi, Yixing, and elsewhere in the Jiangnan area. Many individuals were clients of Qiu Ying on a one-time basis. Sometimes successive generations of a family supported him by commissioning occasional pieces. Throughout his career, Qiu Ying constantly received requests from these lesser customers, even while, it would seem, living in the home of a major patron. Thus, his livelihood was dependent upon three ranks of patrons: the one-
time customer, the loyal but intermittent supporter, and “sustaining” patrons who maintained him for long periods of time as an artist-in-residence in their homes in exchange for the fruits of his brush.

It was not uncommon in sixteenth-century China for wealthy individuals to invite artists to live in their mansions and paint for them. In 1532 Yan Song 严嵩 (1480–1565), who had already risen to high position in the civil service, was promoted to the office of minister of rites in Nanjing and in 1533 to the position of minister of personnel, also in Nanjing. Yan and his son became notorious for their abuse of their positions and for the “inordinate tribute they exacted for favors.” Yan Song amassed a huge collection of goods, including paintings and calligraphies. Qiu’s teacher, Zhou Chen, was unhappily forced by the greedy Yan Song to stay at Yan’s house in Nanjing to paint. It is unknown whether Zhou Chen was required to return a favor in this fashion or Yan simply wanted to acquire Zhou’s paintings. The relationship between Tang Yin and his patron Hua Yun 华雲 (1488–1560) was much more congenial. In these circumstances, presumably the patron provided work space and materials, as was done for jade carvers, silversmiths, and cabinet-makers who worked in clients’ houses.

Like his teacher, Qiu Ying was also available for hire as a painter-in-residence, to paint to the patron’s specifications. Mid-sixteenth-century documents reveal that at least three patrons invited Qiu to live at their homes: Chen Guan, Zhou Fenglai, and Xiang Yuanbian. Qiu may have spent most of his adult life residing in the homes of others.

Another gap in our knowledge of Qiu Ying’s life is the order in which he stayed with his major patrons. This is a lamentable lacuna because several of Qiu’s best scrolls were requested by these patrons or are otherwise associated with their names, and since few of Qiu’s paintings are specifically dated, knowing the periods when he stayed with his patrons would help to establish his stylistic development. Again, there are differences of opinion about the sequence in which Qiu Ying was employed by his primary patrons. Xu Bangda apparently did not know about Zhou Fenglai, and on the basis of Peng Nian’s colophon of 1552, which states that Qiu Ying resided with Chen Guan, believed that Qiu moved there after his stay with Xiang Yuanbian. Martie Young proposes a different sequence: Chen Guan, Xiang Yuanbian, and Zhou Fenglai.

None of the extant Qiu Ying paintings linked with Chen Guan are or can be dated; however, they share the common trait of being impressive pictures executed in heavy blue-and-green pigments recalling the archaic Tang mode: Tribute Bearers (Palace Museum, Beijing), Emperor Guangwu Forging a Stream (National Museum, Ottawa), and Peach Spring in Immortal’s Realms (Tianjin Museum). It is indeed regrettable that these works cannot be fitted into the sequence of Qiu’s stylistic development.

Two Qiu Ying paintings associated with Zhou Fenglai are the lovely scroll representing Zhao Mengfu Writing “The Heart Sutra” in Exchange for Tea (Cleveland Museum of Art), completed in 1542 at Zhou’s request, and A Lady Playing the Harp in a Pavilion, preserved in a close copy (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), a painting owned by Zhou when seen by Chen Shun 陈淳 (1483–1544) in 1542. These two paintings suggest that Qiu Ying was with Zhou Fenglai in the early 1540s.

Two excellent Qiu Ying creations, both dated 1547, are connected with Xiang Yuanbian. One is the only painting in Qiu’s oeuvre dated by him in his own hand: the hanging scroll Wax Plum and Narcissus, dedicated to Xiang Yuanbian; the other is an album of six leaves of landscapes in Song and Yuan styles, said to have been executed in 1547. These dates imply that Qiu was with Xiang in the late 1540s.

No more specific sequencing can be squeezed from the available data; furthermore, even these conclusions might be suspect considering that Qiu Ying was undoubtedly free to accept requests for paintings from other people even when he was staying with a particular benefactor. In addition, it is often assumed that the presence of Xiang Yuanbian’s seals on a Qiu Ying painting automatically signifies that the picture was made by Qiu for Xiang. This is specious reasoning. Xiang was a generation younger than Qiu and lived until 1590; he could easily have acquired additional works by Qiu after the artist’s demise.

Although Qiu is usually considered a Suzhou painter, two of the three patrons with whom he spent substantial amounts of time lived some distance from
the city. Zhou Fenglai lived in Kunshan, some sixty kilometers northeast of Suzhou; Xiang Yuanbian lived in Jiaxing, some sixty kilometers south of Suzhou. Chen Guan, Qiu’s third major patron, housed Qiu in a “mountain villa,” the location of which is unknown; it could have been in one of the hills surrounding Suzhou. When staying with Zhou and Xiang, Qiu Ying was at least a day’s journey from Suzhou and could not associate frequently with Suzhou artists. It is clear that in Jiaxing he had access to ancient paintings in the Xiang family collection, but basically neither Kunshan nor Jiaxing was an outstanding center of artistic endeavor during the sixteenth century, so, for creative stimulation and motivation, Qiu must have relied largely on his innate intelligence, personal sensibilities, and natural talent.

COLLABORATION

Qiu Ying sometimes collaborated with other artists. Most often these joint works were portraits or figure paintings in which Qiu Ying contributed the figure and any architectural representations, while another artist provided a suitable background setting. Qiu’s son-in-law (or nephew; see below) You Qiu 邱九，as well as Tang Yin, Wen Zhengming, and Lu Zhi, are mentioned in the records.

A statement that ostensibly documents an artistic relationship between Wen Zhengming and Qiu Ying at the beginning of their careers must, for reasons given below, be accepted with caution. Made by Wang Zhideng, the statement appears on Wen Zhengming’s hanging scroll of 1517 titled The Princess and the Lady of the Xiang River (Palace Museum, Beijing). The scroll is inscribed by Wen Zhengming and also bears a colophon by his son, Wen Jia. Along the right edge is an undated colophon by Wang Zhideng in which he claims that Wen Zhengming originally asked Qiu Ying to add the color to these figures but was so dissatisfied with the outcome that he redid it himself. The Beijing scroll is presumably Wen’s version, with color applied by him. Unfortunately, there is no hint about why Wen Zhengming asked Qiu to apply the color or about the source of Wen’s displeasure with Qiu’s work. Wang’s evidence that Wen asked Qiu to apply the colors for his rendition of The Princess and the Lady of the Xiang River is compromised by the fact that on another version of this subject by Wen Zhengming (now lost), recorded as having the identical inscription by Wen Zhengming and the same colophon by Wen Jia, Wang also provided a colophon. Here, the colophon is shorter and makes no reference to any participation by Qiu Ying.

The names of Wen Zhengming and Qiu Ying are often paired as collaborators, but it does not follow that they accomplished their tasks at the same time, standing next to each other. Rather, several years might have intervened between the writing of the calligraphy and the painting of its accompanying picture, or vice versa, between the painting of a picture and the inscribing of the calligraphy. Wen Zhengming, for example, states that in 1542 a guest brought Qiu Ying’s fan depiction of The Orchid Pavilion Gathering and asked Wen to write out The Orchid Pavilion Preface. Clearly, the two men, Wen and Qiu, need not have been together in the same room at the same time. They were linked through the arts of painting and calligraphy rather than by physical meeting.

BOOK ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustrated printed books developed into a profitable business in Ming China, especially in the South. For the most part, in the early Ming, the illustrations were designed by men whose names are not on rosters of fine artists. The exceptions are Du Jin 杜堇 (mid-fifteenth century), Tang Yin, Qian Gu 錢榖 (1508–after 1578), and Qiu Ying. Qiu is listed as the illustrator of three titles: Biographies of Virtuous Women (Lienü quan 列女傳) in sixteen chapters, Examples of the Filial and Proper (Xiaozhen lu 孝貞錄) in one chapter, and the drama A Thousand Pieces of Gold (Qianjin ji 千金記) in two chapters. The Biographies of Virtuous Women with illustrations said to be by Qiu Ying exists today in two editions, one a facsimile reprint of the earliest known edition, dated 1779, supposedly based on a Wanli era (1573–1619) edition. In this version, the image occupies a two-page spread. A reduced rendition, relegating these pictures to the corner of the page, was printed as recently as 1978. The depictions,
EROTICA

By the Ming period, various types of erotica were thriving in South China. Here, according to Robert van Gulik, after the government moved north to Beijing in 1421, “old handbooks of sex were reprinted and some new ones written. Aside from the serious literature on sex matters, there was also a great demand for erotic literature of a lighter nature, so that erotic novels, short-stories and poetry flourished as never before.” The newly popular erotic novels were provided with appropriate pictures, and picture albums of erotic scenes accompanied by poems also thrived. These erotic pictures were known as “intimate play pictures” (bixi tu 秘戲圖) or “spring paintings” (chunhua 春畫).

According to tradition, the three great names in pictorial erotica were Zhao Mengfu, Tang Yin, and Qiu Ying. Qiu Ying was a major provider of erotic illustrations to sex handbooks, including those entitled Ten Glorious Postures, Intimate Scenes of Leisurely Love, and Maiden Embracing Spring. Van Gulik notes that these pictures do not depict coitus but nonetheless are highly suggestive. Qiu Ying’s follower, Huang Sheng 黃昇, is also credited with erotic pictures, producing, according to van Gulik, an album titled Leisurely After-dinner Amusement. Qiu’s expertise in the field of erotica was still being proclaimed in 1984. Van Gulik concedes that most erotic paintings under Qiu Ying’s name are crude eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works.

Pornographic pictures were apparently hawked on the streets and at popular amusement spots, and within less than a century of Qiu Ying’s lifetime, his name was evoked in this context in a play perhaps written about 1600, in which the author takes the “hero and his friends on an excursion to West Lake, where they . . . make a wide sampling of its pleasures,” including an encounter with “a vendor of erotic paintings (by the famous Ming masters, Tang Yin, Qiu Ying and Zhou Chen!).” While there are no sixteenth-century records confirming that Qiu engaged in this sort of painting, it is entirely possible that he did. Such pictures obviously focused on depictions of the human figure, an area in which Qiu excelled. Furthermore, if the later examples are any guide, the figures sometimes were placed in elaborate architectural settings, another of Qiu’s strengths. After all, Qiu relied solely upon his painting skills for his living; since there was a demand for such pictures, in all probability he supplied them for a fee.

COLLECTING

Associating as he did with wealthy patrons and collectors may have inspired Qiu Ying to acquire some works of art himself, but in a small way. Two of his seal impressions appear on a calligraphy of The Hall of the Windy Pines Poem by the Song dynasty master Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045–1105; National Palace Museum, Taipei). These two seal impressions may be taken as genuine Qiu Ying seals; they are of utmost importance, since an understanding of Qiu’s repertoire of seals is so garbled by fakes and forgeries. The famous Hall of the Windy Pines Poem calligraphy was once owned by the Yuan dynasty princess Sengge Ragi 祥哥剌吉 (ca. 1283–1331). How it came into Qiu Ying’s hands is unknown. The fact that Qiu does not use any special ownership seal suggests he was not a serious collector; and so far this is the only art work discovered to have been in his possession. The ownership of one scroll, regardless of its quality and fame, however, does not indicate that Qiu Ying was a wealthy man. He need not have purchased the calligraphy; it could well have been given to him, perhaps in payment for one of his creations.
FAMILY

From certain art historical biographical sources it can be deduced that Qiu Ying was married and had at least two children: a son and a daughter. The son, whose personal name is unknown, garnered no celebrity in the art world, but his grandson Qiu Shixiang (zi Yuzhou 丑洲) had a modest reputation. Qiu Shixiang illustrated a verse by the Tang poet Wang Wei 王维,\textsuperscript{115} and his rendition of The Peach Blossom Spring, dated by cyclical characters to either 1582 or 1642, is extant.\textsuperscript{116} Qiu’s daughter, Qiu Zhu 仇珠 (Qiu Shi 仇氏), was an artist in her own right, continuing her father’s style.\textsuperscript{117} There is also a relationship with the painter named You Qiu, but the exact connection is unclear; You was either Qiu’s nephew or his son-in-law. If the latter, then Qiu Ying must have had a second daughter, apparently without artistic bent, who married You Qiu. You Qiu (zi Ziqu 子求, hao Fengqu 樊丘) worked in Qiu Ying’s manner and moved from Suzhou to Taicang, where, among other artistic activities, he was a muralist for the famous poet Wang Shizhen,\textsuperscript{118} perhaps even living in Wang’s residence in Taicang. You’s relationship with Wang was close; Wang repeatedly mentions You in his writings.\textsuperscript{119} Sometimes You was asked to produce a painting for Wang or one of his colleagues; sometimes he was invited on literary parties. You’s son, Daoheng 道恒, was a calligrapher of minor note; one of his fan paintings, Mountain Village and Misty Trees, dated 1591, is extant.\textsuperscript{120} You’s daughter (name unrecorded) was also a painter and a poet; she married Zhou Fengyi 周鳳儀 (zi Zhonglai 仲來), who later changed his name to Mu 牧. They both wrote poetry and also painted for a living.\textsuperscript{121} Thus, Qiu Ying’s family moved quickly into the lower levels of the literati, where the questions of literacy and ability to compose were moot points.

In China it is a common pattern to have several generations of painters in one family, whether members of the imperial house, of the gentry elite, or of the professional class. Such famous literati painter families as the Zhaos (Zhao Mengfu, his younger brother, and his son) and the Wens (Wen Zhengming, his two sons, his nephew, and other members of the extended family) come to mind. No one would assert that these artists either assisted one another or comprised an atelier.

It might be tempting to think of the Qiu family as a cohesive unit and to suggest that Qiu Ying was assisted in his paintings by members of his immediate family. When the circumstances are carefully evaluated, this possibility becomes remote, and in all probability no further significance should be assigned to the Qiu/You connection. First, for Qiu’s daughter, the only one of his children with artistic talent, there is no evidence in the documents that she helped her father. Further, she was married, and although the union was an unhappy one,\textsuperscript{122} she presumably followed the strict custom of leaving her natal family forever, her loyalties and labors ever after devoted to the well-being and fortune of her husband’s family. Qiu’s grandson, Shixiang, claimed Cuili as his native place. Cuili is an old name for Jiaxing, the home of Xiang Yuanbian, with whom Qiu Ying lived for several years, probably near the end of his career. If Shixiang were really born in Cuili, his birth would have taken place in the 1540s and he would have been a mere infant at the time of his grandfather’s death, probably in 1552. It is also doubtful that You Qiu helped Qiu Ying to any great extent because, as noted above, You and his family moved to Taicang, where he established his reputation. Although Taicang was Qiu Ying’s birthplace, he never resided or worked there as an adult.

HEALTH

A bust-length portrait of Qiu Ying (fig. 1), of unknown date of execution, shows a gentle, mildly pock-marked visage. Its gaunt features, protruding cheekbones, and sunken eye sockets suggest Qiu’s health was not robust, a speculation strengthened by his undated letter to an unidentified client, in which he says he has “not yet recovered” and requests a copy of the “Suwen” 誠 部 chapter of the medical treatise Neijing 内經, along with some special pills.\textsuperscript{123}

CONCLUSIONS

Except that Qiu Ying resided in the homes of at least three patrons, his artistic life experiences were not especially remarkable. Many aspects of his career follow
the patterns of other professional artists of the period. As with other professional artists, his limited education precluded aspiration to official position. He relied upon the sale of his art for his living, often working on commission. He painted in the same genres as did many other painters, professional and otherwise, especially those commemorative pictures so sought after in the Suzhou area, as well as contributing to composite scrolls of calligraphy, literature, and painting. He, like other painters, supplied the facsimile copies of older compositions solicited by collectors. Supplementary income may have been derived from providing illustrations for printed books in addition to erotica.

This fragmentary, but reasoned and prudent, statement about Qiu Ying is the sum total of what little is known about his life today. It is a choppy account with many gaps and much speculation because no functional biography of Qiu Ying, composed by one of his contemporaries, exists. Nor does his name appear in the informal belletristic writings of the period, and few uncontested dates are associated with him. Consequently, it is impossible to prepare a strictly narrative account of his life, which performe must depend upon a series of firm dates of major events. Further, a true narrative biography would flesh out this sequence of dates with full anecdotal details about the individual’s friends, lovers, family, travels, education, personal joys and sorrows. Again, unfortunately, nothing like this can be done for Qiu Ying. Contemporary biographical information about him is meager, and his life has to be painstakingly reconstructed on the basis of pieces of data found in widely scattered sources.

Despite the strenuous combined efforts of modern scholars to retrieve Qiu Ying’s persona, only one secure additional fact has come to light: that he once owned a calligraphic masterpiece. The many lacunae that remain in Qiu Ying’s biography will probably never be filled.

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**Notes**


7. The scroll, but not Peng Nian’s colophon, is reproduced in Palace Museum, *Beijing, Mingdai Wumen huihu 8* (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 1990), no. 46, and in *Ming sijia huaij* (Tianjin: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1993), no. 214. This scroll is dedicated by artist’s inscription to one of his patrons, Chen Guan. A second version of this subject by Qiu Ying was signed and dedicated to Chen with different phraseology. It is known only through written records (Zhang Chou 張昭, *Qinghe shuhua fang 清河書畫舫* [preface 1616; n.p., n.d.], 12:52a–53a; Gu Fu 賴復, *Pingsheng zhuanjuan 平生莊獻* [preface 1692; Shanghai: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1962], 10:93; Wu Sheng 吳升, *Daguan lu 大觀錄* [preface 1712; rpt. Taipei: National Central Library, 1970], 20:51a–52b. A third version of *Tribute Bearers* is that recorded by An Qi 安崎 in 1742.
8. This colophon appears on *Hunting on the Autumn Plain* (Shanghai Museum ?). The painting (but not the colophon) is reproduced in *Tang Song Yuan Qing hua xuan* (Canton: Yishu huaobao, 1963), pl. 50. Both painting and colophon are reproduced in an article by Liu Haisu ("Tan Zhongqiu hua de tezheng," *Meishi* 1957:6:37). The hanging scroll, in ink and color on silk, depicts horses, foreign groom, and mounted hunters on an open expanse in the tradition popularly associated with Zhao Mengfu, as well as with a myriad of paintings of equestre taxonomy. The scroll has seals of Xiang Yuanbian and at the top a large seal of the Manchu prince Yi 怡鏡, as well as two seals of Liu Haisu (b. 1896). According to records, a painting of this title once belonged to Zhou Fenglai (who owned the Ningxiang Ge 睦香閣 and was a primary patron of Qiu Ying) and then Xiang Yuanbian; Xiang Shengbiao's colophon was written on the separate paper mounted above the painting. There are, unfortunately, several unsettling peculiarities about the seals, the colophon, and the painting style displayed in the Shanghai scroll. The artist's signature—the usual simple "made by Qiu Ying, Shifu" (Qiu Ying Shifu zhi 仇英實父製)—is followed by an unusual square seal reading "Shizhou's seal" (Shizhou shiyou 十洲之印). This is followed by a unique narrow vertical seal containing the three characters for Zhou Fenglai's pavilion: Ningxiang Ge. No other impression of this seal is known, leaving it unclear whether it should be understood as referring to the building used by Qiu Ying as a studio when he lived at Zhou's home or whether it is Zhou's personal "ownership" seal. Another version of the painting, recorded by Wu Sheng (*Daguan lu*, 20:63), was signed only "made by Qiu Ying" (Qiu Ying zhi 仇英製). The text of Xiang Shengbiao's inscription above the Shanghai-scroll differs substantially (but in inconsequential details not affecting the information conveyed) from that recorded by Wu Sheng, evoking additional apprehension about the authenticity of the Shanghai version of the painting. Unfortunately, Wu Sheng rarely mentioned the presence of seals on paintings he wrote about, so the question of whether his version had the Zhou Fenglai seal cannot be answered by referring to him. The heavy shading in the garments and on the horses in the Shanghai picture is not a sixteenth-century feature but bespeaks eighteenth-century qualities at best. The scroll itself cannot be a serious contender for inclusion in Qiu Ying's oeuvre, although the colophon may have a claim to authenticity, at least in its content.


17. Little, "The Demon Queller," 43-44.


19. For the *Tribute Bearer* scroll, see n. 7. Photographs of *Picking Lotus* are in the C. T. Loo photographic archives at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. I am grateful to Jenni Rodda, Curator of the Department of Slides and Photographs at the Institute, for granting me access to this archive.


23. See my "Qiu Ying's Delicate Style."


26. Lin Jiazhi, "Qiu Ying qiongku de yisheng," *Duoynu* 9 (1982): 201-5. This article was severely criticized by Hu Yi and Zhou Daozhen in the 1984.5 issue of this journal.

27. Qishu 琪書 (unpublished manuscript; Beijing, 1957), 64a. I am grateful to Verity Wilson for access to this manuscript in the library of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

28. Craig Clunas, "Human Figures in the Decoration of Ming..."


30. Vols. 11–14 in *Qingdai biji congkan* 清代筆記叢刊 (Shanghai: Wemning shuju, 1936), 8:36b.

31. A lacquer mixture was used to fill in cracks of hardwoods in preparation for painting (Institute of the History of Natural Sciences, Chinese Academy of Sciences, *History and Development of Ancient Chinese Architecture* [Beijing: Science Press, 1986], 278). For the preparation of this “putty” see p. 287.

32. For examples of the elaborate “Suzhou” style architectural decoration, see Institute of History of Natural Sciences, Chinese Academy of Science, *History and Development of Ancient Chinese Architecture*, 275–80.


34. Shi Guozhu 石國柱 et al., *Shexian zhi 楚縣志* (Shanghai: Chengwen chubanshe, 1937), chap. 7:11a.

35. Two huge anthologies were compiled and published by Zhang: *Zhaodai congshu 照代叢書* and *Tanji congshu 譚几叢書*.


41. Zhang, for example, corresponded with Bada; see Wang Fangyu and Richard Barnhart, eds., *The Life and Art of Bada Shanjuren* (1626–1705) (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1990), 284–85. I am indebted to Wei-kuen Tang for bringing this reference to my attention.

42. Personal communication, April 1996.


44. *Youneng ying, shang*, 10a.


46. Yu Chu (ca. 140–87 B.C.) was a “magician” who supposedly collected all manner of stories of strange and unusual, rare and bizarre occurrences. For a discussion of various editions of this book, see Cheng Yizhong, “‘Yu Chu zhi’ de bianzhe he banben,” *Wenxian* 36.2 (1988): 39–42.

47. Translation by Allan Barr, quoted in Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, 272, n. 91.


54. This possibility was suggested to me by Wei-kuen Tang, letter, 30 July 1996.


59. Huang Zongxing 黄宗惺, *Caoxiong duhua ji 草心楼读画集*, MSCS 1/1, 111.


63. This seal can barely be made out in reproductions of A Scholar Resting on a Qin under a Willow in *Zhengguo meishu quanjí*, *huahua bian* 7 Mingdai hua, *zhong* (Shanghai: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1989), pl. 61, and in *Shanghai bowuguan cang Ming siijia jingpin xuanji* (Four Masters of the Ming Dynasty Masterworks of Shen Zhou, Wen Zhengming, Tang Yin and Qiu Ying from the Shanghai Museum Collection) (Hong Kong: Tai Yip, 1996), no. 97. The seal on this painting is recorded in Peng Yuanji 郎元济, *Xuzhai minghua lu* 虚斋明画录 (n.p., 1909), 8:24 and by Xu Bangda, *Gujia meishu weicang bian* (n.p.: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1984), 2:139. See my comments about the dubious authenticity of this seal in my *Sushou Pinan* and Other Dubious Paintings in the Received Oeuvre of Qiu Ying, *Artibus Asiae*, forthcoming. The seal is clearly visible in the reproduction of *Discussing Painting by a Pine Stream in Kitsurin-sho Hakubutsukan shō: Chigoku Min shin kaiga ten* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1988), pl. 111.


66. For an analysis of the stylistic weaknesses in the leaves of this album, see my “Qiu Ying’s Delicate Style,” 59–63. The album is fully reproduced in Shan Guoqiang, “Qiu Ying ji Qiu yingji Renwu gushi ci,” *Gugong bowuguan yuankan* 1982:2; Qiu Ying *Renwu gushi ci* (n.p.: Commercial Press, 1983); *Ming siijia huaish* 216–25.


68. For *Picking Lotus*, see n. 19. *Illustration to the Red Cliff Fu* is reproduced in *Liaoning sheng bowuguan canhua ji* (Beijing: Renwu chubanshe, 1960), 2:32–33.


73. Young, “The Paintings of Ch’iu Ying,” 40.


76. Siggstedt, “Zhou Chen.”


78. Wu Sheng, *Dagu lu*, 20:61a

79. See Little, “The Demon Queller,” 70–71, for an assessment of comments concerning Qiu’s illiteracy and speculation about who might have signed Qiu’s name on various of his paintings.

80. Little, “The Demon Queller,” 73.


84. I am indebted to Shi Anchang, who examined a copy in
Beijing; the second copy is in my possession.


94. For location of reproduction of Tribute Bearers, see n. 7. Emperor Guangwu Forging a Stream is reproduced in Hsien-ch’i Tseng, Loan Exhibition of Chinese Paintings, organized by Frank Caro for the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology, May-June 1956 (n.p., n.d.), no. 13. Peach Spring in Immortal Realms is reproduced in Sogen Minshin meiga taikan 宋元明清名畫大觀 (Tokyo: Osaka kogeiha, 1931), 109, and in Zhongguo meishu quanji, huinha bian, 7 Mingdai huinha, zhong, 63. Peach Spring in Immortal Realms, however, raises questions. It bears two seals of Chen Guan and seals of An Qi as well as of the Qianlong and other Qing emperors, prompting the suggestion that it went directly from An Qi’s collection into the imperial collection, as did many of An’s paintings (Zhao Chungui, “Qiu Ying ‘Taoyuan xianjing tu’ zhu,” Wenwu 1979.4:485). Although it bears imperial seals, it was not included in the catalogue of the Qing imperial collection of calligraphy and painting. An Qi’s description of Peach Spring in Immortal Realms tallies with the picture in Tianjin, but the Tianjin scroll is not the one once owned by An. The Tianjin scroll, measuring 175 × 66.7 cm is somewhat larger than the one recorded by An Qi, which measured 160 × 55 cm (converted from An Qi’s Qing ruler measurements of 5’ 11” × 1’ 9.2”); see Dorothy Chen-Courtis, “The Literary Theme of the Peach Blossom Spring in Pre-Ming and Ming Painting” (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1979), 210-11. The Tianjin picture must be based on An Qi’s description. Before entering the Tianjin Museum, the painting belonged to the collector Zhang Yi 張翼 and later to his son Zhang Wenfu 張文孚 (Zhao Chungui, “Qiu Ying ‘Taoyuan xianjing tu’ zhu,” 85).

95. Zhao Mengfu Writing “The Heart Sutra” in Exchange for Tea is reproduced in Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting: The Collections of the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City and the Cleveland Museum of Art (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1980), no. 165. For A Lady Playing the Harp in a Pavilion see n. 67. In his colophon on this painting, Chen Shun says he took a trip in 1542 to Kunshan, where he visited Zhou Fenglai; Zhou asked Chen to inscribe Qiu’s A Lady Playing the Harp in a Pavilion, which he did.

96. There are three extant versions of this composition, all exceedingly similar in composition and rendition. Of these, the one in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (reproduced in Little, “The Demon Queller,” pl. 56) is the finest; that in the National Palace Museum in Taipei (Little, pl. 55, and in color in Qiu Ying xuopian zhan tuma (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1989), no. 12) displays many inconsistencies and lapses in drawing. The third version, apparently now lost, is reproduced in Zhongguo meishu ji 中國名畫集 (Shanghai: Yu Cheng Book Co., 1909), 1:61, and in Zhongguo meishu 中國名畫 (Shanghai: Yu Cheng Book Co., 1924-30), 29. The album of six leaves of landscapes after Song and Yuan masters is reproduced in Qiu Ying xuopian zhan tuma, no. 20. See also my “Qiu Ying’s Late Landscapes,” 32-35, for a discussion of these leaves.

97. Illustrated in Zhongguo meishu quanji, huinha bian, 7 Mingdai huinha, zhong, pl. 46 and in Palace Museum, Beijing, Mingdai Wumen huinha, pl. 17. See also Little, “The Demon Queller,” p. 42 and fig. 34.

98. Recorded in Gao Shiqi 高士奇, Jiangfuxia xiaoxia lu 江村消夏錄 (preface 1693; n.p.: Dongfang xuehui, n.d.), 2:66ab; in Wu Sheng, Daguan lu, 20:46ab; and in An Qi, Moyuan huiguan lu, 4:246.


100. Du Jin supposedly illustrated the novel The Water Margin (Zhou Wu, Zhongguo banhua shi tulu [Shanghai: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1988], vol. 2, p. 397); the name of Tang Yin is associated with illustrations of the drama The Western Chamber (Zhou Wu, Zhongguo banhua shi tulu, vol. 2, p. 402, and Fu Xihua, “Zhongguo banhua yanju zhongyao shumu” in Shu zhonglu yishu bian, ed. Ding Fubao and Zhou Yunting [Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1957], bnsy, p. 139b, no. 1183), and the name of Qian Gu both with The Western Chamber and with the drama The Cherry Dream (Zhou Wu, Zhongguo banhua shi tulu, vol. 2, pls. 499 and 510). Qian Gu was asked to provide a set of travel pictures intended to be reproduced by woodblock print, perhaps for dissemination to the owner’s friends (James Cahill, The Painter’s Practice: How Artists Lived
and Worked in Traditional China [New York: Columbia University Press, 1994], 40–41). In the late sixteenth century and on into the Qing dynasty, it became increasingly common for artists to design book illustrations.


103. Fu Xihua, “Zhongguo banhua yanjiu,” 187a, no. 963.

104. Fu Xihua, “Zhongguo banhua yanjiu,” 194b, no. 1216.


108. Van Gulik, Erotic Colour Prints, 156 and pls. v–vi; the four scenes from this album are also reproduced in his Sexual Life in Ancient China, pls. xvi and xvii; van Gulik says that if this album is not by Qiu Ying, it is by one of his followers (Erotic Colour Prints, 156). According to van Gulik, the album was in the Palace Museum; a reproduction of it was published by Yi Yuanzhong shengli (Shanghai, n.d.).

109. Van Gulik, Erotic Chinese Prints, 157–58. One leaf of Huang’s album (which belonged to van Gulik) is reproduced on pl. vii. It is a rendering of a scene from the famous Night Reveals of Han Xizai.


111. Van Gulik, Erotic Colour Prints, 155.


114. Interestingly, the scroll became the property of Xiang Yuanbian, one of Qiu’s patrons (see Gengong shuhua lu, 1:53).


116. Cheng Qi, Xuanhui tang shuha lu (Hong Kong: Xuanhui tang, 1972), 2114.


120. Reproduced in Zhengxun tang cang shanmien shuhua (The Cheng Xun Tang Collection of Painting and Calligraphy Fans) (Hong Kong: Art Museum, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1996), no. 39. I am grateful to Yuan-fang Tung for giving me a copy of this catalogue.


Canonicity and Control:  
The Sociopolitical Underpinnings of Ibn Muqla’s Reform

ABSTRACT

Paleographic studies on Ibn Muqla (886–940) have focused exclusively on the mechanics of his calligraphic reform, disregarding his role as an influential statesman who was directly involved in the politics of the Abbasid state. In an earlier study, I have attempted to demonstrate that Ibn Muqla’s innovation of the proportioned script for writing the Qurʾān reflected a contemporary belief in the exoteric nature of the word of God. This essay re-evaluates the political and sociological aspects of Ibn Muqla’s reform, suggesting that, in addition to its well-established anti-Shīʿī message, the reform was also intended to curtail the power of even Sunni theologians by reformulating the Holy Book as an instrument of Abbasid power. More generally, the essay attempts to locate Ibn Muqla and his successor Ibn al-Bawwāb (d. 1022) within the fundamental literate expansion of the tenth and eleventh centuries.
FIG. 1.
Canonicity and Control: The Sociopolitical Underpinnings of Ibn Muqla’s Reform

Nearly every historical treatise on Arabic calligraphy begins with a similar history of writing, a historical narrative whose naivety and repetitiveness veil its heuristic significance. Told sequentially as the solitary acts of saintly figures and calligraphers, the history of calligraphy highlights the role of individual calligraphers but provides minimal cultural context for their accomplishments. The canonical list of calligraphers includes legendary or near-legendary figures, among whom are the prophets Seth, Enoch, and Moses and the caliphs ‘Ali and ‘Uthmān. Calligraphers of the early Abbasid period tended to be high officials, such as al-Faḍl b. Sahl and al-Aḥwal, culminating in the vizier Ibn Muqla. Under the Buyids and later Abbasids, calligraphers were professional scribes, such as Ibn al-Bawwāb and Yāqūt, who had demonstrated a special gift in the art of calligraphy.

This “history” is obligingly, but uncritically, included in most modern studies on Arabic calligraphy, or it is dismissed as lacking a factual basis. Approached on its own terms, however, this canonical narrative potentially raises a number of important issues that bear directly on the changing role of calligraphy and calligraphers in an evolving Islamic society. The first concerns the descending social status of calligraphers: the earliest calligraphers were men of high rank and religious learning; Ibn Muqla was a patrician who became a vizier; Ibn al-Bawwāb was a man of humble origin who rose to the rank of scribe and librarian; Yāqūt was a slave. The second has to do with the decreasing independence of calligraphers concomitant with their increasing reliance on patronage. Even disregarding such legendary calligraphers as the caliphs ‘Ali and ‘Uthmān, evidence suggests that the first calligraphers—those who wrote the earliest Qur’āns—were learned scholars who were not in the direct employ of sovereigns or princes. Later calligraphers, on the other hand, particularly after Ibn al-Bawwāb, relied greatly or even exclusively on princely patronage, culminating in those calligraphers who were employed by the kitābkhana. The third and most general observation about this hierarchical tale is that it is not so much a history as a mythology of Arabic writing, or, more specifically, a legend of the downward and outward spread of literacy from the elevated source of prophets and caliphs to the diversity and multiplicity of a complex multiethnic culture.

Ibn Muqla (886-940) stands in the chronological and ideological middle of this process as the first calligrapher to carry out a comprehensive reform of Qur’ānic calligraphy, conducted, as I have previously argued, at the behest of the Abbasid state. His calligraphic reform entailed the creation of geometric templates for each letter of the alphabet, resulting in a system of proportional writing (al-khaṭṭ al-mansūb) that was then applied to the six main scripts of his time. The geometric precision of this process, combined with the systematization of orthographic and vocalization signs, produced clear and legible scripts that were deemed worthy of the Qur’ān. Often called semi-Kufic, although “new Abbasid Kufic” is perhaps more appropriate, these new script(s) were marked by a clarity and legibility that reflected the Ash’arī (or generally Sunni) belief in the exoteric nature of the word of God and the uncreated nature of the Qur’ān.
But Ibn Muqla’s calligraphic reform also had social and political dimensions that I did not sufficiently emphasize in my earlier articles, for his reform was very likely intended to challenge the authority of the calligraphers of early Kufic Qur’āns while insisting on the authority of the Abbasids in controlling this process. Engendered in an increasingly literate Islamic world, Ibn Muqla’s reform acknowledges, even endorses, the inevitability of increased writing (especially of the Qur’ān) but places new limits on this fundamental change. In the following discussion, I would like to turn to these social and political aspects of the reform by focusing on Ibn Muqla’s links with the Abbasid state and the new role created for calligraphy and calligraphers subsequent to this transformation. I shall therefore attempt to reconcile my theological interpretation of this phenomenon with sociological and political information about Ibn Muqla as calligrapher, reformer of the Qur’ānic script, and vizier to three caliphs. Since no works of Ibn Muqla have survived, I shall refer to his closest known successor, ‘Ali b. Shādhān al-Rāzī (active 972–86), a calligrapher who produced both secular and Qur’ānic manuscripts.

Despite Ibn Muqla’s well-known influence on Qur’ānic writing, it should be made clear from the start that he was neither a Qur’ānic calligrapher nor someone especially noted for his religious knowledge. As a scribe and state official, he stands apart from early Qur’ānic calligraphers, who, according to Ibn Durūstīyāh, were men knowledgeable in the Qur’ān and other religious matters. Calligraphically speaking, scribes (kuttāb) and early Qur’ānic calligraphers (khattātān) were worlds apart. Whereas the former were keenly interested in clarity and legibility, the latter were more concerned with maintaining the integrity and sanctity of the sacred text, concerns that were better served by using a nearly illegible script. It follows then that Ibn Muqla’s encroachment on the world of Qur’ānic calligraphers and his decisive impact on the development of Qur’ānic calligraphy were not simply internal developments in the craft but ones necessarily motivated by external factors.

Before we attempt to describe these factors, it seems necessary to review the situation of writing around the time of Ibn Muqla’s calligraphic reform. Concerning Qur’ānic writing, its great uniformity in the first three centuries of Islam bespeaks a highly conservative and restrictive attitude toward the transcription of the Qur’ān. With ambiguous and often undifferentiated letter forms and a scattered disposition on the page, Kufic Qur’āns of the ninth and tenth centuries were practically illegible except to those who had already memorized the text (i.e., huffaz). In other words, these Qur’āns were created not so much to be read but to validate the act of recitation and to venerate the word of God. The manuscripts speak of privilege and a restrictive attitude to the act of reading; rare materials, exquisite ornament, and a nearly indecipherable script.

In contrast, secular scripts—which can be subdivided into scribal scripts and book scripts—were quite legible, despite their considerable variation. Writing at the end of the ninth century, Ibn al-Nadim listed twenty-six scripts used by the scribes of his time, ranging from large and angular to small and cursive. The task of matching these scribal scripts to extant specimens has proved to be very difficult, not the least because so few early medieval documents and letters have survived. Book scripts, on the other hand, ranging from semi-angular to cursive, were quite commonly used in literary and scientific manuscripts of the ninth and tenth centuries (fig. 1). Although some of these were copied by the author of the treatise himself, more commonly authors left the task of making clean copies to professional copyists.

Interestingly, these “transitional” book scripts were also commonly used in a variety of Arabic Christian texts, including gospels, psalters, and monastic anthologies (fig. 2). A cursory survey of this little-known phenomenon suggests that Christian manuscripts were written in new Abbasid Kufic scripts as early as the last quarter of the ninth century, whereas those written in cursive scripts generally date to the second half of the tenth century. In other words, the use of book scripts in Christian manuscripts long predates the transformation in Qur’ānic writing but is generally contemporary with their use in Arabic secular manuscripts. Indeed, the use of these scripts for Christian texts attests to their popularity and strengthens the case for their “secular” background, from an Islamic perspective.

On the eve of the reforms of Ibn Muqla, Arabic was being written in an ambiguously majestic
Qu'ānic script and in an unwieldy variety of secular scripts, mostly used by scribes (kuttāb) for writing documents and letters and by booksellers or copyists (warrāqün) for the copying of various manuscripts. Ibn Muqla's rules for proportional writing (al-khatt al-mansūb) did not emerge from Qur'ānic Kufic but were rather based on these multifarious book scripts, which were also initially the subject of the reform. In other words, Qur'ānic Kufic, which by the tenth century had reached a very high standard, was not directly affected by the changes of Ibn Muqla; the reform was intended for the more mundane scripts used by scribes and copyists rather than calligraphers. The result of these reforms, therefore, was not the gradual softening of the angular Kufic script but its supplantation by the redesigned scripts of the copyists.

Ibn Muqla thus created order where disorder had been perceived within scribal writing, a feat that earned him heroic stature among later Muslim biographers. Since success is often equated with quality, the success of Ibn Muqla's proportional writing made him the father of the new Arabic calligraphy, despite the fact that he may not have been an especially gifted calligrapher himself. Indeed, the emphasis by connoisseurs from medieval times to the present on finding authentic specimens in the hand of Ibn Muqla has diverted attention from properly investigating the recipe and legacy of his success, which was certainly not entirely based on his calligraphic hand.

Although we lack any authentic specimens in Ibn Muqla's hand, there is little question that it would have resembled the earliest examples of new Abbasid Kufic Qur'āns. I have presented this argument previously and would like here simply to demonstrate the possible impact of Ibn Muqla's method on 'Ali b. Shādhān al-Rāzi, who is known to us both as a copyist of a literary tract and as a Qu'ānic calligrapher. The secular work is a book entitled Kitāb akhbār al-naḥwiyin al-baṣriyyin (Tales of the Grammarians

FIG. 2.
New Testament, Timothy
4:1f. Jerusalem 902. Paris,
Bibliothèque Nationale,
Arabe 6725, fol. 5v.
of Basra), dated 376/986, a period from which we have several other related manuscripts (fig. 3). Written in a reasonably legible, fully vocalized Abbasid Kufic script, this manuscript probably represents the high end of secular manuscripts produced in the late tenth century. 

"Ali b. Shādhān's Qur'ān, dated 361/972, is the earliest dated Qur'ān manuscript in the Abbasid Kufic script and also the first Qur'ān written on paper (fig. 4). Closely related to, if perhaps more conservative than, the calligrapher’s later secular manuscript, this Qur'ān nevertheless demonstrates the close linkages between Qur'ānic and non-Qur'ānic calligraphy in the aftermath of Ibn Muqla’s reforms. Written about one generation after the death of Ibn Muqla, this Qur'ān manuscript represents the direct influence of Ibn Muqla’s calligraphic method, the transmission of this method from secular to Qur'ānic manuscripts, and the impact of paper production on both processes.

Indeed, the widespread use of paper after the tenth century in chancery documents and secular manuscripts may have contributed to the speed of execution required by scribes and book copiers. Cheaper and more widely available than earlier parchment and papyrus, paper greatly facilitated the work of these scribes and promoted the expansion of literacy. 

The growth in the number of scribes and the literate population seems to have been accompanied by the relaxation of calligraphic standards and a general decline in the quality of writing. Some system was urgently needed for the reform of secular writing, and this was provided by Ibn Muqla in the
form of *al-khatt al-mansūb*. The switch from vellum to paper also led to the transfer of "differentiations in value from the medium itself to what was put on it," a point that is addressed below.

Although generally discussed in aesthetic terms, Ibn Muqla’s innovations were primarily concerned with clarity and legibility, concerns that seem consistent with his role as a state official. While Ibn Muqla’s reform grew out of earlier trends toward clarity in scribal and manuscript writing, his reform was the most systematic and pervasive. This reform was engendered within an atmosphere of increasing literacy—brought about by paper—and was intended to remedy a situation resulting from this burgeoning of the literate population. It resulted in the creation of a series of templates for the canonical calligraphic scripts, which guaranteed quality and consistency. But this standardization came at a price: a relatively small number of scripts formed the canon of reformed scripts, while others were neglected and slipped into oblivion.

The power implications of this standardization and canonicity are, I think, fairly straightforward. Brinkley Messick in his recent book *The Calligraphic State* expatiates on the links between the introduction of new writing systems in Yemen at the beginning of the twentieth century and the rise of a new power structure. Specifically, he argues that the switch that took place from organically formed spiral texts to texts with a standardized linear format implied enforced changes in the relation between form and content and between the state and the population. Although the change in modern Yemen from

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**FIG. 4.**

*Qurʾān*, Iran (other part of same ms. at the University Library in Istanbul [A6758] is dated 361/972), calligrapher ʿAlī b. Shādhān al-Rāzi. Dublin, The Chester Beatty Library, 1434, fol. 164b.
manuscript to print culture is more abrupt and the sources on it more ample, both situations describe a process by which new writing systems are deployed for affirming power and asserting control. Indeed, the Abbasid reforms entailed control of the scripts, control of the scribes who had to be retrained in these scripts, and ultimately control of the content, the texts for which these scripts were to be used.

Although these reforms are attributed by contemporary writers directly to the creative genius of Ibn Muqla, there is no question that their success and quick impact resulted from their adoption by the Abbasid state. As vizier to three successive Abbasid caliphs—al-Muqtadir, al-Qāhir and al-Rādī—Ibn Muqla was embroiled in the politics and intrigue of the Abbasid state. I have previously explored his involvement under al-Muqtadir with the creation of a canonical body of Qur’ānic recensions (qirā‘āt) that were intended to put an end to discord while forever abolishing the legitimacy of aberrant recensions, particularly that of Ibn Mas‘ūd. Indeed, Ibn Muqla was certainly involved in the trials of two of the variant readers, Ibn Miqsam and Ibn Shanabûdh, the latter of whom was beaten and tortured into acquiescence.

In essence, therefore, the Abbasid state used trusted members of its administration to try, judge, and punish Qur’ānic scholars who were deemed divergent. Although state functionaries with no particular claim to religious knowledge, Ibn Muqla and his cohorts were placed in a position to enforce a particular religious dogma and to punish those who persisted in departing from it. This is a curious situation, though not the first time that the Abbasid state had resorted to such repressive measures: the miḥna of Ibn Ḥanbal presents a similar, though ideologically opposite, case. In effect, the trials ordered by al-Muqtadir and conducted by Ibn Muqla demoted traditional Qur’ānic readers and valorized a state version of the Qur’ān that was promoted and even copied by men of the administration. The fact that calligraphers of the Kufic Qur’ān were probably drawn from ‘ulama’ circles may have contributed to the ultimate supplanting of their style and manner of writing by the newly canonized calligraphic modes.

Thus, Ibn Muqla created a new calligraphic system, eventually applied to the Qur’ān, and was the vizier who enforced the caliphal order to establish a body of canonical Qur’ānic readings. The two roles are undoubtedly related: the adoption of al-khāṭṭ al-mansūb for copying the Qur’ān was inspired by the canonization of the text of the Qur’ān. The new script, with its improved orthography and the correct numeration, would have left no doubt in the mind of Muslims that they were reading one of the new orthodox recensions, certainly not a Qur’ān with an aberrant reading. The canonization of the text is made clear and visible by the new canonical script, and the two processes conjoin to reaffirm the absolute control of the content and the form of the Sacred Book by the Abbasid state.

Control is therefore essential to the creation of proportional writing and its application to the Qur’ān, thereby ending three centuries of Kufic writing. Although exactly how scripts were transferred from the secular to the religious domain remains incompletely known, the highlights are fairly clear. Three main processes were at work: the reform of scribal writing, the canonization of the Qur’ānic text, and the application of proportional writing to the Qur’ān. Linked together by webs of power, these processes led to the transformation of the form of the Qur’ān. Although little discussed by most modern writers, this was perhaps the most significant “artistic” innovation of the middle Abbasid period, instigated by the Abbasid state.

Finally, it is curious that the rise of calligraphy as an art form, one that becomes the object of criticism and collecting, only begins after the reforms of Ibn Muqla and the creation of the new Abbasid scripts. Oleg Grabar has proposed two explanations for this curious phenomenon, which in fact goes counter to contemporary preference for the Kufic script over later cursive scripts. The first is that as paper replaced vellum in the tenth century, there was a shift in value from the medium to what was written upon it, hence to calligraphy. The second is that the spread of literacy, also related to the availability of paper, would have created a market in which calligraphic products circulated as objects of cultural value. To these, I can add a third factor: name recognition. Ibn Muqla and Ibn al-Bawwāb are not simply the first calligraphers known to us by name, but
their names were also associated with the caliphs and princes for whom they worked. They become rubrics of recognition: later calligraphers imitate their style, and even forgers attribute works to their names. The two initiate the genealogy of calligraphers with whom I began this paper, but they were not the lone actors impied by the sources. They were rather part of an intricate social, political, and theological construction that shaped their careers and gave meaning to their creative efforts.

**Notes**

This article was first presented as a conference paper at “Inscription as Art in the World of Islam,” Hofstra University, 25–27 April 1996. I take this opportunity to thank Dr. Habibeh Rahbar for organizing the conference and for allowing me to publish this paper outside its projected format. I also thank the two anonymous readers, who have helped me tighten the argument of this paper and expand on some of its historical dimensions. I regret that I was not always able to follow the many excellent suggestions made by the second reader. Readers of Ars Orientalis will note that this article is related to my two earlier articles in this journal (1991 and 1994), in which I dealt with the transformation of Arabic writing, Qur’ānic and epigraphic, from angular to cursive scripts.


3. Yaqūt al-Mustaʿṣim, for example, was an Abyssinian slave in the court of the last Abbasid caliph, al-Mustaʿṣim. The patronage of calligraphers by princes is amply demonstrated for later periods. For example, Thomas W. Lentz and Glenn D. Lowry, Timur and the Princeley Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 1989), 159ff.


8. On the conservatism of Qur’ānic scripts and calligraphers, see Nabiya Abbott, “Arabic Paleography: The Development of Early Islamic Scripts,” Ars Islamica 8 (1941): 83, who proposes that Qur’ānic “writing, including spelling rules and scripts, became established as a Sunna or sacred practice, as one learns from Ibn Durustuyla and others.”

9. François Deroche, Catalogue des manuscrits arabes, Les manuscrits du Coran, I: Aux origines de la calligraphie cérénique (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1983). The author has attempted further to subdivide the well-known categories of Miṣ’il (slanted script) and early Kufic into smaller and more precise groups or families of manuscripts. But keeping within the central Kufic groups one notices a remarkable degree of consistency in the letter forms and the overall appearance of the scripts.

11. Oleg Grabar has recently dealt with complex writing systems as emblems of privilege in the medieval world, proposing that the acquisition of objects with nearly indecipherable scripts became one of the criteria for justifying and sustaining the power basis of a social and political elite. See Mediation of Ornament, chap. 2.

12. Whelan, in “Early Islam,” expanding on Abbott, was the first to make a cogent case for subdividing non-Qur’anic writing into scribal or secretarial and book scripts. See also Nabia Abbott, “Arabic Paleography,” Ars Islamica 8 (1941): 76f.


14. In The Rise of the North Arabic Script and Its Qur’anic Development (Chicago, 1938), Nabia Abbott did in fact succeed in identifying one script, al-musalsal. But, overall, her efforts in this regard were not successful.

15. Pedersen, Arabic Book, 45: “it was not uncommon in the time of the early ‘Abbāsid s for an author to have his special ṭarrāq.”

16. For other specimens, see Georges Vajda, La palæographie arabe (Paris, 1953), pl. 4; and especially Evgenivs Tisserant, Specimina Codicrum Orientalium (Rome, 1914):

- pl. 54: Vat. ar. 7: Florilegium Menestricium, dated 885; new Abbasid Kufic script with elaborate letter forms;
- pl. 55: Brg. ar. 71: Evangelia, ninth century; new Abbasid Kufic script;
- pl. 45a: Vat. ar. 18: Evangelium, see Lucam, dated 993; cursive (naskh) script.


20. It is perhaps in this period that the seeds of discord between scribes and Qur’ānic copyists were first sown, the latter perhaps feeling threatened by the unprecedented spread of literacy. See Pedersen, Arabic Book, 43ff.


22. According to Anthony Welch, Calligraphy in the Arts of the Muslim World (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 29, “good writing was the indispensable tool for anyone aspiring to high governmental rank.”


29. Grabar, Mediation of Ornament, 76f.
A Sogdian Silver Bowl
in the Freer Gallery of Art

ABSTRACT

A polylobed silver bowl recently acquired by the Freer Gallery of Art is a typical example of Sogdian metalwork produced in the late sixth or early seventh century. It is said to have been found in China (Loyang). The bowl bears two Sogdian inscriptions with the personal names and/or nicknames of its owners: one on the bottom and the other on the wall. The lion’s figure in the central medallion might be a symbol of the goddess Nana (Nanaia). The Freer bowl is the only Sogdian metal vessel in a United States museum, whereas Sogdian metalwork is present in several art collections of the former Soviet Union, including the Hermitage Museum (St. Petersburg), the Historical Museum (Moscow), and the museums of Nizhni Novgorod, Samarkand, Tashkent, and Almata.
A Sogdian Silver Bowl
in the Freer Gallery of Art

A silver bowl recently acquired by the Freer Gallery of Art from the Carl Kempe Collection in Stockholm is a typical example of Sogdian metalwork (fig. 1). Such objects are rare in Western museums and private collections, whereas the Hermitage and some other Russian museums house many vessels made by Sogdian silversmiths in Sogdia proper and in the neighboring regions of Ustrushana and Chach. All these vessels belong to several interrelated groups that are obviously different from the Sasanian production, although in older publications they are intermingled with Sasanian silver.

Sogdian vessels are usually less massive than Sasanian ones. Accordingly, Iranian silversmiths cut away the background in order to emboss the figures on their plates and bowls, while the Sogdians preferred hammering and chasing. The shapes are different too. Thus, the typically Sasanian small bottles, ewers with loop handles, and oblong bowls are absent in Sogdia, which produced ewers with handles shaped like a question mark, cups with handles, and circular polylobed bowls, sometimes similar to Parthian bowls. The stylistic difference is also great: their static character, calm grandeur, and spirit of courtly etiquette distinguish Sasanian images from those of Sogdia, which are more dynamic and elastic in their forms and outlines. Figures of ruling kings, so typical on Sasanian silver, were not known in Sogdia until at least the end of the eighth century, while the preferred motif of Sogdian craftsmen was the medallion with a single animal: ibex, deer, wild ram, or lion. A flat ring-matted background is characteristic of Sogdian decoration, whereas the Iranians filled some details of their figures with little punched rings. According to my classification, three related schools of Sogdian silver were prevalent in the seventh through ninth centuries. School A was more closely connected with Iran and School C with China, while School B was independent.

I had occasion to examine the Freer bowl twice: in Stockholm in 1969 and in Washington in 1998. Bo Gyllensvárd, who published the first drawings of this important work of art, mentions that it was said to have been found in Loyang in China and calls it Sasanian or post-Sasanian. With his kind permission I published the photograph of this bowl and wrote about it in 1971, concluding that it was seventh-century Sogdian. At that time I mistakenly thought, following Gyllensvárd, that the outer inscription was Turkic because one of its letters seemed similar to the runic B. Now, thanks to Dr. Ann Gunter and Dr. Paul Jett of the Freer Gallery of Art, I have been able to study the bowl more carefully and see that it bears no Turkic inscriptions. But two Sogdian inscriptions that are lightly scratched on the vessel will be discussed in detail in the last paragraphs of this essay (figs. 7–8).

These inscriptions confirm the Sogdian attribution of this polylobed bowl, which was executed by hammering, with reliefs in repoussé and a low ring-foot made separately and then soldered to the body. The outlines and details of the reliefs, which show a lion and a bush behind it, as well as the starlike border

FIG. 1.
a) interior view
b) profile view
around the central medallion, were finally chased from the front. The thin sheet of silver from which the bowl was made demonstrates the need to save metal that characterized early (sixth through seventh centuries) Sogdian and all Chorasmian silver vessels, whereas the iconography and style are Sogdian. Another detail of the vessel, the ornamental motif of the ring of little convex dots in repoussé, is common in Sogdian silver from the sixth through the early ninth century. This ring is more typical of the central Sogdian school than of its periphery. The twelve-lobed shape is similar to that of the sixth-century bowl from the Chilek hoard found near Samarkand, but the Freer vessel shares the starlike border and the figure of a sitting lion with the later Sogdian bowl found in Shud’iakar in the northern Urals area (figs. 2a, 3).

Generally speaking, Sogdian silver vessels were found in northern and southern Russia, Middle Asia, and China, often together with Sasanian ones, but never in Iran. The government of Iran was hostile to Sogdian merchants, who were the main competitors of Iranian traders, and consequently no Sogdian inscriptions occur on vessels of any origin found in Iran itself. Similarly, almost no Sogdian silverware in the Western art market is supplied by clandestine excavations and accidental finds in Iran. Rather, Sogdian silver vessels come from the lands that lie along the silk and fur routes.

The single animal turning its head back toward the large leaves or stylized flowers of a plant is known only on bowls and platters of the Central Sogdian School B (fig. 4). The pose and proportions of the lion are similar to those of the lion depicted on the Panjikent mural.

Whereas it is obvious that the Freer bowl is Sogdian, without Persian Sasanian or post-Sasanian decorative elements, its dating is a more difficult problem. The two known hoards of Sogdian silver of the fifth and sixth centuries contain only vessels displaying no animal figures (fig. 2a–c), whereas later examples with rich figural and/or floral decoration are datable by comparison with Chinese silverware of the High and Middle Tang periods of the late seventh or eighth century. The decoration of the Freer bowl, with no Chinese parallels in spite of its probable provenance from Loyang and its simple figural composition, may be approximately
A SOGDIAN SILVER BOWL IN THE FREER GALLERY OF ART

FIG. 3.
Silver bowl from Shud‘iakar, eighth century, diameter 26 cm. Udmurt Museum of Local Lore, Izhevsk, Russia.

dated to the period between the mid-sixth and mid-seventh centuries.

The Freer bowl was reportedly found together with a handled cup, which is also Sogdian but produced by a master of the more eastern School C of Chach (Tashkent) or a neighboring area. The floral ornament of this school is mostly original: its most easily recognizable element is a stem ending with the trefoil. The ring-matted background was more popular in School C and China than in the other Sogdian schools. The shape of the Loyang cup is typical of School C as well as of Tang silver, although it has a Graeco-Roman origin. Chinese analogues are from the seventh and eighth centuries, and the date of this cup also cannot be earlier than the mid-seventh century. The two elephant heads on the thumb piece of the handle are comparable to a similar composition on the handle of an early Tibetan (eighth-ninth centuries) bowl with handle found in Afanas’evo in the northern Urals area. Sogdian silver vessels with figures or ornaments found in China include: another cup with handle from Shapo, near the Tang capital Xian; a twelve-lobed bowl showing a deer from the same find, with a starlike medallion and a short Sogdian inscription outside—a vessel closely resembling the Freer one (fig. 5); another polylobed bowl from Xijiao, near Xian, covered with typically Sogdian (of School C) ornaments with the simple

FIG. 4.
Silver bowl from Cherdyn (Perm’ District), seventh century, diameter 19 cm. State Hermitage Museum.

FIG. 5.
Silver bowl from Sapo, near Xian. After Tang dai jin yin qi (Beijing, 1985).
symmetrical three-lobed palmettes that are absent in Chinese ornamental compositions (fig. 6): a ewer from Aohan Qi (Inner Mongolia), with a handle crowned by the head of a youth with shaved temples (such a hairstyle was the Sogdian fashion of the seventh and eighth centuries). The earliest possible date of these four items is the mid-seventh century.

If the bowl and the cup with handle from Loyang were really found together, we can consider them relatively synchronous; therefore, a seventh-century date for the bowl seems most probable, though its decoration is more archaic. In particular, the large, rather naturalistically rendered leaves of the trefoil and the gently curved plant are similar to fourth-century Kushano-Sasanian motifs, which themselves stemmed from Hellenistic models. (Plants on Sogdian silver vessels, including the trefoils so popular in Sogdia, are usually much more stylized.) Although the Sogdian wall painting of the late fifth or early sixth century in the Panjikent Temple II (room 5/6) is closely related to the reverse of Kushano-Sasanian coins of the fourth century, the interval between the fourth and seventh centuries seems too long for the contact between the Kushano-Sasanian and Sogdian artistic traditions attested by the plant on the Freer bowl. Even if the contact was indirect, the bowl must be the earliest in its group; other vessels in this group show no details executed in such a manner. A dating of the bowl cannot, however, exclude the sixth century because, notwithstanding the aforementioned stylization of floral forms common in Sogdian art of this period, other Hellenistic images are well known in the art of Sogdia and Tokharistan (Bactria) as late as the sixth century—for example, the clay relief from Temple II in Panjikent and the silver ewer from China found in the tomb of a general who died in A.D. 569 or ca. A.D. 600 (the Heracles bowl in the Hermitage Museum). The dynamic and minimal composition in the medallion is typically Sogdian, whereas Sasanian medallions are much more static and detailed. On the Freer bowl the complex movements of the animal and the plant are slow, but the images are full of latent energy, although the curved outlines are not as elastic as they are in mature Sogdian art from the seventh century onward. Thus, a more detailed study provides no argument against the dating from the mid-sixth to the mid-seventh century proposed above.

The excavations in Panjikent indicate that art patrons in Sogdia consisted mostly of the relatively wealthy citizens of small city-states, who had considerable self-confidence but modest means. The purchasers of the Freer bowl and similar articles, made of thin sheets of silver and decorated with technical simplicity, were probably of the same social class. Therefore, the lion on the bowl is hardly a symbol of royalty. Bowls of this type were used not only for drinking but also as gifts to the temple. Among the donors depicted
on the wall of the fifth/early sixth-century Sogdian temple in Jar-tepe (between Samarkand and Panjikent) is a man with such a bowl in his hand.25

The motif of a lion and a plant appeared not only in Sogdian but also in Sasanian art, where it was one of the "visual benedictions": the plant, growing from the earth or the waters, and the noble animal both symbolized the Universe, in harmony with which the owner of the vessel, as a noble representative of mankind, should prosper.26 In Sogdia a lion was considered the animal of Nanaia, the most important goddess in the local pantheon. It is quite probable that the master craftsman and the purchaser of the bowl had in mind one or both of these meanings.

The two inscriptions on the bowl were incised by its later owners. One of these was written on the outer side of the bottom among many apparently unintelligible scratches (fig. 7). The five letters of one word were written across the belly of the lion. The script is the later Sogdian cursive of the seventh or eighth centuries. The third letter, defective because it crosses an embossed detail of the relief, Professor Vladimir Livshits reads as y. The inscription can be transliterated $p'y'n$, which may be a proper name although, like many other Sogdian personal names, it has no satisfactory etymology.27

Professor Livshits assumes the reading $p'y'k$ (pâyê, pâyêk) from the verbal stem $p'y$- "(to) protect, (to) care."28 The meaning of $p'y'k$ is "watcher, watchful," which as a name according to Livshits may be part of a composite word meaning "protector of something or somebody" or a one-stem word like "protector" or "watcher." But I continue to think that the last letter is not likely to be $k$ and prefer the reading $p'y'n$. In any case, the inscription is certainly Sogdian.

The other scratches on the bottom seem to be random, but it is at least possible that some of them may be meaningful. Thus three thick, short lines incised in parallel by a tool different from that used for the Sogdian inscription might indicate three units of some kind of weight measure. This sign resembles the Chinese number 3.29 On the Sogdian stone weights from Panjikent there are cursive inscriptions with Sogdian numbers and/or simple short incisions grouped in parallel, but on silver vessels weight was indicated only by inscriptions.30 Thus, among the many incisions on the bottom of the bowl, the
Sogdian letters are indisputable, whereas it is doubtful that the group of incisions similar to a Chinese number can be interpreted as such.

The other incised Sogdian inscription was written vertically on the outer wall of the bowl (fig. 8). The letters are separated from each other, which is an archaic feature, but their shapes are not ancient. The most probable reading is $\epsilon\gamma\chi\nu\nu\nu\nu = \epsilon\gamma\chi\nu\nu\nu\nu\nu(\epsilon\gamma\nu-[\nu\gamma])$. This composite word means "marsh land" ("frogs' plain"). Here it may be a nickname of the owner. The fourth letter was read as $h$ by Vladimir Livshits, who also thinks that the third letter is more likely $n$ and, therefore, the first part of the composite word can be read $\epsilon\gamma\nu\nu$, "silk." Moreover it is possible to read $\delta$ instead of $\gamma$, but such a reading does not provide any meaningful variant. The third letter, together with an accidental scratch, seems similar to the Turkic $b$, which in 1969 served as the basis for my erroneous interpretation of the script, mentioned above.

There are many incised Sogdian inscriptions on Sogdian, Sasanian (but only those found outside Iran), and Byzantine silver vessels of the fourth through eighth centuries. The above-mentioned Sogdian twelve-lobed bowl from Shapo, near Xian, which is so similar to the Freer bowl, also bears a short incised Sogdian inscription. N. Sims-Williams reads it $Z\nu r m\beta n t k$, "Slave of Zurvan," the name of a worshiper of the great god identified with Brahma in the Sogdian Buddhist texts. A long Sogdian inscription was written on the rim of another silver bowl from Qarashahr (Xinjiang). Even in Suixi, near Canton, a sixth-century hoard was found containing a lobed Sogdian silver bowl with another long Sogdian inscription (fig. 9).

The Freer bowl is a good specimen of the art of Sogdia, as yet almost unknown in the West. Its acquisition by the Freer Gallery of Art opens a new page in the history of the collecting of Oriental silver in the United States.

Notes

1. I wish to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Ann Gunter and Dr. Paul Jett for permission to publish the Freer Gallery of Art's Sogdian bowl here and for supplying excellent photographs of it. See appendix for metallic content analysis.


4. Marshak, Sogdiiskoe, 137, 141, table 16, fig. 31; Marshak, Silberschätze, fig. 69.

5. Gyllensvård, Tang Dynasty, 23.


7. V. A. Oborin, "Sasanidskoe serebriannoe bljudo iz derevni Shudi\'akar," Vestnik drevnej istorii 2 (1956): 74-77; Marshak, Silberschätze, 58, fig. 67, table 21. The Chilék hoard, found by a worker digging a well, contained another early Sogdian silver bowl, a Sasanian silver plate showing Peroz (459-84), and a fifth-century silver bowl made for a Hepthalite ruler. The subsequent archaeological investigation revealed that the well crossed a layer datable to about A.D. 600, while the other layers were much later or earlier than the dates of the vessels in the hoard.


9. Marshak, Sogdiiskoe, table 10, 37, figs. 14, 15; Marshak,
Silberschätze, table 10,37, figs. 39, 40, 42, 43, 45.

10. Marshak, Sogdiiskoe, fig. 3A.

11. Gyllensvård, Tang Dynasty, 23, 63, 64, figs. 24k, 77aa; Marshak, Sogdiiskoe, table 23; Marshak, Silberschätze, 61, 69, 75, 88, 91, fig. 80, table 25.

12. Upon first examining the cup, I thought, following Gyllensvård, that the inscription on it was Turkic because its letters are angular and written separately (Gyllensvård, Tang Dynasty, 23; Marshak, Sogdiiskoe, 50, 141; Marshak, Silberschätze, 71). I have no photograph of this inscription, but now I would surmise that it may be Sogdian as well.


18. The Shapo hoard contains many Chinese silver vessels of the Early and High Tang periods as well. The ever predates the tenth-century tomb in which it was found.


23. Marshak, Silberschätze, 35, 38–39, 250, pls. 15–16, with references to the earlier literature.


27. N. Sims-Williams, Sogdian and Other Iranian Inscriptions of the Upper Indus, Corpus Inscriptionum Iranianarum, part 2, vol. 3.2.2 (London: Lund Humphries, 1992), 34, 39–82.


29. Bol’shoi russko-kitaiskii slovar’ (Moscow, 1983), 1:182.


34. Lin Meicun, “Seal with Middle Persian Characters,” 50–54.


### Appendix: Analysis by X-Ray Fluorescence Spectrometry

**Metallic Composition (in weight percent) of Freer Bowl F1997.13***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Silver</th>
<th>Gold</th>
<th>Copper</th>
<th>Zinc</th>
<th>Lead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body of bowl</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. bottom, center</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. lobe near animal's tail</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. lobe near animal's head</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. lobe near animal's front paw</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td>92</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foot of bowl</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. foot near animal’s head</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. foot near animal’s feet</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td>89</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The foot appears to have a slightly different composition from the body, but it is difficult to say that it is a different metal based on this analysis. The analysis of the foot may not be as accurate as that of the body because it was done on a very small, nonflat area in both cases. A small collimator was used to allow the X-ray fluorescence spectrometry analysis of smaller spots on the foot and therefore avoid the soldering where the foot meets the body, but an unfortunate consequence is that the X-ray signal is diminished. It seems safe to conclude that the metal compositions of the body and foot are very similar, and both may have been made with the same metal.

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Department of Conservation and Scientific Research
Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
ABSTRACT

The image of the Egyptian deity Bes appears on a wide and diverse array of objects dating to the time of the Achaemenid Empire. Some of these objects may have been brought to Western Asia by Egyptians, but some examples seem to demonstrate appropriation of the Bes-image into the Achaemenid repertoire. It has been argued that this appropriation may have had some cultural connotation. In other words, other nations of the Achaemenid Empire may have found a resonance with the protective capacity of the Bes-image and adopted Bes as a counterpart for local deities. In the case of the Iranians, in particular, it has been suggested that Bes may have been assimilated to the Iranian deity Mithra.
Bes in the Achaemenid Empire

The Achaemenid Persian Empire (559-330 B.C.E.) ushered in a new era in the history of the ancient Near East. For the first time, nations from the Nile to the Indus with different sociopolitical organizations and cultural backgrounds were unified under a single political hegemony led by the Achaemenid Persians. The Achaemenids, a previously little-known Indo-European-speaking people from the highlands of Fars in southern Iran, rapidly rose to power and, through a series of successful military campaigns, brought lands as far away as North Africa and Central Asia under their control in less than two generations. After initial conquests under Cyrus and Cambyses, the empire was reorganized and consolidated under Darius I. Although the rest of Achaemenid history is punctuated by many internal feuds and constant skirmishes with the Greeks, the Achaemenid Empire maintained its hegemony for nearly two hundred more years. The Achaemenids practiced a novel policy of tolerance toward subject nations, allowing and even encouraging them to carry on with their own customs and traditions. Despite the occasional turmoil that sometimes shook the empire, the Achaemenid period was a time of relative prosperity and tranquility for the Near East. Under pax Persica, arts and crafts flourished, interregional contacts expanded, and people from distant corners of the empire came into close cultural contact.

Egypt, a major power in the ancient Near East, was conquered by Cambyses in 525 B.C.E. and, except for an interval from 404 to 336 B.C.E., remained a satrapy of the empire, ruled by Persian nobles with close ties to the King of Kings. The annexation and incorporation of Egypt put an end to its independence but brought the Egyptian culture into close contact with cultures of Western Asia, including those of the Mesopotamians and Iranians. People from Egypt and Western Asia were now traveling back and forth and exchanging ideas in a socially hospitable environment. There are some comprehensive studies of Egypt's contribution to Achaemenid civilization, especially its architectural and artistic manifestations, but very few attempts have been made to explore cultural interaction between Egyptians and other peoples of the empire on a grass-roots level. While considerable epigraphic and archaeological evidence points to the presence of Egyptians in Mesopotamia and Iran, and some evidence suggests the presence of Mesopotamians and Iranians in Egypt, the cultural ramifications of encounters between Egyptians and peoples of Western Asia as well as the dynamics of acculturation remain to be studied.

This essay is a first step toward a more comprehensive study of cultural interaction among Egyptians, Iranians, and other peoples of the Achaemenid Empire. It focuses on the distinctive Egyptian deity Bes and his fascinating career in the Achaemenid Empire. What makes Bes particularly interesting in a study concerned with cultural interaction among commoners are the idiosyncratic features that set him apart from the rest of the Egyptian pantheon, in both appearance and function. Unlike the majority of Egyptian deities, who were closely associated with royalty, Bes was primarily responsible for the welfare of commoners. Therefore, it is not surprising that in Western Asia it was Bes more than any other Egyptian deity who gained an unprecedented popularity. What makes this study important is the fact that Bes's
popularity outside the borders of Egypt seems to have crosscut social classes, appealing to both common folk and nobles alike.

This essay began as a catalogue of objects depicting the Bes-image in the Achaemenid Empire (see appendix). But as my work progressed, I began to see the cultural ramifications of this corpus, which demonstrates the range of penetration and varied functions of the Bes-image outside Egypt at the time of the Achaemenids. The present corpus of the Bes-image, however, has a unique characteristic: it includes a large number of artifact types, from simple amulets to highly prestigious metal objects, each associated with and belonging to different classes of Achaemenid society. Such widespread distribution and diversity suggest that in the Achaemenid Empire Bes served a variety of functions and roles, many of which may have crossed class lines. The wide distribution of the Bes-image throughout the empire and into the iconography of commoners and nobles illustrates how deep and broad cultural interaction under pax Persica could be.

WHO IS BES?

Ancient Egyptians had a number of dwarf deities collectively known as Bes.1 This deity is usually depicted with a broad muscular face surrounded by a lion’s mane and ears, with his tongue protruding out of his mouth. Normally, he is shown with a plumed crown. The body of Bes is represented as that of a bow-legged dwarf—with a stocky torso, distended abdomen, protruding buttocks, and lion’s tail—wearing a panther skin or a kilt.

Bes can be described as a protector deity. He protected pregnant women during childbirth, and in this capacity he was sometimes depicted in scenes of royal birth. Furthermore, it was thought that Bes could bring good luck and prosperity to couples and their children and protect them from harm. In the latter function, Bes was occasionally represented with a dagger to ward off evil spirits and noxious creatures, a role he also played when associated with Horus on a type of magical stele known as the cippus of Horus (see below, Group 7).

The Bes-image was used in ancient Egypt to decorate a large number of personal belongings and furniture. For example, the Bes-image was carved on beds or headrests, mirrors and spoon handles, amulets, and cosmetic containers. In addition, Bes can be seen on a wide variety of stone and wooden stele, as well as some temple walls and column capitals.

The origin of Bes has been the subject of prolonged scholarly debate. His un-Egyptian appearance—frontal instead of profile view, grotesque rather than dignified shape, comical versus majestic attitude—contrasts with typical Egyptian deities, thus suggesting to some scholars that his origins should be sought beyond the borders of Egypt, perhaps in Western Asia or sub-Saharan Africa. But Romano forcefully argues that Bes is a deity native to Egypt, where the origins and metamorphoses of the Bes-image can be traced and documented from the Old Kingdom to Roman times.5

BES IN WESTERN ASIA PRIOR TO THE RISE OF THE ACHAEMENIDS

The Bes-image became particularly common in New Kingdom times, and his special popularity in Egypt continued through the Persian and Greek occupation into the Roman period, when he sometimes appeared dressed as a Roman legionnaire.6 From New Kingdom times the representation of Bes began to proliferate in the eastern Mediterranean and Western Asia along with other objects of Egyptian origin or local imitations.7 From the mid to late second millennium B.C.E. onward, not only had Egyptian-made Bes-images found their way to Sardinia, Italy, Malta, Greece, coastal Anatolia, Carthage, Syria-Palestine, and Cyprus,8 but also some objects decorated with the Bes-image were produced locally for use in these regions.9 The Bes-image was especially common in Phoenicia in the early first millennium and was used to decorate ivory pieces carved and exported by the Phoenicians.10 Interestingly, however, only a few Phoenician Bes-images reached as far east as Assyria (e.g., Fort Shalmaneser).11

Although widely distributed in the eastern Mediterranean through contact with Egypt, the Bes-image did not apparently gain much popularity in Mesopotamia and Iran prior to the formation of the
Achaemenid Empire. Examples of the Bes-image predating the Achaemenid period in Mesopotamia proper are few, no more than a handful. I know of only a statuette from the city of Ashur and the standing bronze statuette from Fort Shalmaneser, Nimrud, both of which may have been brought back as booty from Egypt by the Assyrians. In central and southern Mesopotamia and the Iranian Plateau, the Bes-image is practically absent from the archaeological record before the Achaemenid period.

**BES IN THE ACHAEMENID EMPIRE:**

TYPOLOGY AND DISTRIBUTION

With the rise of the Achaemenid Empire the geographical distribution and number of Bes-images in Western Asia, especially in Mesopotamia and Iran, underwent a veritable explosion, as images of this Egyptian deity reached distant corners of the empire. I have been able to document a total of 115 Bes-images dating to the Achaemenid period. An appendix to the present article provides a catalogue of these images, presented as tables 1-11 and figures 1-11. This corpus documents a wide array of artifacts, from objects surfacing in the antiquities market with no reliable provenience to specimens discovered in secure archaeological contexts. Despite my attempt to be thorough, I would not be surprised if there are other published examples that I have overlooked, as well as additional unpublished examples in museums, private collections, or excavation notes. I have divided these 115 examples of the Bes-image into eleven categories based on the media on which they are exhibited (see appendix). This corpus does not include examples found in Egypt proper, where the Bes-image appears on many objects of daily use.

**Group 1: Cylinder Seals (table 1, fig. 1).** So far, I have recorded eight cylinder seals with the Bes-image. Except for no. 1.2, which comes from Babylon, all are unprovenanced and were acquired in the antiquities market. These cylinder seals are all carved in styles readily associated with art production during the Achaemenid period. Bes appears on them in various postures:

(1) No. 1.1: On both sides of the Royal Hero, who grasps two horned lion-griffins, Bes appears in frontal position with his characteristic headdress, kilt, and bent legs.

(2) No. 1.2: The Royal Hero stands beneath the winged disc and grasping two winged lions with the Bes head. The head is poorly executed and hard to recognize, but the typical headdress leaves little doubt that the creature is Bes, not a lion. Standing winged lions with Bes head also appear as gold appliqués on a silver vessel in the British Museum (no. 8.1).

(3) On nos. 1.3, 1.5, 1.6, and 1.8 Bes is shown with other creatures. All four seals are carved of chalcedony—one of the most popular kinds of stone for Achaemenid seals—and in all of them Bes is in frontal position with his characteristic headdress, kilt, and bent legs. On no. 1.5 he stands behind the Royal Hero with a quadruped animal on his shoulders. On no. 1.6, next to the main scene showing a man in Persian attire of probable royal status before the symbol of Ahuramazda, Bes stands on two opposed crowned sphinxes and grasps a pair of stags. On nos. 1.3 and 1.8, Bes appears in a posture reminiscent of the Royal Hero, grasping two horned and winged creatures. In both cases this scene is associated with a short Aramaic inscription.

(4) No. 1.4 is the most interesting of the cylinder seals. It shows Bes with his typical appearance, standing frontally between two men in Persian robes, together upholding the winged disc. Bes holds objects in both hands, interpreted by Ward as barsams, a common element in ancient Iranian religious ceremonies. The scene is associated with an Old Persian inscription that reads “Aršaka, son of Ath(a)jiyašt(a)ša.” Both personal names are Iranian, and their occurrence in Old Persian script strongly suggests that this seal belonged to an individual of Iranian origin.

**Group 2: Stamp Seals, Including Scarabs (table 2, fig. 2).** Among the twelve stamp seals and scarabs I have recorded so far, only two (nos. 2.11 and 2.12) have reliable archaeological provenience; one (no. 2.5) is presumably from Cyprus and the rest from the antiquities market. Stamp seals with the Bes-image can be divided into four categories:

(1) Bes as sphinx (nos. 2.1, 2.2, 2.6), a creature with the body of a lion, wings of an eagle, and head of Bes. In two examples (nos. 2.1 and 2.2) the creature
is in a crouching position, and only one of his wings is visible. In one example (no. 2.6), he is squatting with both wings outstretched. The latter image is of particular interest, since each wing terminates in the head of a bird of prey with horns. Furthermore, a uraeus can be seen in front of the creature on a ground line. No. 2.2 is peculiar, shown as a lion head seen from above, attached to the creature’s chest. Boardman suggests that this is an imitation of sphinxes with lion heads at their chests from North Syria. Bes as sphinx, with the body of a winged lion, can also be seen on cylinder seal no. 1.2 and as gold appliqués on no. 8.1.

(2) Stylized head and torso of Bes above griffin (no. 2.3) and sphinx (nos. 2.4 and 2.5).

(3) Bes on Phoenician scarabs (nos. 2.7, 2.8, 2.10, 2.11, and 2.12). These scarabs, also called “Tharros gems,” were adapted by Phoenicians from their Egyptian counterparts. This explains the popularity of Egyptian motifs, such as Bes, and the common use of green jasper for their manufacture. On these scarabs Bes usually appears in his typical frontal position holding animals on either side: on nos. 2.7 and 2.8, he is holding two inverted scorpions, on 2.10 two lions, and on 2.11 and 2.12 two horses. No. 2.10 is reminiscent of the Royal Hero holding lions; remains of a winged disc can also be seen above the scene.

(4) A conical stamp seal (no. 2.9) with a scene comparable to the ones on Phoenician scarabs (above), showing a frontal Bes holding two lions.

Group 3: Seal Impressions (table 3, fig. 3). Nos. 3.1–3.7 in this category are part of a hoard of some 200 impressions of seals, coins, and ornaments discovered at Ur in 1932 at the bottom of a clay coffin of the Achaemenid period in the southwest area of the temple between the terrace edge of the Kurigalzu Temple and the inner side of the city wall. Associated with this hoard are amulets no. 5.25 from Persian Grave 60 and no. 5.24 from Persian Grave 255 (see Group 5: Amulets).

Four seal impressions from this hoard (nos. 3.1–3.4) show the Bes head in frontal position. On no. 3.1, great emphasis has been placed on the facial features of Bes, whereas in nos. 3.2 and 3.3 his face is simpler and surmounted by his characteristic feather crest. On no. 3.3, his headgear is typically Egyptian but on no. 3.2 seems to be more Western Asian in style. On no. 3.4 the Bes head is associated with two motifs on either side, interpreted by Legrain as “two protomes of animals like crocodiles which seem to bite his [Bes’s] ears.” To me these two motifs seem to be a pair of wadjet eyes. The whole scene is surrounded by a line of sixteen dots.

On two of the three remaining examples from the Ur collection (nos. 3.5 and 3.6), a complete figure of Bes is shown standing in his typical posture. On 3.5, he seems to be naked; in no. 3.6 he wears a kilt. No. 3.7 is the familiar Royal Hero grasping two winged lions with the Bes head, which also occurs on nos. 1.2 and 8.1.

A fragment of a clay ball from the Persepolis Treasury (no. 3.8) has three impressions of a round stamp seal showing Bes standing and holding a griffin with his left hand, while another griffin crouches at right.

Another set of seal impressions with the Bes-image comes from the Murašo Archive from Nippur. Four of them (3.9, 3.10, 3.14, and 3.15) are cylinder seal impressions, and the other two (nos. 3.11 and 3.12) stamp seal impressions.

Group 4: Pottery Vessels (table 4, fig. 4). The so-called Bes vessels form a homogeneous category. Except for one example from Syria (no. 4.1) and another from the Persepolis Fortification on Kuh-i Rahmat (no. 4.11), all the vessels come from Palestine. They can be linked to an older tradition of vessels of this type from Egypt. Stern has presented more information on these vessels, so I will discuss them only briefly.

These vessels are usually 15 to 25 cm tall. They are made of ordinary clay, with the Bes face appliquéd or incised on them. Chronologically, they are divided into two groups: The earlier group, probably dating to the first half of the Achaemenid period, resembles the Phoenician and Palestinian decanters of the late Iron Age. Vessels of this group have a tall neck, low ring base, piriform body, and angular shoulder. The later group, dating to the late Achaemenid period, has a rounded, globular body and sloping shoulders. Thus, of the examples I have recorded, nos. 4.1, 4.3, 4.5, 4.8, and 4.10 can be considered early. Stern suggests an apotropaic significance for these vessels.
Tuplin, following the excavators of Tell el-Hesi, seems to subscribe to the idea that the Bes vessels from Deve Hüyük (no. 4.1) and Tell el-Hesi (no. 4.10) were made by the same potter, suggesting a possible movement of the Achaemenid troops between the two garrisons (for the significance of this proposition see “Discussion” below).

**Group 5: Amulets (table 5, fig. 5).** The objects that I, following traditional Egyptological classification, have categorized here as “amulets” need to be checked critically against ethnographic studies before we ascribe a magical function to them. For the purpose of the present study, we can define an amulet as a material symbol designed to be suspended from or worn on the body in a visible way to provide protection from evil forces. Amulets in the form of Bes were common in Egypt. In terms of function, they are comparable to cippi (see Group 7), which, however, were usually erected in temples or houses and carved with texts of magic spells. In contrast, amulets were carried by people to protect them from harm and vicious creatures, especially snakes and scorpions. With 27 examples recorded so far, amulets constitute the largest category of objects displaying the Bes-image. They are generally small, ranging in size from ca. 1.5 to 8 cm.

Surprisingly, most of the amulets come from Iran, especially from Susa and Persepolis. There are three examples from Dor in Palestine (nos. 5.1-5.3) and one from the necropolis of ‘Ain el-Helwe in Lebanon (no. 5.19). The group from Susa, with some quite splendid examples, is of particular interest (see “Discussion” below). Unfortunately, their exact archaeological context is unknown, but reports indicate that they were primarily discovered at the Apadana mound, where most Achaemenid remains are located.

**Group 6: Personal Ornaments (table 6, fig. 6).** Although I have classified this group as “Personal Ornaments,” I would not dismiss the possibility that, like amulets and cippi, they may have had magical functions. This is especially the case for no. 6.1, a necklace with a set of 16 faience Egyptian amulets and two semiprecious beads with a Bes head as the central piece. This ornament is clearly Egyptian in style, and its place of discovery (Dor in Palestine) strongly suggests that it came from Egypt. No. 6.2 is also of interest. Here the Bes head serves as the central piece in a compartmental gold necklace that depicts riders in an Iranian style.

The gold medallion from the “Oxus Treasure” (no. 6.3) shows a full Bes face. It is surrounded by guilloche border designs with a few holes, which suggest that this medallion was originally sewn to clothing.

**Group 7: Cippi (table 7, fig. 7).** Ancient Egyptians believed that Horus-the-child (Harpocrates) had been protected from vicious creatures, especially snakes, scorpions, and crocodiles, by means of spells. Therefore, the cippus of Horus was designed to protect its owner from such creatures by means of figures and magical spells carved on it. Cippi were usually set up in temples or private houses, depending on size and whether or not they were incorporated into the statue of a private person. Very small examples, actually pierced for suspension, must have been worn on the body. Water poured over a cippus was considered to be imbued with its magical powers. It was believed that this water magically absorbed the power of the spells inscribed upon the cippus and, when drunk, cured the one suffering from an attack by noxious beasts, just as Horus himself, stung by a scorpion, had been cured. The magical water could also have been taken away by the faithful for possible emergencies or given as medicine by physicians when they were called to attend a patient.

Cippi were used for a relatively long time. The earliest known examples date to the New Kingdom. They became very common in the Late Period and continued well into Roman times.

Of the two cippi studied here, the first (no. 7.1) was discovered against the northeast wall in the main room of the “Achaemenid Chapel” in Level II, Area WA at Nippur. I located the second example (no. 7.2) in the Department of Lurestan and Historical Antiquities of the Iran National Museum in Tehran. The only piece of information on its provenience comes from records kept in the Museum Library, which state that this piece was discovered at Susa and registered into the museum in 1931. Except for the dating of this piece to the Saite period, no further
information is available in the museum’s files. According to a general posthumous account on excavations at Susa by de Meccquenem, the French delegation discovered a fragment of a stone Egyptian stele at Donjon in 1930. Since I know of no other stone Egyptian stelae from Susa, I believe this brief statement refers to this cippus. But an attempt to find any other mention of this piece in the original excavation reports proved to be futile. It should be remembered that 1930 was shortly after the French monopoly on Iranian archaeology was nullified, and the French delegation was obliged to leave behind half of the finds for the newly founded Iran Bastan Museum (now the Iran National Museum). Therefore, it is conceivable that the French failed to publish objects not in their share, including this cippus.

Group 8: Metalware and Other Metal Artifacts (table 8, fig. 8). This category includes gold appliqués in the form of a winged lion with Bes head on a silver bowl (no. 8.1) as well as the Bes head as a handle stand, appearing in relatively simple (no. 8.2) and quite elaborate forms (no. 8.3). The Bes appliqué on no. 8.1 closely resembles the figure on cylinder seal no. 1.2 and stamp seals nos. 3.7 and 3.10. Bes handle stands, on the other hand, have no close parallels among other groups; but in both cases, the artist has tried to show Bes’s features accurately, especially the headgear, which is incised on the handle in no. 8.2 but pronounced and three-dimensional in no. 8.3.

The next item (no. 8.4) is a shieldlike object in the form of a Bes face attached to the front panel of a miniature chariot from the “Oxus Treasure.” Whether this was a model of a real life-size chariot with a Bes attachment or simply a toy I do not know, but, interestingly enough, the two individuals seen in this chariot both wear Iranian attire.

Group 9: Coins (table 9, fig. 9). Most of the known coins bearing the Bes-image have recently been studied by Mildenberg and there is no need to discuss them in detail here. These coins, usually called Philisto-Arabian, come from a wide area from Sicilian Syracuse to the Arabian desert, but there are more of them at southern Levantine cities on the Mediterranean coast and the neighboring desert region. Mildenberg argues that the Bes-image on Philisto-Arabian coins is not a direct influence from Egypt but rather a result of Bes’s popularity in the Levant, especially the Achaemenid province of Samaria, where these coins seem to have been particularly common. The weight standard of these coins, however, seems to be Attic.

Group 10: Statuettes (table 10, fig. 10). The first object in this group, an alabaster Bes head that ends in a broken tubular footing (no. 10.1), was discovered at the Persepolis Treasury. I do not know why Schmidt calls this object a pot stand because it could be a statuette.

The second object, a Bes statuette (no. 10.2), is also from the Persepolis Treasury. Unfortunately, the head and part of the chest, as well as the feet, are broken off, but the remaining parts of the body suggest that our identification of this statuette as depicting Bes is correct.

The last object in this category (no. 10.3) is a terracotta statuette found at Nippur. He wears a short loincloth with a belt that looks somewhat Persian.

Group 11: Architectural Elements (table 11, fig. 11). The first item in this category (no. 11.1) is of special importance. Here, in a heroon built most probably by an Achaemenid official in Trysa in Lycia around 370 B.C.E., eight Bes figures can be seen above the doorway. Of these, one is naked and in a squatting frontal position. The rest are either seated and playing pipes or harp, or dancing as calathos dancers portrayed on the doorposts. The occurrence of Bes figures behaving like Greek satyrs—that is, dancing, playing musical instruments, and sitting in a relaxed manner—suggests the Hellenization of Bes in this western satrapy of the Achaemenid Empire, which is not unusual in the classical eclecticism of Lycian art.

The next two items in this category (nos. 11.2 and 11.3) seem to be fragments of stone reliefs showing the Bes face. No. 11.2 was discovered by Ann Britt Tilia in the plain west of the Persepolis Terrace in 1974. According to Romano, this piece may have been joined with another unpublished piece (no. 11.3) also found in Persepolis, and these two pieces may have formed a complete Bes-image used as
architectural decoration at Persepolis. If Romano’s suggestion proves correct, this would be the only known use of the Bes-image in a monumental royal Achaemenid context so far.

DISCUSSION

Iconographically, the Bes-images collected here can be divided into two general groups: Egyptian and “Iranicized.”

(1) Purely Egyptian Examples Discovered in the Achaemenid Empire. As already mentioned, objects with the Bes-image were not unknown in the Near East before the rise of the Achaemenid Empire. Bes was in fact a relatively common motif in Phoenician art from the eastern Mediterranean. After the establishment of the Achaemenid Empire and the Persian conquest of the Levant and Egypt, the Bes-image reached Mesopotamia proper and the Iranian Plateau. The discovery of purely Egyptian examples of the Bes-image in the Achaemenid Empire can perhaps be explained in terms of extensive interregional contact during the Achaemenid period, when people of various ethnic backgrounds, including Egyptians, were traveling back and forth visiting or settling in the heartland of the empire—that is, in Mesopotamia and southern Iran.

Such contact and traveling might explain the Bes-images from Susa, including the amulets (nos. 5.6–5.18) and the cippus (no. 7.2). People of Egyptian origin are attested at Susa during the Achaemenid period. In fact, in his foundation charter, Darius I states that “the men who adorned the walls, those were Medes and Egyptians.” I think it is safe to assume that upon their departure from Egypt, these pious Egyptian craftsmen took these amulets and the one cippus to Susa to protect them against unexpected menaces during travel and their stay in a strange land. These talismans, then, may have been discarded, lost, left behind, or buried with their owners at Susa.

Egyptians are also attested at Persepolis, but the discovery of two Bes-images (i.e., nos. 10.1 and 10.2) in the Persepolis Treasury suggests that some Bes-images might have been brought from Egypt by the Achaemenids as booty or presented to the King of Kings by Egyptian delegations.

The discovery of a cippus in the “Achaemenid Chapel” at Nippur (no. 7.1) is of particular importance. Egyptians are attested in Nippur and elsewhere in Babylonia. In fact, a Muršû Archive tablet sealed with a stamp seal depicting Bes (no. 3.12) bears the Egyptian name Si’d.  

(2) Bes-images Incorporated into Western Asian Contexts and “Iranicized” Bes-images. These examples, I believe, are particularly important in a study of cultural interaction in the Achaemenid period.

This category includes the representations of Bes in association with Iranian motifs. The best examples appear on cylinder seals, where six out of seven recorded instances (nos. 1.1, 1.3–1.7) show the Bes-image in scenes that are otherwise Iranian. Egyptian motifs are not uncommon on Achaemenid seals, and one may consider these Bes-images as decorative motifs (e.g., nos. 1.1, 1.5–1.7), but in some cases they do seem to be included in a meaningful way into the main theme of the scene. In a few examples (nos. 1.3 and 1.4) Bes is in fact the pivotal figure in the scene, especially in no. 1.4, where he stands between two men in Iranian attire holding the winged disc. Bes occurs in similar representations in Egypt—that is, holding religious or divine symbols. But this seal bears an Old Persian inscription with Iranian names (see above). This, I believe, is one of the few indisputable examples of the appropriation of the Bes-image by an Iranian individual. Was this adoption simply an artistic innovation? Or did it have religious connotations? We will return to this question later.

Also in this category are what I would call “Iranicized” Bes-images. The best example is the Bes-lion or Bes-griffin, a hybrid of a typical Achaemenid lion or griffin and a Bes head. These hybrid creatures especially appear on cylinder seals (no. 1.2), some stamp seals (nos. 2.1–2.2, 2.6), seal impressions (nos. 3.7, 3.9–3.11), and gold appliqués on a silver vessel (no. 8.1).

Unfortunately, we are not yet in a position to produce a chronological sequence of the process of the “Iranicization” of Bes—that is, the gradual incorporation of Bes into the Achaemenid repertoire of motifs. But it would be interesting to know whether
there is a gradual progression from: (1) purely Egyptian pieces imported into the empire (e.g., most of the amulets and both cippi) to (2) purely Egyptian Bes-images incorporated into otherwise Achaemenid contexts (e.g., nos. 6.2, 8.3) to (3) reinterpretation and appropriation of Bes into an Achaemenid context (e.g., nos. 1.4, 9.3) to (4) hybridization and incorporation of the Bes-image into the Achaemenid repertoire (e.g., nos. 1.2, 3.10, 8.1). This topic will be explored further in another paper.56

Chronologically, there are very few fixed points for dating the introduction and distribution of the Bes-image in the Achaemenid Empire. Bes may possibly have been introduced into the empire after the annexation of the Levant or shortly after the conquest of Egypt—that is, around 525 B.C.E. But it was probably after the consolidation of the empire under Darius I that Bes gained popularity and entered the Achaemenid design repertoire. In the meantime, we should bear in mind that not a single Bes-image is included in the approximately 1,500 distinct seals preserved through multiple impressions on the 2,087 administrative documents from the larger and earlier Persepolis Fortification corpus (509–494 B.C.E.).57 This is particularly notable since the documents themselves record significant movement of Egyptians across the empire. Yet there is one example of the Bes-image from the smaller and later Persepolis Treasury corpus (492–460 B.C.E.): The seal impressions on a clay ball from the Persepolis Treasury (no. 3.8) suggest that by this time the Bes-image had entered the repertoire of motifs accessible to people working in high-level posts in the royal treasury. These observations may provide a rough terminus post quem for the introduction of the Bes-image into the Achaemenid heartland sometime in the late 490s B.C.E. The rest of the datable Bes-images all date to the later fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. Based on present evidence, it is difficult to set a terminus ante quem for the end of the use of the Bes-image in the Achaemenid period, but in the absence of any contradictory evidence it seems safe to assume that its use continued until the collapse of the empire, as I am as yet unaware of any Bes-images from secure Seleucid or later Parthian contexts.58

Geographically, disregarding genuine but archaeologically unreliable examples from the “Oxus Treasure” (nos. 6.3 and 8.4) and examples from the antiquities market, Mesopotamia and the Levant seem to have a concentration of Bes-images. The only other major collections come from Susa and Persepolis, both important Achaemenid centers and subject to extensive excavations. While this geographical distribution favoring the western parts of the empire may simply be a sampling bias, it may nonetheless offer a hint of the cultural patterns in the Achaemenid Empire. The evidence from Anatolia is rather ambiguous. The Bes-images from the heron at Trysa in Lycia (no. 11.1) are among the very few in situ examples (see below), and Bes appears on a number of pyramidal stamp seals (nos. 2.1–2.4) attributed by Boardman to Lydia.59 Yet preliminary assessment of the corpus of Achaemenid seal impressions from Daskyleion in the Phrygian Satrapy of the empire in western Anatolia suggests that this corpus (dating to the reign of Xerxes to Artaxerxes I) reveals no Bes-images.60 Whether the absence of the Bes-image in Daskyleion was a result of a conscious decision or an accident of discovery is hard to say, but in the case of another notable “Besless” corpus, this one from Wadi Dalieh, Leith argues for the Samarians’ conscious rejection of some images, including that of Bes, presumably for religious or national reasons.61

L ast, but not least, is the important question of why Bes was incorporated into the Achaemenid repertoire and the role this Egyptian deity played in the Achaemenid Empire after his appropriation. Below I present some provisional thoughts in a heuristic attempt to further the argument; a more substantial argument will be presented elsewhere.62

The “Iranicized” Bes, I believe, best represents the cultural interaction among Egyptians, Iranians, and other nations in the Achaemenid period. Regarding this cultural interaction, it is interesting to note that despite a great deal of Egyptianizing evident in the architecture of Persepolis, right from the beginning of constructions at the site under Darius I,63 and the documented presence of Egyptians at Persepolis,64 there is no Bes-image in the large sample of the Fortification corpus of seal impressions and tablets from no. 1 to no. 2087, and only one from the Treasury corpus. This observation, I think, is
particular intriguing since the Fortification corpus documents a wider range of types and statuses of people and cultural activities. Yet, even in this multicultural context, one might expect to see Egyptianizing images, the Bes figure is absent. Significant questions remain about what factors explain the absence of Bes in the large sample of Fortification tablets studied by Garrison and Root.

Ideologically, as already mentioned, an important function of Bes was protection against harm, especially physical harm from evil spirits and noxious creatures. During his career outside Egypt, Bes seems to have been assimilated to other deities, some also with protective functions. The religious significance of Bes in Iranian contexts, however, is not entirely clear. Graziani argues that Iranians of the Achaemenid period may have assimilated Bes to the Iranian deity Mithra. This is a plausible proposition, which I would endorse. In fact, the protective properties of Bes may have made him into an appropriate substitute or counterpart for Mithra.

In the course of my study, I noticed a number of Bes-images in association with the Achaemenid military. For example, Bes jugs nos. 4.1 and 4.10 come from Achaemenid military contexts and, as already mentioned, Tuplin argues that these jugs were made by the same potter, thus suggesting movement of Achaemenid troops between the two garrisons. A piece of another Bes jug (no. 4.11) comes from the Persepolis Fortification on the slope of Kuh-i Rahmat, also considered part of the Achaemenid garrison at Persepolis.

Scarab no. 2.12 and amulets nos. 5.1–5.3, 5.27 are also from Achaemenid military contexts. As additional support for the military use of the Bes-image, we may cite indirect evidence in the form of a Bes head attached to the front panel of the miniature chariot from the “Oxus Treasure” (no. 8.4), which may have been a model of an actual chariot in the Achaemenid army, with details copied right down to the Bes attachment.

The divine protection of army units is well attested in Egypt, but I know of no units under Bes’s protection. One may speculate that Achaemenids adopted this tradition from the Egyptians and that certain units of the Achaemenid army (e.g., charioteers?) adopted Bes as their protective deity. While I am unaware of the military patronage of Mithra in the Achaemenid period, it is well known that he had been a respected deity since Achaemenid times and later became a god of the Roman army.

More indirect evidence for the connection between Bes and Mithra may be gleaned from the heroon at Trysa in Lycia. This is a fascinating example of the adoption of Bes into the Achaemenid repertoire, in this case with some Hellenizing flavor. As already mentioned, on this Achaemenid-Lycian monument, eight Bes-images are carved above the inner face of the southern doorway (no. 11.1). Of these Bes-images, one is naked and in a squatting frontal position. The rest are either seated and playing pipes or harp, or dancing as calathos dancers portrayed on the doorposts. Recent studies date the heroon at Trysa to between 380 and 370 B.C.E. Historical information on Lycia in the early fourth century B.C.E. is scarce, but we know that sometime around 370 B.C.E. two Achaemenids, namely Mithrapata and Artumpara, were appointed satraps of eastern and western Lycia, respectively. Mithrapata probably took control of all of Lycia after Artumpara departed for Pamphylia to assist Autophradates, the satrap of Lydia, in suppressing Datames’ revolt. Information on Mithrapata is limited, but we know that he was minting coins on a Persian standard. At about the same time the Lycian tradition of building sculptured monuments, which had faded under Athenian control, was revived. While there is no direct evidence, one may propose that the heroon at Trysa was built by no other than Mithrapata, a suggestion also supported by Borchhardt. Assuming that this proposition is correct, one may ask whether the Bes-images carved on the doorway were significant for the presumed builder of the heroon, who, coincidentally, bears the name of Mithrapata (“with Mithra’s protection”).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper poses more questions than it attempts to answer. Obviously, the wide distribution of the Bes-image in the Achaemenid Empire had important cultural connotations that we are not in a position to fully appreciate. It can be reasonably argued that the
Bes-image owes its distribution in the Achaemenid Empire to the policy of cultural tolerance and encouragement practiced by the Achaemenids. Yet we do not know whether through his adventures beyond the borders of Egypt in the Achaemenid Empire Bes acquired some religious functions. In his homeland, Bes was the focus of a protective cult for ordinary people. He may have had a similar role for some Levantine people and perhaps in certain army units. But when Bes was adopted by other peoples in the empire, what was implied? If it was a subversive cult (similar to the way the Romans viewed Christianity), we would expect it to spread horizontally from commoners in one area to those in another area. But if it was a means of coopting local symbols into a broader, more cosmopolitan ideology, we might expect to see a vertical movement—adoption of the image and presumably the underlying ideology by the elites from the commoners. Ordinary people, including the Iranians and the subject people, and the imperial elite, however, led separate lives, and it is in this context that our study of the Bes imagery and its distribution in the Achaemenid Empire might have a broader significance. When the cults of commoners began to spread, and even to be utilized by the elites, did this appropriation help create a unifying ideology and thus lead to a better integrated empire? Or did it tend to undermine the imperial strategies of compartmentalization—such as that practiced by the Achaemenids through their policy of tolerance and encouragement? These questions remain to be explored.

Notes

I would like to thank Linda Bregstein, Pierre Briant, Joyce Marcus, and Henry Wright, as well as two anonymous reviewers for Ars Orientalis for reading and commenting on earlier drafts of this essay. I would also like to thank John Curtis of the British Museum and John Larson of the Oriental Institute Museum and the helpful staff at the British Museum, Ashmolean Museum, the Louvre, and the Iran National Museum for granting access, and the Museum of Anthropology and Rackham Graduate School of the University of Michigan for providing me with financial assistance to purchase photographs used in my studies and published in this article. Last, but not least, I thank Margaret Cool Root, who read and commented on this paper at various stages of its progress and never failed to encourage me to develop and publish it.


15. There are also a few scarabs with the Bes-image, some in an “Iranizing” style, from Carthage (see Vercoutter, *Objets égyptiens*, nos. 650–55), roughly contemporary with the Achaemenid period. But since they are found outside of strict Achaemenid administrative control, I have not included them here in the catalogue. This, however, does not mean that they were totally unrelated to Bes in the Achaemenid Empire.


20. Culican, “Phoenician Seals.”


56. Abdi, “Notes.”

57. M. C. Root, personal communication, 9 December 1996; see also Mark B. Garrison and Margaret Cool Root, *Seal Impressions on the Persepolis Fortification Tablets*, vol. 1, Oriental Institute Publication, no. 117 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1999); Mark B. Garrison and Margaret Cool Root, *Seal Impressions on the Persepolis Fortification...*

58. I am, however, bothered by no. 5.5, an amulet claimed to have come from a Seleucid context at Mαιζτιδ i Solaiman (Roman Ghirshman, Terrasses sacrées de Bard-e Nechanteh et de Mαιζτιδ i Solaiman, 2 vols., Mémoires de la Délégation archéologiques en Iran, no. 45 [Leiden: E. J. Brill 1976], 1:101). It is possible that some pieces were passed on to later periods as heirlooms. It is also notable that an earlier level at the same site, dated to the Achaemenid period, has yielded a group of earlier artifacts, including a scarab with the name of Tuthmosis III (1479–1425 b.c.e.), which also bears a Bes-image (Ghirshman, Terrasses sacrées, 1:67).

59. Boardman, “Pyramidal Stamp Seals.”

60. Deniz Kaptan, Catalogue of Seal Impressions from Daskyleion, Achaemenid History (forthcoming).


63. Root, King and Kingship.

64. Hallock, Persepolis Fortification Tablets.


73. An Egyptian military standard discovered at Persepolis may provide some support for this proposition; see M. Korostovtsev, “Un étendard militaire égyptien?” Annales du Service des antiquités de l’Égypte 45 (1947): 127–31.

74. Bivar, Personalities of Mithra.

75. Michael P. Speidel, Mithras-Orion: Greek Hero and Roman Army God, Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l’empire romain, no. 81 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980). Regarding the connection between Bes and the military, one can reasonably expect not to find much evidence of Bes in non-military contexts if this deity was mostly associated with the Achaemenid military. This suggestion will bring us, once more, to the Persepolis Fortification corpus, which, as mentioned above, lacks the Bes-image and, coincidentally, does not seem to be associated with the service of Achaemenid military personnel. This obviously is a highly problematic argumentum ex silentio but nonetheless merits some attention and further exploration.

76. Eichler, Reliefs des Heroon, 48.


78. Childs, “Lycian Relations,” 76.


Appendix: Catalogue of Bes-Images

Full citations for the references in the tables and figures below appear in the “References” section at the end of this appendix.

In the figures, illustration numbers are keyed to object numbers in the corresponding tables. Figures do not illustrate every item mentioned in the tables but rather are limited to images that were available to me. No attempt has been made to scale the images that appear in the figures to the actual size of the originals.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>No.</th>
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<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Place of discovery</th>
<th>Repository</th>
<th>Reference no.</th>
<th>Bibliography</th>
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FIG. 1. CYLINDER SEALS
TABLE 2. STAMP SEALS

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<th>Repository</th>
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<td>Johns 1933: no. 935 99, fig. 85</td>
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<td>Poppa 1978: 63, table 8:7, 17</td>
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FIG. 2. STAMP SEALS

2.7. Ashmolean Museum

2.8. Ashmolean Museum

2.11. After Johns 1933: fig. 85

TABLE 3. SEAL IMPRESSIONS

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<td>Legrain 1951: no. 731; Collon 1996: 5f</td>
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<td>BM 198</td>
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<td>TuM 202</td>
<td>Krückmann 1933: no. LXXVIII; Bregstein 1993: no. 208</td>
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3.3. British Museum
3.4. British Museum
3.5. British Museum
3.6. British Museum
3.7. British Museum
3.8. The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago
3.9. After Kruckman 1933: no. LXXVIII
3.10. After Legrain 1925: no. 923
3.11. After Donbaz and Stolper 1997: no. 18
3.12. After Donbaz and Stolper 1997: no. 58

FIG. 3. SEAL IMPRESSIONS
### TABLE 4. POTTERY VESSELS

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<th>Repository</th>
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<td>Pit 1.12.249</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>pot sherd</td>
<td>pottery</td>
<td></td>
<td>Persepolis Fortification</td>
<td>Iran National Museum</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tajvidi 1976: fig. 137</td>
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</table>

**4.1. Ashmolean Museum**

**4.11. Drawn by Anne Marie L. Lapitan, after Tajvidi 1976: fig. 137**

**FIG. 4. POTTERY VESSELS**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
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<th>Material</th>
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<td>Susa</td>
<td>Louvre</td>
<td>Sb 3565</td>
<td>Romano 1989: no. 277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>amulet</td>
<td>faience</td>
<td>h. 42 mm</td>
<td>Susa</td>
<td>Louvre</td>
<td>Sb 10170</td>
<td>Romano 1989: no. 278</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
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<td>Susa</td>
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<td>Sb 2954</td>
<td>Romano 1989: no. 279</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>amulet</td>
<td>faience</td>
<td>h. 22 mm</td>
<td>Susa</td>
<td>Louvre</td>
<td>Sb 10148</td>
<td>Romano 1989: no. 280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>amulet</td>
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<td>h. 14 mm</td>
<td>Susa</td>
<td>Louvre</td>
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<td>5.6</td>
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<td>h. 25 mm</td>
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<td>Sb 10175</td>
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<td>Sb 10149</td>
<td>Romano 1989: no. 284</td>
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<td>5.9</td>
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<td>Susa</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5.14</td>
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<td>Susa</td>
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<td>Romano 1989: no. 282</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>amulet</td>
<td>faience</td>
<td>h. 25 mm</td>
<td>Susa</td>
<td>Louvre</td>
<td>Sb 10175</td>
<td>Romano 1989: no. 282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>amulet</td>
<td>lapis lazuli</td>
<td>24.5 x 18 mm</td>
<td>Grave no. 34, Kamid el-Loz</td>
<td>British Museum</td>
<td>U.12797</td>
<td>Woolley 1962: 115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>amulet</td>
<td>faience</td>
<td>24 x 25 x 9 mm</td>
<td>Babylon</td>
<td>British Museum</td>
<td>Reade 1986: 83, no. 43, pl. IVf</td>
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</table>
FIG. 5. AMULETS

5.4. Iran National Museum

5.5. The Louvre

5.6. The Louvre

5.7. The Louvre

5.8. The Louvre

5.9. The Louvre

5.10. The Louvre

5.11. The Louvre

5.12. The Louvre

5.13. The Louvre

5.14. The Louvre

5.15. The Louvre

5.16. The Louvre


5.21. Iran National Museum

5.22. Iran National Museum

5.23. Iran National Museum

5.26. After Poppa 1978: table 16: 34,6
### Table 6. Personal Ornaments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Place of discovery</th>
<th>Repository</th>
<th>Reference no.</th>
<th>Bibliography</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>necklace</td>
<td>faience</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dor, Area B1</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Reference no.</td>
<td>Stern and Sharon 1987: pl. 27B</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>necklace</td>
<td>gold</td>
<td>h. 40 mm</td>
<td>antiquities market</td>
<td>Metropolitan Museum of Art</td>
<td>65.169</td>
<td>Porter 1984: no. 65</td>
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<td>6.3</td>
<td>medallion</td>
<td>gold</td>
<td>d. 43.5 mm</td>
<td>“The Oxus Treasure”</td>
<td>British Museum</td>
<td>Reference no.</td>
<td>Dalton 1964: no. 32, pl. XII:32</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>medallions</td>
<td>gold</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pasargadae</td>
<td>Iran National Museum</td>
<td>Reference no.</td>
<td>Stronach 1978: fig. 86:1, pl. 154 a-c</td>
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<td>6.5</td>
<td>earring</td>
<td>gold</td>
<td>d. 50 mm</td>
<td>Susa, Grave no. Sb 2764</td>
<td>Louvre</td>
<td>Reference no.</td>
<td>Ghirshman 1962: pl. 323</td>
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<td>6.7</td>
<td>medallion</td>
<td>gold</td>
<td>h. 27 mm</td>
<td>Talesh, Gilan</td>
<td>Iran National Museum</td>
<td>Reference no.</td>
<td>Unpublished</td>
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<td>6.8</td>
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<td>gold</td>
<td>24 x 17 mm</td>
<td>Grave no. 2, Dosaran Cemetery, Zanjan</td>
<td>Reference no.</td>
<td>Reference no.</td>
<td>Rahbar 1997: 24, fig. 2, fig. 3:18</td>
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**Fig. 6. Personal Ornaments**
TABLE 7. CIPPI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Place of discovery</th>
<th>Repository</th>
<th>Reference no.</th>
<th>Bibliography</th>
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<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>cippus</td>
<td>white stone</td>
<td>88 × 83 × 31 mm</td>
<td>Nippur, Area WA 13, Level II 1, the “Achaemenid Chapel”</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>11 N 61</td>
<td>Johnson 1975</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>cippus</td>
<td>black stone</td>
<td>94 × 91 × 18 mm</td>
<td>Susa</td>
<td>Iran National Museum</td>
<td>2103/103</td>
<td>Abdi n.d.</td>
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</tbody>
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7.1. Drawn by Jenny H. Lee, after Gibson 1975: fig. 34: 3 up

7.2. Drawn from the original by Kamyar Abdi

FIG. 7. CIPPI

TABLE 8. METALWARE AND OTHER METAL ARTIFACTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Place of discovery</th>
<th>Repository</th>
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<th>Bibliography</th>
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<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>phiale with gold Bes-sphinx appliqués</td>
<td>gilded silver</td>
<td>d. 172 mm h. 18 mm</td>
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<td>BM135571</td>
<td>Curtis 1989: fig. 58</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>jug with Bes head below the handle</td>
<td>silver</td>
<td>antiquities market</td>
<td>Uşak Museum</td>
<td>1.14.96</td>
<td>Özgen &amp; Öztürk 1996: no. 12, p. 75</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>handle in the shape of a winged ibex on a Bes head</td>
<td>gilded silver</td>
<td>Louvre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Amandry 1959: pl. 27: 2–3; Porada 1965: 168, fig. 86</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>head of Bes attached to the front of a miniature chariot</td>
<td>gold</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dalton 1964: no. 7, pl. IV</td>
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</table>

8.1. British Museum


8.4. British Museum

FIG. 8. METALWARE AND OTHER METAL ARTIFACTS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Place of discovery</th>
<th>Repository</th>
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<td>morion</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9.10</td>
<td>obol</td>
<td>silver</td>
<td></td>
<td>Abu Shusheh hoard</td>
<td>Department of Antiquities, Jerusalem</td>
<td>IGCH 1507</td>
<td>Mildenberg 1995: pl. I:10</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.20</td>
<td>obol</td>
<td>silver</td>
<td>d. 9.5 mm</td>
<td>Cilicia</td>
<td>H. Sirri Göktürk Coll., Turkey</td>
<td></td>
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<td>H. Sirri Göktürk Coll., Turkey</td>
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**FIG. 9. COINS**
### TABLE 10. STATUETTES

<table>
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<th>Repository</th>
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<th>Bibliography</th>
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<tr>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>pot stand (?)</td>
<td>alabaster</td>
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<td>PT4 1062</td>
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<td>10.2</td>
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<td>PT5 299</td>
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<td>10.3</td>
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<td>Nippur</td>
<td>University Museum, Philadelphia</td>
<td>CBS 9454</td>
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10.1. The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

10.2. The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

10.3. Drawn by Anne Marie L. Lapitan, after Legrain 1930: no. 221

FIG. 10. STATUETTES
### TABLE 11. ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
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<th>Place of discovery</th>
<th>Repository</th>
<th>Reference no.</th>
<th>Bibliography</th>
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<tr>
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<td>8 figures of Bes in relief above the southern doorway</td>
<td>stone</td>
<td>Heroon of Golbasi-Trysa, Lycia</td>
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<td>Benndorf 1889: 34, fig. 34; Eichler 1950: 48, pl. 1 below Oberleitner 1994: fig. 30</td>
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<td>11.2</td>
<td>relief fragment (?)</td>
<td>stone</td>
<td>plain west of Persepolis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Romano 1989: no. 271</td>
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<td>Persepolis (?)</td>
<td>Iran National Museum</td>
<td>P-810</td>
<td>Schneider 1976: 34, microfiche no. 7G4</td>
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**FIG. 11. ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS**

11.1. Drawn by Anne Marie L. Lapitan, after Oberleitner 1994: fig. 30

11.2. Iran National Museum

11.3. The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago


Hidden Messages and Meanings: 
The Case of The Infant Witness 
Testifies to Yūsuf’s Innocence

ABSTRACT

This miniature depicts the handsome and saintly slave Yūsuf being accused by the ‘azīz, Egypt’s grand vizier, of having seduced his wife Zulaykhā. As the guards are about to lead Yūsuf off to prison, a baby in its mother’s arms to the left of the ‘azīz proclaims the slave’s innocence. The following reversal of innocent and guilty players is expressed by their turn to their right or their left, respectively. Those who had assumed Yūsuf’s guilt until the baby revealed the truth turn their bodies to their right but their heads to their left, while those truthful from the outset, like Yūsuf and the baby, face entirely to their right. Each figure’s role is also indicated by its location, movement, and expression. Such remarkable psychological insight jibes perfectly with the hidden signature of Shaykh-Muḥammad as the painter.
Hidden Messages and Meanings: The Case of The Infant Witness Testifies to Yūsuf’s Innocence

As I read Marianna Shreve Simpson’s admirable publication of Sultan Ibrahim Mirzā’s Haft awrang manuscript in the Freer Gallery of Art, the miniature of fol. 120a (fig. 1) from Jāmī’s story of Yūsuf u Zulaykhā seemed to me of special interest and worthy of a more detailed analysis.1 This small jewel of a painting depicts the scene of the beautiful young Yūsuf being accused by the ‘azīz, the title of Egypt’s grand vizier, of having seduced his wife Zulaykhā. Actually, as we find out elsewhere in the story, it was she who, after having tried unsuccessfully to seduce Yūsuf, blamed him for this crime while insisting upon her own innocence. As a result of the accusations against him, Yūsuf—represented as an angelic-looking young gentleman now reduced to slavery—is about to be led away by two guards. The juxtaposition of the innocent and saintly-appearing slave Yūsuf to one side in front of the central ʿivān and the forbidding-looking ‘azīz near the other side clearly defines the role of two of the main players in this drama.

To Yūsuf’s right are the guards who, following the orders of the ‘azīz, believe that they are acting correctly by laying hands on Yūsuf in order to deliver him to prison. Yet these guards, whose bodies face toward their right, appear to stop in their tracks, turning their heads in the other direction, toward the baby pronouncing Yūsuf’s innocence.2 In the story Yūsuf’s innocence is also proven by his shirt, ripped in the back as a result of his escape from the grip of his female attacker. The heads of the guards arresting Yūsuf, in contrast to their bodies, are directed to their left because their role has suddenly changed from that of administering justice to that of committing a wrongful act—namely, seizing Yūsuf, who is now proven to be blameless. The guards’ supreme commander, the large and impressive-looking ‘azīz, convinced of the accusation’s veracity, is turned to his right. But the situation is completely reversed by the utterances of the tiny baby in the arms of his mother, who is followed by a female attendant. This reversal is also reflected in the ‘azīz’s facial expression, in which bewilderment and embarrassment seem to mingle with a rising rage. The juxtaposition of the large ‘azīz avowing what turns out to be a lie and the small baby proclaiming the truth is rendered very effectively. This difference is visualized through the painter’s use of the left-right dichotomy: while the ‘azīz’s head, in contrast to his body, is turned toward the baby to his left, that of the baby and his entourage face toward Yūsuf and thus to their right. Moreover, the imperious-looking ‘azīz is contrasted to the tiny baby, indicating that big and weighty do not have to be synonymous with right.

Also present are such secondary players as the standard bearer in the center front, whose stance is related to that of the guard arresting Yūsuf and whose social status, like that of both guards, is indicated by his small size and simple turban. The lead guard wears similar headgear, which contrasts sharply with the attire—including turbans—of the gentleman class represented by Yūsuf, the ‘azīz (with whom the standard bearer is also aligned), and two figures in the foreground.

The two male figures to the right appear to be not active participants but rather observers or perhaps
commentators on the dramatic event. The one near the right picture frame is turned to his right, expressing his astonishment with his right index finger at his mouth, while the other, tugging at the former’s sleeve and turning to his left, seems dubious about the turn of events. Actually, in these two figures the whole leftward- and rightward-turning drama seems summarized. It becomes clear that all figures who proclaim the truth or believe in it are turned entirely or partially toward their right—Yûsuf, the baby, and others—whereas all those proclaiming or believing in what turns out to be an untrue face toward their left—the ‘azīz and the guards.

Two women are partially visible in the two windows to either side of the central ivân. The one on the right with her head turned toward her right, her surprise indicated by her right index finger at her mouth, echoes the onlooker in front. On the other hand, the female figure at the left window looking down toward her left with her eyes fixed on Yûsuf and her left hand over her mouth appears to have her left thumb in her mouth, as if inadvertently biting it. As a visual admission of wrongdoing, this gesture might refer to the Qur’ân 25.25, which reads (albeit in connection with the Day of Judgment), “the evil doer shall bite his hands.” Moreover, this gesture could also allude to an episode further on in the story in which Zulaykhâ’s lady guests, overwhelmed by Yûsuf’s beauty, cut their fingers with the knives meant for peeling the fruit in their hands. Thus, this scene at the window seems a drastic expression of this woman’s feelings of guilt and anxiety as well as her consuming lovesickness. In contrast to the thumb in the mouth of this onlooker, the gesture of the rest of her hand in front of her mouth might well indicate her utter consternation over the sudden turn of events below. The turn of this woman’s head toward her left and her conspicuous use of her left hand suggest that this is a person in the wrong. Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that it is indeed Zulaykhâ who is represented here, as Shreve Simpson has tentatively proposed. Naturally, Zulaykhâ would be embarrassed and distraught that the falseness of her testimony had been uncovered.

The whole scene is built up around its three main players—Yûsuf, Zulaykhâ, and the ‘azīz—with each of them positioned in the corner of a triangle. The pivotal role, however, falls to Yûsuf (with the halo of a saintly person), who as the fulcrum of events occupies the bottom angle, indicating the initial precariousness of his position and the volatility of the situation, with Zulaykhâ and the ‘azīz in the balance. By depicting the bodies and heads of the players in this drama turned appropriately leftward or rightward, the painter has not only ingeniously conveyed one significant moment of the story; he has also unfurled a whole sequence of events, even alluding to other features and incidents not directly represented in this miniature. Instead of being rendered in conventional narrative form, the most dramatic moment in the highly emotional story of Yûsuf and Zulaykhâ is presented as a tableau but at the same time alludes to a broader spectrum of events, expressed in the turn of body or head, in gestures, and in facial expressions—mainly the special rendition of the eyebrows and the particular depiction of the eyes, as in the case of the ‘azīz and the arresting guard. The mise-en-scène is accomplished masterfully in both the relation of the figures to each other and their placement within the architectural setting and, further in the background, within nature. Although echoed in the setting, it is the bold or subtle expressions of the human figures that mainly create the feeling of high drama and reveal the psychological and emotional state of the players as an important undercurrent of a highly developed pictorial language. In a searching article Shreve Simpson has recently argued that Shaykh-Muhammed may have painted this folio. According to Martin Dickson and Cary Welch, early accounts repeatedly mention Shaykh-Muhammed’s reputation for fine portraiture, which might very well imply the kinds of psychological undertones, emotionally expressive renderings, and dramatically charged atmosphere that I am suggesting are characteristic of this miniature. Thus an attribution to Shaykh-Muhammed, indicated by the almost hidden signature of the artist, is confirmed by the quality of the painting in The Infant Witness Testifies to Yûsuf’s Innocence.
Notes


2. The fact that the baby can speak, expressing itself well and truthfully and thus fulfilling a mission, is reminiscent of the passages in the Qur'an (19.29–34) about the baby Jesus speaking for himself. I am grateful to J. Christoph Bürgel for drawing my attention to this parallel.


6. These features can also be found in the single miniature, *The Camel and Its Keeper* in the Freer Gallery of Art, which is signed and dated by Shaykh-Muhammad. For a discussion of this painting see especially Simpson, “Discovering Shaykh-Muhammad,” 112, fig. 5; and Dickson and Welch, *Houghton Shahnameh*, 1:168.

7. Simpson, “Discovering Shaykh-Muhammad,” 109f. The signature was first discovered by Priscilla Soucek.
Why Ancient Silk Is Still Gold:
Issues in Chinese Textile History

ABSTRACT

This essay reviews the 1997 catalogue *When Silk Was Gold: Central Asian and Chinese Textiles*, which accompanied the exhibition of sixty-four rare silks at both the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Analyzing the relationship between artistic and technological aspects of these artifacts, the reviewer assesses both the strengths and weaknesses of this sumptuously illustrated catalogue. By realigning these silks in a logical technical sequence, she shows how and why Central Asian and Chinese weavers differed in both stylistic and technological development from the eighth to the fifteenth centuries. The article further points out why studies of ancient Chinese textiles have been largely fragmentary both outside and inside China, though for different reasons. Finally, it suggests that adopting an integrated interdisciplinary approach would enable students of Chinese textile history to shed light on the meaning of ancient Chinese textiles both as material evidence of historical change as well as a medium of artistic expression and technological progress.
FIG. 1.

Drawing of the stylized peony (a) woven in smoky-colored gauze to make women's pants (b), pants length 87 cm × width 74 cm, Fuzhou, thirteenth century. The Museum of Fuzhou, 38-6. After Fujian Sheng Bowuguan, [ed.], Fuzhou Nan Song Huang Sheng Mu (Beijing, 1982), fig. 35 and color pl. 7.
Why Ancient Silk Is Still Gold:
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 Appearing one century after the discoveries of ancient artifacts in Central Asia that led to the study of Chinese textile history, both the exhibition and catalogue of When Silk Was Gold: Central Asian and Chinese Textiles signify a major landmark in the development of the field. Sixty-four pieces of silk are assembled to represent eight centuries (mid 700–early 1400 C.E.) of textile development from eastern China to eastern Iran. Above all, the exhibition and catalogue show that Han Chinese textile art and technology of this period had absorbed a multitude of cultural influences: Sogdian, Turkish, Uighur, Jurchen, Khitan, Tangut, Tibetan, and Mongol. Vast resources were commandeered to make an elite selection of textiles accessible to the general public. Even though more people than ever before can travel widely to satisfy their intellectual curiosity, this single volume brings together more diverse knowledge about ancient textiles than anyone could ever hope to gather alone. Yet the wealth of information contained in the catalogue also raises more questions than it answers.

In three pages of introduction to When Silk Was Gold, James C. Y. Watt and Anne E. Wardwell, the two senior curators responsible for this achievement at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Cleveland Museum of Art respectively, lament that, despite many years of preparation for this exhibition and catalogue, the combined collection of early Chinese and Central Asian silks still falls far short of being complete. Even so, they have formed a core group of outstanding specimens unrivaled elsewhere outside China. They also list their problems with dating, sources, and textile terms, largely resolving these methodological snags as they see them. Finally, they state two clear goals: first, that “the material will expand what has been known of Asian textiles produced between the Tang and the early Ming period, especially those dating from the tenth to the fourteenth century” and, second, that “there will be greater recognition among art historians of the importance of luxury textiles to the history of Asian art” (p. 4). This review will first assess the catalogue on these terms and then relate the strengths and weaknesses of the catalogue to issues in Chinese textile history. To avoid repetition, I will merely signal areas where the authors have excelled and refer readers to the original text; but supplementary information will be added for areas where it might facilitate readers’ understanding.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

To shed light on the many cultures represented by the sixty-four artifacts, Morris Rossabi, professor of Chinese and Central Asian history at Columbia University and at Queens College of the City University
of New York, was enlisted to provide a succinct summary entitled “The Silk Trade in China and Central Asia” (pp. 7–19). Following this historical survey, When Silk Was Gold is divided into five chapters. Whereas chapter 1 groups twelve silks of various weaves because of their early dates, chapters 2 and 5 are classified by method of ornamentation—fifteen silk tapestries and seventeen embroideries, respectively. The artifacts of chapters 3 and 4 are divided by both chronology and weave structure: seven “brocades” of the Jurchen Jin (gold) and Mongol periods and thirteen examples of “luxury-silk weaving” of the Mongol period. Some inconsistencies arise from these chapter divisions, as noted below.

Within each chapter, an introductory essay elaborates on the background, emphasizing salient points, whether historical or art historical, to attain the two principal goals. Next come detailed description and technical analysis of each artifact, with footnotes and publications laid out conveniently on the same page or close by. The presentation of each artifact is supplemented by illustrations of comparative material and sometimes further accompanied by micrographic photographs to show technical details.

Particularly noteworthy is the economy with which dimensions are stated for warp and weft rather than more conventionally for length and width. In the latter case, additional reference to the direction of the warp would be necessary to clarify how the pattern repeats were executed. Although not stated anywhere in the catalogue, pattern repeats suggest type and level of loom technology, an issue hotly debated among textile historians.

The exhibition is made up almost entirely of artifacts from museum collections outside China and Central Asia. In contrast, therefore, to material evidence archaeologically excavated in the region, provenance is not available for most artifacts in the catalogue. This exacerbates the difficulty of identification, but the authors have solved this problem in many instances.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the historical survey four maps produced by Joyce Denney with cartographer Wilhelmina Rey-}

inga-Amrhein clearly illustrate the boundaries of Chinese dynasties and non-Han ethnic domination (pp. 8, 11, 13, and 16–17). They show unmistakably how ethnic Han Chinese territory shrank between the eighth and the fifteenth centuries. By inference, conflicts between ethnic Han Chinese and non-Han peoples could only have escalated, favoring the latter. The ransom for peace usually required, among other things, luxury and other silk in vast quantities.

Although Rossabi refers to this issue, in the overview below I wish to emphasize further that when China was unified and expanded northward and westward, as in the Han (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.), Sui-Tang (581–618–907), and Yuan (1279–1368) dynasties, Chinese silk production also intensified, resulting in a prosperous silk trade. But when China was divided between the north and south and Han Chinese territory shrank south, as in the period of disunity from the fourth to the sixth century and in the Northern and Southern Song (960–1127–1279) dynasties, then silk manufacture suffered setbacks in war-torn areas; afterward it resumed with new products to meet the demands of a different clientele. In the second century the Han Chinese maintained a preemptive stance (at least in formal terms) in peace negotiations vis-à-vis the non-Han ethnic groups, who exacted heavy war indemnities from them. This change in the balance of power affected Han Chinese culture in general and textile production in particular.

Far from deterring trade, complex political intrigues and frequent military campaigns on the northern and northwestern Chinese frontier actually encouraged the outward flow of precious commodities, especially luxury silks. Woven or embroidered with intricate patterns, luxury silks were rare, valuable, easy to transport, and hence abundantly exchanged. As far back as 198 B.C.E., Han rulers had adopted a policy of “harmonious relations” (heqin 和親), or marriage alliance, with the Xiongnu confederacy to maintain peace. Silks figured prominently among Chinese imperial dowries and other rich offerings to buy friendship. After 126 B.C.E., when the Chinese envoy Zhang Qian 張騫 brought back intelligence that he had gathered on Central and West Asia, the Chinese
state turned more aggressive in its frontier campaigns and began to covet the fast and strong “blood-sweating celestial horses” of Kokand in the valley of Ferghana. This posture led to the exchange of silk for horses along the Silk Road. Some museums outside China hold silks of this period excavated from Noin Ula, Mongolia (for example, the Philadelphia Museum of Art). If examples had been included in When Silk Was Gold, it would have enhanced our understanding of the silk trade in the pre-Tang period. Likewise, readers would have benefited from the inclusion of woolen textiles woven and traded by nomads and seminomads from the third to the second century B.C.E. The importance of comparing weaves of different fibers becomes apparent in the discussion of the lampas below and in the final section.

Trade in silk for horses and other exotics continued in the subsequent Three Kingdoms period (220–65), Jin dynasty (265–420), and the period of disunity from the fourth to the sixth century, during which China was split in two. Whereas Han Chinese ruled southern China through the Southern Dynasties (317–598), northern China was dominated by the so-called barbarians who formed the Northern Dynasties (386–581). This political division also led to diverse and distinct artistic developments in northern and southern China. In particular, the Tuoba (Tabgatch) people, who founded the Northern Wei dynasty (386–535), left major Buddhist monuments showing considerable Central Asian influence. Also during this period of great turmoil, many Han Chinese fled from northern China to safer oases along the Silk Road. For example, Chinese migrants arrived in Turfan en masse in the fifth century. After settling there, they integrated with the locals and later with other Central Asian immigrants. The extraordinary and unprecedented crosscultural integration in Turfan resulted in artistic and technological innovation. In his overview, Rossabi fails to discuss relations between ethnic Han Chinese and nomadic peoples during the earlier Northern Dynasties (386–581). This oversight reflects a Sinocentric view of Chinese history, as does the “Chronology” (p. 6), which lists only Chinese dynasties. To render justice to the history of Central Asia, an equivalent listing of dynasties or nomadic confederacies would have been in order, not to say extremely helpful.

While frontier areas such as Turfan experienced crosscultural integration, China proper was once again unified under the Sui dynasty (581–618), leading to the prosperous and cosmopolitan Tang dynasty (618–907). But the An Lushan Rebellion from 755 to 763 pushed a further wave of Han Chinese toward the frontier. Archaeological evidence shows that most chose to settle in Dunhuang, another oasis along the Silk Road. Here, relations between Han Chinese and Uighurs greatly intensified, as they did along the northern border between China and Mongolia after the Uighur empire collapsed there in 840. Rossabi attributes to Uighurs a significant role as “intermediaries and cultural transmitters in Central and East Asia,” particularly evident in kesi【織錦】silk tapestry (pp. 9 and 61–62).

Beginning in the tenth century, tea from the Red Basin of Sichuan became an extremely important commodity in addition to silk. In exchange, Tibetans also joined Central Asians in offering horses to the Han Chinese. Unquestionably, the addition of tea from Sichuan further enhanced the appeal of that region’s figured “Shu jin” 蜀錦 silks, famous since the Han dynasty. During the period of disunity from the fourth to the sixth century, only Sichuan in China proper enjoyed a level of stability sufficient to permit imperial workshops in Chengdu, the regional center of Sichuan, to continue the production of these figured silks. Astana tombs in Turfan have yielded many examples brought there by royalty who had fled from China proper. Both the child’s white damask pants and the fragment of floral medallions (cat. nos. 5 and 6), attributed to the Tang dynasty, are prime examples of Shu jin. The failure to identify them as such may be due to prudence, insufficient understanding of the vital trade in horses for tea and silk from Sichuan, or inadequate analysis of how weaves are technically related.

After the end of the Tang dynasty in 907, China again suffered disunity. The Han Chinese in the north were ruled by Five Dynasties (907–60), while still further north the Khitans established their own Chinese-style Liao dynasty (907–1127). In the south, China was divided among Ten Kingdoms (907–79) until south China was united with the
north under the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127). But northern and northwestern territories previously controlled by the Tang were now dispersed among the Khitans (Liao dynasty), Tanguts (Xia dynasty, 1032–1227), Uighurs (Xizhou 西州, 803–1283), and Tibetans (Tibet, after late seventh century). Meanwhile, the Jurchens in Manchuria also formed their own Chinese-styled Jin dynasty in 1115 (until 1234), replacing the Khitans as rulers there. Two years later, they pushed southward, overthrowing the Northern Song, greatly reducing the Han Chinese territory to an area of southern China now known as Southern Song (1127–1279).

Territorial negotiations associated with these political changes in the eleventh century marked a turning point for the Han Chinese. For the first time in Chinese history, under the Treaty of Shanyuan 三源 in 1004, the Han Chinese state of the Northern Song dynasty was forced to pay a war indemnity to the Khitans, in silk and silver and on an annual basis. This requirement contrasted sharply with earlier offerings of silk and other gifts under the Han dynasty, which were voluntary. It also set a precedent for the peace settlements of the Tanguts in 1044 and the Jurchens in 1127.\(^1\)

In addition to these payments in silk, both plain and luxury, the Han Chinese of the Song dynasty also had to supply its huge armies with clothing. Soldiers stationed in the cold north were provided with both regular uniforms and silk floss to pad their jackets for warmth, further depleting the state treasury. The increasing amounts of raw silk used for purposes other than supplying the court inevitably led to a decline in the production of *jin 綹* silks, which required a proportionately much larger amount of raw silk to weave due to their compound warp and weft. In contrast, the lightweight and nearly transparent *huo 霹* silk gauze, consumed proportionately much less raw material. Moreover, with the capital moved south to Lin’an 臨安 (Hangzhou), which is already hot, humid, and sultry by late spring and throughout the long summer, silk gauzes suited the Southern Song court elite far more than the heavy *jin* silks. Not surprisingly, then, in the excavated Southern Song tomb of Huang Sheng 黃昇, wife of an imperial clansman, who died in 1243 at age sev-teen,\(^1\) most of the buried textiles were extravagant, complex silk gauze weaves. Clearly, the energies employed to create fancy motifs in compound weaves were diverted into inventing complex silk gauze weaves with even more intricate patterns, mostly floral (see fig. 1).

It is a pity that only a single silk gauze of the Southern Song is featured in *When Silk Was Gold* (cat. no. 7). But it is clearly chosen for the painted motif of “Boys in Pomegranates” and not for the silk gauze weave, which is simple rather than complex. The lack of silk gauzes in the catalogue could be explained either by their scarcity in museum collections or by a failure to recognize their importance among historians, art historians, and textile historians, who differ in disciplinary focus.

The relative paucity of silks attributed to the Song dynasty (cat. nos. 11, 20–23) contrasts sharply with the abundance of those attributed to the Khitan Liao dynasty (907–1125) (cat. nos. 8, 9, 10, 23, 51, 52) and the Jurchen Jin dynasty (1115–1234) (cat. nos. 28–32). But by far the best-represented examples are those of the Mongol period (1207–1368),\(^1\) reflecting the empire’s expansive reach (cat. nos. 14–19, 24–27, 35–47, 50, and 53–61).

In contrast to the incomplete coverage of the earlier periods, the catalogue is a much more satisfactory guide for the Mongol period. Drawing from his area of expertise, Rossabi presents a clear account of how, beginning with Chinggis, Mongol rulers exempted artisans from corvée labor and taxes so that they could concentrate on producing luxury goods such as textiles. Peace under unified Mongol rule from China through Central to West Asia allowed long-distance trade to prosper and, even more importantly, facilitated the transfer of artisans and their techniques, which in turn fostered the mixing of Han Chinese traditions with those of the Uighurs and Tibetans.

The resultant hybrid development in textile art and technology is easily visible in all samples attributed to the Mongol period (1206–1368). The comprehensive selection of artifacts and the crisp condensation of complex Mongol history meet the catalogue’s first goal of making Asian textiles of this period better known to the world.
CHAPTER DIVISIONS

At first glance, the division of the five chapters based partially on chronology and partially on weave structure seems logical. Yet, when one starts to examine the relations among chapters and the relations among artifacts, the division raises doubts. What does the grouping by early dates provide beyond their dates? How are these various weaves related to one another, in the order of their appearance in the catalogue: weft-faced compound twill, gauze, twill damask, tabby with supplementary weft, kesi, brocades, and lampas? How are the weaves related to embroidery and painting? How are the methods of ornamentation related to the motifs and the motifs to the various cultures? While each artifact has been presented with detailed connoisseurship, how artifacts are connected together beyond the general historical context remains elusive. To tease out their connections, we need to examine the relation between the art and technology of ornamenting textiles.

ORNAMENTING TEXTILES: ART AND TECHNOLOGY

Textiles can be ornamented by four major methods: dyeing, weaving, painting, and embroidery, as well as by any combination of these methods. The process of ornamentation can occur before, during, or after the process of textile-making (woven or non-woven, such as felt). Each ornamentation method and its moment of process bring both advantages and drawbacks. In the days before machine power, all methods and processes depended on manual labor. Many technical improvements were sought to render the task of repeating patterns more effective. Such progress is most visible in the evolution of various kinds of looms and, to a lesser extent, in the evolution of printing.

I will discuss each method represented in When Silk Was Gold in order of decreasing manual flexibility for design and suggest how some artifacts might have benefited from a different classification from the one determined by the catalogue’s chapter divisions.

Painting. Of the four methods listed above, painting on textiles allows the artisan or artist the most freedom of expression. Silks, even ramie cloths, were often painted for religious worship and meditation. Many examples from the ninth century have been found in Turfan and Dunhuang. More durable than paintings on paper, painted textiles of religious themes are easier to transport for purposes of travel and preaching. Unless treated for protection against light, water, dust, and the wear and tear of daily use, however, painted textiles are not practical for clothing or furnishing. If painted textiles are used functionally at all, they often serve as shrouds enveloping the corpse or coffin in funerary rituals. The most famous Chinese example is Lady Dai’s name banner excavated from Number One Han Tomb (168 B.C.E.) at Mawangdui in Changsha.

The only example of painted textile in When Silk Was Gold is “Boys in Pomegranates” (cat. no. 7 in chap. 1). On this fragment, boys or birds inside pomegranates with foliage are outlined freely in ink. Additional blue and brown strokes add depth and volume. Due to its hidden meaning of wishing for many sons, I surmise that the authors intended to group it with the “Purse” and “Boys in a Floral Scroll” (cat. nos. 8, 11, and pp. 26–27), not with bird motifs (cat. nos. 3, 5, 9, 10, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 28, 31, and 32). Indeed, the theme of naked baby boys is derived from depictions of Buddhist souls reborn in a process known as transformation (huasheng 花生), which can also be read phonetically as “flower-birth,” hence “baby” in lotus, the exemplary Buddhist flower. This literal representation can be traced to monks in the fifth century, who, in accordance with their sūtras for meditation, painted such images on the walls of Toyok Cave 42 in Turfan. Thus, the specific Buddhist context eliminates the catalogue’s comparison with the “Purse” and “Boys in a Floral Scroll” (cat. nos. 8 and 11), for which I will suggest separate classification below.

Also, the painted silk gauze does not fit with any other method of ornamentation in the catalogue. And, as discussed above (“Historical Background”), the technical aspect of silk gauze is entirely ignored. Had the authors first highlighted
the silk gauze as the most fashionable weave in Southern Song and then discussed the secularization of a Buddhist motif through the Tang-Song period, the value of “Boys in Pomegranates,” a rare example of its kind, could have been more properly understood.

Embroidery. Though less than painting, embroidery still affords the artisan considerable freedom of expression. All seventeen examples are grouped together in chapter 5. Predictably, subjects are often complex and religious—for instance, “Thangka with Garuda,” “Thangka with Yamantaka,” “Thangka with the Seventh Bodhisattva,” and “Celestial Musician” (cat. nos. 58, 62, 63, and 61). The discussion on the Tantric Buddhist iconography of Tibet accompanying each artifact is extremely informative. The close link between painting and embroidery is apparent in the shading of bird plumage, petals, and leaves (cat. nos. 48 and 49), which recalls a popular Tang painter’s technique of yunjian 落線 (spaced clouds). That embroidery is used to imitate painting is even more evident in “Welcoming Spring” (cat. no. 59), specifically the obligatory Taihu 太湖 rocks in a garden and the “three friends of winter”: plum, bamboo, and pine. “Welcoming Spring” conveys a general auspicious greeting. Under the red clouds shining above (hongyun gaozhao 红云【高照】: “[with] great destiny shining from high above”), a boy rides a goat by the ruyi 如意-shaped artemisia (língzhī 靈芝) (tongzi qiuyang 功士龺羊) 像子犄羊【吉祥】如意: youth [in the spring of his life], [can look to a future] always auspicious [ahead]). But several factors raise doubts about its attribution to the Yuan: the extensive use of Chinese rebus, Han Chinese stylistic vocabulary, and silk tapestries of comparable subject dated to the Qing dynasty (1644–1911). The issue of dating aside, the “Glossary of Embroidery Stitches” (pp. 215–16) provides helpful diagrams for a detailed appreciation of the various stitches used to achieve texture and bas-relief. Regrettably, no terms are given their Chinese or Japanese translations. Although readers can consult both the English and Chinese edition of Wang Yarong’s Chinese Folk Embroidery (Hong Kong: Commerical Press, 1987), they should note that most terms refer to nomenclature practiced in late imperial China, mostly of the nineteenth century.

Of more recent interest is the detached looping stitch,20 represented by four items that all feature peonies with either birds or rocks (cat. nos. 54–57). The strong association of this stitch with Buddhist usage in the Lower Yangzi region21—including the fact that nuns of special sects were famous for their secret embroideries, which they sold in markets22—deserves further study.

Kesi, Silk Tapestry. Next to embroidery, because of the relatively simple weft-patterning technique, kesi, or silk tapestry, offers more flexibility in design than all other weave structures.23 Thus, not surprisingly, a liveliness and fine detailing characterize stylized representations of flowers, birds, deer, tigers, lions, and dragons on the early examples designated as Eastern Central Asian or Central Asian (cat. nos. 13–19). Similarly, intricate patterns and small curves, which are difficult to execute, can be seen in complex tapestry-woven Tantric Buddhist mandalas of the later Mongol period (cat. nos. 24–27). In the only clearly datable “Yamantaka Mandala with Imperial Portraits” (cat. no. 25), the delicate facial features of the donors—Tugh Temür (Emperor Wenzong 文宗, r. 1328–32), his elder brother Khoshila (Emperor Mingzong 明宗, r. 1329), and their respective spouses, Budashiri and Babusha—as well as their fine Tibetan inscriptions—would have been nearly impossible to produce without using kesi (p. 95). In this instance, the silk tapestry technique proved the more expedient. In that the principal advantage of the drawloom is to facilitate pattern repeats, its use here would have been wasted since only one sample was commissioned.

The outstanding connoisseurship exhibited in this chapter highlights some technical details that will permit more precise identification in the future. For example, non-Han weavers usually used animal substrate as the base for gold weft, whereas Han Chinese preferred gilded paper. Yet it remains unclear why some silk tapestry-woven examples feature massive tangles of long weft floats on the reverse while others do not. The authors suspect that “ethnic
diversity of the populations in both the Tangut Xia and the Yuan territories” contributed to the technical variation (p. 60). They also believe that the Uighurs were the carriers of the technique (pp. 61–62). They point to a thin silk tapestry-woven belt (L: 9.3 cm × W: 1 cm) made for a wooden figure discovered in Turfan and dated to the seventh century as an early example (p. 62 and n. 28). In fact, an even earlier example of silk tapestry-woven shoes with Chinese words of good wishes has been discovered at Astana Tomb 39 in Turfan.  

Casting doubt on my earlier hypothesis that the Chinese might have independently invented the silk tapestry weave in the third century B.C.E., my more recent work on Turfan textiles is leading me to search elsewhere. A thorough comparison with the development of tapestry in both wool and cotton since antiquity in Egypt and West Asia could clear the confusion that surrounds the transmission of the art and technology of silk tapestry. It could also help determine whether and how the Chinese perfected pictorial likeness in silk tapestry.

Unfortunately, the catalogue does not contain a glossary showing the various ways in which small areas of different colors are joined. Instead, readers can consult Dorothy Burnham’s diagrams for slit, toothed, interlocked, and dovetailed tapestry.

**Weaving and Dyeing.** Unlike painting, which can be removed from a textile by bleaching, or embroidery, which can be physically cut off, woven motifs cannot be destroyed without destroying the textile itself. They are permanent. That both painting and embroidery require no technology but imagination, skill, and dexterity means that anyone could try them, though only those with talent and financial support would succeed. In contrast, complex patterns simply cannot be woven without raw silk, as well as an expensive loom and equipment. Thus, the technical aspect of complex weaves enhances their luxury appeal. In this sense, they embody “the enchantment of technology.” More on this in the final section.

Whereas the tapestry weave structure is simple, with all its patterns woven manually in the weft, it requires more technical ingenuity to make patterns in the warp. Still, if warp and weft threads are dyed before weaving, even with a simple loom one can weave patterns in stripes (with colorful warp), bands (with colorful weft), checks (with colorful warp and weft), or ikat (with warp or weft or both dyed in intricate patterns). If dyeing is done after weaving, the textile can still be woven on a simple loom and feature complex patterns by using various resist-dyeing techniques: hand-painting, tie-dyeing (jiao xie 絞絣), or stamping [and clamping] with wood-blocks (jia xie 夹綴). None of the above is featured in *When Silk Was Gold*. Instead, the catalogue presents only complex weave structures, but not consistently. In my view, grouping similar weaves together before examining their content would better illuminate their relationship and, hence, both their artistic and technical development.

1. The Weft-faced Compound Twill ([1/2] wei-mian xie-wen 纬面斜纹). The first group would comprise all samples of the weft-faced compound twill. These include the obvious Sogdian textiles (cat. nos. 1–5), the “Floral Medallions” (cat. no. 6), and the three examples dated to the Khitan Liao dynasty: a purse, a fragment, and a pair of short boots (cat. nos. 8–10).

The weft-faced compound twill is a complex weave that derives from other simpler weaves. It requires the equipment for and knowledge of both weaving the twill binding, which requires more shafts than the simple tabby binding, and weaving more than one series of weft (the compound aspect). My own recent research on Turfan textiles shows that sometime during the sixth and seventh centuries, due to the migration and mingling of peoples of different cultures (see “Historical Background” above), Chinese and Sogdians worked together and developed new weaves. They progressed from the traditional Chinese warp-faced compound tabby (A) (jingxianhua jiawei jing erchong jingmian xie-wen 程顯花夾緯經二重經面斜紋), which the Chinese had perfected since the Warring States period (475–221 B.C.E.)—its secrets being unknown to non-Han ethnic groups—to weaving the warp-faced compound twill (B) (jingxianhua jiawei jing erchong 程顯花夾緯經二重 [2/1] jingmian xie-wen 經面斜紋), the weft-faced compound
tabby (C) (*jingwei er’chong weimian ping wen* 纹纬二重纬面平纹), and finally the weft-faced compound tabby (D) (*weixianhua hanxinjing wei’erchong* 纹显花合心纬纬二重)—the weave in question here. All four compound structures are loosely referred to as jin in Chinese historical texts, causing great confusion in deciphering their meaning.

In the meantime, ancient Iranians under Sasanian rule (224–651) had also started to weave weft-faced compound tabby and twill (C and D). The question of whether these two weft-faced compound weaves were independently invented requires more research. Nevertheless, Sogdians during this period played an important role in transmitting art and technology between Chinese and Iranians. Anna Jerusalimskaia confirms my own hypothesis that Sogdians abstracted motifs from other cultures and then integrated them into their own in unique ways. Thus, in “Hunter” (cat. no. 1), both the hunter on a horse with his backward glance as in the “Parthian shot” and the fleeing ibex, the prey, are given equal space and disposition. This equal weighting contrasts with the Sasanian representation of the boar hunt, in rock-relief at Taq-i-Bustan, where the hunter dominates. In another example, the child’s coat (cat. no. 5), the paired ducks feature ribbons of royal glory (farn and not, as indicated on p. 21, *patif*, which has a religious connotation). These ribbons can be traced to early Sasanian depiction of the long floating ends of the taenia that encircled the crown worn by royals.

Sogdians abstracted motifs not only from the Sasanian but from the Chinese culture. Although the “Textile with Geometric Design” (cat. no. 4) in itself is of little interest, it foreshadows more intriguing designs, specifically “Floral Medallions” (cat. no. 6). The role of “Textile with Geometric Design” (cat. no. 4) as an intermediary becomes apparent when aligned with earlier Sino-Sogdian designs.

Three types of motifs found on silk fragments from Turfan predate it. The first is the “chess-board,” an example of which was excavated with a document dated to the early seventh century from Astana Tomb 139 in 1969. Woven in the warp-faced compound 2/1 twill (C), it is structurally and stylistically related to two other motifs. One combines the Chinese pictogram *ji* 吉 (auspicious) with elliptic loops that hint at a non-Chinese script on a fragment that was found together with a tomb epi-
taph dated 558 in 1972.³⁷ The other shows similar elliptic loops but with a starlike flower, as evident in a fragment (see fig. 2), dated to the seventh century, that was brought to Japan by the Ōtani Mission earlier in this century.³⁸ Both are woven in the weft-faced compound tabby (C).

My hypothesis is twofold.³⁹ First, weavers in Turfan experimented with the geometric designs, first in weave (C), then in weave (D) (cat. no. 4). Second, whereas in ancient Iran the chessboard motif evolved into other patterns,⁴⁰ artisans in China developed the much more complex, curvilinear floral-treasure roundel (baoxiang tuanhua jin 資相團花錦). An example has been discovered in Astana Tomb 20, Turfan, in 1964 and dated to 706 (p. 24, fig. 4).⁴¹ After some years of perfecting in the eighth century, weavers wove an even more complex floral roundel with many minute details, such as in “Flora Medallions” (cat. no. 6). The same floral-treasure roundel is seen in the boy’s pants (cat. no. 5), though this is woven in a simple damask (ground: 2/1 s twill; pattern: 1/4 s twill; p. 37).

Both examples (cat. nos. 5 and 6) are woven of warp and weft with little twist and of a density comparable to typical Chinese Shu jin weaves.⁴² Thus, these additional technical details strongly suggest they were manufactured in China, probably Sichuan, where textile makers had centuries of experience in reeling silk off boiled cocoons directly and did not necessarily need to twist or spin their silk warp.⁴³ And if they spun their silk yarn, they tended to spin it in the “s” direction. In contrast, textile makers in Central Asia today still do not reel directly after they have boiled the cocoons.⁴⁴ Also, due to their wool weaving tradition, they tend to twist their warp and weft in the “z” direction. Exceptions do occur, as for example with left-handed workers. Thus, the “s” or “z” direction cannot suffice on its own as evidence for either Chinese or non-Chinese cultural identification.

While I agree with Watt and Wardwell that vestiges of the “Floral Medallion” (cat. no. 6) can be seen in a smaller, more dispersed version in the Liao examples (cat. nos. 8 and 9, p. 39), I would add that the design underwent a major change during the Southern Song. Excavated samples of both embroidered and woven floral compositions in silk gauze from Huang Sheng’s tomb show a much freer and more naturalistic rendition (see fig. 1). The early tendencies toward this more relaxed style can already be detected in “Boys in a Floral Scroll” (cat. no. 11), dated to the Northern Song, which, however, is woven in the technically more demanding damask (ground 1/5 s twill; pattern: 5/1 s twill, p. 48). Before I comment on the damask weave in connection with the lampas, I would like briefly to discuss the brocaded tabby.

2. The Brocaded Tabby.⁴⁵ All seven pieces in chapter 3 are woven in the brocaded tabby, with the first five attributed to the Jurchen Jin dynasty and the last two to North China, Mongol period (cat. nos. 28–34). Although individual motifs range from the swan, djeiran (Central Asian antelope), dragon, phoenix, and hare to the lotus, together they show a coherent uniformity in their stamplike disposition. Also immediately apparent is the common use of gold to render these compact designs, woven with gilded parchment, animal substrate, or paper.

In addition to the authors’ meticulous analysis of technical details, I would like to point out that brocading can be compared to tapestry weaving. Both methods require the weaver to use a small bobbin (holding the gilded weft) to fill in the area of the designated motif, back and forth and between sheds (of tabby) until completion. Whereas in the tapestry the weft used for patterning is also part of the ground itself (no supplementary weft), in brocaded tabby the weft used for the patterning is supplementary. Thus, brocading shows off the gold weft to advantage. Granted, the weft floats on the reverse are invisible. But this apparent waste only reinforced the users’ resources for conspicuous consumption, adding to these silks’ luxury appeal.

To the thorough analysis of iconography might be added one other note. The moon in the “Djeiran with Floral Branches and Moon” (cat. no. 29) is related to Sogdian religious beliefs.⁴⁶ While the combination of the moon and the antelope might be an eleventh-century idea, the moon with script was woven at an earlier time, possibly in the ninth to tenth century, evidenced in a fragment excavated from Turfan (not Astana).⁴⁷

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3. Tabby with Supplementary Weft.48 How does brocaded tabby (chap. 3) differ from the tabby with supplementary weft represented by three fragments in the catalogue (cat. nos. 12, 38, 46)? Buried in the technical analysis is the French word lancé (p. 50), which means the supplementary weft having been thrown across the width from selvage to selvage.49 In Chinese, it is called paosuo 窈梭. In contrast to the manual insertion of a brocading weft for each individual motif in the seven pieces of chapter 3, here the weavers were experimenting with greater mechanization for purposes of patterning. Viewed chronologically, the technological progression is striking: from simple geometric motifs in “Textile with Diamonds” (cat. no. 12, Central Asia, eleventh century), to slightly more rounded but still small patterns in “Textile with Tiny Leaves” (cat. no. 38, Central Asia, Mongol period, late thirteenth to mid-fourteenth century), and finally to the larger, smooth, curlicue overall motifs in “Textile with Palmettes” (cat. no. 46, Central Asia [?], Mongol period, thirteenth–fourteenth century).

I would argue that in design, this type of palmette leads directly into Italian silks of the thirteenth to the fifteenth century.50 Technically, the tabby with supplementary weft precedes the lampas.

4. The Lampas and the Damask.51 Except for the two pieces mentioned above, “Textile with Tiny Leaves” and “Textile with Palmettes” (cat. nos. 38 and 46), the other eleven artifacts in chapter 4 are all woven in lampas (cat. nos. 35–37, 39–46, and 47). Winged lions and griffins, displayed and double-headed falcons, felines, eagles, and hares point to eastern Islamic culture. Even stylized phoenixes, dragons, and lotus have been transformed so as to be no longer Chinese but rather Central Asian. Armed with her many years of research on medieval textiles, Wardwell presents a coherent and exhaustive discussion on the iconography. She has linked materials that have long fascinated textile historians, for example, “Textile with Tiny Leaves” (cat. no. 38), not woven in the lampas, with those showing similar motifs that are woven in the lampas: “Textiles with Floral Design” (cat. no. 37) and with the fragment from Cangrande della Scala (p. 129, fig. 54). Here I would merely add a note on technical comparison.

Following the “Textile with Diamonds” (cat. no. 11), the three examples mentioned above show a clear progression: stylistically, from geometric motifs that are easier to achieve to more elaborate and curvilinear floral designs that require more refined patterning devices on the loom; and technically, from the tabby with supplementary weft to the more complex lampas. As discussed in the previous section, in weaving the tabby with supplementary weft, artisans had moved from manual brocading to more mechanized pattern repeats across the width of the loom. Because the salient feature of the lampas weave is the secondary or binding warp, the lampas is also clearly derived from weft-faced compound tabby and twill, which, as we have seen above, were perfected in the eighth century. In addition, the lampas is also related to the true “double cloth” or “double weave,” which is in fact two separate layers of tabby woven simultaneously and joined at the selvages.52 But in the lampas structure, whereas only the main weave can be double-woven, the essential defining binding warp with the pattern weft is always tightly woven together with the main weave.53

This last connection with the double cloth brings us back to Turfan, where in 1972 an example in silk was excavated from Astana Tomb 187. Dated to 702, it features uniformly distributed brown floral roundels on faded white tabby ground (see fig. 3). The motif derives from the earlier chessboard design, as discussed above. In Chinese, the double-cloth is called fonglong 風通, “wind passage,” or shuangmian juan 雙面絨, “double-faced juan 絨 (silk tabby),” or shuangmian jin 雙面紈, “double-faced jin (polychrome silk). Another fragment of silk double cloth was dated to 689.54

But the double cloth weave did not gain much popularity in China. Instead, I argue, because of a tradition in weaving qi 窠 (warp-faced tabby with 3/1 twill) going back to antiquity, Chinese weavers were more interested in developing silk damask, as in the boy’s white pants and “Boys in a Floral Scroll” (cat. nos. 5 and 11). Between these two examples should be inserted another archaeological find of the same damask twill (ground: 5/1 twill; pattern: 1/5 twill) that features flying phoenix, butterfly, and the floral roundel. Dated to the late ninth or

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early tenth century, it was found in a Buddhist site at Sangim in Turfan.\textsuperscript{53} The relationship among the qi, the weft-faced compound tabby and twill, and the damask twill awaits further analysis.

In contrast to Han Chinese indifference to the double cloth, non-Chinese weavers not only wove it much earlier in wool but also experimented with it. This eventually led to the lampas. The discovery in 1984 of a wool fragment in double cloth with grape vine design at Shampula Tomb 2 of Luopu in Xinjiang shows that non-Han peoples had already mastered that weave structure sometime between the second century B.C.E. and second century C.E. But no transfer of technology between non-Han wool weaving and Han Chinese silk weaving occurred then.\textsuperscript{54} Regrettably, \textit{When Silk Was Gold} is limited to the eighth through the fifteenth centuries and to luxury silks only. Otherwise, it would have been more readily apparent why all eleven examples of lampas in the catalogue feature Central Asian or eastern Iranian motifs.

In summary, the above correlation between the art and technology of ornamenting textiles helps to shed light on the relationship among all the weft-patterned weaves represented in \textit{When Silk Was Gold}: tapestry, warp-faced compound twill (D), brocaded tabby, tabby with supplementary weft, damask, and lampas.

There are a “Glossary of Chinese and Japanese Names and Terms” (pp. 217-22) and “Glossary of Weaving Terms” (pp. 213-14), but it would have been useful for readers to have had the latter with both English and Japanese translations and diagrams. The authors state in their introduction that “a standard terminology is being established” (p. 3). Three texts that Chinese textile historians most often refer to remain inaccessible to those who cannot read Chinese.\textsuperscript{57} Also, these texts do not sufficiently distinguish modern from historical usage. A Chinese terminology consistent with archaeological finds and the vocabulary developed by Dorothy Burnham and the Centre International d’Études des Textiles Anciens (CIETA), and perhaps modeled after the Japanese dictionary of dyeing and weaving terms,\textsuperscript{58} would be immensely useful. This lacuna is illustrative of the many problems affecting the field of Chinese textile history, both outside and inside China.

\section*{THE FIELD OF CHINESE TEXTILE HISTORY: PROBLEMS AND ISSUES}

The field of Chinese textile history outside China owes its inception largely to the European discovery of Central Asia a century ago. Motivated to protect
its colonial interest in the Indian subcontinent from Russian expansion, Britain began to dispatch military officers to map out the area in the 1860s. Concerted efforts to survey the borders of China, Russia, and India led to an international race among archaeologists to investigate the ancient ruins uncovered by these surveys. The Swede Sven Hedin started the chase in 1895, followed by the Hungarian-born Briton Marc Aurel Stein in 1900, the Russians Dmitri Klementz and the Beresovsky brothers in 1902, the French Paul Pelliot, the American Langdon Warner, the Japanese Ótani mission, and the Germans Albert Grünwedel and Albert von Le Coq. All brought home treasures, among which figured unusual textiles. Fascination with their exotic patterns provided the initial impulse for their study.

Even without the use of such scientific equipment as the microscope, the first publications on these textile finds were detailed, often precise, and full of insight. The initial focus was on motifs. This aesthetic approach followed the principles of inquiry into the function and life of forms and motifs set by Alois Riegl (1858–1905) for decorative art. At a time when the field of art history was just emerging as a separate discipline from history in the West, only Riegl wrote about textiles. Other prominent German art historians of the time, such as Heinrich Wölflin (1864–1945), were busy hammering out the methodologies, mostly formal analysis, for the new field of art history. The aesthetic approach is clearly the one adopted and applied to the analysis of individual artifacts in When Silk Was Gold.

In addition to the archaeological expeditions that provided the first database for Chinese textile studies abroad, another major impetus came in 1935 when the first “block-buster” Chinese art exhibition in the West opened in Burlington House, London. Among the 1,022 choice artifacts on loan from the National Palace Museum in then-nationalist Beijng (moved to Taipei in 1949), textiles numbered only 29 pieces. Still, the overwhelmingly enthusiastic response to the splendors of Chinese bronzes, jades, paintings, and ceramics spilled over to costumes and textiles. As a result, many museums in the West rushed to publish their oriental textile holdings. Generally descriptive of motifs and often with mistakes in interpretation, most of these early writings lack historical support and analysis.

Thanks to the rapid development of China studies during and after the Cold War, especially in the United States, the field of Chinese art history has now advanced to the point that no serious graduate student would dare study Chinese art and archaeology without first acquiring linguistic competence in both Chinese and Japanese as well as rigorous disciplinary training. For those specializing in Buddhism, expert knowledge in Sanskrit, Mongolian, Tibetan, and Manchurian have now also become increasingly mandatory. Sophisticated analysis of iconography in When Silk Was Gold bears witness to this advancement.

Not satisfied with just the interpretation of motifs, textile historians have also analyzed weave structures. For this task, access to artifacts is indispensable. Many researchers have worked on collections brought back by the early archaeological expeditions—for example, Sylvan on Hedin’s finds, Riboud and Vial on the Pelliot collection. But others also worked on museum collections that were legacies of earlier China Trade or otherwise purchased by or donated to museums.

Beyond the fascination with the complexity of weave structures, textile historians also searched for the origin of the Chinese drawloom with a tower (huалou 花楼) as depicted in the Tiengong kaiwu 天工開物 (The Exploitation of the Works of Nature), written by Song Yingxing 宋應星 around 1637 in the Ming dynasty. A debate developed concerning whether the Chinese invented it early in the Han dynasty or learned it later from the West, possibly Syria. The argument pivots around weft-faced versus warp-faced patterning methods. Constructive experimentation by Ota Eizō and Becker has shed much light where speculation on material evidence has remained vague. Of these efforts, Becker’s work is particularly useful, but it is not cited.

Although the technical analysis for each artifact in When Silk Was Gold meticulously follows the standards set by CIETA in Lyon, France, a systematic discussion of the relationship between textile art and technology is lacking. This lacuna reflects a
seeming lack of interest on the part of most art historians and textile historians in paradigms of social and technological change. 70

Or if historians have been interested in textile technology, they have often begun with the analysis of fiber—usually restricted to silk. 71 Rarely do historians combine in-depth analysis of the production of fiber with that of textile-making, and still more rarely do they connect these findings with the pictorial likeness of textile motifs. Dieter Kuhn’s works are important exceptions, but they are not cited. 72

To summarize, efforts to understand Chinese textile history outside China have followed individual inclination, been limited by disciplinary focus, and depended much on access, or lack thereof, to the original artifacts. Consequently, early museum curators who could work on textile collections usually lacked interest or training in linguistic tools and historical methodology. Art historians, who were more interested in the development of motifs, have not been able to understand, let alone discuss, textile technology. Historians of textile technology have largely focused on the evolution of the loom, with little regard to broader issues of technology and social change. Historians interested in political economy have failed to see textiles except as a commodity for trade or barter for peace. The result is that each has presented a fragmented view. A complete picture of the role of textiles in historical development has yet to emerge.

Similar problems have arisen in the field of Chinese textile history in China, though for somewhat different reasons. Most Chinese historians, if interested in textiles at all, have sought to analyze textile production as an illustration of economic progress to explain whether (and if so when) an industrial revolution occurred in China. Most have been eager to confirm or refute Marxist theories of the roots of capitalism. 73 While they offer a macro view of the supply and demand of capital, land, labor, and technology (as controlled by the state), they have not concerned themselves with the role of art. Furthermore, they have worked mostly on primary textual sources, often ignoring the artifacts themselves.

In contrast, Chinese textile historians have read archaeological reports carefully. Yet, like their non-Chinese counterparts, many have also been obsessed with the evolution of inventions, especially that of the drawloom. National pride seems at stake here, sweeping aside considerations of artistic development and social change.

Xia Nai was a notable exception. Trained as an archaeologist in Britain with digging experience in Egypt prior to his return to China to head the Institute of Archaeology in Beijing, Xia Nai paid close attention to the early finds in the Autonomous Uighur Region of Xinjiang (hereafter abbreviated as Xinjiang) from 1959. Ironically, these finds also led him to found the field of Chinese textile history in China. Personally interested in textile technology as evidence of technological transfer, Xia Nai wrote pioneering articles and promoted the study of Chinese textile history. Careful to avoid xenophobia, he had already signaled the need to study Sasanian textiles for comparison as early as several decades ago. 74 Only recently has his idea been taken up by Bo Xiaoqing. 75 Despite a thorough comparison of motifs, Bo Xiaoqing’s useful analysis suffers from an insufficient database and, more seriously, a lack of technical understanding.

Wu Min, curator of textiles in the Museum of Xinjiang, has benefited from an intimate knowledge of these archaeological finds and published prolifically. Discussing both motifs and technology, she has bridged the gap considerably. 76 Jia Yingyi also writes on Xinjiang textile finds, incorporating Wu Min’s textile analysis, archaeological reports, and historical sources. 77 But none of the above authors is cited in When Silk Was Gold. Given the emphasis on Central Asia in the catalogue, such absences are curious, especially that of Wu Min’s important works, even though she appears in the acknowledgments.

In contrast, Zhao Feng, vice-director of the China National Silk Museum in Hangzhou, is cited. Largely basing his investigations on textile finds in Dulan of Qinghai Province, 78 he has written extensively on the history of silk in China. 79 But, in general, textile art has yet to be analyzed with rigorous art historical methodology and in relation to other decorative media in China.

Traditionally, textiles in China were prized less for their beauty than for their designation of status,
rank, authority, and wealth. They first caught art collectors’ attention in the Tang dynasty as the necessary wrapping or framing material for paintings and calligraphy—that is, as accouterments accompanying real art. Embroideries from Dunhuang, for example “Sakyamuni Preaching in the Vulture Peak,” and from Turfan, for example “Seated Bodhisattva,” show that from the eighth century on, people began to embellish Buddhist temples with textile art. Later, the format of embroidered religious icons was secularized first to portray non-Han royalty—for example, an Uighur princess with child—and then extended to the Han Chinese elite, going down the social hierarchy. Subsequently, during the Song dynasty, silk tapestries were woven to resemble paintings to be offered on auspicious occasions. From this time on, entries on embroideries and silk tapestries are found in various collectors’ appraisals. Superb examples were also stamped with imperial seals of approval and appreciation in later dynasties. For instance, the embroidered silk gauze “Welcoming Spring” (cat. no. 59, also on the cover of When Silk Was Gold) features five seals of the Qing emperor Qianlong 乾隆 (r. 1736–95) and two seals of his successor, Emperor Jiaqing 嘉庆 (r. 1796–1820).

Emperors’ seals on rare silk tapestries notwithstanding, it should be obvious from the above summary that the traditional Chinese elite ranked textiles at the bottom of the hierarchy of Chinese art, even decorative art. It is worth noting the importance accorded textiles in Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei, published in conjunction with the 1996 exhibition “Splendors of Imperial China: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei.” This thick tome of 648 pages on Chinese art, illustrated with 357 plates, features but 8 pages (248–55) of discussion on textiles, supported by 5 plates (nos. 127–31). All textile artifacts are silk tapestries—that is, those that come closest to paintings. Of course, the National Palace Museum collection in Taipei (like that in Beijing) reflects imperial Chinese taste and selection criteria. This elementary content analysis clearly reveals where costumes and textiles stand in relation to all other media in Chinese art. Having recently toured four major American museums in great pomp and style and resonant with national symbolism, “Splendors of Imperial China” served in a very real sense to “constitute a nation . . . as a work of art,” much like the 1935 exhibition at Burlington House in London.

Because When Silk Was Gold focuses uniquely on luxury silks, it does not claim a similarly comprehensive role. Instead, to a large extent, it rides on the awe that the grander collection has inspired. As both the exhibition and catalogue of When Silk Was Gold cannot but impress any viewer with the importance of early luxury silks produced in China and Central Asia, they succeed impressively in redressing an old bias toward textiles as a lowly art. Congratulations to Watt and Wardwell for this laudable feat. Moreover, by including Central Asia, When Silk Was Gold has also broken new ground for a multicultural approach.

WHY ANCIENT SILK IS STILL GOLD

In his essay, “The Silk Trade in China and Central Asia,” Rossabi writes of silk from the eighth to the fourteenth centuries without once referring to its actual worth as a currency. For silk was much more than a prestigious, often exclusive, luxury commodity; it was also used as a currency for taxation. Yet most taxed silks were plain silk weave (juan) and not luxury silks, as might be inferred from the association with gold. The latter were mostly produced in imperial workshops for court use but became widely available with increased urbanization and the rapid development of extensive market systems during the Tang-Song social transformation.

Clearly, we are to understand the reference “a new gold in the form of silk” (p. 7) as a metaphor. The implicit assumption is that the weave complexity acts as a measure of its worth (see section on “Ornamenting Textiles” above). We are mesmerized by what anthropologist Alfred Gell calls “the enchantment of technology.” Watt and Wardwell have focused only on luxury silks and labor-intensive embroideries of artistic interest, rarity, or complex theme. Just like ancient bronze artifacts, which
are valued for their complex technology and iconography, ancient luxury silks also embody similar elements of “magic.” Their inherent technological complexity and especially their artistic beauty bewitch us and have led to their art historical study. As shown above, however, an aesthetic approach to ancient luxury silks without a corresponding analysis of their technical development and use cannot bring out a full appreciation of their meaning.

Yet bronze artifacts and luxury silks also differ in one important respect. As many ancient bronze vessels feature inscriptions that commemorate important ritual or historical events, this literary aspect has provided scholars with an added incentive to study bronze as material evidence of historical change. Furthermore, because bronze inscriptions in themselves give clues to their provenance, it has not posed a serious problem that their study in the West can be based on collections without archaeological data. Thus, a mature field in the Chinese Bronze Age has developed over the past decades.  

In sharp contrast, rarely do luxury silks also bear inscriptions beyond the exceptional names of donors (as in “Yamantaka Mandala with Imperial Portraits,” cat. no. 25) or names of silk tapestry artisans, such as the few known ones of the Song dynasty: Wu Xu 吴煦, Shen Zifan 沈子蕃, and Zhu Kerou 朱克柔.  

The lack of provenance for most luxury silks outside China has also denied scholars any conclusive evidence for their identification. Difficult access to archaeological data only compounds this problem. Although excavated materials in China provide secure provenance, they are not easily available for study abroad. No wonder ancient Chinese textiles have yet to be studied in as rigorous and comprehensive a manner as Chinese bronzes. But, with China’s increasing publication of archaeological finds and its more open attitude toward international cooperation, comparative analysis of artifacts of dubious provenance with securely dated objects can overcome this hurdle. For example, the “Imperial Boots” (cat. no. 23, Liao dynasty) have been usefully compared with bronze and silver-gilt boots excavated from the tomb of a Liao princess and her husband in Inner Mongolia in 1984–85 (pp. 88–89).

Ancient textiles are not without their unique advantages. Inasmuch as bronze vessels were reserved for the aristocracy in ancient China, everyone including the peasant majority wore clothing made of textiles. Extending the study of luxury silks to that of textiles made of other natural fibers such as cotton, wool, ramie, and creeper vine that commoners made and wore, including their chief method of ornamentation—dyeing—expands the field dramatically. Furthermore, if we begin to analyze their use from an anthropological perspective, we gain insight into their dynamic symbolism for political, economic, social, and religious purposes.

Since the relaxation of social and economic controls in China, beginning in 1978, which has unfortunately been accompanied by rampant smuggling, large quantities of ancient silks have flooded the antique markets in London, Hong Kong, and New York. Their prices today are indeed golden. Given that other decorative media in the history of Chinese art are being saturated by increasingly specialized treatment and given that the discipline of the history of Chinese art is actually broadening in scope, approaches, and methodologies, the study of ancient luxury silks will prove a gold mine for productive, interdisciplinary studies.

Notes

Thanks go to Ann Abid, Head Librarian at the Cleveland Museum of Art, for sending me Zorna Latkin’s English translation of Anna Jerusalimskaia’s 1967 and 1972 articles, Elizabeth Owen, Ph.D. candidate in Chinese Art History at Yale University for sending me sources, and for their generous offer of resources: Professor Hori Akira, director of the Ancient Orient Museum, Tokyo; Professor Takahama Shu, curator of Chinese archaeology; and Professor Ogasawara Sae, guest curator, at the Tokyo National Museum where they also graciously permitted my viewing of many early samples of silk tapestry, some of which are companion pieces to those published in When Silk Was Gold (Japanese surname precedes first name).

1. To emphasize the multicultural aspect of Chinese society from the eighth to the fifteenth centuries under discussion, I will distinguish ethnic Chinese as “Han Chinese” (Han ren 汉人).
2. In agreement with the authors’ basis for technical terms (p. 213), I will also refer to the vocabulary developed by Centre International d’Études des Textiles Anciens (CIETA), Vocabulary of Technical Terms: Fabrics (Lyon, 1980) and Dorothy Burnham, Warp and Weft: A Textile Terminology (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1980).

Brocade is “a term in general use without precise denotation. It has been used for any rich figured textile, and by extension is applied to any textile with a woven pattern, especially one with a pattern in gold or silver. As the meaning is so indefinite, the use of the word as a noun is not recommended. It has a precise meaning when used as a verb and should be used in that form” (Burnham, Warp and Weft, 145). I will refer to textiles in chapter 3 as woven in “brocaded tabby”; see section on “Ornamenting Textiles.”

Brocade used as a noun in English causes as much confusion as *jin* (polychrome silk) in Chinese. Its ambiguity can be avoided only when its specific compound weave structure is known: warp-faced compound twill (A), warp-faced compound twill (B), weft-faced compound tabby (C), or weft-faced compound twill (D).


10. Xizhou is the prefecture that the Tang dynasty established in the territory of the Gaochang kingdom in Turfan area in 640. After the An Lushan Rebellion (755–63), the Tang army fought with the Tibetans for control of this area. But the Orghun Uighur Khanate (803–66), with whom the Chinese sought an alliance to fight off the Tibetans, gained control instead. This Khanate was succeeded by the Qoboq Uighur Kingdom (866–1283). See Zhang Guangda and Rong Xinjiang, “Introduction,” *Turfan Documents and Artifacts: A Handbook for Students*, presented to the final conference of “The Silk Road Project: Reuniting Scattered Treasures of Turfan” held at Yale University in July 1997.


28. “A weft-patterned weave with complementary wefts in two or more series, usually of different colors, and a main warp and a binding warp. Through the action of the main warp ends, only one weft thread appears on the face, while the other or others are kept to the reverse. The ends of the binding warp bind the weft in passes, and the ground and the pattern are formed simultaneously. The entire surface is covered by weft floats that hide the main warp ends. If the passes are bound in tabby, the construction is called weft-faced compound tabby; if in twill, weft-faced compound twill” (Burnham, *Warp and Weft*, 180).


30. Sheng, “Textile Production on China’s Northwest Frontier.”


35. Sheng, “Woven Motifs.”


37. 72TAM169 in *Xinjiang chutu wenwu* (Excavated Cultural Relics from Xinjiang), ed. Xinjiang Weiwuer Zhiqiu Bowuguan (The Museum of the Uighur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang) (Bijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1975), color pl. 81.


40. Ierusalmiskaia, “K slozhennyu.”


42. Wu Min, “Tulufan chutu Shu jin de yanjiu.”


44. Maria Zernickel, “The Textile Arts of Uzbekistan,” in

45. To brocade is "to weave with a brocading weft, which is a supplementary weft introduced into a ground weave. ... The movement of the brocading weft is limited to the width of the area where it is required by the pattern. It does not travel from selavage to selavage" (Burnham, Warp and Weft, 14 and 18).


47. Ryūkoku University Library, Japan, in Tatsumura Ken, "Ōtani tanken dai shorai no kodai nishiki rō ru" (Ancient Silks Brought back by the Ōtani Mission), Sai-iki Bunka Kenkyū 6 (1963): 26 and color pl. 1, fig. 5.

48. Tabby with supplementary weft: "The use of the term supplementary in describing either warps or wefts indicates that they are non-structural elements added to create a pattern or enrich a ground weave" (Burnham, Warp and Weft, 138).

49. Lancé: "Effet de dessin formé par une trame supplémentaire passant dans toute la largeur du tissu" (CIETA, Vocabulary of Technical Terms).


51. Lampas: "Term used exclusively for a figured weave in which a pattern, composed of weft floats bound by a binding warp, is added to a ground weave formed by a main warp and a main weft. The ground weave is variable. The weft threads forming the pattern may be main, pattern, or brocading wefts; they float on the face as required by the pattern, and are bound by the ends of the binding warp in a binding which is ordinarily tabby or twill and is supplementary to the ground weave. ... The essential ingredient of a lampas weave is a secondary or binding warp to bind the wefts from the design" (Burnham, Warp and Weft, 82). Damask: "A self-patterned weave with one warp and one weft in which the pattern is formed by a contrast of binding systems. In its classic form it is reversible, and the contrast is produced by the use of the warp and weft faces of the same weave, usually satin. By extension this term is also used for weaves in which two distinct binding systems are employed" (Burnham, Warp and Weft, 32).

52. Becker, Pattern and Loom, 149; Burnham, Warp and Weft, 39.

53. See Becker, Pattern and Loom, 147–49, fig. 122.

54. Wu Min, Zhixiu, 131.

55. Wu Min, Zhixiu, 133, color pl. 98.

56. Sheng, "Textile Production on China's Northwest Frontier."


and in Dunhuang Tushu jian yu jin 4 (Beijing, 1999).


79. Zhao Feng, Sichou yishu shi.

80. Zhang Yanyuan 張彦遠 (Tang dynasty), Lidai minghua ji 歷代名畫集 (Records of Famous Paintings throughout the Ages), in Huashi congshu (Collected Books on the History of Painting), vol. 1 (Taipei, 1974).

81. Cave 17, Ch.00260 in Whitfield and Farrer, Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, no. 88.

82. MIK III 4796, Central Asian Art, no. 148.

83. MIK III 4920b, Central Asian Art, no. 149.

84. Sheng, “Chinese Silk Tapestry.”


89. Gell, “Technology of Enchantment.”

90. Von Falkenhausen, “Issues in Western Zhou Studies.”


In folk art potters of Japan anthropologist Brian Moeran has revisited his own 1984 study of a Japanese pottery community to produce an often stimulating and provocative discussion of Japanese mingei ("folk craft"), the contemporary Japanese art world, and more generally the problem of defining and evaluating art in any society. By focusing on the well-known pottery community of Sarayama, or Onta, in rural Kyushu, as well as its relation to the "outside" world of critics, dealers, and consumers, Moeran seeks to develop what he calls an "anthropology of values" that improves upon more conventional approaches to art and aesthetics. These, he suggests, have tended—at least in the case of anthropology—to define art inconsistently, in ways that are "an expression of western cultural bias, or personal predilection, or a strategy to enhance the value of certain individuals' private collections" (p. 5). Instead, Moeran proposes a "less value-laden" (p. 216) approach that, by studying the interaction of "aesthetic" or "appreciative" values with "extra-aesthetic" values—namely, "use, technical, social, commodity exchange, and symbolic exchange values"—shows how art is defined as such in different societies (p. 12). Moeran claims, further, that his approach "avoids the definitional problems of both 'art' and 'aesthetics' and reaches out to all those other aspects of culture which we have come to link with notions of beauty or taste" (p. 217).

Folk Art Potters retains all the virtues of the earlier study, Lost Innocence: Folk Craft Potters of Onta, Japan (Stanford University Press, 1984), which is reproduced almost in its entirety, and with little substantive revision, as chapters 1 through 9. In this portion of the book, Moeran draws upon several years of fieldwork conducted in Sarayama during the late 1970s to describe and analyze the hamlet's social organization, to develop an ecological argument about the impact of environmental changes on social structure, and to offer a rather poignant portrait of rural artisans caught between an increasingly profitable "tradition," as formulated largely by urban critics linked to the so-called mingei movement, and the pressures and blandishments of a modernizing society and economy. In the process we learn much about pottery production in general, and in Onta (the name by which the pottery, and therefore Sarayama, are more generally known) in particular, and we also gain a striking, mostly unflattering perspective on the mingei movement from the viewpoint of the rural producer. Moeran is at his best as he deftly teases out the ironies and contradictions at the heart of a crafts movement seeking to impose urban, middle-class, consumerist expectations and desires on potters in the name of rural authenticity.

Moeran's 1984 work represented a significant, pioneering contribution to the critical study of mingei, therefore, which has since developed into something of a small academic industry. It is not certain that the current interest in the subject, as well as in the larger questions of "invented traditions" and national identity with which it intersects, Moeran and his publisher are perhaps justified in choosing to present his material once again, with new emphasis on the mingei angle. Unfortunately, Folk Art Potters reproces the flaws of Lost Innocence as well as its strengths. As noted by reviewers of the earlier book, Folk Art Potters is weakened as an anthropological study by Moeran's uncritical reliance on various assumptions made by both mingei ideologues and Sarayama potters. These include, for example, the rather mechanistic notion that social organization has been largely determined by environmental constraints on the technology of water-powered clay crushers used by the potters to produce clay (p. 88). Moeran fails to consider the possibility that this (and other) technology chosen by potters may have been partly determined, in turn, by social organization, and so he misses an opportunity to consider more deeply such questions as why, for example, the prestigious role of potter is reserved for a small number of men.

Another, related problem concerns Moeran's treatment of the past and the question of historical change. Much of the argument of Folk Art Potters (and Lost Innocence) turns on the idea that changes since the 1950s have destroyed a once authentically communal and egalitarian harmony, which has become riven by self-interested households and even individuals stratified by various kinds of inequity. Emotionally satisfying though this thesis may be, Moeran's evidence for it is unpersuasive and even contradictory. His only source appears to be the testimony of his informants, who he tells us have idealized their past (p. 99). Claiming, further, that "there is,
of course, no way of showing that the people’s model [of the past] reflects the true state of affairs in Sarayama more than 40 years ago now” (a statement that can only startle an historian), Moeran concludes, nevertheless, that “it is by and large a fair reflection of community life” in 1954 (p. 123). Moreover, at points Moeran seems to reverse himself by suggesting on one hand that Sarayama remains a hamlet upholding and even practicing communal ideals and, on the other, that real inequity existed before 1950 (pp. 175–76, 170).

In Folk Art Potters, this difficulty is compounded by a vagueness about the thirteen years that have elapsed since the publication of Lost Innocence. Occasionally Moeran refers to unspecified subsequent visits to Sarayama and information presumably gained thereby that upholds the continuing validity of his earlier descriptions and analysis (pp. 62, 248, 249). And yet without a more thorough and specific accounting of his evidence, it is difficult fully to credit Moeran’s statement that in Sarayama “no structural change has taken place since the early 80s, even though elsewhere in Japan events have led to the virtual demise of the kinds of rural social institutions described in this book” (p. 62). This raises another question: If Sarayama stands alone in its preservation of an older form of social organization, how can the story of its pottery be “the story of mingei folk art pottery all over Japan” (p. 2), or the lives of its potters be “typical” of “many other folk art potters in Japan” (p. 45)?

But in its introduction, and again in the final chapter and afterword, Folk Art Potters is presented less as a rural community study than as an ambitious effort to rethink the sociology of aesthetics by considering Japanese mingei ideal and practice. While Moeran’s conclusion, that “the relationship between society and aesthetics is very much a two-way process” (p. 242), adds little either to his earlier work or to that of the sociologists (Howard Becker, Pierre Bourdieu, Arnold Hauser) quoted liberally throughout the new text, his discussion of mingei does offer intriguing insights into the specific mechanisms of that two-way process. Perhaps most suggestive is Moeran’s exploration of the interaction between European and Japanese aesthetic ideologies. Proposing first that the mingei aesthetic was heavily influenced by the ideas of William Morris, Moeran argues that the British Arts and Crafts Movement and the European “orientalist” passion for Japonisme were “two sides of the same artistic coin” (p. 221). In response to the ensuing questions—“Are Japanese mingei ideals ultimately little more than a form of western ‘aesthetic imperialism,’ or do they derive from an independent aesthetic tradition?”—Moeran rightly points out that, in a world where “no cultural tradition can ever be pristine,” the answer to both is a qualified “yes” (pp. 225–26). Further, by noting the influence of mingei thought and practice Moeran concludes, it is difficult fully to credit Moeran’s statement that in Sarayama “no structural change has taken place since the early 80s, even though elsewhere in Japan events have led to the virtual demise of the kinds of rural social institutions described in this book” (p. 62). This raises another question: If Sarayama stands alone in its preservation of an older form of social organization, how can the story of its pottery be “the story of mingei folk art pottery all over Japan” (p. 2), or the lives of its potters be “typical” of “many other folk art potters in Japan” (p. 45)?

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mingei in particular, and Japanese studies in general, it joins a growing body of recent anthropological literature on the production as well as marketing and consumption of “folk” or “ethnic” or “tourist” arts throughout the world. Like many of these works, Folk Art Potters is effective as a case study supporting the general claim that art and aesthetics can never be understood apart from multiple and changing social contexts.

NOTES

1. See, for example, a spate of recent dissertations by Chiaki Ajioka (Australian National University, 1996), Noriko Aso (University of Chicago, 1997), Lisbeth K. Brandt (Columbia University, 1996), Alan Christy (University of Chicago, 1996), and Seung-mi Han (Harvard University, 1995).


4. As Homi Bhabha, Partha Chatterjee, and others have shown, Said did not adequately account for the various, often resistant, uses to which orientalist stereotypes can be and have been put.


KIM BRANDT


THE LYRIC JOURNEY evolved from the author’s presentation of the Reischauer Lectures at Harvard in 1993. This is a familiar and advantageous format for Cahill, whose The Compelling Image (1982), Three Alternative Histories of Chinese Painting (1988), and The Painter’s Practice (1994) all originated as prestigious lecture series. The writing preserves the relative casualness of the spoken lectures, allowing for Cahill’s insights to be communicated with clarity and ease. The skillful use of illustrations, which complement the text like well-chosen slides, also reminds the reader of Cahill’s formidable abilities as a lecturer. Committed to print, however, and the lecturer’s ideas must bear the weight of what might be called the sustained audience. That weight is considerable in The Lyric Journey because Cahill’s chosen subject is of overwhelming importance to the painting traditions of China and Japan. Where does one even begin when talking about poetry and painting in China? Carrying the discussion across the East China Sea to Japan would seem to make this Herculean undertaking all the more difficult.

As the author recounts in his preface, the original plan of this project was far more limited than the book’s title and subtitle suggest. The initial project was to focus solely on the renowned Japanese Nanga painter and haiku poet Yosa Buson (1716-84), who is the main subject of the third and last chapter, “In Edo Period Japan.” Chapters 1 and 2, “In Southern Sung Hangzhou” and “In Late Ming Suchou,” were originally conceived as backgrounds to Buson. The fact that the structure of the book does not make this clear creates problems. The author has a particular idea of what “poetic painting” is, determined in part by what is seen and admired in the eighteenth-century Japanese poet-painter’s work. He tracks the roots of this vision to earlier periods in China, but because this poetic painting is but one manifestation of the broader poetry-painting relationship, and a very particular one as well, the author’s definition at first seems peculiarly restricted.

Perhaps defiant is a better word, for what the author defines as poetic painting excludes the work of the dominant literati tradition in China—those most commonly associated with the poetry-painting symbiosis through history. Cahill’s definition for the type of poetic painting with which he is concerned unfolds gradually. It is, first, landscape painting, or representations of figures in landscape describing an idealized narrative of eremitism (pp. 3-4, 55). It is emotional and affecting, reporting personal and poetic experience but in muted or self-effacing fashion—concerned with creating external worlds rather than asserting personal presence (pp. 17, 52-53). As represented in Southern Song paintings, it is occupied with qualities of the
momentary. Stylistically, it fuses natural images into unbroken visual fields, utilizing devices for drawing the viewer’s gaze deep into the pictorial space (p. 149). Painterly means render subtle and ephemeral effects of space, atmosphere, light, and surface (p. 64). It is, in other words, the work of professional painters, such as the Southern Song academy artists Ma Yuan and Xia Gui, or late Ming masters of painterly effects, such as Li Shida (ca. 1540–after 1620), Zhang Hong (1580–after 1650), and Sheng Mao Ye (active ca. 1595–ca. 1640). Clearly, the author felt it imperative to defend his choices. These were, after all, the kinds of painters who in another time were likely to be dismissed as artisans lacking deep culture (as presented in the imagined voice of Wen Zhengming on p. 53). Cahill polarizes the issue in chapter 1, setting the scholar-amateurs of the late Northern Song, with Su Shi (1037–1101) as the central figure, against the professional artists that The Lyric Journey champions. He openly challenges the notion that the Northern Song literati painted poetic painting, at least as the author defines it, arguing that they scarcely did it at all and certainly not best (pp. 13–14).

Cahill’s position is understandable, but in righting one historical bias, he begins to forge a new one. The achievements of the individual painters associated with Su Shi are too diverse to allow the kind of grouping they are subjected to here. Wen Tong (1019–79), Li Gonglin (ca. 1049–1106), Wang Shen (ca. 1048–after 1104), and Mi Fu (1052–1107/8), judging from extant works and copies, were remarkably unlike in their various approaches. Moreover, to the degree that it can be judged today, much of their work was distinctly unamateurish. Cahill’s view is strongly colored by the later developments in Chinese painting that eventually fetishized brushwork for what it could suggest about authorial presence, sometimes at the expense of pictorial integrity, but is it right to project these developments back onto the Northern Song literati painters? Ironically, judging from associations of poetry with painting that predate Su Shi’s time (and were influential on him), the pictorial expression of convincingly naturalistic, evocative landscapes suggestive of personal experience that forms the core of Cahill’s definition of poetic painting also served as the foundation for poetic painting in the eleventh century.1 The use of early literati painting and theory as a foil for the Southern Song professional paintings that are the focus of chapter 1 is the kind of rhetorical device that can make a lecture effective, but in published form it distorts the historical truth.

This objection aside, Cahill’s assertion of poetic value in Southern Song academy painting is well taken. He forcefully states what has long been recognized but rarely voiced: one must master the art of painting to produce evocative paintings, and such mastery has little to do with literary training. Moreover, Cahill’s suggestion that lyrical expression is intimately tied to the professional painters’ ability to approximate the optical experience of real scenery deserves close attention. We tend to associate this ability with earlier painters of the Northern Song. The reductive quality of Southern Song landscape painting makes it appear stylized and abbreviated in contrast, yet the astounding realism of much of the bird and flower painting of Southern Song date is testimony to the keen powers of observation academy masters brought to their art. A painting such as Xia Gui’s Pure and Remote Views of Streams and Mountains is less an abbreviation than a distillation; whatever poetic quality Xia Gui perceived in the landscape of West Lake and the Hangzhou area became greatly enhanced when he set brush to paper.

As others have written, this visual distillation of imagery appears to have been designed to match the verbal concentration of imagery that characterizes Chinese poetry, especially couplets. A good portion of Cahill’s discussion in chapter 1 utilizes the pairing of poems with paintings that characterizes much of Southern Song painting; typically with instructive insights into the painter’s interpretation. There are, however, missteps here. One character of an imperial seal impressed on a fan with the transcription of a Bo Juyi (772–846) quatrain on the subject of crape myrtle is misread as Shaoxi (the reign era 1190–94 of Emperor Guangzong) (fig. 1.20). The seal reads “Writing of the Jixi Palace” and belongs to Emperor Lizong (r. 1224–64), as does the calligraphy. This would place into doubt the attribution of the accompanying painting to Ma Yuan (fig. 1.21); it is more likely to come from the hand of a close follower (this has no bearing on Cahill’s specific discussion of the painting). Another misreading, though less definitive, is the penultimate character of the Lizong couplet accompanying Ma Lin’s Willows in Rain (figs. 1.24, 1.25). I suspect that this character, which Cahill reads as shei, “who” or “whom,” is liang, “cool,” which creates a more perfect parallel construction (though an admittedly less interesting reading): “An evening wind blows away the heat, / The fresh rain ushers in the cool.”

More problematic is Cahill’s relative dismissal of
the importance of these texts: “The identification of pre-existing poetic texts—which were often, in any case, mere springboards from which the painters took flight—becomes superfluous, since the paintings in effect generate their own poetic texts” (p. 47). Cahill’s championing of the painters’ accomplishments is laudable, but it need not come at the expense of what can only be considered a major component of these collaborative efforts. My complaint registers with the final section of chapter 1, in which the author freely weaves a number of “textless” paintings into an invented thematic program of reclusion, journey, contemplation, and return. Since the time of Cahill’s preparation of this manuscript, the textual coordinate to one of the paintings utilized, the anonymous Drunken Traveler Arriving at Inn (fig. 1.50, mistakenly placed with the Beijing Palace Museum; it is in the Shanghai Museum), has been identified as a Huang Tingjian (1045–1105) poem. The subject is the Tang poet Du Fu’s drunken return to Flower-washing Stream in Sichuan Province. Without this information we can still appreciate the painting, and we may offer an intelligent guess about the general theme, but certainly the information that comes with a specific identification is vital to a full understanding of what is going on. Song paintings continue to present many questions regarding iconography and, by consequence, function and meaning. Our present inability to answer them is no reason to diminish their importance.

Cahill offers a number of refreshing ideas in chapter 1 related to the practice of painting during the Southern Song, including the suggestion that the wide range in quality noticeable in attributions might reflect a broad base of painting activity that extended outside of the imperial academy. This meshes nicely with the author’s attempt to link the popularity of the poetry-painting phenomenon with the growing affluence and culture of Hangzhou society. The expansion of printing, which allowed a wide dissemination of earlier poetry collections, the proliferation of poetry clubs, and the high status of poetry-making all must have contributed to poetic painting as Cahill defines it. Chapter 2 builds upon these ideas, leading to one of the book’s main theses—that similar socioeconomic factors create similar practices in painting. Flourishing economic conditions of the late Ming, in a manner analogous to thirteenth-century Hangzhou, allowed the spread of cultural practices to a larger community of affluent people, and, among these, appreciating and composing poetry were primary in establishing upper-class status. Popularity of the High Tang style in particular naturally led to the practice of creating paintings based on poems, typically with evocative Tang couplets added to the scroll. In the best of cases, Ming artists naturalized the poetic imagery so the paintings read as firsthand sensory experience. Zhang Hong, Li Shida, and Sheng Maoye are singled out for their success in employing highly refined representational techniques to make the poetic imagery real. As in chapter 1, Cahill highlights these artists’ painterly achievements by contrasting them with the “brush-and-ink” tradition of literati painting. Here, however, the author stands on firmer ground, and his points are well taken. Cahill’s demonstration of how certain principles of the Gongan school of poetry are better realized by Zhang Hong and other Suzhou masters than by the opposite camp of Dong Qichang and his circle is food for thought.

Extension of the issues in these first two chapters to Yosa Buson in chapter 3 is assisted by tangible historical connections between painting in late Ming China and the development of the Nanga school in Japan. Again, Cahill works to establish a fundamental difference between “brush-and-ink” oriented painting, with its emphasis on specific brush modes of earlier artists’ styles, and a more naturalistic painting capable of arousing poetic sensations. Here, the latter is almost exclusively limited to a single artist’s late work. The author skillfully sketches a concise backdrop for his subject by introducing the rise of Nanga painting—with its concerns for adopting various aspects of Chinese literati painting—as well as the painters Sakaki Hyakusen (1697–1752) and Ikkena Taiga (1723–76). The former, linked to late Ming professionals like Sheng Maoye, is presented as a forerunner to Buson’s more fully realized poetic painting. The latter is employed primarily as a subtle contrast—one who utilized Chinese poetry extensively but whose brilliant images are derived primarily from brush schema and surface effects (as opposed to empathy with human experience).

In his lengthy treatment of Buson, Cahill at first focuses almost entirely on the artist’s allegiance to the Chinese tradition, to the point where the reader has little sense of Buson as a Japanese artist. Gradually, poetry is integrated into the discussion, including some of Buson’s ideas about haiku, and we begin to gain a sense of a Japanese artist whose present is largely defined by interaction with the Chinese past. The greatness of Buson’s late work is seen as the successful realization of a cultural shift from a sinophile’s orientation to “a
naturalization of the Chinese-derived forms into flexible vehicles for conveying the poetry of everyday Japanese existence” (p. 166). Utilizing the painterly techniques learned from the late Ming professionals, Buson created evocative scenes of solitary travelers every bit as lyrical as those of the Southern Song painters, yet they seem to be rooted in the immediacy of the haiku poet’s present. Cahill’s study of Buson provides a satisfying conclusion to The Lyric Journey. If the beginning of the book is stymied by too many unknowns, too many knotty issues surrounding the emergence of Cahill’s “poetic painting,” the end delivers the kind of specific detail needed to validate the author’s argument.

The Lyric Journey ultimately proves to be a strangely compelling trek across time and cultures. The poetic subject that forms the center of James Cahill’s attention remains stubbornly vague and difficult to define, despite the author’s many good attempts, but the paintings that he singles out for giving it visual expression constitute a discreetly related body of art. Identifying this group of paintings, analyzing its shared characteristics, and noting the repeated socioeconomic conditions that allowed it to reappear in different times and milieux all add up to an impressive achievement, and one upon which further researches will be able to develop. Hopefully, however, those who follow up on the insights and research presented here will perceive the strongly polemical character of the book as something that need not be carried further. Recognizing the achievements of those skilled professional painters who understood the art of making visually compelling scenes is one thing. Elevating them by simultaneously pulling down the brush-and-ink oriented literati—pompous and unskilled as they may occasionally have been—is another.

NOTES

1. This is an involved issue too complex to detail here, but I discuss it at length in “The Donkey Rider as Icon: Li Cheng and Early Chinese Landscape Painting,” Artibus Asiae 55.1/2 (1995): 43–97.


PETER C. STURMAN


When I agreed to undertake this review, I assumed I could simply assess the utility of this catalogue as a textbook for a survey course in Korean art history. It contains numerous beautiful color plates of objects included in the exhibition, supplemented by monochrome illustrations that offer quite comprehensive coverage of several major areas of Korean art. So far, so good. But when I read the seven essays, I quickly realized that they ranged from basic historical surveys to highly technical art-historical scholarship. Consequently this review will necessarily oscillate between wide extremes on the spectrum of scholarly discourse.

Jonathan W. Best’s “Profile of the Korean Past” brilliantly summarizes key issues in Korea’s cultural and political development from the Neolithic through the early twentieth century in twenty-three pages. Yet many of his sentences are so packed with information that students will have a hard time appreciating their full significance. Since Best is especially known for his detailed analyses of diplomatic missions between China and the courts of Three Kingdoms Korea, it is not surprising that his discussion of these exchanges is particularly interesting. Regrettably, however, Best’s essay lacks footnotes, and the catalogue’s skimpy bibliography omits even his major study of Six Dynasties/Three Kingdoms diplomacy.

A lengthy chapter on ceramic art by Chung Yang-mo reflects the preeminent status of pottery within Korean visual culture. This chapter not only explains Korean pottery production from the Neolithic through the Choson dynasty; it also provides a historical survey that complements and, for the earlier periods, enlarges upon Best’s. In his survey of Three Kingdoms pottery, Chung dwells on the fascinating pottery tradition of Kaya, suggesting that human representations on Kaya pieces may have influenced the Japanese haniwa tradition. For Paekche he emphasizes the remarkable architectural tiles with landscape representations. Surprisingly, however, he has little to say about Silla pottery. Rather than drawing tenuous connections between Kaya pottery and haniwa, he might better have discussed the
overwhelming impact of Silla pottery on the Sue ware of Kofun-period Japan.

For the Koryo period Chung concentrates on the magnificent celadon wares. After pointing to their origin in Chinese Yue wares, he examines various decorative techniques, emphasizing inlaid decoration under the glaze (sanggam), a unique achievement of Korean potters. Chung also proposes that underglaze copper-red decoration was a Korean invention. Discussing the yellow or brown celadons with iron-oxide painting, he insists that these wares, produced at the same time as the green-blue celadons, should be regarded not as evidence of decline but as wares fashioned for a different category of consumer. I would have liked more examples of such "ceramic sociology," clarifying the social class of consumers and functions of the pottery.

Chung's section on the Choson period regrettably repeats historical material already lucidly treated by Best and thus allocates only six pages to ceramics. He devotes more of these pages to porcelain (paekcha) than to Punch'ong, which I consider one of the glories of the Korean ceramic tradition. Perhaps Chung is striving to shift the balance from the popular Punch'ong ware to porcelains, which have often been placed in the shadow of the Chinese porcelain tradition.

Kim Lena's essay on Buddhist sculpture is so rich in data and insight that it is difficult to summarize briefly. Her long discussion of the Three Kingdoms period begins with a well-known early gilt-bronze Buddha (her fig. 1), which she thinks "might be a copy of a Chinese figure of the late fourth or early fifth century," despite the usual—and more likely—hypothesis that it was imported from China. Her decision not to subdivide her Three Kingdoms account into specific kingdoms was probably wise but creates some confusion. For example, the small soapstone seated Buddha (fig. 3) from Paekche appears before the earlier standing Buddha (fig. 5) from Koguryo.

Kim's detailed treatment of the Unified Silla is generally far easier to follow than the Three Kingdoms section, no doubt in part because of the better understood stylistic evolution of the later period. Her dating of the Buddha Triad plaque (pl. 66) to ca. 680, however, seems to me a little early. As her discussion moves into the eighth century, there are a number of datable monuments, and the interrelationship between Tang elements and indigenous Silla traits becomes clearer, culminating in the magnificent Sokkuram complex. Finally, Kim's thorough discussion of Buddhist sculpture during the Koryo and Choson periods is especially welcome since most surveys of Koryo and Choson art focus on painting, ceramics, and metalwork.

Ahn Hwi-joon, a senior specialist in Korean painting studies, limits his discussion of painting to the landscape genre, certainly a defensible focus given the importance of the landscape tradition in Korea. Particularly interesting is his decision to devote nearly half his essay to the evidence for landscape painting during the pre-Choson periods since we tend to think of Korean landscape painting as primarily a Choson dynasty phenomenon.

Ahn opens his discussion of the early Choson dynasty with his own specialty, the preeminent painter An Kyon. Unfortunately, this section is somewhat truncated, presumably because of Kim Hongnam's chapter on An Kyon. Interestingly, Ahn cites Eight Views of the Four Seasons as a work "by the master himself or an immediate follower" (p. 911), whereas Kim (pp. 391–92) seems skeptical about this attribution. Similarly, he considers the set of album leaves Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers, captioned "attributed to An Kyon" (pl. 83), as a "continuation" of An Kyon's style in the sixteenth century, while Kim remains silent about the set. As a result, students will experience some difficulty in formulating a clear image of An Kyon's art. Ahn also discusses other important early artists, including Yang P'aeng-son, Kang Hui-an, and Yi Sang-jwa, and makes insightful comments about Choson-Muromachi relations. He goes on to consider the continued impact of the An Kyon style from 1550 to 1700, as well as the significant effects of the Zhe school of the Ming dynasty and of Southern school ideology on Korean painting during that time. His section on the late Choson dynasty gives short shrift to its most important artist, Chong Son, probably because of Yi Song-mi's contribution. Ahn concludes by tracing some important developments in nineteenth-century landscape painting, focusing on such artists as Cho Hui-ryong, Chon Ki, and Chang Sung-op.

Inevitably overlapping with Ahn's discussion are two highly technical essays on important issues in Choson dynasty painting: Yi Song-mi's analysis of the "true-view" tradition and Kim Hongnam's attribution of two landscape paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art to An Kyon. Yi's essay, treating a much-discussed theme in Korean art history, is bound to have a strong impact on the field. She analyzes both the artistic background of the "true-view" tradition—that is, the
representation of actual scenes in Korea—and its intellectual foundations in Chinese philosophy and art theory, as well as later intellectual developments in Korea, especially the School of Practical Learning (sirhak). Yi dwells on Chong Son’s depiction of the Diamond Mountains but also takes up such other eighteenth-century artists as Kang Se-hwang and Kim Hong-do, as well as relevant nineteenth-century painters.

Kim Hongnam’s attribution of two landscapes in the Met to An Kyon is more problematic. Although readers can glean a basic image of An Kyon’s art from this discussion, the emphasis here is on a very specific problem of attribution and connoisseurship. (I must state that I find the An Kyon attribution for these paintings highly unlikely, although a review does not allow adequate space for detailed argumentation.) This essay—and, to an extent, Yi’s as well—belongs more in the scholarly journals aimed at specialists than in a museum catalogue. Neither essay can be read adequately without a strong background in East Asian painting.

In some respects the most challenging and useful essay in the volume is Pak Youngsook’s “The Korean Art Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art,” which lays out a number of important developments from Three Kingdoms to Choson. These include a more extensive discussion of Silla pottery than Chung’s and an excellent analysis of Silla earrings. The core of Pak’s essay, however, is a detailed survey of the arts of the Koryo period, based on the Met collection. She makes the stimulating suggestion that a lacquer three-lobed box with mother-of-pearl and tortoise shell decor may have contained incense rather than cosmetics. She provides a good discussion of Koryo celadons. And she convincingly dates a fine Maebyon with inlaid design of cranes and clouds (pl. 18) to the second half of the twelfth century, although the caption for the illustration (“late 13th–early 14th century”) follows Chung’s dating. Students will benefit greatly from Pak’s mini-monograph (pp. 423–39) on Koryo Buddhist paintings, including her exposition of Buddhist doctrine and painting techniques and painstaking analyses of the iconography and style of various examples.

Pak’s final section, on the Choson dynasty, takes up Buddhist painting, ceramics, and landscape painting, dating *Wild Geese Descending to Sandbar* (pl. 85) to the late fifteenth century while noting that Kim Hongnam has dated it to the sixteenth century. Generally speaking, Pak seems more judicious about dating and attribution than Kim, but these issues beg for further discussion in a scholarly context.

In sum, despite its superb color illustrations and much interesting material in the essays, this volume is not entirely appropriate as an undergraduate textbook. Many chapters, for example, cite sources mainly in Korean even when English sources, such as articles in *Korean Culture*, are readily available. Nevertheless, the catalogue will serve well as a reference for important monuments, while individual essays should interest a wide range of scholars concerned with Korean art history.

DONALD F. MCCALLUM


In 1992 RUTH BARNES began to study more than 1,200 textile fragments donated in 1946 by the Egyptologist Percy Newberry to the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Although many other museums possess similar block-printed Indian textiles, all their collections are small, whereas the Newberry collection’s enormous range provided Barnes with a unique opportunity for comparative analysis and a reappraisal of such material, first seriously discussed by R. Pfister in the 1930s. As Indian textiles have not survived the climate of India, those found in Egypt provide vital material evidence of the pre-European Indian fabric trade to back up historical and art-historical knowledge.

After explaining her approach to categorizing and conserving the collection, Barnes sets out, in readable style, the background to the Newberry collection and previous research into Indian printed textiles; she includes such problems of terminology as the overuse of the blanket term “Fustat textiles.” She then tackles the question of dating the textiles. Fifteen carefully selected examples were subjected to carbon 14 analysis; most confirmed the author’s hypotheses and will provide material useful for comparison with similar textiles, but some threw up results that will surprise textile historians.
Two fragments turned out to date from the eleventh century (and another is even older), earlier than the dates generally assumed for such fabrics, and a similar result appeared when an Indian textile traded to Southeast Asia was examined. These findings will no doubt stimulate more carbon 14 analyses of historical textiles in the future, perhaps leading to new appraisals and further surprises.

The two chapters concerning textile technology and related terminology are central to the subject and provide the pivot of Barnes's cataloguing sequence. The first of these chapters examines the distribution of cultivated cotton, followed by a definition of the structural characteristics—that is, the spin and weave—common to all the Indian textiles in the Newberry collection. The second chapter tackles the contentious issue of defining “block-printed” textiles, which have been referred to variously as specialists as “resist-dyed,” “mordant-dyed,” “resist-printed,” and so on. Because of the fundamental chemical difference between indigo blue and red dyestuffs, Barnes in her catalogue legitimately differentiates the Indian textiles by color and, by extension therefore, by patterning technique. Those that are blue were produced by the “resist” process, in which parts not intended to be dyed are reserved by mechanical means before the cloth is dyed. (This is commonly known as “batik,” although this term too is confusing as it implies Javanese-type hot wax-resist methods rather than, say, block-printing with a mud-based paste.) Patterns on the red textiles relied on the chemical reaction between an applied mordant and the red dyestuff, whose source is madder or morinda. Whether the thickened mordant is printed or applied to a cloth already printed with a mechanical resist, the red dye can only bond with the fibers that have been treated with a mordant. Since “resist-dyeing” is such an umbrella term, Barnes uses such clear descriptions as “block-printed resist, mordant applied, dyed red” in the catalogue. Many of the Newberry fragments combine red and blue, making the unraveling of their dyeing sequence even more complicated. In this chapter it is apparent that Barnes benefited enormously from visits to block printers of Rajasthan and Gujarat (which I happily shared with her in 1994). One family in Kutch provided an exceptionally strong sense of continuity with a centuries-old tradition. This journey also gave Barnes further insights into the repertory of designs found on the Indian textiles, which are examined in the next two chapters. The influence of Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, and Islamic iconography all played their part in the cultural melting pot.

On the question of provenance, Barnes looks first at the small group of non-Indian textiles in the Newberry collection. A reader unfamiliar with Islamic textile history might infer from this section that Middle Eastern textile technology lagged behind that of India in the medieval period and beyond, when in fact its textile industry was based on a highly sophisticated technical knowledge of fibers, dyes, and weaving. But Barnes’s prime concern (hence the title of the book) is with the bulk of the collection, clearly manufactured in northwest India and traded to Egypt via the ports of Gujarat.

The final chapters examine the function of the textiles and Indian Ocean textile trade. Remains of stitching and tabs, the quality of cotton, and the overall designs provide clear evidence that export block-printed textiles were used both as utilitarian dress material and for domestic furnishing. Their role in an international trading network that stretched from the Mediterranean to the Far East is fascinating. In present-day Yemen, also visited by Barnes during the course of her research, one can still see the strong influences of both India and the Far East, in textiles and in architecture. Trade specifically between India and Southeast Asia is discussed separately by Barnes, whose expertise on Indonesian textiles is particularly strong.

The second volume consists of the exhaustive catalogue, each block-printed textile being illustrated in black and white although classified according to color. To appreciate the colors the reader has to turn to the plates at the end of volume 1. Considering the prohibitive price of the two volumes, placing them out of range of most individual purchasers, it is surprising that the quality of the illustrations in volume 2 is mediocre and that the number of color plates allowed in volume 1 is rather meager. The overall enterprise, however, has already become a standard work of reference for textile historians, providing as it does such a rich body of material now so substantially reexamined, as well as further illuminating the exciting subject of Indian Ocean textile trade, especially in the pre-European period. □

JENNY BALFOUR-PAUL

It is difficult to capture how King Dhaṅga (950–99) felt on the day that the Laksmana temple was consecrated at Khajuraho. Had he embraced a division of Viśṇu worship associated with an imported icon from the Kashmir region that was installed in the sanctum? Is this branch of Vaiṣṇavism then the key to unlocking the iconography of one of India’s most celebrated monuments? Devaugana Desai probes such profound questions and others in a book that is a “must-read” for students of medieval north India.

Desai’s overarching aim is to illuminate the distinctive religious environment that molded the Candella patrons and guided the conceptions of three major temples at Khajuraho. Readers will recognize many of her arguments from no fewer than fifteen articles that have appeared since 1982. Nonetheless, this monograph unites diverse topics under a single cover and is therefore indispensable.

Since Khajuraho’s discovery by Europeans in the nineteenth century, the list of authors touching upon the site reads like a Who’s Who in Indian Art History, from Alexander Cunningham to Stella Kramrisch. The most recent work on Khajuraho is Shobita Punja’s The Divine Ecstasy—The Story of Khajuraho (1992), which claims that the mythical marriage of Śiva and Pārvati inspired much of its imagery. In rebutting this thesis, Desai points out that only six of the thousands of sculptures at Khajuraho depict this union.

A chapter on religion sets the stage for Desai’s analysis of the three monuments. Motivating the Candella kings was not only Purānic Hinduism but also two other traditions, Pañcarātra and the Śaiva Siddhānta, both labeled Tantric. For the former, key evidence is the Laksmana temple inscription of A.D. 954 describing a Vaikuṇṭha image, perhaps in metal, originally obtained from the Kashmir region but replaced by a locally produced sandstone Vaikuṇṭha more than a hundred years later. Inasmuch as Vaikuṇṭhas in Kashmir are associated with a special branch of the Pañcarātras (Kashmirāgama), Desai seeks in this tradition the religious underpinings of the monument. She explains facets of the temple by citing both Pañcarātra texts and sources that are thought to reveal Pañcarātra influence, from the standard Purāṇas to the Mahābhārata. Her most persuasive argument is the choice of the three deities assigned to the sanctum’s outer wall facing the enclosed circumambulatory path: Hayagriva (north), Varāha (south), and Nṛsiṃha (west). This trio is a key to Pañcarātra doctrine since Hayagriva can be identified with the Supreme Nārāyaṇa and Varāha and Nṛsiṃha are two of the emanations (vyūhas) of Para Vāsudeva, deriving from Nārāyaṇa. Curiously, the disposition of the lion and boar faces of the ensnired Vaikuṇṭha does not conform to the location of Nṛsiṃha and Varāha on the sanctum’s outer wall; Hayagriva could have been placed on the west wall and the positions of the two avatāras reversed, but such conceptual integration was eschewed for unexplained reasons.

Above the three images are small reliefs featuring Viśṇu expounding to celestial sages; two panels show Viśṇu seated above his fish (north) and tortoise (south) manifestations, a reference to the two avatāras teaching the sages, which Desai brilliantly relates to texts. But the fish and tortoise by themselves play no central role in Pañcarātra doctrine, leaving their selection for this pivotal position unexplained. Perhaps this choice echoes certain north Indian Viśvarūpā images featuring four principal animal heads (fish, tortoise, boar, and lion). Significantly, the sole Viśvarūpā image at Khajuraho, placed at the very terminus of the inner circumambulatory path, displays these same four heads (although fish and tortoise are not visible in the photograph). Desai overlooks the connection between the fish and the tortoise on the Viśvarūpā sculpture and their appearance again on the sanctum’s outer wall, but I suspect that these two avatāras have been highlighted because they generally head the list of avatāras and thus visually express the logical progression from the vyūhas to the avatāras. Desai offers reasons for the inclusion of twelve panels on the sanctum wall depicting scenes of Kṛṣṇa’s childhood, but their presence perhaps reflects the fact that Kṛṣṇa is one part of Nārāyaṇa’s fourfold form.

While the imagery of the Laksmana temple does not perfectly reflect Pañcarātra precepts, enough correspondences exist to suggest that these broad Vaiṣṇava beliefs underlie its conception. To the degree that Pañcarātra doctrine influenced Purānic Vaiṣṇavism, it is difficult to claim that the temple’s patron or builders had received formal initiation into a Pañcarātra sect, either based in north India or specifically tied to the Kashmirāgama. For example, the type of close correspondence between Pañcarātra doctrine and the well-known Devasar...
Desai attributes the inspiration for the eleventh-century Kandariya Mahadeva temple to the Śaiva Siddhāntins. This Śaiva lineage arose outside the Candella realm in central Madhya Pradesh and by the tenth century was patronized largely by the Kalacuris, a dynasty bordering the Candellas to the south. Since the Kandariya temple is without its donative inscription, its Siddhānta affiliation rests heavily on two unique sculptures at Khajuraho of a seated, four-legged Śiva with six heads. One is placed in a niche surrounding the sanctum; the findspot of the other is unknown, but an inscription on it names the image as Saḍāśiva. The occurrence of the same term in a south Indian Siddhānta text and at least one Purāṇa makes it difficult to claim an exclusive connection with the Siddhāntins. Moreover, this form of Śiva occurs in no iconographic manuals. The inscribed Saḍāśiva reveals the donor to be Urduva-Śiva, whose name alone suggests possible connections with the Siddhāntin ascetics known from epigraphs outside the Candella kingdom. In the basement niches framing the temple are the Seven Mothers. The order in which the sculptures appear conforms to a Siddhānta text but also agrees with Purāṇic sources. Indeed, insofar as this sequence is rather standard throughout north India, its value as a predictive tool is limited.

Desai rightly associates the Chausath Yogini temple with “mainstream Purānic tradition” and not the Śaiva Siddhānta. She accepts the traditional date for the temple, ca. 900, but this could be reevaluated in view of the figural style of the three extant yoginis. The unpretentious dimensions of this open-air temple, its simplicity, and its granite construction have probably misled researchers to ascribe it to a phase preceding the larger sandstone temples beginning in the mid-tenth century.

It must also be asked why so few images of Vaikuṇṭha (five) and Saḍāśiva (two) are present at Khajuraho if these deities were so central? (The paucity of “marriage” scenes rightly prompted Desai to challenge Punja’s thesis.) Also, are the many medieval Vaikuṇṭha images found outside the Candella realm in north India inspired by a formal Pañcarātra system? Why are there no similar images of Saḍāśiva at established Kalacuri Siddhānta sites, such as Gurgi, Chandrehe, and Bilhari? Moreover, five deities central to this Śaiva group are specifically noted in a tenth-century Kalacuri Siddhānta epigraph (Śiva, Śakti, Kārttikā, Sarasvatī, and Gaṇeśa) but are not stressed as a group at the Kandariya temple or elsewhere at Khajuraho.

More critically, however, if Siddhānta and Pañcarātra ascetics or royal priests (rājagurus) had been influential at Khajuraho, there was ample room in the dynasty’s epigraphic record to acknowledge their presence. But the lengthy inscriptions at Khajuraho and other Candella sites contain not even indirect references to these two Hindu divisions or other groups. This situation contrasts with the Kalacuri inscriptions listing donations of Siddhāntin stone monasteries and temples. Other Kalacuri inscriptions demonstrate support of the Pāṣupatas. In western India certain families, such as the Guhils, made grants to the Pāṣupatas. In general, however, medieval dynasties, including the Candellas, did not patronize specific Hindu groups. Desai acknowledges that “no records are available of donations to temple or religious gurus as in the case of neighbouring dynasties” (p. 51).

One Candella inscription recording the construction of a temple porch by a king’s guru orders, en passant, the temple officers and Pāṣupatas to honor the grant. Had the guru himself been allied to a specific sect, it is unlikely that he would have forgone the opportunity to express it. Moreover, the temple was located at Kalinjar, a sacred center that probably attracted diverse ascetic groups, as it does today. Desai’s admission that this is the only Candella inscription referring to Hindu sects makes it hard to believe that Pañcarātra and Śaiva Siddhānta religious groups played a significant role at Khajuraho. The majority of dynastic families remained aloof from these sects, perhaps shrewdly realizing that if they subsidized one, they would soon be pushed to support others. In fact, the Candellas may have eschewed the Siddhāntins, probably knowing that this sect was patronized by the Kalacuris, a dynasty that the Khajuraho kings boasted to have vanquished in the Laksmana inscription. I believe that an inclusive “Purānic” Hinduism was adopted by medieval dynasties, including the Candellas and even the Kalacuris, who were unquestionably influenced by the Siddhāntins. The author’s abundant references to the Purāṇas and the Mahābhārata to explain Khajuraho confirm this suspicion.

Despite these minor observations, Desai’s book has loosened many of the most tightly tied Gordian knots enveloping the Khajuraho temples. Her analytical acumen makes this study a lasting contribution.

DONALD M. STADTNER
**BOOK REVIEWS**


**Most recent books** on Islamic art have been either broad surveys of the entire field intended for undergraduates or exhibition catalogues intended for the educated public. The publication of three fairly specialized books in Islamic art in the same year is therefore a happy event that demonstrates continued vigor in the field. The books represent a recent trend in which scholars of Islamic art increasingly focus on its calligraphic and ornamental aspects as opposed to their earlier preoccupation with documentation, patronage, and iconography. Building on the huge corpuses of Islamic inscriptions and on the somewhat sketchier compilations of ornamental features, these writers attempt in varying degrees to move beyond documentation and taxonomies into the realm of interpretation.

Since middle-ranging books such as these are still relatively uncommon in Islamic art, audience must have been an important consideration for writers and publishers alike. Specialists in Islamic art are a relatively small group, so one must ask about the nature of the target audience for these books and also the possibility that others outside this group might benefit from them. The books by Blair and Baer began as Kevorkian Lectures, a yearly series at New York University by senior scholars of Islamic art and architecture. They therefore share a similar physical format and intellectual perspective, largely determined by the sequence of the lectures, although Blair's has clearly benefited from further editing and reformulation. Likewise, their scope is broad but not comprehensive, apparently aiming at specialists and nonspecialists alike. Although Bierman's book is more specialized and more demanding of the reader, it also seems to have been edited with a broader audience in mind. Such a concern might in itself explain why a book on the Fatimid inscriptions of Cairo bears a sixth-century Greek inscription on its cover.

But casting a wide net is not as unproblematic as it might seem. It does not suffice to throw in some basic introductory observations—"Arabic is an alphabetical language" "written from right to left"—then move on to extremely specialized points. Some sense of consistent scale and appropriate tone is required in order to mitigate the inevitable struggle between clarity and complexity, general and specific. Unfortunately, neither Baer nor Blair succeeds in this sense: their books are not manuals for the uninitiated but rather series of detailed and nearly independent essays that showcase the enormous erudition of the two scholars. Bierman, who has an easier task to begin with, only sporadically achieves an appropriate level of discourse; more often, her discussion is marred by opacity and unnecessary repetition.

The books are quite divergent in method. Baer is entirely oblivious to methodological questions, artlessly listing totally irreconcilable views with no comment about their relative interpretative merit or connection to her own approach. Thus, Dimand's taxonomies, Kühnel's positivism, Ardalan's occultic essentialism, and Nasr's fundamentalism (pp. 4–5, 89) are placed side by side despite their radically opposed views about the development and especially the meaning of Islamic ornament. Furthermore, Baer's bibliography seems to stop around 1985, dismissing Grabar's, Necipoğlu's and my own recent work. Blair's generally positivist approach is enlivened by occasional iconographic interpretations, rigorously based on specific case studies she had already published. Bierman's task is the most original; she shuns the positivist and essentialist approaches previously applied to the study of Arabic writing and dwells exclusively on its semiotic dimension, or more simply on the question of meaning in written forms. Although such a critical stance is indeed refreshing, the author's insistence on a new language for describing written forms and her tendency to overinflate the importance of quite mundane calligraphic features do little to further her argument. As every inscription becomes a "writing sign" and all "concentric rings" acquire eschatological dimensions, the book takes on a cultic quality that could alienate many casual readers.

The main strength of Blair's *Islamic Inscriptions* is her discussion of medieval Iranian inscriptions on buildings, textiles, and minor arts. Detailed analyses of the Shroud of St. Josse (pp. 4–5), the graffiti on some ancient Persian monuments (pp. 46–48), and even the controversial Buyid silks (pp. 171–74) all underline her vast knowledge of medieval Iranian dynastic history, titulature, and epigraphy. These sections are crammed with references to little-known events and obscure
dynasts—Abu Mansur Bakhtekin, for example—about whom even specialists remain ignorant. It is not entirely clear how these specialized case studies contribute to an overall understanding of the function or significance of public inscriptions in the medieval Islamic world.

Blair focuses primarily on the informative and iconographic content of inscriptions but largely ignores the significance of their form. Reacting to my work (published in Ars Orientalis 21 [1991], 24 [1994], and 29 [1999]) and possibly also Bierman's, she rejects any significance or intentionality in the quite dramatic changes of calligraphic forms or public texts. According to her, Arabic public writing changed continuously and seamlessly through internal processes whose course can be described and classified but not explained. Thus, floriated Kufic, the pride of Fatimid epigraphy, may have begun in Ikhshidid inscriptions (pp. 58–59), and cursive public inscriptions can be traced to earlier East Iranian coinage (p. 16).

Quite emphatically, she writes (p. 57) that “attempts to impute political motivations to stylistic changes, however enticing, are wrong, for they are not grounded in an accurate knowledge of the epigraphic material. They overlook significant specimens, omit material that does not fit with preconceived hypotheses, and disregard events that occurred elsewhere.” What is at stake here is not so much overlooked materials but my choice to define the problem in terms of the transformation of public and official inscriptions while placing most tomb inscriptions, which clearly belong to a lower and less public type of patronage, outside my main field of investigation. Within these parameters, it seems abundantly clear that despite the earlier existence of scattered tomb inscriptions written in an inconsistent floriated Kufic style (Tabbaa, 1994, fig. 1), it was the Fatimids who systematized this script and recast it as the official and public script of the dynasty.

Similarly, cursive writing was minimally used in some tenth-century east Iranian coins (Tabbaa, 1994, fig. 8a–b), but the actual transformation of public inscriptions from floriated Kufic to cursive was not effected until the middle of the twelfth century. Coins, in fact, present a variety of palaeographic problems that make them poor indicators for parallel changes in public inscriptions. Thus, even in Syria, where Nur al-Din may have mandated the use of cursive public inscriptions around 1150, the earliest coins with fully cursive legends do not begin until thirty years later.

Blair (p. 57) mistakenly suggests that my interpretation of the switch from angular to cursive public inscriptions is based on Bierman and Jun'ah. Bierman's interpretation of Fatimid public writing, as I note in this review, relies far more than mine on Fatimid esoteric texts and numerological symbolism. Likewise, my work is only tangentially related to Jun'ah, an obscure Egyptian scholar whose studies of Kufic epigraphy deserve more credit than they have received. Rather, my work, like Blair's, is ultimately founded on van Berchem and Herfeld, both of whom posited an intimate connection between the switch from angular to cursive public scripts and the Sunni revival. If anything, I have attempted to historicize their sweeping conclusions by pointing out differential change in various regions and by more intimately linking the process to contemporary historical sources and treatises. In other words, Blair and I have the same heroes, but we have chosen to develop different aspects or conclusions in their works. Blair goes straight to their positivist groundings, while I develop some of their vague conclusions regarding the reasons for changes in medieval Islamic calligraphic and ornamental forms.

None of the three books contains any Arabic transcriptions of inscriptions or pious formulas, a curious omission in view of the accessibility of Arabic word processing. Among other things, using the original Arabic text might have avoided transliteration errors in Arabic inscriptions, which especially plague Blair's book. For example, there are three mistakes in the transliteration of a single line from an eleventh-century ceramic bowl (p. 8): “Ya'qâlu [yuqâlu] qad khâṭara man istaghâniya [istaghâna] birâ'îyah [bira'îyîh]” (correct form in square brackets). At least seven other errors could be cited.

Baer's much shorter book (about sixty pages of text) is divided into four ambiguously titled chapters—‘The Motifs and Their Transformation,’ ‘The Formation of Order: Creating Overall Patterns,’ ‘The Meaning of Ornament,’ and ‘Principles and Concepts’—that serve as receptacles for various quite unrelated discussions. For example, ‘The Meaning of Ornament’ mainly discusses medieval figural iconography, one of Baer's specialties but not one that directly pertains to the question of meaning in ornamental forms. Overall, Baer shows a distinct bias toward the figural over the nonfigural; in fact, even her discussion of vegetal and geometric ornament emphasizes their function as framing devices for figural elements, such as continuous arcades or whirls and stars. On the other hand, she is strangely silent about the question of meaning in the most common and original forms
of Islamic ornament—arabesque, geometric patterns, and the *muqarnas*—aspects that Grabar, Necipoğlu, and I have recently discussed.

Baer’s positivist, developmental approach is largely indifferent to differential developments in ornament and its sudden transformations (e.g., the *muqarnas* dome). For example, she notes (p. 17) that in late tenth-century Fatimid Cairo, “floral elements form separate units,” whereas slightly later marble slabs from Ghazna “are merged by half-palmettes and create a new design termed by Scerrato ‘arabesque candelabras’,” without stopping to ask why that should be the case.

Bierman discusses meaning in the Fatimid public inscriptions of Cairo. Arguing at length that the Fatimids were the first Islamic dynasty to make “writing a significant public art,” she dedicates much of the rest of her book to a detailed, multilayered discussion of the semiotic dimension of Fatimid public texts, their connection with Fatimid political ideology, and their resonance within a diverse urban population. “Meaning,” she writes (p. 15), “is not completely contained in the writing itself but, rather, grows in the web of contextual relationships woven between the official writing, the patrons, the range of the beholders, and the established contexts in which writing was placed.”

Public writing, Bierman elaborates, has multiple dimensions: a territorial function, intended to delimit the seignorial domain of the dynasty; a referential or informational dimension that pertains to specific historical figures or events; and an aesthetic or symbolic dimension that is largely based on the actual form and placement of public inscriptions. The first two functions are quite straightforward and can be applied to the public texts of other dynasties. But the symbolic dimension, which is more inherently Fatimid, requires further scrutiny. Were these elaborate floriated Kufic inscriptions, as Bierman writes, intended to “communicate meaning to the beholder,” or were they instead intended only to suggest the existence of meaning shrouded within the ambiguity of the script? Countering the view that floriated Kufic was “inherently difficult to decipher” (p. 110), Bierman argues that the content of the script was legible to the educated public through context and certain recognizable phrases. But such hair-splitting misses the point, for floriated Kufic was not just difficult to decipher; it embodied the very idea of ambiguity. What was special about Fatimid practice, therefore, was not simply “the systematic display” of public texts but also that these texts were written in a deliberately ambiguous script that was effectively created by the Fatimids for that purpose. Thus, the image of the message is made tantalizingly accessible, but its secrets are encoded within a nearly indecipherable script. This simultaneity of visibility and incomprehension, of inclusiveness and exclusiveness, underlines the intentions of a dynasty that always seems divided between its messianic purposes and its encrypted messages.

Chapter 3, “The Sign of Isma‘ilism,” represents perhaps the most original part of the book. Here Bierman proposes (p. 62) that the concentric circle, which was used in most Fatimid coins and in a few public inscriptions, most notably the mosque al-Aqmar of 1125, was a “sign of Isma‘ili rule and law” and of “Isma‘ili ideology.” She convincingly interprets the powerful symbol of a circle with a well-defined center and a number of concentric rings in terms of *zāhir* and *bātin or imān* (i.e., Isma‘ilism) and Islam, pivotal concerns for the Isma‘ili creed. Yet Bierman’s attempt to juxtapose this simple epigraphic form with the vastly more complex Fatimid cosmological diagrams is much less convincing, for with the exception of their concentric form, the two diagrams are otherwise unrelated.

Bierman’s afterword purports to demonstrate the legacy of Fatimid inscriptive practices under the Ayyubid and Mamluk dynasties. Thus, four centuries and hundreds of monuments are superficially summarized in a few pages. More seriously, Bierman’s attempt to seek continuity in the use of public inscriptions misses a crucial point, for the later Sunni dynasties shunned the ambiguous script of the Fatimids for the much more easily legible *thuluth* script, which reached its fullest development in the late thirteenth century. Furthermore, these later public inscriptions were literally brought down from their elevated position to the level of the passing public, directly presenting an exotic text intended to be read by all literate people.

Perhaps one common tenet shared by the three books under review is a persisting sense of continuity in Islamic art, an outmoded essentialist assumption that has been repeatedly questioned but not entirely abandoned. I have noted above several instances in which rejecting this facile assumption and embracing the disjunctions of artistic change might produce a more historically nuanced picture of medieval Islamic art. It is perhaps time fearlessly to explore these disjunctions and differences across the breadth of Islamic art.

YASSER TABBA