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FREER GALLERY OF ART
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Abstract

Charles Lang Freer (1856–1919) was the first American to make Chinese painting a collecting priority, and from the start he specialized in works from the Tang, Song, and early Yuan dynasties. He never wavered in this pursuit, as is indicated in a postscript written on a letter to a Shanghai dealer near the end of his life: “Do not send me any Ming or later pictures. I buy only Sung [Song] and earlier paintings. CLF.” Chinese painting was a later interest for Freer. He began as a collector of European and American prints in the early 1880s and amassed one of the world’s greatest collections of works by the American artist James McNeill Whistler. In the late 1880s Freer acquired his first Japanese paintings, ceramics, and prints, and he carried on building this part of his collection through 1907. It was not until his first extended trip to China in 1909 that Freer turned his full attention to building a Chinese art collection—with painting at the forefront. By this time, he held unusually fixed ideas about Chinese painting.

This paper explores the influences that shaped Freer’s aesthetic views. A common thread throughout the literature about Freer as a collector of Asian art is the notion that Whistler led him first to Japanese prints and then to the “early productions” of China and Japan. Actually, Freer’s interest in Japanese painting and prints predates their first meeting in 1890. Furthermore, Freer’s extensive activities as a collector of Japanese prints from 1889 to 1904 brought him into contact with another American, the Asian art scholar Ernest Francisco Fenollosa, whose role in shaping Freer’s collection has not been fully examined.

Fenollosa was the first curator of Asian art in an American museum—the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston—and in 1901 he became a kind of private curator to Freer. Together they systematically weeded out, catalogued, and made deliberate acquisitions to augment Freer’s unique collection of Asian and American art, preparing it to be gifted to the Smithsonian Institution. While Freer had many advisors during the years he built his collection, Fenollosa was unique in his ability to articulate the visual connections Freer found in an otherwise disparate collection of American and Asian art and to conceptualize it as an organic whole with three main divisions: the pictorial works of Whistler; Asian glazed pottery; and Chinese and Japanese painting. For Fenollosa, Chinese and Japanese painting was one aesthetic tradition, with early Chinese painting of the Tang, Song, and early Yuan dynasties at its foundation. Freer’s commitment to completing his painting collection as he and Fenollosa envisioned it explains his refusal to embrace Ming dynasty or later Chinese paintings.
CHARLES LANG FREER (fig. 1), a Detroit industrialist and founder of the Freer Gallery of Art, made his fortune by manufacturing railway cars. After retiring from active business in 1899, he dedicated the remainder of his life to building a significant collection of Asian and American art. At that time the arts of Asia were not widely exhibited or understood within the aesthetic or art historical context of museum displays. With the opening of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City in 1872 and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 1876, nascent collections of Chinese and Japanese art became accessible to the public for the first time. Over the next fifty years, other American museums followed. The Freer Gallery of Art opened its doors on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., in 1923. Six years later, by 1929, there were forty-three American museums with sizeable Chinese and Japanese art collections, as reported by Benjamin March (1899–1934) in China and Japan in our Museums. March singles out Chinese painting as being representative of the Freer collection. In fact, Charles Lang Freer was the first American to make Chinese painting a collecting priority.

Chinese painting was a later interest for Freer. He began as a collector of European and American prints in the early 1880s and gradually amassed one of the world’s greatest collections of watercolors, etchings, and paintings by the American expatriate artist James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903). In the late 1880s Freer acquired his first Japanese paintings, ceramics, and prints, and he carried on building parts of this collection through two trips to Japan in 1895 and 1907. Freer’s Japanese acquisitions declined between 1907 and his first extended trip to China in 1909, when he turned his full attention to building a Chinese art collection—with painting at the forefront. By this time, the Detroit collector held unusually fixed views about Chinese painting. He specialized in early Chinese painting—pre-fourteenth century—and never waivered in this pursuit, as is indicated in a handwritten postscript on a letter to one of his Shanghai dealers, K. T. Wong (Wang Jiantang 王鑑堂), near the end of his life: “Do not send me any Ming or later pictures. I buy only Sung [Song] and earlier paintings. CLF” (fig. 2).

This article explores the influences that shaped Freer’s aesthetic views about the pictorial arts of China as he built the first major collection of Chinese painting in an American museum. A common thread throughout the literature about Freer as a collector of Asian art is the notion that Whistler led Freer first to Japanese prints and then to the “early productions” of China and Japan (fig. 3). While Freer came to understand and appreciate his Asian collection under the influence of Whistler, he had already begun acquiring Japanese painting and prints before he met the American artist who was then living in London. Furthermore, Freer’s extensive activities as a collector of Japanese prints brought him into contact with another American, the Asian art scholar Ernest Francisco Fenollosa (1853–1908) (fig. 4), whose role in

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shaping Freer’s views about Chinese painting have not been fully examined. Freer embraced Fenollosa’s concept that Chinese painting before the fourteenth century provided the foundation for a unified collection of Chinese and Japanese painting. As a result, the Freer Gallery of Art houses one of the most important collections of paintings from the Song and Yuan dynasties (tenth to fourteenth centuries) in the West. Moreover, Freer’s preference for early Chinese painting helped set the course for other American collections as Chinese dealers supplied a concentration of early works from China to meet his demands, and American curators and Freer’s collector-friends bought up the surplus.

**Freer and Whistler**

The narrative of Freer’s life as a collector is often told with Whistler as the catalyst for the industrialist’s interest in Asian art. The writing of Agnes Ernst Meyer (1887–1970), a close friend and admirer from 1912 until the collector’s death in 1919 (fig. 5), is the usual source for this assertion. In 1927 she wrote, “It was Whistler’s powerful interest in the first gleanings of Japanese painting that came to Europe which turned Freer’s mind in that direction.” Later, in 1970, Mrs. Meyer recollected,

At our first meeting Mr. Freer explained that it was Whistler who called his attention to the Japanese screens, the Chinese blue-and-white china, the fans, ivories, and other things they called Chinoiserie as indications of a far earlier and higher culture than that of contemporary China. With his instinct for the development of art, he told Mr. Freer he was certain these recently
discovered objects must be the last gasp of a great tradition. He urged his young friend to explore this ancient country as he felt sure he would discover far more important treasures as the source of the trivial objects with which Europeans were now so captivated.\(^9\)

Whistler apparently shared these views with Freer. Nevertheless, as will be discussed below, this idea that greater traditions lay behind the Asian objects popular in Europe did not originate with Whistler.

Furthermore, it seems that Whistler was not the source of Freer’s early interest in Japanese art. Freer had already purchased at least one Japanese painting before he acquired his first Whistler prints in 1887 or before he met the artist for the first time in 1890.\(^10\) Early in 1887 the young collector from Detroit purchased a Japanese fan painting attributed to the Rimpa 琳派 painter Ogata Kōrin 尾形光琳 (1658–1716) from Takayanagi Tōzō on Fifth Avenue in New York (fig. 6).\(^11\) It was not until after the fan purchase that Freer acquired his first Whistler prints: a set of twenty-six etchings titled Venice: Second Series from M. Knoedler and Company in New York City.\(^12\)

Another event explains how Freer became interested in collecting Japanese prints. In 1889 Freer became a member of the Grolier Club, the prestigious New York organization for bibliophiles and print collectors.\(^13\) The year he joined, its members included such notable collectors, dealers, and friends as Samuel Putnam Avery (1822–1904), Henry O. Havemeyer (1847–1907), Frederick Keppel (died 1912), John La Farge (1835–1910), Howard Mansfield (1849–1938), Shugio Hiromichi (1853–1927), Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848–1933), and Stanford White (1853–1906).\(^14\) In April 1889, Shugio Hiromichi, the Oxford-educated manager of the First Manufacturing and Trading Company in New York, launched the first major American exhibition of Japanese prints at the Grolier Club (fig. 7).\(^15\) According to Freer himself, this was how his Asian art collection began. In a 1915 interview with art critic and club member Royal Cortissoz (1869–1948), Freer explained that after viewing the Japanese print exhibition at the Grolier Club in the late 1880s, he found “points of contact” between a few prints by Hokusai 北斎 (1760–1849) and Whistler’s etchings. Later, Freer bought some of Shugio’s Japanese prints, which proved to be the beginning of his Asian art collection.\(^16\) Unfortunately, this purchase is undocumented. Nevertheless, it seems safe to say that Whistler and Japanese art were two parallel streams of collecting interest and activity for Freer before he met the American expatriate artist in London in 1890.

Japanese prints were at the center of Freer’s early collecting activity and carried him into the orbit of the Asian art scholar Ernest Fenollosa. Inexplicably, experts treat Freer’s interest in Japanese prints as a brief episode.\(^17\) In reality, Freer spent
more than fifteen years acquiring Japanese prints—from the time of the first Grolier Club exhibition in 1889 until around 1904, when he began looking for a buyer for his collection. He sold most of the works—three hundred nineteen prints—to Tod Ford, a California collector, in 1905. As Freer explained to Ford, “I could accomplish more by devoting my time and means to paintings.” By this time, he could buy a Japanese painting for the price of a Japanese print. In fact, one of the strengths of Freer’s Japanese painting collection is the number of paintings (more than three hundred) by ukiyo-e artists that he purchased while other collectors acquired prints. As one scholar observed, Freer often concentrated on pursuing works that did not appeal to other collectors.

Freer and Fenollosa
If Whistler’s role in prompting Freer’s Asian art collecting has been somewhat overstated, the influence of yet another American, Ernest Fenollosa, in shaping Freer’s views about Asian art has not been adequately examined. From the mid-1880s until his death in 1908, Fenollosa was considered by many to be the “first authority in the West on the art of China and Japan.” In 1901 Fenollosa became an important advisor to Freer. While there is still speculation about when the Detroit collector and the Boston Orientalist first encountered one another, Freer undoubtedly held Fenollosa in high regard long before 1901.

The son of a Spanish immigrant who married into a prominent family in Salem, Massachusetts, Ernest Fenollosa graduated from Harvard with first-class honors in philosophy in 1874 and was recommended by another Harvard graduate and Salem neighbor, Edward Sylvester Morse (1838–1925), to fill the first chair in philosophy and logic at the Imperial University of Tokyo, where Morse taught zoology. Soon after arriving in Japan with his young bride in August 1878, Fenollosa developed a passion for Japanese art that led him into the fields of art history, archaeology, art criticism, and eventually art education and administration. His accomplishments in Japan between 1880 and 1890 include: surveying the temple art throughout Japan with his student Okakura Kakuzō (1862–1913);
launching a public campaign to revive Japan's traditional pictorial arts; being appointed to Japan's Imperial Arts Commission and sent abroad for a year to study art institutions in Europe and America; and helping to establish Japan's first fine arts academy. For his service, Fenollosa was given high court rank and decorated by the Meiji emperor.24

While in Japan, Fenollosa began his prolific writing career with at least a dozen articles, published in Japanese and English, regarding the arts and culture of Japan.25 He also kept up with the nascent Asian art literature written in Western languages that was sprouting up in Europe. In 1884 Fenollosa captured public attention when he published a scathing review of a chapter on Japanese painting in L'Art Japonais written by the French art critic Louis Gonse (1846–1921), calling it a “Hokusai-crowned pagoda of generalizations.”26 Fenollosa's primary criticism was that Gonse drew conclusions about the entire history of Japanese painting based upon the modern prints of ukiyo-e artists then popular in Europe while he failed to acknowledge the great masters of ancient times whose works laid the foundation for all that came later. This is more or less the same idea Whistler discussed with Freer regarding the greater traditions that lay behind the Asian art objects being made available in Europe. Within Asian art circles this view was associated with Fenollosa. According to Laurence Binyon (1869–1943), Keeper of the Department of Oriental Prints and Drawings at the British Museum,

Mr. Fenollosa ... gave a clue to the understanding of the ideas which inspired successive periods of production... . The collectors of Europe had been enthusiastic over the art of eighteenth-century Japan; they had ignored the grander achievements in painting and sculpture of its earlier ages.27

The Gonse review was reprinted in 1885 by James R. Osgood, a publisher in Boston, and distributed more widely.28 Freer acquired a copy of the reprint and made a few handwritten comments in its margins.29 As it so happens, Whistler was an acquaintance of Louis Gonse.30 It seems likely that Whistler, a collector of Japanese prints during this period, was aware of both the Gonse book and the Fenollosa review.

In 1889 Fenollosa was offered the curatorship for the newly formed Japanese department at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. In accepting the position, he became the first curator of Japanese art in the first department of Japanese art in an American museum. During the twelve years Fenollosa lived in Japan, he scoured the country—often accompanied by Morse, Okakura, and their Boston friend William Sturgis Bigelow (1850–1926)—looking for Japanese art treasures. Those works later became the strength of the Asian art collection at the Museum.
of Fine Arts, Boston. When he returned to America, Fenollosa brought with him roughly a thousand Chinese and Japanese paintings that Charles Goddard Weld (1857–1911) had purchased and formally gifted to the Boston museum as the Fenollosa-Weld Collection at the time of his death in 1911. Most of these paintings were in the museum when Fenollosa began cataloguing and arranging the collection in 1890. 31

Early in his tenure at the Museum of Fine Arts, Fenollosa and Edward Morse, who became Keeper of Japanese pottery in 1890, were appointed as members of the fine arts and pottery juries, respectively, for the Japanese exhibits at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago.32 This was the first time Japanese art was included in the “fine arts” section at an American world’s fair.33 By 1893 Freer was already a recognized collector of American art, and he loaned nine paintings and seven prints to the American exhibits in Chicago.34 At that same time he was also actively acquiring Chinese and Japanese art from the New York dealers Takayanagi Tōzō and Rufus E. Moore (1840–1918).35 He bought his first two Chinese paintings from Takayanagi in June of that year. Only one, the hanging scroll Two Herons and Lotus Flowers (fig. 8) by an anonymous artist of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), remains in the collection today.36 During his three visits to the Chicago Exposition, Freer was almost certainly aware of the celebrated Japanese art curator Ernest Fenollosa and his role on the fine arts jury. If they met in the early 1890s as some claim, it could have happened in July of 1893 when both men attended the fair.37
Soon after getting settled at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Fenollosa launched a series of six exhibitions to enlighten the public about the fine art traditions of Asia. *Hokusai and His School* opened in the summer of 1892 and remained on view until March 1893. From May 1893 through March 1894, early nineteenth-century hanging scrolls by Keibun 景文 (1779–1844) and Hoyen 芳園 (1803–1867) were shown. This presentation was followed by three exhibitions in close succession: sixteenth-century screens with gold backgrounds from the collection in April; a loan exhibition of Japanese prints from the collection of the Paris dealer Siegfried "Samuel" Bing (1838–1905) in May; and pre-seventeenth-century paintings and metalwork lent by F. Shirasu of Tokyo in June. In fact, in the 1890s the Museum of Fine Arts was the only museum in the country with a regular rotation of high-quality Asian art exhibitions.

During these years, Freer’s professional interests required frequent travel to the major cities in the Northeast, including Boston. His own growing collection of Japanese paintings and prints would have drawn him to the Boston exhibitions. According to his diaries, from the summer of 1892 to the summer of 1894, Freer visited Boston six times. Three of those visits overlapped with the Hokusai exhibition where Freer apparently acquired his copy of Fenollosa's catalogue.

Fenollosa’s sixth and most ambitious exhibition in Boston opened in December 1894 and featured forty-four scrolls from a rare set of one hundred Chinese Buddhist paintings from the eleventh and twelfth centuries lent by the Daitokuji 大德寺, a temple in Kyoto. This was a diplomatic and scholarly achievement that very few, if any, could have accomplished other than Ernest Fenollosa. In the catalogue introduction, the Boston curator explains the exhibition came about when the Daitokuji, in need of repair, was given permission by the Japanese government to dispose of the paintings. Indeed, after the exhibition, the Boston museum acquired ten scrolls, and the Japanese organizers gifted Fenollosa an eleventh scroll that he later sold to Freer in 1902 (fig. 9). The Daitokuji exhibition was the first major presentation of Chinese paintings in an American museum, and Freer’s acquisition became the first painting in his collection from the Song dynasty (960–1279). That said, he missed the Daitokuji exhibition, having departed on his first trip to Asia in September 1894.

By the time Freer returned to America a year later, Fenollosa’s position in the museum was in jeopardy for personal reasons. In September 1895, Fenollosa was put on indefinite leave after it was revealed he planned to divorce his wife and marry his young assistant, Mary McNeil Scott (1865–1954). Moving to New York, Fenollosa continued working on the catalogue for an upcoming ukiyo-e exhibition he organized with W. H. Ketcham, an art dealer on West 29th Street. In January 1896, *The Masters of Ukiyo-e* opened at the Fine Arts Building in New York (fig. 10).
Fenollosa's impressive catalogue presented 447 paintings and prints grouped by artist chronologically, and it provided one of the first art historical treatments of the subject in English. This commercial exhibition included works from Fenollosa's private collection as well as those of other well-known Japanese print collectors from New York and Chicago, including Freer's friend Howard Mansfield (1894–1938) and Frederick W. Gookin (1853–1936), who wrote the catalogue preface. Freer was clearly impressed with the exhibition; that January he wrote Ketcham to request four copies of “the excellent catalogue prepared by Prof. Fenollosa for the beautiful exhibition now being made of Japanese prints.”

A few months later in April 1896, a second Japanese print exhibition opened at the Grolier Club (fig. 11), and this one included prints from Freer's collection. Organized jointly by Shugio Hiromichi (mentioned above) and Howard Mansfield, the exhibition presented 182 prints by twelve ukiyo-e masters drawn from the collections of club members and non-members. On the last page of Shugio's brief catalogue, the non-members are identified, and again the names of several collectors who lent to the Fenollosa/Ketcham exhibition are included. Freer's prints are not identified in the catalogue because only non-members were acknowledged. However, Freer provided Mansfield with a descriptive list of the prints he sent for the exhibition, including works by Utamaro 歌麿 (1754–1806), Toyokuni 豊國 (1769–1825), Yeishi 楊之 (1747–1829), and Kiyonaga 清長 (1752–1815) that are consistent with eight works in the catalogue. A comment Freer made to Mansfield indicates a degree of competition that existed within this small circle of Japanese print collectors. "I hope your exhibition will prove very successful. I have no doubt that in quality and real interest it will surpass the Ketcham show."

Early in April 1896, Fenollosa finally resigned from the Museum of Fine Arts and traveled with his new wife to Japan, where he spent the next five years in a kind of self-imposed exile. Despite Boston's public shaming of the scholar, Freer and others continued to hold Fenollosa in high esteem. In May, Mansfield sent three Japanese paintings to Freer that had been "pronounced genuine by Fenollosa," an apparent stamp of approval. While in Japan, Fenollosa and his dealer friend Bunshichi Kobayashi 小林文七 (1861–1923) organized the first extensive public exhibition of ukiyo-e held in Japan in the spring of 1898 and the first Hokusai exhibition in the winter of 1900. Fenollosa wrote both catalogues and a second book on the history of ukiyo-e. The only documented contact between Freer and Fenollosa during those years was through intermediaries. Early in 1898, Ketcham informed Freer that a large group of Fenollosa's paintings and prints would be sold. Between 1898 and 1900, Freer purchased ninety-five Japanese prints through Fenollosa's lawyer, Edward S. Hull. Freer also acquired at least twenty-five ukiyo-e paintings in 1898 that had apparently been shown in the Fenollosa/Ketcham exhibition in New York.
By the time Ernest and Mary Fenollosa returned from Japan to settle in the United States in the summer of 1900, Freer had retired from active business and turned his full attention to collecting. When Fenollosa arrived in Detroit for the first time to spend a week viewing Freer’s collection in February 1901, both men were ready to begin the work of building a significant Chinese and Japanese painting collection.

That summer Freer’s travels in Europe took on a new focus. Leaving his friends in Capri, he visited the major ethnographical, historical, and industrial arts museums of Venice, Munich, Nuremberg, Dresden, Berlin, Hamburg, and Cologne—taking notes and sketching floor plans in the back papers of his diary. While touring Dresden’s ethnographical museum, he noted details such as, “Japanese prints in print department.” It seems Freer was already thinking about the design and organization of his future museum (figs. 12a, b).

Building a Chinese Painting Collection

Among the 3,404 Chinese objects in Charles Lang Freer’s gift to the Smithsonian Institution, Chinese paintings made up the largest collection with 1,255 hanging scrolls, handscrolls, and album leaves. Other areas of concentration included 678 bronzes, 503 jades, and 481 objects of pottery, followed by 196 stone or wood sculptures, 183 textiles, and 108 miscellaneous small objects of lacquer, ivory, glass, silver, iron, or pewter. While Chinese painting was not a high priority until the final decade of his life, as indicated by an upsurge in acquisitions during Freer’s first extended trip to China in 1909, the Detroit collector spent much of the preceding decade educating himself about the painting traditions of China and Japan in the company of Ernest Fenollosa.
From 1901 to 1908, Fenollosa acted as a kind of private curator to Freer, helping him to weed out, acquire, catalogue, and maintain his evolving collection of Chinese and Japanese painting.60 During those years others contributed to Freer’s effort to build a first-class collection of Asian art, including dealers Matsuki Bunkyō (1867–1940), Yamanaka Sadajirō (1866–1936), Dikran Kelekian (1868–1951), and Siegfried Bing.61 Nonetheless, Fenollosa distinguished himself with his ability to articulate clearly the aesthetic connections Freer found in his otherwise disparate collection of American and Asian art and by providing a coherent intellectual framework to guide the collector’s future acquisitions. Fenollosa and Freer’s shared vision for the collection is best stated in a 1907 article published in Pacific Era shortly after his gift to the nation had been formally accepted by the Smithsonian Institution (fig. 13).62 Here, for the first time, Freer’s collection is described as consisting of “three great parts”: the pictorial works of James McNeill Whistler; the ancient glazed pottery of Egypt, Babylonia, Persia, India, China, Korea, and Japan; and the finest and best-unified group of masterpieces by Chinese and Japanese painters of all ages.63 With this in mind, the Japanese and Chinese painting acquisitions made with Fenollosa’s guidance help to explain Freer’s determined quest for early Chinese painting.

During the 1901 to 1908 period, Freer acquired the bulk of the 804 Japanese paintings he gifted to the Smithsonian.64 The strength of this collection was Buddhist, Kano 行野派, Rimpa, and ukiyo-e paintings that range from the fourteenth through the nineteenth century.65 While Freer’s Chinese painting acquisitions during the same period are far fewer, it is nevertheless possible to recognize collecting patterns here as well.66 Prominent among these are Buddhist paintings of the Tang (618–960), Song (960–1279), and Yuan (1270–1368) dynasties; wash-style landscapes of the Northern (960–1126) and Southern Song (1126–1279) dynasties; and archaistic blue-and-green landscapes in a Tang idiom from the Ming dynasty (1368–1644).67 If one accepts that Tang-style paintings produced in the Ming still preserve Tang aesthetics, these works best represent Chinese painting traditions of the tenth through the thirteenth century. In other words, early Chinese painting was viewed as completing the Japanese painting collection.

This unique view is corroborated in Fenollosa’s writings about the painting traditions of China and Japan. He believed that Chinese and Japanese art was one aesthetic tradition and that ancient Chinese painting was the parent of Japanese painting.68 It was also his view that the great schools of Chinese painting had reached full fruition during the Tang and Song dynasties, and they had already sunk far into degeneration by the time of the Ming.69 Elsewhere, he explained further that the periods of excellence and decline in Chinese painting resulted from the “free individualism” that was allowed to flourish under Buddhism and Daoism
during the Tang and Song dynasties, followed by the Confucian “literary formalism” that set in under the Yuan and suppressed artistic creativity thereafter. As will be seen, these aesthetic values continued to guide Freer’s acquisitions during the decade he dedicated himself to building a Chinese painting collection.

Upon arriving in Peking in September 1909, Freer checked into the luxury hotel, the Grand Hotel Wagons-Lits, adjacent to the Foreign Legation quarter. He then rented rooms in the Tartar City—the walled-in area also known as the Inner City that surrounded the Imperial Palace in the northern half of Peking—where he could conduct trade, and he sent out word that he was looking to acquire early Chinese paintings. According to Freer’s 1909 diary, he met regularly with dealers bearing obscure names: Riu Cheng Chai, Chi Pao-char, Yung Pao Chai, Pao Ming Sai, Ta Kou Tchai, and Loon Gu Sai. These unintelligible names were mainly the result of the irregular romanization used during the years Freer traveled in China. Several names could be shops just south of the Tartar City in the famous book-and-antique district known as Liulichang琉璃厂. Yung Pao Chai may have been Yongbaozhai永寶齋 established at Liulichang in 1884. Loon Gu Sai was possibly Lunguzhai論古齋, a store in Liulichang since 1862 known to deal in Song painting. Ta Kou Tchai was another spelling for Daguzhai達古齋, the Beijing curio shop since around 1906 or 1907 of a dealer named Huo Mingzhi霍明志 (born 1879). Freer referred to him as Mr. Ho.

During a month’s stay Freer acquired 199 paintings, with the greatest share coming from Loon Gu Sai. Delighted with the results, he wrote his partner, Colonel Frank J. Hecker (1846–1927),

Thanks to Fenollosa’s superior teachings and the splendid opportunities given me in Japan during the summer of 1907, when I saw practically all of the early Chinese paintings owned publicly and privately in Japan, I knew what to search for when I began my quest here—I mean Peking—scientifically and determinedly for painting of the Tang, Sung [Song] and Yuan dynasties.

Tang, Song, and early Yuan paintings were truly scarce in China long before this time. Early Chinese paintings with true pedigree were already in the imperial collection or in the hands of a few well-known private collectors. It is therefore not surprising that only three paintings purchased in Peking during Freer’s 1909 visit were, in fact, early works. It is important to mention that among the “pretenders” were some later paintings of high quality.

Freer’s prospects improved during his second trip to China in 1910 and 1911, when early paintings belonging to the famous Manchu official and collector Duanfang 端方 (1861–1911) became available (fig. 14). Duanfang—whose ancestors...


were apparently Han Chinese from Zhejiang who moved to Manchuria in the late Ming dynasty—rose to high office through the examination system and served as viceroy (governor) to the provinces of Hubei (1901), Fujian and Zhejiang (1905), Liangjiang [Jiangxi, Jiangsu, and Anhui] (1906), and Zhili [including Shandong and Henan] (1909), and was en route to Sichuan when his soldiers assassinated him in 1911. Americans knew Duanfang as an imperial commissioner who led a Chinese delegation to the United States and Europe in 1906 and 1907 to study educational, industrial, and political institutions. He was also the architect of China’s first world’s fair, the 1910 Nanyang Exposition in Nanjing. Duanfang’s private collection was built during the political turmoil in the last half of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth, when countless important antiques came onto the market. Like many Qing officials, Duanfang had close ties to art dealers in Liuslichang.

Freer first met Duanfang in October 1909 when he traveled from Peking to Tianjin for the day to view his famous collection in the company of the American vice-consul general of Tianjin, G. Hamilton Butler. A year later, Freer visited the viceroy twice in Peking: first on 9 October with Marcel Bing (1875–1920), a Parisian dealer and the son of Siegfried Bing; and again on 12 October with Mrs. Lucy Calhoun (1865–1950), the wife of the American ambassador, and her party. Before leaving Peking in February, Loon Gu Sai (mentioned above) sold to Freer one of Duanfang’s treasures, the twelfth- to thirteenth-century handscroll Ten Thousand Li Along the Yangzi River, attributed to the monk-painter Juran 巨然 (active circa 960–995) (fig. 15). This misty river landscape rendered with broad wash strokes and many gradations of ink recalled the painting style of the Southern Song master Freer admired most, Xia Gui 夏珪 (active 1195–1224), and at one time it was attributed to that artist. Freer later told Agnes Meyer that the Ten Thousand Li handscroll was previously owned by the Shanghai entrepreneur and collector Pang Yuanji 龔元濟 (1864–1949) (fig. 16), who sold it to Duanfang. As will be seen, many of the early Chinese masterpieces that Freer acquired can be linked to both collectors.

During the 1910–11 trip, Freer also met John Calvin Ferguson (1865–1945) (fig. 17), the Canadian-born “China Hand” who arrived in Nanjing in 1887 to set up a Methodist school (later Nanjing University). After leaving the ministry in 1897, Ferguson became a close advisor to a succession of officials in the late-imperial and early-republican periods, including Sheng Xuanhuai 盛宣懷 (1844–1916), the minister of transportation; Viceroy Duanfang; and Xu Shichang 徐世昌 (1855–1939), the president of the republic from 1918 to 1922. It was Duanfang
who introduced Ferguson to jinshi 金石 scholarship, the study of archaic texts on ancient metal and stone objects. Fluently Mandarin, Ferguson became a Chinese art scholar and dealer who later helped Freer acquire perhaps the most famous painting in Duanfang's collection, Nymph of the Luo River (fig. 18), a twelfth- to thirteenth-century handscroll attributed to Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (circa 344–406).

It is widely held that John Ferguson introduced Charles Lang Freer to Pang Yuanji (just mentioned above). Freer first viewed Pang's famous collection on 14 January 1911 at his residence on New Chang Road (Niuzhuang Lu 牛莊路) just northeast of the race course in the international settlement. The Shanghai collector was reputed to have one of the largest private collections of Chinese painting outside the Imperial Palace. By one contemporary estimate, the palace collection owned all extant paintings from the Jin and Tang dynasties, and two-thirds of all the Song and Yuan paintings and calligraphies, while Pang Yuanji owned the other third. Freer was clearly impressed with the objects he was shown that day and wrote “Fine Things” in his diary.

This meeting inaugurated a web of important relationships surrounding Charles Lang Freer from the time of his first contact with Pang. Freer's 1911 diary entries record daily and often overlapping visits with Shanghai dealers and collectors, including Lee Van Ching (Li Wenqing 李文卿; circa 1869–1931), Pang Yuanji, K. T. Wong (Wang Jiantang 王鑑堂), Mr. Hwang (Huang Zhonghui 黃中慧), John Ferguson, and Abel William Bahr (1878–1959). A merchant born in Shanghai, Bahr became a dealer in early Chinese art following Freer's encouragement. Freer left China in February, having acquired 290 paintings primarily from Loon Gu Sai and Riu Cheng Chai in Peking and Lee Van Ching in Shanghai. Gallery records indicate 237 of these were acquired as works of the Yuan dynasty or earlier. Thirteen, including the Ten Thousand Li masterpiece mentioned above, are currently accepted as works of the Song and Yuan dynasties.

Freer intended to return to China, but he suffered a stroke that May. With his own increasingly fragile health and the tumultuous political situation in China, travel there was no longer feasible. In the following two years, the Detroit collector acquired fewer than a dozen Chinese paintings. Bahr sent two Ming scrolls from Shanghai in 1912 that Freer promptly returned with the advice "not to indulge
in collecting such Ming paintings." The dealer had better luck in 1913 when he offered Freer a fourteenth-century Buddhist painting now in the museum's collection (fig. 19). Freer's painting acquisitions began to pick up in 1914 when he added a few dozen works, including the above-mentioned Nymph of the Luo River that Ferguson delivered to Freer, together with a late fourteenth-century Buddhist painting also from Duanfang's collection (fig. 20).

Most of the great acquisitions Freer made subsequently came about when Pang Yuanji and the Shanghai dealers began to send their collections abroad. The 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco prompted both Pang Yuanji and Lee Van Ching to send a group of early Chinese paintings to the United States as described in catalogues prepared for the grand event. Much to Freer's displeasure, neither collection was included in the official exhibits at the world's fair. Freer was angry with John E. D. Trask (born 1871), the chief of the department of fine arts for the Panama-Pacific Exposition, for choosing to display the "unworthy" collection of Liu Sung Fu rather than "a really important group of early Chinese paintings well-known throughout the Orient, and which the owner [Pang Yuanji] once intended to exhibit in your Department." In fairness to Trask, each country selected its own exhibits. The Chinese paintings that Freer found "unworthy" but were nonetheless officially shown at the Panama-Pacific Exposition were largely Ming, Qing (1644-1911), and modern paintings.

Pang Yuanji's collection was nevertheless brought to San Francisco by his younger brother, Pang Zanchen (1881-1951), and the Paris dealer C. T.
Loo, also known as Lu Qizhou (1880-1957), was an important Chinese antiquities dealer in the early 20th century. He was the leading Chinese dealer in the United States and is known for his significant contributions to the Chinese art market. Loo's expertise and knowledge of Chinese art led him to assemble a significant collection of Chinese art and antiques, which he sold to major museums and collectors around the world.

Loo's work with Tonying, who owned the Shanghai Antiques Company, was crucial in bringing Chinese antiques to the Western world. Loo and Tonying formed a partnership in 1913, and Loo opened his own company, the Shanghai Antiques Company, in 1914. He opened branches in Paris and New York, and his company became one of the leading dealers in Chinese art.

Loo's interest in Chinese art was sparked by his early exposure to Chinese art and antiques, which he learned from his family. His father, Loo Kung-fai, was a wealthy merchant who had a large collection of Chinese antiques. Loo was also influenced by his mother, who was a member of the famous Loo family of Hong Kong.

Loo's knowledge of Chinese art and antiques was derived from his own personal experience and from his extensive travels in China. He was known for his expertise in identifying and valuing Chinese antiques and for his ability to negotiate deals with Chinese dealers.

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Wind and Snow in the Fir Pines, by Li Shan 李山; China, mid-12th to early 13th century; Handscroll; ink and color on silk. F 1961.34.

Tipsy Monk, attributed to Li Gonglin 李公麟 (ca. 1049–1106); China, Southern Song dynasty; Handscroll; ink and color on paper. F 1968.18.

mind. Both catalogues predominantly feature Yuan and earlier paintings, and Freer was given the opportunity to make the first selection. 115

A year later Pang Yuanji sent another impressive group of seventy paintings attributed to the Tang, Five Dynasties, Song, and Yuan periods and fully illustrated them in the catalogue Antique Famous Chinese Paintings Collected by Pang Lai Chên. 116 This time Pang Zanchen and another Shanghai dealer, Seaouke Yue (You Xiaoqi 游小鳕), brought the paintings to New York and showed them to Freer at the Plaza Hotel. 117 Freer bought twenty-one paintings from Pang, including two exceptional Song-dynasty masterpieces that previously had been in Duanfang’s collection. 118 Clearing Autumn Skies Over Mountains and Valleys by Guo Xi 郭熙 (circa 1000–circa 1090) (fig. 25) was a major conquest for Freer, who regarded the Northern Song master as “the greatest painter of distance in Chinese art.” 119 The second handscroll was Freer’s first acquisition of a painting from the imperial collection—Shu River (fig. 26), a topographical landscape depicting places along the Yangzi River as it passes through Sichuan (or Shu 蜀)—and was attributed to another favorite artist, Li Gonglin.

The Shu River handscroll carries a unique history as one of four famous paintings first acquired by the late Ming collector Gu Congyi 顧從義 (1523–1588) and
Clearing Autumn Skies over Mountains and Valleys, attributed to Guo Xi 郭熙 (ca. 1000–1090). China. Northern Song dynasty. Handscroll; ink and color on silk. F1916.538.

later rejoined in the collection of the Qianlong 乾隆 emperor (1711–1799; reigned 1735–96) during the Qing dynasty. The other three handscrolls are Admonitions of the Instructress, attributed to Gu Kaizhi and now in the British Museum; Dream Journey on the Xiao-Xiang River, attributed to Li Gonglin and now in the Tokyo National Museum; and Nine Songs, also attributed to Li Gonglin and now in the National Museum of China (previously called the History Museum). Qianlong was so delighted with the four paintings that he built a studio, the jingyixuan 静怡轩, to house the scrolls and created the special Simeifu 四美倶 [Four Beauties Complete] seal found on each onet.120 Apparently, the Dowager Empress Cixi 慈禧 (1835–1908) gifted the Shu River handscroll to Duanfang.121 In 1902 he proudly listed the scroll in a catalogue of his painting collection.122

The handscrolls Clearing Autumn Skies and Shu River are indicative of Freer’s preference for early landscapes in a more representational tradition. A comment that Pang Yuanji made to the young painter-connoisseur, Wang Jiqian 王己千 (C. C. Wang; 1907–2003), points to another distinguishing characteristic of Freer’s painting collection. As Wang noted,

He [Pang] had more than one thousand scrolls and albums, and as I recall, the Freer Gallery in Washington, D.C., bought many paintings from him. Mr. Pang would sometimes tell me what he had sold to them and that often what he thought was very good, they didn’t like. Usually they preferred Sung paintings and not the Yuan paintings which he liked.123

Pang’s comment addresses an omission in Freer’s acquisitions that would have been apparent to any art connoisseur in China, namely, there are no scholar-literati landscape paintings by the Four Masters of the Yuan: Wu Zhen 吳鎮 (1280–1354), Huang Gongwang 黃公望 (1269–1354), Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301–1374), and Wang Meng 王蒙 (circa 1308–1385). Here again, the influence of Ernest Fenollosa’s teachings is felt with the dismissal of paintings by these “Confucian formalists.” Literati landscapes are also omitted from the paintings that Fenollosa acquired for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Another collection of Chinese paintings brought to Freer’s doorstep by the Shanghai dealers in 1916 boldly targeted his patronage in a more personal way. C. T. Loo delivered a group of paintings to Freer, who was staying at the Berkshire
Shu River, attributed to Li Gonglin (ca. 1049–1106), China, Southern Song dynasty. Handscroll; ink on paper. F1916.539.

Inn in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, that September. An English-Chinese catalogue compiled by Loo’s associate F. S. Kwen (Guan Fuchu 管復初), titled Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient and Genuine Chinese Paintings, accompanied the collection.124 Kwen explained in its preface that sixty ancient paintings had been gathered over many years

for Mr. Freer who towers above all other connoisseurs of Chinese art... I now present this catalogue to the United States in order to give the people some knowledge of the pictorial art of China from the Tang and Song dynasties to the present day.

Freer’s reaction is recorded in a letter to Agnes Meyer.

The catalogue of paintings shown you by Loo is here. I blush over its personal follies but am finding in it a lot of interesting information concerning seals and inscriptions.125

The Laiyuan catalogue was the first to provide, in both Chinese and English, a list of the collections and collectors from which the paintings were gathered. It was an impressive list that included Duanfang.126 Freer very likely took note of the name Wanyan Jingxian 完顏景賢 (circa 1848–50–circa 1927–29),127 the Manchu collector and friend to Duanfang, whose seals were on several paintings he had already acquired from the viceroy.128

Although annoyed at being mentioned, Freer was prepared to make an offer for the entire collection when he learned the asking price exceeded his estimate by more than 300 percent. As he explained to Agnes,

This broke the camel’s back! The pictures were instantly returned to Loo notwithstanding his protest—and so far as I am concerned the book covers are slammed shut.129

By this time Freer believed he was a fair judge of the value of Chinese paintings, and he was insulted by what he considered to be excessive profit taking. Exorbitant prices for works in a catalogue that mentioned his name was far too “wily” for Freer.
Thereafter, he refused to do business with C. T. Loo again. Nevertheless, in the following days he distributed Loo's catalogue to other collectors and encouraged Sigisbert Chrétien Bosch-Reitz (1860–1938), the new curator in the department of Far Eastern art at the Metropolitan Museum, to view the paintings. He wrote to Bosch-Reitz, "The [Laiyuan] collection contains a few fine examples, but I can live happily without them so long as they remain in America."  

The real prize in the Laiyuan catalogue was the Suiyang wulao or Five Old Men of Suiyang, a famous eleventh-century album with five portraits then in the collection of Wanyan Jingxian. Not long after Freer refused Loo's asking price, the album was broken up. Following Freer's advice, in 1917 Bosch-Reitz acquired for the Metropolitan Museum one of the portraits, the brocade cover to the album, and a number of colophons relating to the five men. Sometime before the 1940s, Mrs. Ada Small Moore (1858–1955) acquired two of the portraits and then gifted them to the Yale University Art Gallery in the 1950s. As fate would have it, in 1948 the Freer Gallery of Art purchased the final two portraits from C. F. Yau (Yao Shulai 姚叔來), brother-in-law to Curio Zhang and a manager of the New York branch of Tonying and Company (figs. 27a, b). According to Yau, Tonying and Company had been the original American dealer for the album—evidence that C. T. Loo and Tonying were still partners in 1916.

The guidance extended to Bosch-Reitz was not the first time Freer advised the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In 1913 he was called to New York to appraise a controversial group of Chinese paintings that John Ferguson had acquired for the museum. Refusing to judge the Ming and Qing paintings, Freer recommended the purchase of thirty-one earlier works. A 1913 article in the Metropolitan's bulletin presents a few of the Song paintings he considered “genuine.”
for the museum, Ferguson donated the paintings rebuffed by Freer, including the much-praised Yuan-dynasty handscroll *Home Again* that Qian Xuan 錢選 (circa 1235–before 1307) had painted in the literati mode. In the end, Ferguson's 1914 exhibition of the Chinese works he acquired for the Metropolitan Museum presented a distribution of paintings from the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. Ferguson's keen regard for later painting may explain why Freer acquired relatively few Chinese artworks from him.

Outwardly confident in his judgment and the educational value in studying and acquiring Asian art, Freer felt an obligation to share his collection and help other museums build theirs. After the Grolier Club exhibition in 1896, Freer lent objects for exhibitions at Smith College in 1897, the University of Michigan in 1910, the Smithsonian Institution in 1912, the Japan Society and Knoedler Galleries in 1914, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1916, the Art Institute of Chicago in 1917, and the Metropolitan Museum again in 1917. In 1915 he helped the Cleveland Museum of Art acquire a group of Chinese paintings. Two years later, in 1917, he donated 178 objects of Near and Far Eastern art to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. The following year he agreed to advise museums in Pittsburgh and St. Louis “in determining the class of Oriental things to acquire.”

That said, on occasion Freer spoke candidly about misjudgments in letters to his friend Agnes Meyer. What shines through is a firm belief in the educational value of both the strengths and weaknesses in his collection that seemed to obviate any misgivings. Regarding a duplicate painting by Li Cheng that was offered by Pang Yuanji, he wrote,

> Possibly both Pang’s Li Cheng and mine are copies—early on, possibly late—and who outside of a few in China can tell? Such conditions are as you say “unfathomable”?—but what opportunities for study? As you wrote in 291, “Science in criticism must meet science in art.” Then again both paintings attributed to Li Cheng may have been actually painted by that master, for I believe that practically all great Chinese academicians painted over and over again but with almost imperceptible variations for different collections, a few specially designed subjects as mentioned in ancient authenticated manuscripts, some even in my little group. If then, the Li Cheng in Pang’s hands is not gobbled up by some appreciative American, I must add it to my lot, so as to give students of the future a chance.

What fun is coming after a while, in Washington, and what a fool Freer will be pictured. A blind man diving in the depths of Chinese art, taking out fakes and trash and hugging them as genuine, without advice, without
personal knowledge, and then working them off on an innocent government! And what sport when some future writer discovers the long Ma Yuan scroll landscape in my collection and its duplicate in part in the Metropolitan. And what will be said when the fifty or more Wu Daozi's, like my “Flitting” now in China, are seen by lynx-eyed critics? A yell will go up. Good! I hope it will reach me in some spirit way. Then will come what you call the “reasoning and scientific era” to awaken study, to learn the hows and whys of art production in China—the ideals, the materials, the means, the copies, and why. Intelligent people will strive for the knowable—foolish adventurers some collector will be forgiven even if his flowers prove to be thorns—educational thorns that helped others.141

During the final three years of his life, Charles Lang Freer fluctuated between periods of moderate activity and deep convalescence with doctors at his side in Great Barrington, Detroit, and New York. Throughout, he continued to receive shipments of art objects from China, primarily from Pang Yuanji and the Shanghai dealers Seaouke Yue, Lee Van Ching, and K. T. Wong. His acquisitions of paintings fluctuated as well. Sixty-three Chinese paintings were acquired in 1917, sixteen in 1918, and seventy-four in 1919. Although Freer was a meticulous record keeper, the dealers often delivered art or received payment for one another, and it was sometimes difficult to establish the owner of an object. According to Gallery records, in 1917 Freer acquired five paintings from Seaouke Yue and Pang Yuanji, including the handscroll Crabapple and Gardenia (fig. 28) by Qian Xuan 錢選 (circa 1235–before 1307) that previously had been in the collection of the famous Korean salt merchant and collector An Qi 安岐 (1683–after 1743).145 Looking more closely at vouchers and correspondence, Yue and Pang were actually paid a commission for facilitating this purchase from an unspecified “Peking gentleman.”146 Each scroll carried the seal of Duanfang’s friend Wanyan Jingxian, whose card was left for Freer when Seaouke Yue dropped off the five paintings.147 Wanyan Jingxian was likely the Peking gentleman. Later in 1917 Freer acquired a second batch of Chinese paintings from Seaouke Yue in a separate transaction. Among these was a Buddhist painting featuring Ajita, the Fifteenth Luohan, from a set of eighteen luohan paintings, with a dated
Ajita, the Fifteenth Luohan, attributed to Wang Jianji 王顯濟 (Song dynasty). China, Yuan dynasty, 1345. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk. F1917.334.

Panthaka, the Tenth Luohan, attributed to Qian Yi 錢易 (act. 997–1022). China, Yuan dynasty, 1345. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk. F1919.163.

Dae, the Seventeenth Luohan, attributed to Guanxiu 貫休 (832–912). China, Yuan dynasty, 1345. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk. F1918.6.

Over the next two years in different transactions with Seouke Yue and K. T. Wong, Freer acquired three additional hanging scrolls associated with the 1345 set (figs. 29b, c, d). Apparently disregarding the Yuan date found on three of the four paintings, Freer embraced the luohan as works by the Tang and Song masters identified in labels on the outside of each scroll. In a September 1919 letter to Seouke Yue, Freer indicates the luohan paintings pleased him and early Chinese Buddhist painting continued to hold a special attraction. He adds:

I should also like to find, from time to time, a few more fine examples of early Buddhistic painting, both in ink and in colors and gold, particularly those done by Wu Tao-tzu [Daozi] or his followers, and in addition will be glad to see a few fine T’ang paintings or particularly important early Sung [Song] specimens.149

Freer would have been delighted when two additional luohan paintings from the 1345 set were later gifted to the Gallery by the children of Agnes and Eugene Meyer—particularly Pindola Bharadvaja, the First Luohan, a painting attributed to Wu Daozi 吳道子 (active 710–760) (figs. 29e, f).150

Two other fine works acquired from Seouke Yue and K. T. Wong in the final year of Freer’s life further illustrate how consistent his objectives remained over the years he dedicated himself to collecting Chinese painting. They also show that persistence pays. The handscroll Tao Yuanning Returning to Seclusion attributed to
Li Gonglin (fig. 30) and the hanging scroll *Autumn Moonlight on Dongting Lake* by Xia Gui (fig. 31) are works associated with the artists who inspired Freer's first purchases with Ernest Fenollosa. When Freer acquired his first handscroll attributed to Xia Gui in 1906, Fenollosa—who advised him on that purchase—wrote,

I congratulate you most heartedly on the acquisition of the Kakei [Xia Gui] treasure, which is of secondary importance to the Ririmins [Li Longmians] alone. Those two [artists] head the two greatest schools of Chinese art.¹⁵¹

Unfortunately, the Xia Gui handscroll and the work by Li Longmians [a.k.a. Li Gonglins] to which Fenollosa refers turned out to be “educational thorns.”¹⁵² Nevertheless, a decade of experience acquiring early Chinese paintings— independent of Fenollosa—sharpened Freer's eye and strengthened his judgment. The *Tao Yuanming* handscroll acquired in 1919, while not executed by Li Gonglin himself, is widely accepted as a work painted by a skilled follower early in the twelfth century.¹⁵³ The *Autumn Moonlight* landscape is the only known hanging scroll painted by the Southern Song master Xia Gui.

Freer spent the final ten years of his life searching zealously for early Chinese paintings and succeeded in acquiring forty-seven of the eighty-six Song and Yuan paintings in the Freer Gallery of Art today.¹⁵⁴ Timing was an important factor. The political turmoil surrounding the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the founding of the new republic animated the Chinese antiques market. During two extended stays in China in 1909 and 1910–11, Freer acquired important early paintings and
established relations with a group of well-connected dealers and collectors, primarily in Shanghai, who continued to provide shipments of Chinese paintings after he could no longer travel overseas. The dealers understood Freer’s collecting priorities and assembled artworks to meet those requirements.

In conclusion, Charles Lang Freer’s taste for early Chinese painting is less a reflection of the dealers or of the contemporary art market than it is evidence of the enduring influence of Ernest Fenollosa, who viewed painting of the Song and earlier dynasties as the foundation for a unified collection of Chinese and Japanese paintings. Freer’s unwavering commitment to this unique vision explains why the Detroit industrialist, who early on succeeded both as a businessman and as a collector by specializing in a commodity before others fully appreciated its value—railway cars, works by James McNeill Whistler, ukiyo-e paintings—later devoted himself to collecting a singularly rare and precious art form—pre-fourteenth-century Chinese painting—and was blind to the literati landscape traditions of the Yuan or the far more abundant and often less expensive paintings of the Ming and Qing dynasties.

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NOTES

1 Benjamin March, *China and Japan in our Museums* (Concord, NH: Rumford Press, 1929).
2 Ibid., 7.
4 Charles Lang Freer to K. T. Wong, 28 February 1919.
6 For comprehensive documentation and colored images of Song and Yuan paintings and calligraphy in the Freer Gallery of Art go to www.asia.si.edu/SongYuan/default.asp.
7 Contrary to the view that Agnes Meyer first met the Detroit collector at a New York gallery opening in 1913, Freer and the Meyers were already acquainted in 1912. Freer and Eugene Meyer, Jr., were on a committee formed in December 1912 to establish an American school of archaeology in China under the joint auspices of the Archaeological Institute of America and the Smithsonian Institution. See Francis W. Kelsey to Freer, 20 December 1912. Freer dined with the Meyers that December. See telegram from Agnes E. Meyer to Freer, 28 December 1912, “Look forward to seeing you Monday evening we dine at seven thirty. Agnes E. Meyer.”
10 Freer first met Whistler on 4 March 1890 in London. See Freer’s diary, 4 March 1890, “London, lunch with Whistler.”
11 Judging from the accession number, the Ogata Kôrin fan (F1887.1) was Freer’s first acquisition in 1887.
12 See M. Knoedler and Company invoice, dated 11 November 1887, that records: 1 set *Venice: Second Series*, 26 etchings by Whistler (F1907.2–27). Note: the museum’s electronic database mistakenly gives provenance to Frederick Keppel and Company.
14 Ibid., 16, 65, 78, 81, 90, 122, 133, 142.
18 Seven Japanese prints acquired in 1904 remain in the collection today (F1904.437–443).
19 Freer Papers, Subseries 5.7: Art inventories—Prints—Japanese, box 62, folder 8, “List of Prints owned by Charles L. Freer.”
24 Chisolm, Fenollosa, 86.
27 Binyon, “National Character in Art.”
28 Ernest Fenollosa, Review of the Chapter on Painting in “L’Art Japonais” by L. Gonse (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1885).
29 See ibid. in Freer and Sackley Library [759.952 G6F32].
30 Whistler and Gonse exchanged letters in 1878. See Gonse to Whistler, 7 February 1878; Gonse to Whistler, 12 June 1878; Gonse to Whistler, 12 June 1878 (second letter); Whistler to Gonse, 13/20 June 1878, in the Glasgow University Library.
32 According to Kevin Nute, the role of Fenollosa and Morse as jurists for the exposition was reported in the Japanese newspaper Asahi Shim bun. See Nute, Frank Lloyd Wright, 49 and 69, fn. 8.
33 It was not until the 1915 Panama–Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco that Chinese art was included in the fine arts pavilion. See Benjamin March, China and Japan in Our Museums (New York: American Council Institute of Pacific Relations, 1929), 20–23.
35 Takayanagi’s invoice of 20 February 1893 lists fourteen glazed pots; Takayanagi’s invoice of 28 March 1893 lists seven miscellaneous Japanese objects of art; Takayanagi’s invoice of 12 June 1893 lists thirteen Japanese paintings and two Chinese paintings; R. E. Moon’s invoices of 8 and 14 December 1893 list twenty-nine miscellaneous Chinese and Japanese art objects.
36 See Takayanagi’s invoice of 12 June 1893. The other Chinese painting described as “Peony Flowers by Ming artist, signed with seals, 14th century,” was apparently removed from the collection. Freer began weeding out his collection first with Fenollosa in 1901 and continued with periodic “removals” until his death in 1919.
37 According to Freer’s diary, he visited the Columbian Exposition on 8–17 July, 2–3 October, and 9–15 October in 1893.
38 Fenollosa gave a public lecture at the exposition on 19 July and attended the International Congress of Education in Chicago that was timed to coincide with the world’s fair (25–28 July). See Nute, Frank Lloyd Wright, 49 and 69, fn. 8.
39 For discussion about the early Japanese art exhibitions at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, see Chisolm, Fenollosa, 91–93. In addition to the Hokusai catalogue, Fenollosa produced catalogues for other two of these exhibitions. See Museum of Fine Arts, Catalogue of Japanese Engravings: An Important Collection of Prints in Color Belonging to Mr. S. Bing, Paris, on exhibition at the American Art Galleries from Monday, March 12th until Saturday, March 24th, inclusive (New York: American Art Association, 1894), and Museum of Fine Arts, An Exhibition of Japanese Paintings and Metal Work, Lent by Mr. F. Shirasu of Tokio, Japan, Catalogue (Boston: Alfred Mudge and Son, 1894). Bing’s prints were shown at a gallery in New York following their May exhibition in Boston.
40 According to Freer’s diaries, he was in Boston 23 and 30 July 1892, 20–23 January 1893, 19 October 1893, and 7 and 9 July 1894.
41 See Museum of Fine Arts, Hokusai, in Freer and Sackley Library [759.952 B74].
See Fenollosa to Freer, 12 October 1902. In 1907 Freer acquired a second painting from the Daitokuji set while he was in Tokyo. See Zhou Jichang 周季章 (act. late twelfth century), Rock Bridge at Mount Tiantai, Southern Song dynasty, 1178, hanging scroll mounted on panel, ink and color on silk (F1907.139).


45 Other collectors who loaned works to the exhibition as identified in the catalogue credits include Charles J. Morse, Clarence Buckingham, George W. Vanderbilt, and Samuel Colman.

46 Freer to Ketcham, 23 January 1896. According to Freer’s 1896 diary, he was in New York 15–18 January and 26 January–5 February.


48 The non-members who loaned prints include Frederick Gookin, Clarence Buckingham, Samuel Colman, Charles J. Morse, T. E. Waggaman, and J. Alden Weir. See ibid., 23.

49 Freer to Mansfield, 16 March 1896. Freer’s titles and descriptions are consistent with catalogue nos. 49, 78, 100, 112, 123, 124, 132, and 133.

50 Ibid.

51 Mansfield to Freer, 25 May 1896.


53 Freer to Mansfield, 1 February 1898.


55 See "Freer ukiyo-e paintings exhibited by Fenollosa/Ketcham at the Fine Arts Building, New York in January 1896" (author unknown) found inside the Freer and Sackler Library copy of Fenollosa, Masters of Ukiyo.

56 Freer diary, 23 February to 1 March 1901.

57 Freer diary, 9 June to 25 July 1901.

58 Freer diary, 20 June 1901.

59 Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, appendix 3.

60 For more about Freer’s working relationship with Fenollosa see Lawton and Merrill, Freer, 131–51.

61 For more about Freer’s other colleagues and dealers see ibid., 99–129.


63 Ibid., 58–59.

64 According to the 1921 annual report, Freer’s gift included 804 Japanese paintings. See Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, appendix 3.


66 According to the Freer Gallery’s electronic database, twenty-four Chinese paintings remaining in the collection today were acquired between 1901 and 1908. Before reattributions, there were closer to four dozen paintings. Reattributed paintings include F1903.110, F1904.13, F1904.296–311, F1906.269, F1907.141, and F1907.148.


69 Fenollosa, Review, 11.

70 Ernest F. Fenollosa, “Chinese and Japanese Traits,” The Atlantic (June 1892), 771.

71 Freer to Frank J. Hecker, 17 September 1909.

72 Freer diary, 12 September to 12 October 1909.

73 Ma Jianong 馬建農, Beijing difangshi, fengwu zuishi congshu: Linda chuang 北京地方誌，風物圖志叢書：琉璃窯 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2006), 120.

74 Huo Mingzhi, a missionary-educated Chinese dealer, opened a gallery in Peking around 1906 or 1907. See Paul Hou-Ming Tse (Paul Huo Mingzhi), Preuves des Antiquités Chine (Peking, 1930), introduction, and R. H. van Gulik, Chinese Pictorial Art (Rome: Instituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958), 467.

75 Freer acquired 199 paintings from Loon Gu Sai (128), Riu Cheng Chai (27), Pao Ming Sai (19), Mr. Ho (6), Pang Shou Ting (4), and a few each from Wah Fung, Wan Ye Shun, and Ta Guian Sai.

76 Freer to Hecker, 27 September 1909.
Freer acquired Hunters on Horseback, an anonymous Jin-dynasty hanging scroll (F1909.160), and Travelers in a Winter Landscape, a Southern Song album leaf (F1909.244), from Loon Gu Sai. He also purchased Zhongli Quan Seeking the Dao, an anonymous Jin-dynasty hanging scroll (F1909.168), from Riu Cheng Chai in Peking.

One example is the long handscroll Wang Wei’s Villa at Wangguan (F1909.207) acquired from Riu Cheng Chai as a Yuan-dynasty painting by Wang Meng (ca. 1301–1385) that is now accepted as a work by the Ming artist Song Xu (1523–1605). See Lawton and Merrill, Freer, 86, fig. 59.

For more about Duanfang’s Han ancestry see Edward J. M. Rhoads, Manchus and Han: Ethnic Relations and Political Power in Late Qing and Early Republican China, 1861–1928 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 55.


For more about the relationship between officials in the Qing court and Liulichang see Yang Renkai 杨仁恺. Guobao chenfou huang du ben 国宝档案录：精读本. (Shanghai: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 2008).

Freer diary, 9 October 1909.

Freer diary, 9 and 12 October 1910. For more about Lucy Calhoun, a collector of textiles and a long-term resident in China, see Elinor Pearlstein, “Color, Life, and Moment,” Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies 26, no. 2: Clothed to Rule the Universe: Ming and Qing Dynasty Textiles at the Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2000), 80–93, 106–12.

This painting was first published by Taki Sei-ichi, “Art Treasure in the Collection of Mr. Tuan-fang, Ex-Viceroy of Chih-li,” Kokka 250 (March 1911), 263–64. It is interesting to note that Freer acquired the painting before Duanfang was assassinated in November 1911.

Wang Keyu 汪阿玉 (1587–after 1643), Shanhuang hualu 珊瑚画录 (preface 1643) (China: Shiyuan congshu 道原叢書, 1914–16), 30, 88–9a.

Freer to Agnes E. Meyer, 22 March 1915. Freer explained that his famous Juran handscroll was “once owned by Pang [Yuanji] and by him sold to H. E. Tuan Fang from whom I bought it.”


Ibid., iii. I thank Lara Netting for sharing her research.

Cable from Ferguson to Freer, 19 May 1914; letter from Ferguson to Freer, 26 May 1914.

Lawton and Merrill, Freer, 93.

Freer was escorted to New Chang Road by Pang’s associate, the dealer Lee Van Ching (Li Wenqing 李文卿; ca. 1869–1931). Freer diary, 14 January 1911.

Chen Dingshan (b. 1897), Chunsheh jiuwen 春申舊聞 (Taipei: Chen giugang yuekan chuban she, 1964), 150. Chen Dingshan was a collector and an acquaintance of Pang Yuanji. I thank Katharine P. Burnett for sharing her research about Pang Yuanji. See Katharine P. Burnett, Pang Yuanji as Artist and Patron of the Arts (forthcoming), 4–5.

Freer diary, 5 January to 20 February 1911.

According to a manuscript written by A. W. Bahr, he met the Detroit collector during Freer’s “first trip” to China when Count D. Pecorini introduced them. Freer was invited to Bahr’s house at Helen Terrace, Willscote, and after admiring a small collection of bronze objects in the drawing room offered to buy the lot. Freer then encouraged Bahr to devote his life to collecting and dealing in early Chinese art. See A. W. Bahr Papers, Freer and Sackler Archives, Bahr Manuscript 1: 22–23. Bahr’s name is first penciled into Freer’s diary on 22 October during his 1909 stay in Shanghai.

During Freer’s 1910–11 trip to China, most of his painting acquisitions were made from Loon Gu Sai (76), Riu Cheng Chai (37), and Lee Van Ching (84).

In 1965 James Cahill, associate curator of Chinese art at the Freer Gallery of Art, created a comprehensive list of Chinese paintings that documented the original attribution, any changes made in attribution after 1919, and present attributions. According to Cahill’s list, 237 of the 290 paintings acquired by Freer during his second trip to China were attributed to pre-Ming artists as follows: Six Dynasties (1), Tang (23), Five Dynasties (12), Song (145), Yuan (56), Ming (27), Qing (2), and uncertain (24).
99 Song: F1911.155a, F1911.155b, F1911.155d, F1911.155g, F1911.155h, F1911.161a, F1911.168, F1911.195, F1911.199; Yuan: F1911.161c, F1911.161e, F1911.209, F1911.295. Six of these were purchased from Loon Gu Sai, five from Lee Van Ching, and one each from Cheng Kuan and Shu Gu Sai.

100 Lawton and Merrill, Freer, 203.

101 One of the scrolls, a figure painting by Tang Yin (1470–1524), is currently in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. See Bahr Papers, Freer and Sackler Archives, Bahr Manuscript 2: 138–40. I thank Dr. Thomas Lawton for urging me to read this manuscript.

102 Anonymous, Vaisravana, Guardian King of the North, Yuan-Ming dynasties, late fourteenth century, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk (F1914.147a).

103 Pang Laichen (Pang Yuanji), Biographies of Famous Chinese Paintings from the Private Collections of Mr. L. C. Pang (Shanghai: Mercantile Printing, 1915), Lee Hung-yee (Lee Van Ching), Description of Famous Chinese Paintings from the Very Large Collection of Mr. Lee Van Ching, Van Yeu Tsar Curios Store (Shanghai: Mercantile Printing, 1915).

104 See Freer to Trask, 17 May 1915. Ironically, Freer recommended Trask for his position as chief of fine arts at the Panama-Pacific Exposition. Trask to Freer, 23 August 1912; Freer to Trask, 27 August 1912.

105 The official guide to the Panama-Pacific Exposition in 1915 lists two Chinese painting collections. Both were published in catalogues. One collection featured modern reproductions of forty-two traditional Chinese paintings and two hundred ceramics. Some of the paintings were listed as copies of works in the collections of Pang Yuanji, Duangfong, and others, leading some scholars to mistakenly conclude that Pang’s collection was shown at the Panama-Pacific Exposition. See Shen Tun-ho (Shen Zhongli 沈仲禮) and Shen Tin-chen (Shen Dingchen 沈鼎臣), A Selection from Modern Chinese Arts for the Panama-Pacific International Exhibition (Zhongguo xin meishupin liuying 中國新美術品留影) (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1915), painting nos. 1–42. A rough count of the 358 paintings in the second collection indicates that two-thirds were from the Ming and Qing dynasties. See Liu Sung Fu 劉松甫 and Florence Wheelock Ayscough (1878–1942), Catalogue of Chinese Paintings Ancient and Modern exhibited at the China Pavilion [Zhongguo gujin mingren tuhua lu 中國古今名人圖畫錄], Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco (Shanghai: Oriental Press, 1915).

106 Confusion about the relationship between Pang Yuanji and Pang Zanchen is possibly due to the mistranslation of Chinese correspondence into English. In Pang Yuanji’s Chinese letters to Freer, he refers to Pang Zanchen as his jiaji 家弟 or younger brother. This was translated “cousin” in an English version of the letter. See Pang Yuanji’s original Chinese letter to Freer dated 5 October 1916. John Ferguson’s letter to Freer on 3 March 1915 also identifies Pang Zanchen as Pang Yuanji’s brother.


108 In the back pages of Freer’s 1915 diary he recorded the New York address of C. T. Loo and Company.

109 Freer diary, 29 April 1915.

110 According to a voucher dated 11 May 1915, five days earlier, on 6 May, Freer transferred $16,500 to a bank in Shanghai for thirteen paintings he purchased from the Pang Collection while he was in San Francisco in late April. According to a memo dated 3 June 1915, Freer sent two of these paintings (Pang catalogue nos. 13 and 55) to Eugene Meyer, Jr, and was reimbursed $4,800 by Mr. Meyer.


112 Agnes Meyer to Freer, 21 March 1915.


114 See Freer voucher dated 24 January 1916 for 100 Chinese paintings bought from Lee Van Ching’s catalogue.

115 Of the 120 paintings listed in Pang Yuanji’s catalogue, 99 were identified as Yuan dynasty or earlier works. Of the 100 paintings featured in Lee Van Ching’s catalogue, 97 were identified as Yuan dynasty or earlier.

117 Freer diary, 15 November 1916. Letter in Chinese from Pang Yuanji to Freer, 5 October 1916, in which he introduces Seakoue Yue as "a friend with a valuable collection of antiques" who would accompany his brother, Pang Zanchen, to the United States.

118 The accession numbers for the paintings Freer acquired from Pang in 1916 are F1916.520–539. The two Song-dynasty handscrolls (F1916.538 and F1916.539) were not listed in the catalogue.


120 Duan Yong 段勇, Qianlong "Shan'ai" yu "Sanyou 乾隆『四美』與『三友』" (Beijing: Forbidden City Publishers, 2008).


124 F. S. Kwen (Guan Fuchu 閩復初), comp., Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient and Genuine Chinese Paintings (Guhua liuzhen 古畫錄) (Shanghai: Laiyuan Company, 1916).

125 Freer to Agnes Meyer, 10 October 1916.


127 Wanyan Jingxian’s life dates have long been a mystery. For these dates see Xie Wei 謝巍, Zhongguo liuxue zhihua kaolu 中國學會著作考錄 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1998), 691.

128 The paintings with Wanyan Jingxian seals that Freer already owned from Duanfang’s collection in 1916 were Ten Thousand Li Along the Yangzi River (fig. 15), Nymph of the Luo River (fig. 18), Clearing Skies Over Mountains and Valleys (fig. 25), and Shu River (fig. 26).

129 Freer to Agnes Meyer, 24 October 1916.

130 Freer to Bosch-Reitz, 27 October 1916.

131 Kwen, Descriptive Catalogue, cat. no. 60.

132 For a detailed discussion of the Five Old Men of Suiyang album and the colophon, see Thomas Lawton, Chinese Figure Painting (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1973), 164–70.


134 C. F. Yau or Yao Shulai was the younger brother of Zhang Jingjiang’s wife, Yao Hui 姚慧, and he became the Paris manager of Tonying and Company in 1910. Four years later, in 1914, C. F. Yau opened the New York branch of Tonying and Company. See Zheng Zhong, “Yiju siju nianqian.” It is interesting to note that C. F. Yau co-authored the catalogue of Ada Small Moore’s Chinese painting collection in 1940; see Hackney and Yau, A Study of Chinese Paintings.


138 Cohen, East Asian Art, fig. 18.


140 For more about Freer’s exhibitions see Lawton and Merrill, Freer, 207–30.

141 F. Allen Whiting to Freer, 20 September 1915; Freer to Whiting, 20 September 1915.

142 "Mr. Freer’s Gift to the Minneapolis Institute," New York Times, 12 August 1917.

143 Freer to Agnes Meyer, 8 February 1918.

144 Freer to Agnes Meyer, 30 March 1915. "As you wrote in 297" refers to the art magazine started by Agnes Meyer and others in the circle of Alfred Stieglitz.
(1864–1946) in March 1915 following the suspension of publication of *Camera Work*.

145 For a discussion of this and four other Freer Gallery paintings previously in An Qi's collection see Thomas Lawton, "Notes on Five Paintings from a Ch'ing Dynasty Collection," *Ars Orientalis* 8 (1970), 191–215. The paintings attributed to Li Shan and Li Gonglin that the Meyers acquired from Pang Yuanji in 1915 and gifted to the Freer Gallery in the 1960s were also previously in An Qi's collection.

146 See Freer to Seouke Yue, 29 January 1917: "I have enjoyed looking at the five scroll paintings belonging to the gentleman of Peking," Freer to Seouke Yue, 26 March 1917: "I have your cablegram advising me of the purchase of the five Chinese scrolls. ... I have added $500 commission to yourself and Mr. Pang."

147 See file with 1917 vouchers for cards left by Seouke Yue on 18 January.

148 The undated luohan can be grouped with the dated paintings based upon similarities in the brushwork, composition, dimensions, and quality of the silk. Additional unique features that link all four paintings and suggest origins from the same workshop include a series of black dash strokes running along the silk edge (to map out the space required for each composition to facilitate uniformity in size) and a seam five to six inches from the right or left edge to extend the silk.

149 See Freer to Seouke Yue, 3 September 1919.

150 Seven other known paintings from this set have the 1345 date, *Kanaka Bharadvaja* (third luohan) in Michael B. Weisbrod, *Weisbrod Tenth Anniversary Exhibition* (New York: Michael B. Weisbrod, 1986), cat. no. 42; *Subhinda* (fourth luohan) in *Kokka* 8 (March 1918), 260, 264; *Bhadra* (sixth luohan) in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (purchased from A. W. Bahr in 1948; unpublished); *Vajraputra* (eighth luohan) in Zhongguo gudai shuhua jian ding zubian 中國古代書畫鑑定組編, *Zhongguo gudai shuhua tumu* 6 中國古代書畫圖目（六） (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1987), Su 18–05 (gifted to Nanjing University by John C. Ferguson); *Ingada* (thirteenth luohan), in Roderick Whitfield, "The Luohan in China," *Mahayanist Art After A.D. 900* (London: Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, 1972), 96–100, 123, figs. 19a–c (purchased by the British Museum from N.Y. Hammer in 1962); and *Cuda-Pan-thaka* (sixteenth luohan) and *Nandimitra* (eighteenth luohan) in Zhongguo gudai shuhua jian ding zubian 中國古代書畫鑑定組編, *Zhongguo gudai shuhua tumu* 2 中國古代書畫圖目（二） (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1987), Hu 1–270 and Hu 1–269, respectively (both paintings are in the Shanghai Museum).

151 Fenollosa to Freer, 19 September 1906.

152 The handscroll by Xia Gui was later reattributed as an anonymous fifteenth- to sixteenth-century painting of the Ming dynasty. The Li Longmians were reattributed to the Japanese artist Ryôzen (act. ca. 1328–ca. 1360). Lawton and Merrill, *Freer*, 104–107, figs. 70 and 71.


154 These numbers are the result of a ten-year project to catalogue the Song and Yuan paintings in the Freer Gallery of Art led by Joseph Chang (Zhang Zining 張子寧), former associate curator of Chinese art, with research specialists Stephen D. Allee and Ingrid Larsen.
ILLUSTRATIONS OF ROMANCE OF THE WESTERN CHAMBER ON CHINESE PORCELAINS

Iconography, Style, and Development

Abstract
Scenes from Romance of the Western Chamber have decorated Chinese porcelain from the thirteenth into the twenty-first century. This research compares and contrasts porcelain decoration with the formal and stylistic development of this romantic tale in literature, performances, and artistic media of paintings and woodblock prints. It identifies and explicates numerous subjects of porcelain decoration that previously have not been well understood. It also verifies some characteristic features of porcelain decoration from different periods and considers the dating of porcelains from the late Ming and into the early Qing dynasty. By examining selected scenes from Romance of the Western Chamber, this study offers a better understanding of the history of Chinese porcelain decoration as well as characteristics of Chinese narrative art as a whole.

LITERATURE HAS BEEN A VERY IMPORTANT SOURCE of inspiration for the creation of Chinese art since the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE). Among the literary works that were influential in later Chinese art is Romance of the Western Chamber (Xixiangji 西廬記, also translated as Story of the Western Wing; hereafter cited as Western Chamber), a tale that originated in the Tang dynasty (618-907) and evolved into a popular drama in the thirteenth century. Frequently used as a subject in the visual arts, it has attracted the attention of painters and decorators in different schools and media since the Song dynasty (960-1279). The most well known works among these are the forty various editions of woodblock prints of the Western Chamber that were published in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and contain some of the most innovative and exquisite illustrations produced in China.1

Themes from this romance also became one of the most fascinating and popular sources of decorative motifs on Chinese porcelains in the Ming and into the Qing dynasty (1644-1911).2 While most studies on this subject have focused on porcelains of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, those of other periods have been largely overlooked and neglected. Although many decorative scenes from the story have been recognized on porcelains, some motifs still remain unstudied. In addition, many questions and problems concerning the iconography of scenes with regard to their identification, interpretation, and chronology of appearance on porcelains also are unsolved and require further examination and clarification. The present study will focus on how this romance was illustrated on Chinese porcelain and will help to develop a better understanding of certain salient features of porcelain decoration and to serve as a reference for further research on Chinese narrative art.
Following a brief introduction to the *Western Chamber*, the discussion in the present study is divided into six parts.

I. The emergence of new images of women in Chinese porcelain decoration, including their identification and styles.

II. The shift in emphasis from “beautiful women” to “major scenes” in the Ming dynasty.

III. The formation of new fashions in porcelain decoration from the Shunzhi 順治 (1644–1661) to Kangxi 康熙 (1661–1722) periods.

IV. The influence of performances and local dramas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

V. The participation of professional painters in the creation of “art pottery” in the modern period.

VI. Trading in forgeries and the phenomena of studio pottery.

The research compares and contrasts porcelain decoration to the development of this drama in literature, other performance media, woodblock prints, and paintings. The present study identifies and interprets major decorative scenes, analyzes the styles and sources of the images, and treats the problem of dating Chinese porcelains from the so-called Transitional Period. In other words, it uses the *Western Chamber* as the focal point of investigation and attempts to understand the impact of this literary work on the art of Chinese ceramic decoration. It looks at how the changing choices of artisans in scenes, themes, iconography, and style reveal a clear evolution paralleling that of the literary work itself as well as artistic fashions. Thus, the study explores the complicated phenomenon of how porcelain decoration reflected changing literary conditions and artistic styles, yet it also retained its own characteristics throughout the centuries.

**Introduction to Romance of the Western Chamber**

The *Romance of the Western Chamber* is considered to be “China’s most popular love comedy” and “at the same time highly popular as reading matter.” The content of the story was formulated over a long period of time, and its literary style evolved through many different forms before it was finally written down as a drama in the thirteenth century. This story originated from a piece of short prose fiction titled *Yingying zhuan* 鶯鶯傳 (The Story of Yingying [Little Oriole]) written by the Tang-dynasty poet Yuan Zhen 元禎 (779–831). It relates the tragic love affair between a young scholar, Zhang Sheng 張生 (“Student Zhang”), and the beautiful young lady Yingying 鶯鶯. Both characters reside at the Pujiu普救 (“Universal Salvation”) Temple near the Tang-dynasty capital of Chang’an. In the
story, Zhang Sheng abandons his lover once he passes the official examinations in the capital.

The Story of Yingying is a complicated love story that provokes different ways of interpretation. Stephen Owen, for example, points out that it is difficult to read the story without taking sides, or at least without deciding which side the story really takes. Some scholars also accept that it is an autobiographical work of the author Yuan Zhen. Others, however, think that such an interpretation ignores the values inherent in Tang love stories, which were as or more powerful than the Confucian pieties by which Zhang excuses his actions at the end of the story. In any case, if it is not an actual biography, it is a recreation with psychological verisimilitude unparalleled in its time.

The story circulated widely during the Tang and Song dynasties, when it was a popular subject in poetry. Many of these poems were the lyrics to musicals and dance performances in public houses. During the Southern Song era (1127–1279) and the occupation of northern China under the Jin dynasty (1115–1234), Yingying's story was adapted for the stage in the form of zaju 杂剧 (“miscellaneous play”), a style of drama that further developed and reached its golden age in the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). Song scholars, however, saw the story differently from their Tang predecessors; instead of articulating social mores, they held a sympathetic view of Yingying as a tragic victim of love.

During the Jin dynasty, a scholar by the name Dong Jieyuan 董解元 (“Master Dong”) enlarged and enriched the Story of Yingying into the popular “storytelling text” (shuoshu huaben 說書話本) format. His Xixiangji zhugongdiao 西廂記諸宮調 (Medley of Romance of the Western Chamber) was written in a mixture of vernacular dialogue, classical verse, and prose. Dong's version, also known as Master Dong's Western Chamber Romance (Dong Xi xiang 西西廂), is the sole “storytelling text” that has survived in its entirety. In the book, Dong Jieyuan uses many literary devices and innovations of plot and character to create and enrich the Story of Yingying. More significantly, he also converted the tragic ending of the original story to a happy one with the marriage of Zhang Sheng and Yingying.

In the Yuan dynasty, Wang Shifu 王實甫 (active 1295–1307) expanded Dong's text into a play with five parts, each containing four acts. With a total of twenty acts (some editions divide the text into twenty-one or twenty-two acts), it forms the longest zaju of that period. In this play, Zhang Sheng is a poor but aspiring scholar, while Yingying is the daughter of a former Tang-dynasty prime minister. On his way to the capital to take the civil service examination, Zhang Sheng stops at the Pujiu Temple where Yingying and her mother also happen to be staying. There, he catches sight of Yingying and instantly loses his heart to her. During an incident in which the temple is attacked by a fierce local warlord known as “Sun, the Flying
Tiger” (Sun Feihu 孫飛虎), Zhang Sheng proves himself worthy by resolving the crisis and saving Yingying from being abducted by the warlord. To Zhang's dismay, Madame Cui (Yingying's mother) later breaks her original promise of giving Yingying's hand to him in marriage as a reward for his heroism. Yingying's maid Hongniang (紅娘 (“Crimson Maiden”) sympathizes with the two young lovers and acts as a go-between, sending letters and arranging a rendezvous for them. When Madame Cui discovers their secret love affair, she demands Zhang pass the government examination in the capital as a condition for her approval to marry Yingying. Eventually, all is well. Zhang Sheng passes the examination, is appointed to high office in the imperial government, and marries Yingying. The central message of this play thus became “Let all lovers in the world be united as husband and wife” (願天下有情人皆成眷屬), which is written as the last line in the text. This suggests the main concern of the play was the right of young people to choose their own mate, instead of being forced into arranged marriages.

Wang's drama represents the final development of Yingying's story and is the standard version of the romance that most people know today. In order to distinguish this Yuan version from the Dong Jieyuan one, it is sometimes called Wang Xixiang 王西厢 (Master Wang's Western Chamber Romance). It is also called Bei Xixiang ji 北西厢記 (Northern Version of Romance of the Western Chamber), as it was written in the style of beiqu 北曲 (“Northern Drama”) popular during the Yuan dynasty, in contrast to what was popular in the southern part of China (nanqu 南曲, or “Southern Drama”) later in the Ming dynasty.

Even though the Western Chamber enjoyed tremendous popularity during the Ming and Qing dynasties, it was frequently banned from the stage and publishing houses by the government because of its provocative views and descriptions of physical love. Today, the Western Chamber is highly regarded as one of the best and most important literary works in Chinese history. Its dramatic content, vivid and lively use of dialogue, rational and well-structured composition, and use of elegant and descriptive poetry and prose make it a dramatic masterpiece surpassed by few others.

I. The Emergence of New Female Images on Porcelains: Identification and Styles

In the history of Chinese porcelain decoration, figural subjects developed significantly later than plant or animal motifs. Most figurals images on early Chinese porcelains are of religious men, mythical characters, or children of auspicious connotation. It was not until the Song dynasty that imagery with literary and historical content became more common and that images of women related to them began to appear, mainly on Cizhou 磁州 pillows. In the early development of Chinese figure
painting, moral and didactic values were emphasized, so most female figures were in the *henü* 烈女 ("Exemplary Women") category. During the mid-Tang period, an interest in daily life generated the new category of *shinü hua* 仕女畫 ("Paintings of Beautiful Women"). This subject in painting had a substantial influence and was utilized as a decorative motif on all manners of Chinese art objects. The following shows how early representations of scenes from the *Western Chamber* developed into porcelain decoration. It began, for example, by focusing on the female figure type of *shinü* 仕女 (Beautiful Women), but instead of depicting women as submissive, demure, and unassertive, as commonly seen in Chinese paintings, the female images from this drama were depicted on porcelains as more independent and self-assertive. They are the heroines in literature where "love" is the sole subject and central theme.

In the history of disseminating the *Western Chamber*, the story was already widely known among scholars and entertainers in the Song dynasty. Furthermore, commoners became familiar with it through stage performances and poems written as lyrics intended for musical and dance performances in public playhouses. From existing titles of Song-dynasty *zaaju*, we also know that *Romance of the Western Chamber* had already been adapted as a play based on the story.

Similarly, in northern China during the Jin dynasty, Yingying's story was also much enjoyed. This is verified by the discovery in the ruins of Pujiu Temple of a stone slab inscribed with a poem dedicated to the memory of Yingying. The poem was written by the Jin scholar-official Wang Zhongtong 王仲通 around 1170. This was thirty years before the stone slab was erected and about twenty years before Master Dong's version of the *Western Chamber* was published (circa 1190–1208). This slab thus confirms the popularity of Yingying's story before Wang Shifu wrote his *Western Chamber* in the Yuan dynasty.

During this era, the adaptation of scenes from the story into visual art forms was also popular. Records of Yingying's "portrait" and illustrations of her story by Song and Yuan painters are found in texts and in woodblock prints of the Ming and Qing periods. Given these circumstances, it is not surprising to find that porcelains were also decorated with scenes from this story. "Yingying Burning Nighttime Incense" and "Hongniang in the Dock," for example, are two scenes that can be found on porcelains of the Jin and Yuan dynasties. Their iconography and evolution of styles deserve further attention and examination.

1. "Yingying Burning Nighttime Incense"

The earliest example of a piece of porcelain decorated with a scene from this story is a Cizhou pillow dating to the thirteenth century during the Jin dynasty (fig. 1). The flat top of this oblong pillow, enclosed in a cloud-shaped frame, is painted with a scene that can be identified as Yingying burning nighttime incense in a garden.
According to Master Dong’s Western Chamber, one night Zhang Sheng secretly watches Yingying as she burns nighttime incense in the garden. He suddenly begins to chant verses to her, to which she promptly chants in response. In the verse, Zhang expresses his love for her, and she in turn implies her acceptance of him as a suitor. In the text is a prose section that vividly describes Yingying’s lovely appearance when she performs the ceremony of burning incense. She is described as wearing “a tight-fitting jacket setting her shapely figure to advantage. Again and again, she bowed to the moon.”

On the pillow, in a simple and spacious composition, Yingying is seen dressed up and standing behind an incense table in the garden, accompanied by her maid Hongniang. This scene well fits the description in the text.

To confirm the identification of this subject, it is useful to compare it to the woodblock print illustration of the Western Chamber in the anthology of act-plays Xinkan yaoji guanchang zhuoqi fengyue jinnang zhengzi liangke quanj. 新刊耀目冠場描奇風月錦囊正雜四科全集 (Complete works of the newly printed, eye-catching, best, extracted marvels of wise counsel to amorous affairs), published in 1533 (fig. 2). In this illustration and located in the upper register of the page (with the picture above and text below), Yingying stands in a garden that is surrounded by a brick wall. Posed in front of an incense table, she turns back to look at Hongniang. The four-character title Yingying zhuxiang (‘Yingying Burning Incense’) is printed in the top frame to indicate the subject. In addition, a seven-character couplet summarizing the contents appears on both sides of the picture frame. Although there is no inscription of a title for the thirteenth-century Cizhou pillow, similarities in overall composition to the sixteenth-century woodblock print help relate the two and identify the theme of the pillow.

Two works that emerged at a later date, showing Yingying burning nighttime incense, also include inscriptions that specify the theme, thereby helping to identify the subject. The first is the painting Qianjiu jueyan tu 千秋絕豔圖 (Painting of Peerless Beauties in History) from the late Ming dynasty (fig. 3). It depicts more than fifty-seven women in different poses or activities, such as standing, sitting, dancing, and playing musical instruments. These women are either histori-


The scene of Yingying burning incense in a garden, in a composition similar to the painting just mentioned, appears again on an enameled vase of a much later date (fig. 4). This vase is painted with four figural scenes of equal size around the sides; each is in an oblong cloud-shaped panel surrounded by dense, richly colored floral motifs in a Western style. One scene shows Yingying in the garden outside a house with a round window. She is leaning across an incense table and raising one hand in a gesture of praying under a full moon high above. A poem relating to the episode of “Yingying Praying to the Moon” from the romance is inscribed on the vase. This poem carries the signature of Liu Yong 劉墉, a celebrated figure of the Qianlong period (1736–1795). Judging from the decorative style and the shape of the vase, however, it is more likely to have been produced in a later period, perhaps in the nineteenth or early twentieth century. In both the above painting and the vase, Yingying appears alone without the company of Hongniang. Nevertheless, these motifs provide further evidence to identify the subject of decoration on the Cizhou piece, thus confirming the longstanding popularity of Yingying in this context.

As seen above, the image of Yingying burning incense in a garden achieved symbolic representation in Chinese art, and it can help identify ceramic decoration devoted to this subject that has been found from the Yuan and early Ming periods. Reflecting the interests of people in the Yuan dynasty, scenes from literature and drama suddenly became fashionable as decorative motifs on so-called Zhizheng type porcelain, the highest quality blue-and-white porcelain produced during the Zhizheng period (1341–1367). In this type of porcelain are two pieces that depict Yingying burning incense in a garden. One is a bulging jar, and the other is a vase traditionally called a *meiping* 梅瓶 ("plum-blossom vase") (fig. 5). On both the jar and the vase, Yingying stands alone in the garden in front of an incense

In the mid-Ming period, after an apparent hiatus, the scene of Yingying burning incense reemerged as a form of decoration on porcelain, and this coincides with the increase in figural scenes on porcelains at the time. This could perhaps be due to the fact that cobalt blue was then of better quality and thus more suitable for painting figural subjects. At that time, the Yingying scene seems to have become a favored motif and can be seen, for instance, on a drum-shaped blue-and-white censer of the Tianshun 天順 (1457–1464) to Chenghua 成化 (1465–1488) periods, as well as a two blue-and-white plates of the Jingtai 景泰 (1450–1457) and Hongzhi 弘治 (1488–1505) reigns, respectively (fig. 6). Compared to porcelains of the Yuan dynasty, the quality of those produced in private kilns during the Ming dynasty deteriorated sharply. This was partly due to government restrictions as well as to the establishment of the imperial kiln in Jingdezhen 景德鎮, where most of the skilled potters would have been summoned to work. These Ming pieces are in sharp contrast to the refined and vigorous style of the Yuan dynasty. The decorations on this group of porcelains appear simple and crude, yet the interpretation is still quite vivid and expressive. For example, on the Hongzhi plate, the decoration is free and spontaneous, with flowing lines comparable to those in cursive script calligraphy (fig. 6). Landscape elements in the decoration tend to be quite exaggerated, painted in an abstract, unrecognizable, and sometimes upside-down manner, yet exuding a sense of flow and freedom.

After the mid-Ming period, decorations on porcelains with the subject of "Yingying Burning Nighttime Incense" seem to decline in popularity as new modes of representation emerged under the influence of contemporary woodblock print illustrations. Instead of depicting Yingying burning incense alone or being accompanied by Hongniang, these new scenes include Zhang Sheng in the composition, as the emphasis apparently shifted from the theme of "Yingying burning incense" to "Zhang Sheng chanting a poem and Yingying responding." Where similar motifs are found, the representations are so ambiguous that it is hard to attribute them to any particular story. I posit that they are more likely related to literary works other than the Western Chamber, since the theme of burning nighttime incense had become common in many new dramas of the late Ming period.
During the Xuande 宣德 (1426–1435) and Chenghua (1465–1487) periods, many new scenes of women burning nighttime incense in a garden setting can be found on porcelains, but these may include the celestial lovers niulang zhinui 牛郎織女 (“Cowherd and Weaving Maiden”) of folklore. According to Chinese legend, these two lovers are separated by the Emperor of the Heavens, who allows them to meet only once a year on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month in what has popularly become known as Chinese Lovers’ Day. This kind of decoration, however, is not to be confused with “Yingying Burning Nighttime Incense.” The former usually includes a number of ladies engaging in various activities in addition to burning incense, and it also features symbols of constellations in the sky. The imagery from both stories, however, carries the symbolic meaning of women praying to find a loving husband and nuptial bliss. The theme of Yingying burning nighttime incense, in fact, plays a key role in the development of the story of the Western Chamber. It happens twice in the text of Wang’s Western Chamber—in part I, act 3 (“A Poem and Its Response”) and in part III, act 3 (“Repudiation of the Billet-Doux”). The importance of this theme in the text, as well as its auspicious connotations, thus account for its popularity as a decorative motif on porcelains of the Yuan and Ming dynasties.

2. “Hongniang in the Dock”

A much more vigorous and dramatic scene than burning nighttime incense is found on the other side of the meiping vase mentioned above (fig. 7). This scene shows two women standing in a garden; the woman on the left holds a whip, while the other one covers her face with her sleeves in a gesture of weeping. The theme of this decoration can be accepted as “Hongniang in the Dock” from the Western Chamber (part IV, act 2). Of all the surviving Yuan dramas, the Western Chamber is probably the only one that highlights both a young lady burning incense and a maid being beaten by her old mistress (in separate acts). The difference in appearance between the woman who is elaborately dressed and the maid in much plainer clothing on the other side of the vase is sufficiently clear; they are not to be confused as the same person, as sometimes happens in other Yuan dramas with similar themes.

The act of “Hongniang in the Dock” also concerns Madame Cui, who becomes suspicious of her daughter’s behavior and one day strikes the maid Hongniang in order to secure a confession. Having confessed, Hongniang persuades Madame Cui to accept Zhang Sheng as her son-in-law, whereupon Madame Cui decides that Zhang Sheng must first take the imperial examinations and receive an official appointment before he may marry her daughter. Being witty, cunning, and righteous, Hongniang plays a key role in the Western Chamber. She not only delivers love letters between Zhang Sheng and Yingying and arranges a rendezvous for
them, but she also argues their case to Madame Cui, thus influencing the outcome of the love affair and the ending of the story. For her conduct, Hongniang was later singled out and regarded as the heroine of the story. After the mid-Ming period, when dramatic performances took the form of selected acts from one or various plays instead of one entire play, the act “Hongniang in the Dock” became a favorite. Its popularity increased with time and is still often performed on stage. In fact, the name Hongniang has become a synonym in Chinese for a go-between who mediates between men and women for a prospective marriage.

The scene “Hongniang in the Dock” remained a popular decorative theme on Chinese porcelain throughout the Qing dynasty. One such example is a plate that can be dated to the Shunzhi period (fig. 8). The composition is very different from that on the meiping vase of the Yuan dynasty and is more faithful to the text of the drama. Instead of placing the figures in a garden with a rock, plants, and a pavilion, this interior scene takes place in a room facing the garden. Madame Cui sits on a stool holding a stick with her son Huanglang standing beside her. Hongniang kneels on the floor in front of Madame Cui, while a hidden Yingying peeps out from behind the screen. A verse of four lines from the play is written on the screen to help identify the subject.

The style and composition of this illustration are comparable to those in the woodblock print of Gelin shici 樂林詩録 (Selected Examples of Songs and Lyrics), published in the sixteenth year of the Shunzhi period, or 1659 (fig. 9). This woodblock print focuses on a close-up view of the scene inside the building and omits the garden surroundings seen on the dish. Judging from their similarities, it is quite clear that the porcelain decoration is an imitation of the woodblock print, with their mirror-image visual relationship caused by the technique of applying designs on porcelain. Their similarity in composition and style not only confirms that the plate was most likely produced around 1659, but it also suggests that its decorative pattern and that on the Yuan dynasty meiping vase derive from different sources: the former was copied from a woodblock print, while the latter was likely inspired directly from a stage performance. The former reflects in large part the print designer’s imagination and understanding of the story, while the latter is simple in background and symbolic in posture and gesture, demonstrating elements of Chinese drama.
3. Evolution of Styles

Before the late Ming period, the decoration of dramatic scenes on porcelains was mainly drawn from two sources—paintings on silk or paper and performances on stage. It is believed that paintings of popular stories originated in or were inspired by the ancient tradition whereby story narrators held up pictures to the audience during performances in order to enhance their interest. Consequently, paintings of scenes from the Western Chamber must have been produced for storytellers in the Song and Jin periods, since this story was already very popular at that time. Although no actual paintings on this theme from the period have survived, textual evidence from later periods suggests their existence. One such example that helps to confirm this theory comes from a mid-Ming woodblock print illustration in Xixiangji zalu (Anthology of Miscellaneous Poems from Romance of the Western Chamber), published in 1569 (fig. 10). The print shows the encounter of Zhang Sheng and Yingying in a garden from part I, act I (“Beauty’s Enchantment”) and is inscribed with the title Songben huizhentu 宋本會真圖 (“Song Painting of Meeting a Fairy”), thus attributing the origin of this illustration to a painting from the Song dynasty (when the story of Yingying was also known as Huizhenji 會真記, or Romance of Meeting a Fairy). In this print Zhang Sheng is accompanied by a monk and Yingying by Hongniang; the pairs are divided by a garden wall. Although this print is probably a reproduction of the original painting by a Ming painter, it features elements comparable to Song painting and to decoration on Cizhou ware. For example, the method of depicting the scene from an elevated angle, so that the viewer looks down from a higher position, was often used by painters illustrating narrative themes in the Song dynasty. The way figures are depicted in the middle of a wide-open space filled with landscape elements further suggests the importance of landscape in the painting, also an invention of the Song period. Although we cannot know whether this illustration was really executed after a Song-dynasty painting or not, at least it indicates the Ming tradition of attributing this kind of picture to the Song dynasty.
It has been common practice for decorators of Chinese pottery to emulate and copy motifs found in brush painting. This phenomenon is stated and explained by Chen Liu 鍾潤 (1863–1929) in *Taoya* 陶雅 (*Pottery Refinements*) as follows:

Craft decorators were venerated. In the past motifs for embroidery, jade, ceramics, and bronzes were copied from each other, sharing the same patterns.... Furthermore, in order to make their decorations more elaborate, (pottery) decorators carefully imitated [the motifs from] Song and Yuan silk narrative paintings [so that] almost every brush stroke has its source of origin.38

The decoration of the Cizhou pillow shows the characteristics of monochrome painting on paper by the singular use of black and the application of modulating lines of thickness as well as dark and light variations in the strokes themselves. It is therefore reasonable to believe that the pottery painter of the Cizhou pillow was originally inspired by a brush painting of the same subject and attempted to achieve a similar effect. He was thus more likely to have become acquainted with the narrative from a storytelling performance, rather than from a stage play, since the art of drama did not become popular or mature until the Yuan dynasty.

The painting on the Yuan-dynasty meiping vase (figs. 5 and 7), however, is markedly different from that on the Cizhou pillow. Figures were painted with pronounced size and more realism, with vivid facial expressions, hairstyles, and costumes presented in great detail. Landscape and architectural elements appear out of proportion and are scattered around the surface in order to fill the space. The drawing on the meiping vase is particularly refined and meticulous. The outlines of the images are crisp and clear, with the use of cobalt blue rendering a variety of tones similar to those found in brush painting.

The decorative effect of this vase has been compared to that of a woodblock print, leading to the speculation that a lost illustrated edition of the drama may have directly influenced its decoration.39 Woodblock print illustrations of dramas were rare in the Yuan dynasty, however, and they did not become popular until the late Ming period.40 Illustrated books from the Yuan dynasty, as is now known, belonged to the category of pinghua 平話, or “narrative fiction.” These are texts for storytelling in which similar compositions have been found between *pinghua* illustrations and blue-and-white porcelain decorations of the Yuan dynasty,41 but no comparable scenes from dramas between woodblock print illustrations and Yuan-dynasty porcelain decoration have been found.
Although the manner of handling rocks and plants is similar to those in the woodblock prints, the meticulous drawing of the figures is not. Therefore, I would suggest that the landscape elements and the figures were painted by different decorators. While the figures were executed by a decorator directly inspired by the stage performance, the landscape elements were done by a specialist in landscape decoration and were drawn from an existing repertoire. The division of labor, still in existence today, has been common practice in the Chinese porcelain industry since early times. 

The Yuan dynasty witnessed the golden age of Chinese drama, during which plays were commonly performed throughout the country. The fact that potters in Jingdezhen were familiar with contemporary dramas can be determined from several pillows of qingbai 青白 (shadow-white) ware made in Jingdezhen at this time (fig. 11). These pillows are in the shape of a theater with concave tops. They were produced in such a careful and detailed manner that not only are the graceful floral and scroll patterns of the theater windows, trellis, and stage curtains visible but so are the vivid expressions and gestures of the actors themselves. In the pillow illustrated here, four consecutive scenes, probably from Baishezhuan 白蛇传 (The Story of White Snake), are presented one on each side of the pillow, respectively, and were executed mainly by molding and carving techniques. 

The presentation of multiple scenes from one story on a single piece of porcelain, side by side, was very likely a new device developed in the Yuan dynasty, and this kind of design can also be seen in the meiping vase decorated with "Yingying Burning Nighttime Incense" and "Hongniang in the Dock." On this vase, these two scenes are depicted in gardens full of plants, where architectural features are used as part of the setting and to separate the scenes. This presents a new Yuan decorative technique to display multiple scenes from a given drama on a single piece of porcelain. It is believed that this kind of design was very likely inspired and influenced by the newly popular style and technique of writing dramas in the Yuan dynasty, when dramas were divided into parts and acts that could be performed complete or as specific selected acts.

A Yuan-dynasty mural painting discovered in Yuncheng 運城, Shanxi province, is also a valuable document for understanding how plays were performed during
that period (fig. 12). This painting shows an outdoor performance with actors and an actress standing side by side, facing the audience. There is no background for this performance except in the far distance, where above the heads of the figures are simple drawings of plants and vase-shaped images. Similarities in the arrangement of figures in this mural painting and in the decoration of “Hongniang in the Dock” on the Yuan vase suggest that the latter emulates an outdoor performance. The frontal position of the figures and their articulated gestures link them to the theatricality of a stage performance.

An intriguing question is, Who painted these groups of porcelains decorated with dramatic scenes? The consensus is that they were not ordinary artisans but were well-trained painters who, owing to the social crisis and disturbances brought by Mongol rule in China, were forced to seek shelter in Jingdezhen and work there as porcelain decorators. Furthermore, it is even possible that some were Southern Song court painters who were forced to work as professional artisans in the marketplace or in handicraft industries when the imperial Southern Song painting academy was dissolved during the Yuan dynasty. This theory becomes relevant when the refined and realistic style of porcelain drawings is compared to that on the Song-dynasty Cizhou pillow that shows the influence of Song court painting (fig. 13). Both are painted with delicate and refined lines as well as with a detailed and realistic drawing of the figures. The Cizhou pillow, however, is painted using the baimiao 白描 (line drawing) technique popular in Song literati painting, while the latter shows a gradation of pigment and tone. The posture and gesture of the boy holding a whip while looking to the right demonstrate similarities to those of Madame Cui on the meiping vase, therefore suggesting a connection in decoration between these two porcelains.

The style of painting changed in the early and middle Ming period. In the beginning was a revival of Southern Song court painting, but soon a loose and unrestrained style of drawing prevailed. This style pertains in particular to the Zhe school paintings of the mid-Ming period, such as those by Wu Wei 吳偉 (1459–1508) and Jiang Song 蒋嵩 (circa after 1475–before 1565), who was active in Hangzhou 杭州, Zhejiang. The drawing on the Hongzhi dish (fig. 6) shows the rough and sketchy style of painting that was prevalent at the Zhe school during that time (fig. 14).

In the late Ming period, the industry of woodblock print illustrations reached its golden age; almost every literary work published contained illustrations. Well-known painters teamed up with skilled woodblock carving masters in Huizhou 徽州, Nanjing 南京, Suzhou 蘇州, Hangzhou, and Wuxing 吳興 (locations in the southern Yangzi River area) and produced many woodblock prints that have
become distinguished as the most creative and exquisite in the history of this artform.48 Woodblock print illustrations were taken as models for porcelain decoration because of their general availability. This resulted in the similarity in subject and style between the two kinds of art in the late Ming and Shunzhi period. The plate “Hongniang in the Dock” mentioned earlier (fig. 8) is an example of such a phenomenon. The woodblock illustration of the same theme in Gelin shicui (fig. 9) is also based on Bei Xixiangji published by Wanhuxuan 玩虎軒 (Playful Tiger Studio) in Huizhou around 1597 (hereafter cited as the Wanhuxuan edition). Illustrations in this book were by a master painter in this profession, Wang Geng 汪耕 (circa 1572–1662). Therefore, the decoration on the Shunzhi plate imitating the Wanhuxuan illustration reflects the graceful style of woodblock prints in the Huizhou school (Huipai 徽派), which was popular in the late Ming period and had by that time reached unrivalled excellence in terms of quality.49

II. From “Beautiful Women” to “Major Scenes” in the Ming Dynasty

After the fall of the Yuan dynasty in 1368, management of the porcelain industry in Jingdezhen and the development of Chinese drama changed significantly, and this affected the application of drama scenes on porcelain. In the early Ming dynasty, the government set up imperial kilns in Jingdezhen and implemented restrictive controls over the kinds of porcelain produced, whether for imperial or civilian use.49 During the Jiajing period 嘉靖 (1522–1560), government restrictions eased, and as a result, the difference in decoration and quality between imperial and civilian wares became blurred. This situation was mainly due to the introduction of a new government system of manufacturing imperial wares in private kilns, called guanda minshao 官搭民燒 (private firing of official wares).51 Under this system, a number of civilian kilns were subcontracted by the Jingdezhen imperial kilns to assist in the production of official porcelains. Because the court often placed enormous rush orders, the official kilns had no choice but to allocate part of the workload to local civilian kilns as a way to fulfill
the demand. This system continued into the Qing dynasty and was an important factor in raising the status of private kilns and improving the quality of their products, which had a profound influence on the stylistic developments of both imperial and private wares.

During the Hongwu 洪武 (1368–1398) era, the government announced restrictions on the kinds of decoration and motifs that porcelain painters were allowed to use. The government simultaneously imposed censorship on plays, printed books, and paintings that were considered improper. As a result, few figural scenes appear on porcelains of the early Ming period (late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries). From the Jiajing period onward, however, representations of such scenes with narrative content on porcelains once again became popular, reaching a climax in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. This phenomenon was very likely caused by the easing of government controls, as well as the rising number of civilian kilns in Jingdezhen due to increased demand from both domestic and foreign markets. Narrative motifs were also popular mainly among commoners.

In the Ming dynasty, the Northern type of drama popular in the Yuan dynasty, zaju, declined as chuanqi 傳奇 ("Transmission of the Strange"), also called nanqu 南曲 (Southern Drama) — a type of drama popular in southern China with humble origins and a coarser dramatic style — became fashionable. In the sixteenth century chuanqi was bolstered by the introduction of an innovative style of singing. This new type of chuanqi, called kunqu 溫曲 (Kunshan Opera), had attained full maturity by the second half of the sixteenth century and became the principal literary genre until the mid-Qing dynasty. Zaju, however, was far from forgotten. During the last fifty years of the Ming dynasty — from the Wanli 萬曆 (1573–1620), Tianqi 天啟 (1621–1627), and Chongzhen 崇禎 (1628–1644) periods — interest in zaju was revived, and many anthologies of Yuan zaju were reprinted between 1599 and 1632.

In the Ming dynasty, the Western Chamber was revised and adapted into Southern Drama and Kunshan Opera to suit contemporary taste and to promote its performance. Among numerous revisions of this drama was Nan Xixiangji 南西厢記 (Southern Version of Romance of the Western Chamber), written by Li Rihua 李日華 (active 1522) in the early sixteenth century. It was the most successful revision, and therefore it became the most popular one for performing on stage. In the meantime, the Western Chamber became a reading text for the literate populace, resulting in 110 editions of the play being published (68 new editions, 39 republications, and 3 editions in the form of aria scripts, or qupu 曲譜). It became the undisputed best seller of the time, as verified in the saying, "Only the books of Confucius can rival it in the number of editions." Most of these editions contain woodblock print illustrations and were published in the late Ming dynasty from the Wanli to
Chongzhen eras, just as the thriving woodblock industry was reaching its golden age.\textsuperscript{55} Due to woodblock prints being commonly used as models for other media, they had a tremendous impact on porcelain decoration both in terms of subject and style (with one example being “Hongniang in the Dock” on the Shunzhi plate [figs. 8 and 9]).

Early editions of the Western Chamber before the Wanli period are illustrated with the text above and the picture below. Therefore, the whole text is fully illustrated with pictures running through the top quarter of each page. Early in the Wanli period, however, a new mode of assigning one picture to each act became a standard practice. Illustrations were taken from the subtitle verses of each act and were printed on one full page or on two facing pages.\textsuperscript{56} Therefore, ten- or twenty-picture formats became common in many instances. With this shift in focus on the climax of the episodes within each individual act, the subjects of the illustrations became fixed to selected moments of the play instead of covering the content of the whole text, as was possible to do with the method of text above and picture below. This change in illustration preference affected porcelain decoration as well and marked a division between porcelains produced before and after the Wanli period. Here, porcelains decorated with Western Chamber scenes are examined in two groups: those produced before the end of the Jiajing period, and those after the beginning of the Wanli period.

**1. Scenes Related to “Yingying Burning Nighttime Incense”**

Before the sixteenth century, figures were not a favored decoration for porcelains, so pieces with Western Chamber subject matter are relatively rare. In my opinion, by that time only about three motifs can be attributed with certainty to this drama before the end of the Jiajing period. They are “Yingying Burning Nighttime Incense,” “Yingying Calling Hongniang to Burn Nighttime Incense” (part III, act 3), and “Zhang Sheng Greeting Yingying and Hongniang in the Garden” (part I, act 3).\textsuperscript{57} Coincidentally, all three relate to the theme of burning nighttime incense.

**“Yingying Calling Hongniang to Burn Nighttime Incense”**

The scene that could be identified as “Yingying Calling Hongniang to Burn Nighttime Incense” is found on several examples of blue-and-white porcelain of the Jingtai and Hongzhi periods (figs. 15 and 16), exemplifying its popularity as a decorative motif at that time. Comparing these to the woodblock print in Xinkan qimiao quanxiang zhushi Xixiangji 新刊奇妙全像註釋西廂記 (A Newly Cut, Deluxe, Completely Illustrated and Annotated Romance of the Western Chamber) published in 1498 during the Hongzhi period (hereafter cited as the 1498 edition)
helps to identify the subject as from part III, act 3 (“Repudiation of the Billet-Doux”). In the previous act, Yingying sent a letter to Zhang Sheng in which she invites him to meet her at night in the garden. This act describes how, after nightfall, Zhang enters the garden and is unexpectedly reproached by Yingying for not behaving like a scholar. The scene in this woodblock print represents Yingying and Hongniang going to the garden in the very beginning of the act. Following the text, Yingying is dressed up for the occasion.

The composition and poses of the figures in this woodblock print bear a striking resemblance to the porcelain decorations, all of which have the same arrangement of two ladies in an open landscape—the one walking in front (Yingying) turns back to look at the other (Hongniang). The title of “Yingying Calling Hongniang to Burn Nighttime Incense in the Garden” (鴛鴦紅花園燒夜香) is inscribed in the cartouche on the right side of the woodblock illustration and helps identify the porcelain decoration (fig. 17). The realistic and observant manner of representation in the woodblock print is closer to that in the fragment from the Jingtai period (fig. 15) than in the Hongzhi plate (fig. 16). The decoration of the latter is freer and more spontaneous, reflecting the style of painting associated with the Zhe school.

After this comparison, it is possible to conclude that the Hongzhi plate decoration is executed in imitation of the Jingtai fragment. The depiction in the latter is realistic and meticulous, while the landscape elements on the Hongzhi plate are distorted and all but unrecognizable. It is a common feature that the copied versions often lose the meaning of the original either by adding unnecessary elements or by being rendered in an abstract and sketchy manner, as seen here. The Jingtai piece was not copied from the 1498 edition, since it was produced at an earlier date. It is possible that a missing illustration produced in or before the Jingtai period might be the common source for both works, as they are almost identical in composition and similar in style.
The above shows that during the Jiajing period, woodblock illustrations had not yet become a model for porcelain decoration. Instead, they may have been copied from the same source of the original pattern. Furthermore, a pattern could have been used repeatedly, each time slightly diverging from the original, so that in the end the original meaning of the pattern could have been lost completely, while the decoration became a general depiction without referring to any specific literary provenance. Therefore, like the generalization of “Yingying Burning Nighttime Incense,” the scene of “Yingying Calling Hongniang to Burn Nighttime Incense” may also have become a generic depiction of youchuntu 游春圖 ("Women’s Springtime Outing"), a genre of “Women of Beauty” in Chinese painting that also carried the auspicious meaning of prosperity and enjoyment in life.33

“Zhang Sheng Greeting Yingying and Hongniang in the Garden”

The scene of Zhang Sheng greeting Yingying and Hongniang in the garden is depicted on the base of a polychrome bowl dated to the Jiajing period (fig. 18). This subject can be identified by comparing the woodblock print illustration on the same theme in the 1498 edition (fig. 19). Both the woodblock illustration and the porcelain decoration show Zhang Sheng greeting Yingying in the garden, and a ten-character caption for the title of the scene is inscribed on the woodblock print illustration. This scene comes from the same act as “Yingying Burning Nighttime Incense” (part 1, act 3), “A Poem and Its Response,” and relates how, after hearing Yingying’s response to the poem he had chanted to her, Zhang Sheng cheerfully comes out from hiding to greet her. Yingying retreats as soon as she sees him, however, in order to maintain her maidenly propriety.

Here, for the first time, the male character Zhang Sheng appears in porcelain decoration together with Yingying and Hongniang. This may suggest porcelain decoration was no longer restricted to the category of “Women of Beauty,” since narrative subjects of literary content are represented in an undisguised manner. During the Jiajing period, the number of porcelains decorated with dramatic scenes increased, reflecting the thriving business of civilian kilns in Jingdezhen that had led to the desirability of this type of decoration. The appearance of the new theme of “Zhang Sheng Greeting Yingying and Hongniang in the Garden” illustrates this new development.


2. Establishment of Archetypes: The Influence of Woodblock Print Illustrations

In the history of Chinese porcelain, the period between the end of the Wanli reign in 1620 during the Ming dynasty and the reinstallation of government supervisors in Jingdezhen by the Qing emperor Kangxi in 1683 is called the Transitional Period. Imperial kiln production came to a standstill during this time. Private kilns, however, excelled in providing high-quality porcelains not only for domestic and foreign markets but also for the imperial household. Well-made porcelains of unprecedented shape and decoration were produced, and the ongoing popularity of narrative scenes from fiction and drama became one of the most important and interesting features of these Transitional porcelains.

Due to the rarity of dated pieces and the lack of written materials, it is difficult to establish the chronology and a full picture of porcelain production during this period. The following study intends to challenge the problem of dating and to prove that the Western Chamber was indeed a popular subject for porcelain decoration during this era, particularly during the Tianqi and Chongzhen reigns, when imperial kiln production ceased and orders were carried out by private kilns. New forms of decoration replaced old ones, highlights from the play's twenty acts were thoroughly represented, and the style of decoration evolved into that of contemporary woodblock print illustrations.

1. Simultaneous Developments of Porcelain Decoration and Woodblock Print Illustrations

According to research published to the present, three scenes are unanimously accepted as being from the Western Chamber. They appear on decorated porcelains produced between the Wanli and Chongzhen periods.
a. “Beauty’s Enchantment” (part I, act 1) on a fragment of blue-and-white porcelain of the Wanli period (fig. 20) and a Rowlagen vase in the Ashmolean Museum collection (fig. 21).

b. “A Surprising Dream” (part IV, act 4) on a bottle vase in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

c. “A Feast with Tears” (part IV, act 3) painted on a brush holder in the Butler Family Collection.

These scenes represent new themes in porcelain decoration, while those of the previous period seem to have fallen out of favor. In addition, they depict the highlights of different acts, and the images are copied from contemporary woodblock print illustrations.

The composition and style on the remaining scene from the fragment of the Wanli period, for example, are comparable to those in a woodblock print illustration to the scene of “Beauty’s Enchantment” in Chongke Yuanben tiping yinshi Xixiangji (Newly Cut Yuan Edition of the Annotated Romance of the Western Chamber), published in Fujian in 1592 (hereafter cited as the 1592 edition) (fig. 22). The highlight of this act describes how Zhang Sheng, during his visit to the Pujin Temple, unexpectedly comes across Yingying taking a walk with Hongniang in the courtyard. In both works, the figures stand outdoors; Yingying, accompanied by Hongniang, looks at Zhang Sheng, who is depicted in profile. Although only the upper part of Zhang Sheng’s body is visible in the fragment, the theme of this piece is clearly recognizable. A four-character caption and a couplet referring to the scene are also inscribed on the print, thereby confirming the identity of the subject. The manner of drawing the figures in large size, with vigorous thick outlines and exaggerated expressions, is particularly similar to that in the woodblock print illustration of 1592. The latter, representing a bold and archaic image, can be categorized as a “stage-acting type of woodblock print illustration,” because both the expression and gestures of the figure emulate those of stage performances.

A similar scene depicted on the Rowlagen vase is represented in a very different manner from the above example. This vase, with a refined, solid body cobalt blue decoration tinted with delicate lavender hues, was produced in the Chongzhen period and belonged to the so-called High Transitional Porcelain, the group of top-quality porcelains produced during that period. Instead of the carefree and bold manner of depiction in the Wanli fragment, the decoration here is carefully delineated in fluid, even lines, and figures with subtle and graceful expressions are dainty and diminished in size. The style and composition of the decoration on this vase are quite similar to those in the woodblock print illustrations of the same theme in the
Wanhuxuan edition, but the drawing of the landscape surroundings and the garment patterns here are more meticulous and elaborate. This style is similar to and influenced by Huizhou-style woodblock prints that were popular in the late Ming dynasty. Since Huizhou is near Jingdezhen, woodblock illustrations produced in the Huizhou area were introduced to Jingdezhen porcelain painters via Huizhou merchants. In the late Ming period, merchants controlled most of the porcelain trade in Huizhou, and the influence of Huizhou-style woodblock print designs on porcelain decoration is an outstanding feature of Transitional Porcelain. It is speculated, however, that the drawing on this vase was probably not imitated directly from the woodblock print illustration of the Wanhuxuan edition published around 1597, but rather it was from a later reprinted version of the work in circulation during the Chongzhen period and was available to the decorator of this vase.

Of all the examples of porcelain decorated with Western Chamber scenes listed above, only one piece belongs to the Wanli period; the others were produced in the Chongzhen era. This may indicate that the influence of woodblock print illustration on porcelain decoration emerged during the Wanli period and blossomed during the Chongzhen period. Even though only a small portion of the production remains extant or is recognized by scholars today, studies conducted on material and cultural life, in addition to a re-examination of the chronology based on archaeological discoveries and woodblock print illustrations, seem to support the assumption and expectations of the popularity of the Western Chamber on porcelain decoration at this time.

From the Wanli to the Chongzhen eras in the late Ming dynasty, cultural life flourished as the social and political order plunged into crisis; the wealthy in the Tianqi and Chongzhen periods became richer than ever and enjoyed extravagant lifestyles. Such circumstances saw the production of the most sumptuous and luxurious objects for the upper echelons of society. The majority of this group lived south of the Yangzi River in the Jiangnan region of central China, the same geographical district as Jingdezhen. Some of these wealthy people were fans of the Western Chamber, and under their patronage, artworks related to this romance reached a pinnacle. The production of the twenty-leaf polychrome album of the Western Chamber published by Min Qiji 閒齋偽 of Wuxing in 1640 (hereafter the 1640 edition) is a fine example of the popularity of this play among the wealthy and
of the high artistic standards that were achieved. This album is not only the sole remaining colored woodblock print illustration of all of Chinese literature, but it is also considered the best executed of all woodblock print illustrations in China. Furthermore, it is very likely that this album was published independently and without text for the sheer visual pleasure of the wealthy class.

In this polychrome album, some of the scenes are represented in the forms of art objects, such as ceramics, bronze wares, a lantern, and so on; together they create some of the most complex and intriguing images in the history of Chinese design. The artist for this album was probably responding to the contemporary phenomenon of illustrations of famous dramas being used increasingly to decorate ceramic wares and other types of art objects. Worthy of note is the third picture, which is depicted inside the form of a ceramic jar (fig. 23). The scene depicts Zhang Sheng introducing himself to Hongniang, whom he hopes will help send a message to Yingying (from part I, act 2, “Renting Quarters in the Monastery”). This scene is shown in baimiao style, the special technique of illustration whereby motifs are executed with pure outlines and without grading or shading. This style of decoration appeared in porcelains of the Wanli period and continued into the Qing dynasty. Both the technique of drawing and the elongated, graceful figure types in this image provide clues for the dating of porcelains produced around 1640.

2. A Re-examination of Chronology: The “Repudiation of the Billet-Doux” Dish and the Box Decorated with Twenty Scenes

The discovery of a shipwreck in the South China Sea by Michael Hatcher in the early 1980s provided much valuable material evidence about porcelain production in the 1640s. The Hatcher wreck, as it became known, contained a large shipment of Chinese porcelain produced in Jingdezhen during the late Ming dynasty, specifically around 1643 (as evidenced by two pieces in the cargo bearing the cyclical date for that year). Among the cargo holdings was a group of fine dishes and saucers decorated with figures in fictional and romantic scenes. One of the decorative scenes depicts a young lady sitting under a grotesquely shaped towering rock in a garden (fig. 24). This motif is an abridged version of that on the blue-and-white dishes in the collections of the Ashmolean Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum (figs. 25 and 26). The decorations on the latter two pieces are identical in
composition but vary in style and details. By comparing the decoration with the woodblock print illustration of the *Western Chamber* published in the late Ming dynasty, as well as by reading the poem inscribed on the dish from the Victoria and Albert Museum, it becomes evident that the scene represents a highlighted moment from part III, act 3, "Repudiation of the Billet-Doux."

This scene is a continuation of "Yingying Calling Hongniang to Burn Nighttime Incense" in the same act (figs. 15 and 16). In this specific episode, Hongniang advises Zhang Sheng to enter the garden by climbing the wall instead of coming through the door. As a result, Yingying reproaches him for not acting like a scholar, and she treats him as if he were a thief. The porcelain decorations show the moment when Zhang Sheng is on top of the wall, while Yingying is seated at the back of the rock, unaware of what is happening. Hongniang, who is behind this farce, stands between them, assuming a key role in the plot.

The decoration on the saucer from the Hatcher wreck, which shows only Yingying seated, therefore represents an incomplete scene from this episode. This example may suggest that "Repudiation of the Billet-Doux" was a popular subject for porcelain decoration in the late Ming dynasty. As a result, a simplified version may have been used as a decoration on export porcelains, for most foreign buyers would not know the story and therefore would not demand details.

In my previous study on Transitional Porcelains, I dated the Ashmolean Museum dish (fig. 25) to the early Kangxi period prior to 1672. Subsequent studies of its features, however, as well as comparisons with the Hatcher wreck discovery and contemporary woodblock prints now convince me that the dish was very likely produced even earlier, that is, in the Chongzhen period. The brown rim on this dish, for example, is a characteristic of porcelain produced somewhat earlier, between the Chongzhen and the Shunzhi periods. In addition, the careful and delicate manner of depicting the willow trees, rocks, palm-leaf patterns, and tiny dots on the ground in this dish is very similar to that in the saucer from the late Ming dynasty. Moreover, the style of decoration is also quite different from that on the early Kangxi period dish in the Victoria and Albert Museum (fig. 26). The former is executed in a graceful and fluent manner comparable to the print image from the 1640 edition (fig. 23), while the latter shows characteristics of a copied version, which is stiffer in drawing, sluggish in appearance, and monotonous in texture.

On the Ashmolean Museum dish, the formation of the rocks, the way Yingying sits on the rock, and the pose of Zhang Sheng holding a willow branch in one hand while placing a foot on the roof of the garden wall are identical to the same subject depicted in the woodblock print illustration in Xinke Wei Zhongxue xiansheng pidian Xiaxiangji 新刻魏仲雪先生批點西廂記 (Newly Cut Romance of the West-
Blue-and-white round box decorated with twenty scenes from Romance of the Western Chamber, Ming dynasty, Chongzhen period (1627–44), 23 x 42 cm. From Takashin Kushi, Minsho toji zukan (Tokyo: Hounsha, 1943), amendment pl. 6.


Romance of the Western Chamber with Commentary by Mr. Wei Zhongxue; hereafter cited as the Wei Zhongxue edition) reprinted by Chen Changqing 程長卿 in the Tianqi or Chongzhen period (fig. 27). The dandy figures with swaying drapery and long fluttering sleeves, however, are closer to those of the 1640 edition. Therefore, I believe that this plate was very likely produced in the Chongzhen period around 1640.

In addition to the porcelain pieces mentioned above, the round box in trapezoid form decorated with a complete series of twenty episodes from this drama can also be dated to the Chongzhen period (fig. 28). This dating is further confirmed by comparison with the octagonal box recovered from the Hatcher wreck (noting the shared features in quality, shape, and device of decoration) as well as the contemporary woodblock print (fig. 29). Both the trapezoid box and the box from the Hatcher wreck are of the highest quality porcelain made at the time, and the decoration is divided into multiple trapezoidal compartments along the edge of the cover and on the body of the box. Another striking similarity in the decoration of these two boxes is that both are drawn in baimiao style, the same technique seen in the third picture of the 1640 edition (fig. 23). A common feature in wares of the Chongzhen period is the decoration of geometric patterns around the joined borders of the cover and the body of the box, as seen here on both pieces.

Round boxes produced in the Shunzhi period, however, seem to be of inferior quality and without geometric motifs, while round boxes of the early Kangxi period are also different from those of the Chongzhen period. Both the shape and the decorative schemes of the typical early Kangxi box is a round body and a round domed lid without sharp edges. Also, the decoration is simplified into two zones; one is painted on the lid, and the other is on the body. These comparisons further suggest dating the box, with its twenty scenes from the Western Chamber, to the Chongzheng period.

The twenty scenes from the Western Chamber on this trapezoid box coincide with the woodblock print illustration of twenty pictures, with one scene depicting the highlight of each act. On this box the twenty scenes are arranged as follows: two each on the inside and outside roundels on top of the cover and base of the body; eight each on the two trapezoidal bands of the box; the scenes from “Interruption of the Consecration Service” (part I, act 4) and “The Glorious Homecoming” (part V, act 4) are painted in the top and inside roundels of the box; and scenes for “A Surprising Dream” (part IV, act 4) and “A Feast with Tears” (part
"Interruption of the Consecration Service" on a blue-and-white round box, Ming dynasty, Chongzhen period (1627–44). From Takushin Kushi, Minsho toji zukan, amendment pl. 6.

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The act "Interruption of the Consecration Service" is about the religious service for Yingying's late father, a minister of the Tang dynasty. When Zhang Sheng learns that this activity is going to take place in the temple, he asks for the abbot's permission to let him participate in the ceremony. In the text, the scene is depicted like a farce. The abbot stares unblinkingly at Yingying and raps the bald head of a young monk, mistaking it for a percussion instrument. The young monks likewise forget their duty to replace the burnt incense and candles, which results in the incense burning out and the smoke from the candles ceasing. All these events apparently have been caused by Yingying's bewitching beauty.

The illustration of this scene on the box shows nothing of these humorous features from the text. Instead, it is painted in an elegant and formal manner similar to the woodblock illustrations. The composition and style of this scene are similar to the Wei Zhongxue edition published by the Chunchengtang (Hall Embodying Honesty) in the Chongzhen period (fig. 31). Both the box and the woodblock print are set in a crowded Buddhist hall, with the abbot and the Cui family worshipping in front of a table placed before an altar that holds three Buddhist statues. Stand-

IV, act 3) are depicted on the inside and outside bases of the box. The remaining sixteen scenes from the play are painted in consecutive order along the exterior of the box.

In addition to the number of scenes and their content, the elegant and sinuous style of drawing on this box is reminiscent of the woodblock prints from the Chongzhen period. The porcelain painter evidently referred to different sources of woodblock prints, since each scene on the box can be compared to a print illustration from a different edition. No single edition of this drama contains illustrations similar to all of the scenes on the box. Even though some of the scenes are very close to woodblock illustrations, some slight differences in detail are more interesting and captivating than the woodblock prints. The representation of "Interruption of the Consecration Service" is a fine example of the exquisite imagery and proficient technical quality that was achieved in the decoration of this box (figs. 30 and 31).
ing between the altar and the table, Zhang Sheng holds a candle that is being lit by a servant boy. On both sides of the hall monks chanting sutras are seated behind long tables. The novice striking the bell in the upper left corner of the print is missing from the composition on the box, but the triangle stand for the bell and the tassel hanging down from it remain visible. Since more monks play musical instruments in the foreground of the porcelain decoration than appear in the woodblock print illustration, that composition seems more compressed. It is thus clear that the porcelain painter took this woodblock print as a model, but instead of making a faithful copy, he tactfully altered the details and transformed it into a more meticulous and extravagant representation. As the elaborate and comprehensive decoration of this box reflects the social and intellectual climate as well as the artistic style of the Chongzhen period, it is reasonable to date it to that era.

The above discussion suggests that Jingdezhen porcelain painters took contemporary woodblock print illustrations as models or references. Not only do the porcelains follow the sequence and contents of woodblock print illustrations, but the styles are also closely imitated. This intimate relationship and simultaneous development among woodblock print illustrations and porcelain decoration help both in dating porcelains of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, and in estimating the scope and range of decorative motifs and subjects that could have been employed during this period.

III. The Formation of New Fashions in Porcelain Decoration: The Shunzhi and Kangxi Periods

Dramas from early in the Qing dynasty reveal continuity with those from the Ming dynasty, “but soon the influence of the ruler on drama becomes so marked as to indicate the use of them.”80 In 1652, for example, a decree announced that

only books on science, politics and literature of approved content may be published. Those containing indecent words and licentious prose ... are strictly banned from publication. People who violate the law are subject to the most severe punishment.81

只許刊行理學政治有益文業諸書，其它瑣語淫詞 ... 通行嚴禁，違者從重究治。

This law dealt a serious blow to the publication of dramas and consequently to the industry of woodblock print illustration, which went hand-in-hand in production. Thus, the latter declined sharply from the early Qing dynasty and eventually became extinct by the end of the era.82
Although unable to compete with its peak of popularity in the Ming dynasty, the *Western Chamber* continued to be enjoyed during the Qing dynasty—no less than fifty-five annotated and amended editions of this drama were published.\(^3\) Of all the different editions, the one annotated and commented by the unconventional scholar Jin Shengtan 金聖歎 (circa 1610–1661) was by far the most popular (hereafter cited as the Jin Shengtan edition).\(^4\) This edition became a bestseller as soon as it was published in 1656, and even the Shunzhi Emperor (1638–1661) greatly admired it.\(^5\) Contrary to the prevailing contemporary opinion of the time, Jin praised the achievements of the *Western Chamber*, comparing it to five other classics in Chinese history and grouping them as the *Liucizi shu* 六才子書 (Six Books by and for Talented Scholars). His annotated *Western Chamber* was known as *Diliucizi Xixiangji* 第六才子西厢記 (The Sixth Book by and for Talented Scholars, Xixiangji). In editing this book, he included many of his own lengthy commentaries and took the liberty of altering parts of the prose and dialogues. In addition, Jin also transposed and edited many verse passages and added his own dialogue and stage directions. The most daring change he made to the text was to end the story at part IV, when Zhang Sheng awakes from a dream on his way to the capital to take the government examination, dismissing the last part of the drama as an “appendix.”\(^6\)

Jingdezhen, the porcelain center in China, suffered from war and unrest during the early years of the Shunzhi period and from 1673 to 1676, when the rebellion of the Three Feudatory Princes against the Manchu government spread in Jiangnan and southwestern China.\(^7\) Instead of being devastated by war, however, the industry regained momentum quickly and resumed operations as usual.\(^8\) The biggest blow was to the imperial kilns, which did not fully recover until 1683, when the Kangxi Emperor appointed an officer to supervise the production of porcelain there. After that, Jingdezhen reached new heights in the history of Chinese porcelains.

During the Shunzhi and Kangxi periods, decoration of scenes from the *Western Chamber* on porcelain reached a peak of popularity. This type of porcelain has been praised in *Taoyao* as follows:

The pottery painters of the Kangxi period were very skillful. Porcelains produced in the private kilns (*kehuo* 客貨) are decorated with drama themes from the *Shuihuzhuan* 水滸傳 (*The Water Margin*) and *Western Chamber*. The brushwork on the drawing of private kiln porcelains is simple and full of rustic delight. This kind of effect is difficult to achieve.\(^9\)

康熙朝畫工手佳矣。然客貨所畫類皆水滸、西廂之意實為多。似此荒率野趣之筆，更不易覓也。
During these periods, scenes from the Western Chamber were used to decorate vases, jars, brush pots, furniture tiles, and even lanterns. By far the most popular wares were bowls and dishes of various shapes and sizes for domestic and foreign markets. Flatware was often decorated with a single episode, and three-dimensional ware (such as bowls, vases, and brush pots) was often rendered with two to four scenes. These were usually in sequence and in compartments frequently bordered with stylized rocks and clouds.\(^{50}\) It is also probable that porcelain decorated with Western Chamber scenes were produced in pairs or sets, allowing a more complete rendering of the story. The vase depicting twenty-four scenes from this drama, in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, represents the pinnacle of this vogue during the Kangxi period (fig. 39). In addition to blue-and-white porcelain, wares decorated in polychrome, such as a combination of underglaze cobalt blue and copper red, as well as famille-verte, became increasingly popular at this time. The emphasis on color marks a difference in taste on porcelain made during the Qing dynasty and previous periods.\(^{51}\)

During this era, the following four characteristics can be discerned in porcelain decorated with scenes from the Western Chamber:

1. The inscription of poems quoted from the text.
2. The distorted manner of drawing figures and the influence of Chen Hongshou's painting style.
3. The assimilation of imperial court styles on decoration in the Kangxi period.
4. The reflection of views on tragedy influenced by late Ming literary critics and the Jin Shengtan edition.

1. The Inscription of Poetry

Poems inscribed on porcelain first appear on Changsha 長沙 ware of the Tang dynasty\(^{52}\) and become a common feature late in the Ming dynasty, but scenes from the Western Chamber seem to have been started in the Shunzhi period of the Qing dynasty. A comparison between the Ashmolean Museum vase decorated with “Beauty’s Enchantment” (fig. 21) and the polychrome vase with the same scene in the collection of the Beijing Palace Museum (fig. 32) illuminates this point.

The Ashmolean blue-and-white vase was produced during the Chongzhen period, as previously discussed, while the latter polychrome vase with a truncated neck and coffee-colored rim bears characteristics of the Shunzhi period (as indicated below) and therefore can be dated to that time. The compositions of these two decorations are nearly identical except for variations in detail and landscape background. The style of figures on the latter has been transformed from graceful,

well-rounded forms into the flat and slightly deformed ones commonly seen in the Shunzhi period. The most distinctive new feature of this vase is the inscription of verse from the text written in seal-script characters. According to Feng Xianming 馮先銘, a historian of ceramics, inscriptions in seal-script calligraphy appeared between the tenth year of the Chongzhen reign (1632) and the fourteenth year of the Shunzhi reign (1658). From the Shunzhi period onward, the “picture with poetry” type of decoration became increasingly common. The dish of “Hongniang in the Dock” discussed earlier is another example from the Shunzhi period (fig. 8).

In her study of education and popular literacy in Qing China, Evelyn Rawski writes, “Qing China inherited a means for cheaply reproducing and widely disseminating printed materials, along with a tradition of supporting elementary schools in both rural and urban areas.” Consequently, the literate population in the Qing dynasty was larger than in previous periods. Writing became a common form of communication, and the art of calligraphy was also more widely appreciated and practiced. For example, in the woodblock print illustration of the Western Chamber published in 1669, pictorial images occupy less than a quarter of the page, with the remaining area being inscribed with poetry and prose. Reflecting this interest, the calligraphy of poems and inscriptions became increasingly fashionable in porcelain decoration as well.

2. The Distortion of Figures on Porcelains and the Influence of Chen Hongshou’s Painting

The grotesque and distorted manner of depicting figures is another distinguishing feature of early Qing porcelain decoration. Texts from the Qing dynasty, such as Yinliuzhai shuoci 饮流齋說瓷 (Elucidation on Porcelain at Yinliuzhai) by Xu Zhiheng 許之衡 and Taoshuo 陶說 (Elucidation on Pottery) by Zhu Yan 朱琰, assign this phenomenon to porcelain of the Kangxi period and relate the new style


to Chen Hongshou 陳洪綬 (1598–1652), a renowned painter in the late Ming to early Qing dynasties. However, studies now show that these characteristics may have been initiated as early as the late Ming period and continued into the Kangxi reign, as discussed below.

The distortion of narrative decoration on porcelain can be observed as early as the Chongzhen period, such as in the Ashmolean Museum dish with “Repudiation of the Billet-Doux” mentioned above (fig. 25). On this dish, the figures are elongated, with their robes and long sleeves spread out and curled upwards in an elegant and decorative manner, and the baroque formation of the central rock echoes their swaying movement. The image on this dish of Zhang Sheng with a protruding belly is comparable to that in the second woodblock illustration in Zhang Shenzhi xiansheng zhengbei Xixiang miben 張深之先生正北西廂秘本 (Treasured Private Edition of the Romance of the Western Chamber Collated by Zhang Shenzhi) published in 1639 (hereafter cited as the 1639 edition), in which the illustrations were designed by Chen Hongshou (fig. 33). In “ Interruption of the Religious Service,” Zhang Sheng is shown holding a flower vase and standing between the monks and members of the Cui family during the Buddhist ceremony. Proportionately smaller in size than the squat and squarish monks standing before him, Zhang Sheng is portrayed with a protruding belly and hip. A nearly identical image of Zhang Sheng, with more expression and movement, can be found on a blue-and-white shallow bowl of the early Kangxi period (fig. 34). This bowl, inscribed on the base with a four-character cyclical date equivalent to 1668, is an important example for recognizing the early Kangxi style. A couplet from “The Breach of Promise” (part II, act 3) was written in the bowl, relating the decoration to said episode. In this act, Zhang Sheng is invited by Madame Cui to attend the feast honoring his heroic resolution of the bandit crisis that had saved Yingying from abduction and a forced marriage. To Zhang’s dismay, however, Madame Cui breaks her promise of marriage to Yingying and instead seeks to console him with money. The decoration on the bowl illustrates the moment when Hongniang, who is sent by Madame Cui to bring Zhang Sheng to the feast, arrives at Zhang’s lodging. Self-conscious about his appearance, Zhang is seen holding a fan and adjusting his hat.
The style of drawing is basically a continuation from the Shunzhi period, but there are subtle changes in the way figures are depicted. For example, Zhang Sheng’s distorted and deformed belly and hip are more articulated here than in porcelains of the Chongzhen and Shunzhi periods. This is evidence that by the early Kangxi period Chen Hongshou’s style had been fully established, and a distinct Qing style of porcelain decoration can be easily discerned.

A highly exaggerated manner of figural depiction in painting was already in vogue during the late Ming period, as seen in works of such painters as Wu Bin 吳彬 (active 1573–1620), Cui Zizhong 崔子忠 (circa 1590–1640), and above all, Chen Hongshou. Distortion in the decoration of porcelain became extremely popular in the Kangxi period, with Chen Hongshou’s figural style being the dominant influence. This phenomenon is recorded in texts of the Qing dynasty and is evident in extant porcelains produced at the time. Chen Hongshou was actively engaged in making woodblock print designs for popular book illustrations, such as *jiuge 九歌* (Nine Songs) in 1616, *Water Margin* playing cards (between 1625 and 1630), and three editions of *Romance of the Western Chamber* in 1631, 1639, and 1640, respectively. Through these works, his distorted form of archaic painting was disseminated and reached porcelain painters in Jingdezhen. Among these books, the 1639 edition seems to have been quite popular during the Shunzhi and early Kangxi periods.

Besides the 1668 dish mentioned earlier, the blue-and-white dish with Zhang Sheng and Yingying’s first encounter from “Beauty’s Enchantment” also reflects influence from this edition (fig. 35). This dish can be dated back to the Shunzhi period judging from the appearance of similar features on other porcelains, such as the brown rim, the fine regular style of writing, a six-character mark denoting the Jiajing period on the base, and the application of tiny “plum blossom dots” (*meihua dian* 梅花點) on the dresses of ladies. Figures on this dish are distorted, as seen in the elongation of Yingying and Hongniang, the round face and heavy body of the monk, and the curved, bending image of Zhang Sheng.

A two-character title of the episode “Qifeng” 奇逢 (An Unexpected Encounter) is written in the upper right corner. In the *Western Chamber*, each act has a title, which may differ in exact wording from one edition to another. The titles of each
act in most editions are in four characters, with only a few having two. The two-character title here is similar to that in Bei Xixiangji 北西廂記 (Northern Western Chamber) annotated by the poet He Bi 何壁 (published in 1616) and the 1639 edition.\textsuperscript{105} Judging from similarities in the wording of the title and the style of illustration, it is possible to secure the 1639 edition as an important reference for this dish. Although there is no comparable composition for the porcelain decorators, the style and images of individual figures as well as the element of distortion were borrowed. The popularity and usage of the 1639 edition among ceramic painters in Jingdezhen could be regarded as an indication that the 1656 Jin Shengtan edition was not yet popular among Jingdezhen potters during the Shunzhi period. This situation remained so until the Kangxi period, as explained below.\textsuperscript{105}

It is believed that scenes from the Western Chamber played an important role in disseminating the Chen Hongshou style of porcelain decoration, as this romance was the most popular for such decoration in the early Qing dynasty. After the re-establishment of imperial kilns in Jingdezhen around 1680, the painter Liu Yuan 劉源 (circa 1641–1691) was employed by the government to make designs for porcelain production.\textsuperscript{106} Liu Yuan was an admirer of Chen Hongshou and painted in his style, and it is very likely that under Liu Yuan’s influence, porcelain decoration in the Chen Hongshou style continued and reached another peak in popularity. The vase decorated with twenty-four scenes from the Western Chamber in the Chen Hongshou style (fig. 39), discussed below, is thus perhaps related to Liu Yuan and his influence.

3. Assimilation of the Court Painting Style: Kangxi Period

Both the Shunzhi and Kangxi emperors were deeply interested in the Western Chamber, as Ni Yibin believes that “its pronounced popularity in the Shunzhi and early Kangxi reigns, and especially in the 1660s, may well stem from the Shunzhi Emperor’s personal interest in this play”\textsuperscript{107} Without solid evidence, however, the nature and extent of the Shunzhi Emperor’s influence on porcelain décor remains to be verified. The Kangxi Emperor’s patronage, however, is easier to establish, as several porcelain pieces decorated with scenes from the Western Chamber of imperial quality and with imperial marks can be found in various collections.\textsuperscript{108}

This group of refined porcelains comprises dishes of different shapes, all elaborately decorated with underglaze blue and underglaze red. On the base are eight-character marks assigning them to the Hall of Central Harmony (Zhonghetang 中和堂) in 1672 or 1673. Although the Hall of Central Harmony in the Summer Palace had not yet been built by the early 1670s, it is still commonly believed that this group of porcelains bearing these specific hallmarks was produced for the Imperial Household.\textsuperscript{109} It is speculated that originally complete sets decorated with episodes
from the Western Chamber had been ordered and produced. Another group of large plates decorated with Western Chamber scenes in underglaze cobalt blue and copper red within the border of an eight-pointed star or flower shape is also of imperial quality and can be assigned to the imperial kiln production of this same date (figs. 36 and 37). Although not inscribed with marks, this group of porcelains shares the same refined quality, production technique, and decorative style as the previous group, indicating the two can be grouped together.

At this time, porcelain decoration with Western Chamber vignettes reveals innovation and transformation in both style and in content concurrent with the continuity of late Ming and Shunzhi fashions. In the early Kangxi period, however, a distinct Qing-dynasty style emerged, reflecting the following two characteristics: the application of Western perspective in landscape backgrounds; and the transformation of women’s clothing fashion and attire.

The Application of Western Perspective in Landscape Backgrounds

Jesuit priests introduced Western art to China in the late Ming dynasty. In the early Qing dynasty, the Kangxi, Yongzheng (reigned 1723–35), and Qianlong emperors all expressed an interest in Western curiosities and crafts. This led to several European priests being summoned to the imperial court, where they would serve as artists under the emperors’ command. At the court, these Western priest-artists not only learned how to produce Chinese paintings, but they also taught European art techniques, including oil painting, to Chinese artists. In this way, an artistic style blending Chinese media and Western techniques of perspective and chiaroscuro appeared at court. In the initial stage during the Kangxi period, a typical type of “Women of Beauty” painting was established by the court painter Jiao Bingzhen (circa 1662–1720). This style, imitated by junior court painters, had a major impact on Chinese arts of the eighteenth century. In Jiao Bingzhen’s paintings, women are shown playing in gardens with grand architectural settings in the background. In one of Jiao’s paintings, for example, the application of Western perspective techniques can be observed in the detailed drawing of the corridor erected across the middle section (fig. 38). The height of the corridor gradually diminishes from right to left, creating an illusion of spatial extension into the distance beyond the edge of the picture frame.
The women in the garden appear flat and weightless, while their simple, ovoid faces reveal little individual physiognomy. Their style of overdress, called a beizi 被子, could have either long or short sleeves and featured close-fitting garments with skirts trailing on the ground. This type of garment was fashionable in the Ming dynasty and was commonly seen in court painting of the Qing dynasty. Although the Manchu government prohibited court women from wearing Han Chinese clothing, in paintings the representation of Han-style dress was accepted for aesthetic reasons.112

The application of perspective techniques can be recognized immediately in the large polychrome dish decorated with the scene “Zhang Sheng Handing the Letter of Rescue to Monk Huiming,” from the act “Alarm at the Monastery” (part II, act 1) (fig. 36). In this episode, Zhang Sheng writes a letter to his friend, General Du, after the Cui family had been threatened by the bandit Sun, who demands the hand of Yingying in marriage. During this crisis, the monk Huiming 惠明 bravely volunteers to deliver the letter to General Du. In this polychrome dish painted in underglaze cobalt blue and copper red enhanced by a rare powder blue in the border, Zhang Sheng and the abbot Facong 法聰 stand in front of the temple and bid farewell to Huiming, who holds an iron bar in his hands. This scene takes place in a landscape scenery with the inner courtyard and outer garden separated by a balustrade. The extension of space into the distance is suggested by placing the balustrade on a diagonal stretching across one side of the composition and also by...
having the door of the building partially open, so that the interior of the hall is visible. The “open-door” form of perspective had been an active ingredient in Chinese painting since the Han dynasty, so the porcelain decorator in this piece appears to have combined the traditional Chinese perspective of general spatial extension and the newly absorbed European techniques of one-point perspective in producing this image.113

Executed in extremely refined straight lines and in eye-catching red, the balustrade extends from the foreground to background in steady diminution. Although slightly awkward in the zigzagging front section, the rest of the balustrade is rendered in logical perspective. The device of drawing the right side of the building with an open front door, from which part of the interior is exposed, is a traditional Chinese method of enticing the beholder’s gaze far into the depths of the picture. Placement of a winding balustrade alongside a building with an open front door or window became a common convention on porcelains with narrative scenes during the Kangxi period (figs. 34, 36, 37).

*The Transformation of Women’s Clothing Fashion and Attire*

The transformation of women’s clothing and attire can be best observed in the polychrome plate decorated with the theme of “Love and the Lute” (fig. 37).114 This episode, from part II, act 4, tells how Zhang Sheng plays music to express his love for Yingying, hoping to win her affection. Greatly despondent after Madame Cui breaks her previous promise to give him Yingying’s hand in marriage, Zhang now intends to commit suicide. Hongniang convinces him that to gain Yingying’s favor, he should play the lute for her. Therefore, at night, when Yingying has said her prayers and lit her incense in the garden, Zhang seizes the opportunity to play the lute and sing the love song “Phoenix Seeking Its Mate.” Yingying is deeply touched.

On this plate (fig. 37), Zhang Sheng plays the lute in a room with the door wide open while Yingying and Hongniang listen on the other side of the garden, separated by a wall. The appearance and attire of Yingying and Hongniang in this illustration are similar to those of Jiao Bingzhen’s “Women Playing in a Garden” (fig. 38). All the figures are slightly elongated and willowy, as if bodiless, and their attire of a long flowing skirt and a slim-fitting overdress (beiizi) differs from the blouse-and-skirt type of clothing in the Ming dynasty. The clothes are plain and simple, and the old motif of tiny plum blossom dots commonly applied on women’s clothes in porcelain illustrations of the late Ming and Shunzhi periods has disappeared. In addition, Hongniang wears an upswept hair-do that reveals a new fashion of the Qing dynasty. (This type of hairstyle can also be seen in figs. 43 and 44.) Indeed, these new images of Yingying and Hongniang bring the Qing style to the medium of porcelain and can be regarded as criteria for dating porcelain produced after the early 1670s.
4. The Return to Tragedy: Influence from Late Ming Literary Criticism and the Jin Shengtan Edition

In the late Ming dynasty, studies on drama became popular among progressively minded scholars. Influenced by the pessimistic intellectual climate at that time, the theory of "tragedy" in literary criticism was in fashion, and some scholars criticized the "happy marriage" ending of Western Chamber as vulgar and deceptive. They advocated that the play would be improved if it concluded at the end of part IV, when the two lovers separated and Zhang Sheng dreamed of meeting Yingying on his way to the capital to take the government examination. They argued that since life is but a dream, what could be more proper than to end the romance in a dream sequence?

This tragic view was taken up by Jin Shengtan, who considered the last part redundant and in bad taste. As a consequence, he relegated it to the section of appendixes in his edition. In fact, he believed that the last part of the text was aesthetically inferior and was written by a different playwright. This pessimistic and fatalistic view in literary criticism during the Qing dynasty also had an indirect influence on pottery painters in Jingdezhen, very likely through the dissemination of the Jin Shengtan edition, since it was virtually the sole edition being read at that time. The absence of the marriage scene in illustrations on porcelain during the late seventeenth and eighteenth century can be regarded as a reflection of this view among those who created Jingdezhen ceramics. Such examples can be seen on the tall cylindrical vase with twenty-four scenes from this romance (fig. 39) as well as on a square brush holder from the Yongzheng period (figs. 40 and 41).

On the blue-and-white cylindrical vase, twenty-four scenes from the Western Chamber were painted systematically to create an impressively unified form of decoration. These scenes, painted in oblong panels of equal size and shape, are
arranged in four registers over the entire body. The sequence runs from left to right and top to bottom, except in the bottom register, where the story begins from the middle section but the images are still arranged from left to right. The content of the twenty-four scenes are unevenly distributed between act I of part I to act 1 of part V in the play. Some acts are dismissed from representation altogether, while others, such as acts 1 and 2 in part I, and act 1 in part II, have more than one illustration each. Worth noting is that the sequence of the decoration on the vase ends with the scene in which Zhang Sheng asks his servant boy to send Yingying the message of his success in the capital examination. This scene is from part V, act 1, and it is the only illustration from the last part; even the marriage scene from act 4 of the same part is omitted. In the late Ming dynasty, pictorial representations of this romance usually conclude with the marriage of Zhang Sheng and Yingying, as seen in most woodblock illustrations of the time and in the trapezoidal box depicting twenty scenes discussed previously (fig. 28).

The unusual arrangement of content in this decorative scheme may be regarded as an indication of influence from the literary view of tragedy prevailing among early Qing scholars and propagated by the Jin Shentang edition. Furthermore, the uneven distribution of scenes on the porcelain also suggests that decorators no longer depended on woodblock print illustrations as their source. The practice of selecting one scene from each act and painting it in sequence, as seen on the trapezoidal box, was also abandoned.

The woodblock print industry had gradually fallen into disfavor during the Qing dynasty, and as a result, its output declined and deteriorated both in quality and in quantity. For this reason, decorators of Jingdezhen porcelain were apparently less inclined to utilize woodblock prints and instead turned directly to paintings. Judging from the distorted manner of delineating figures in the Chen Hongshou style, it is conceivable that the decorator of this Kangxi vase (fig. 39) was guided by fashionable painting styles. This trend was very likely supported and encouraged by Liu...
Yuan, the contemporary government-appointed porcelain designer in Jingdezhen. The classic, elegant appearance of decorations from the late Ming dynasty was thus perhaps out of date by this time.

The second example of omitting the marriage scene on porcelain decoration is found on a foursquare polychrome brush holder from the Yongzheng period (figs. 40 and 41). On this piece, two scenes are painted respectively on each side, "Zhang Sheng Traveling to Puzhou 蒲州" from the beginning of part I, act 1, is on one side (fig. 40). Riding a horse and followed on foot by his page, Zhang Sheng heads for Puzhou, in Shanxi province, to visit the Pujiu Temple, where a chance meeting with Yingying heralds the start of their romance. The composition of this illustration is similar to that on the top register of the cylindrical vase (fig. 39 right), and it is also comparable to woodblock illustrations in several editions of this drama from the late Ming dynasty, thus confirming the identity of the subject.

The theme of the decoration on the other side of the brush holder, however, is more obscure. Instead of depicting a highlight from the play, the monochrome painting shows a misty landscape in which a solitary man is seated in a small boat that drifts on the river (fig. 41). This desolate landscape scene compares well to the last page in the woodblock print illustrations of certain Western Chamber editions on which scholars commented, such as those of the 1610 Li Zhuowu xiānshēng pipíng bei Xixiāngjì 李卓吾先生批評西厢記 (The Northern Style Romance of the Western Chamber Commented by Li Zhuowu) (fig. 42) and the 1611 Chongke pipíng huáyì bei Xixiāngjì 重刻批評畫意西廂記 (Recut, Commented and Illustrated Northern Style Romance of the Western Chamber). Illustrations in these books exclude the marriage scene and replace it with landscape scenery, a dramatic change that could be considered an indication of the preference for a tragic ending to the romance. The decoration on this porcelain thus can be seen as a forlorn type of tragedy that late Ming intellectuals and Jin Shengtang preferred.

The base of this brush holder is inscribed with a six-character mark denoting Yongzheng imperial ware, and the decoration exhibits characteristics of imperial porcelain of that time. Such qualities as the subtle, delicate, and refined manner of
drawing, as well as the application of colors in the characteristic mixture of famille verte and monochrome ink are evident. These features relate the decoration of the brush holder to brush paintings of fine quality rather than to woodblock illustrations.

IV. The Influence of Performances and Local Dramas in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

From the Yuan dynasty onwards, the length of plays performed on stage underwent a gradual evolution. In the beginning, the entire play was acted out in one long performance that could span several days. By the Jiajing era in the Ming dynasty, however, the custom changed to performing only a selection of acts from one or more plays.\(^\text{119}\) This type of *zhezi xi* 折子戲 (theatrical selection) became increasingly popular and was commonly practiced during the Qing dynasty. Due to this change, subjects for performance became more selective and acting skills were stressed as a way to focus on the dramatic and entertaining aspects of the play. As a result, watching plays performed on stage replaced the habit of reading texts that had prevailed in the late Ming dynasty.

Furthermore, since the early Qing dynasty, popular local music and dramas flourished and became highly competitive nationwide. This situation became most acute in the eighteenth century, when the orthodox drama *Kunqu*, dominant since the sixteenth century, fell into decline and eventually gave way to other kinds of music and drama during the Qianlong period.\(^\text{120}\) By the early nineteenth century, Anhui troupes were leaders of the theatrical world. In the capital city of Beijing, these troupes played a decisive role in the creation of one of the most powerful kinds of Chinese drama, namely, *jingxi* 京戲 (Peking Opera). This conglomeration of different types of musical and performing techniques gathered from many local dramas and from *Kunqu* flourished after several decades of development. By the end of the nineteenth century it was an independent and widely popular form of drama. During the later decades of the Qing dynasty, Peking Opera also spread to other parts of China, including the middle and southern regions that were reached by the Shanghai troupes.\(^\text{121}\)

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the government expressed disapproval of the *Western Chamber*. In 1735, for example, the Qianlong Emperor banned its translation into Manchu, and in 1867 the government placed it at the top of the list of "lewd books" to be censored. Consequently, copies of the romance were gathered and burned. The drama, however, continued to be very popular and "almost every household had a copy, and every person had a volume" (幾子家置一編，人懷一疏).\(^\text{122}\) It was also adapted into various kinds of local dramas, and it remains widely appreciated to this day.
Scenes from the *Western Chamber* appeared frequently in both domestic and export ware of the eighteenth century, at a time when the Chinese porcelain trade with Europe flourished, and it reached its climax in 1800. Trade stopped abruptly after that year when Europeans successfully began producing their own porcelains. In the nineteenth century trade policies inevitably changed to coincide with the marked decline of the Chinese porcelain industry. This led to a severe drop in the quality and quantity of overall production. Nevertheless, novels and dramas continued to provide themes for porcelain decoration, and scenes from the *Western Chamber* continued to be reproduced but in far fewer numbers.

For the representation of *Western Chamber* themes on porcelain produced during this period, two new features are significant: the increased importance of Hongniang, and a sense of lighthearted humor. Based on the analysis of these two features, below is a discussion of how subject and style of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century porcelain illustrations were influenced both by orthodox plays performed on stage and by popular regional plays.

**The Increasing Importance of Hongniang**

Although not a main character, Hongniang has long been a popular figure among audiences of the *Western Chamber*. On stage, she plays a far more important role than is assigned to her in the text. According to a study by Jiang Xingyu 蒋星煜, Hongniang’s role became increasingly important, from *The Story of Yingying* to *Wang’s Western Chamber* and a variety of later revised versions of this play, and eventually she surpassed Zhang Sheng and Yingying to stand out as the protagonist in the one-act play “Hongniang.” A similar phenomenon also occurred in porcelain decoration. The increasing importance and popularity of Hongniang are emphasized by her more frequent appearance and the role she plays in compositions designed for porcelain. This is seen by the increase in the episodes in which Hongniang plays a key role, such as when she invites Zhang Sheng to the banquet in “Invitation to the Feast” (part II, act 2) (fig. 34), when she delivers Zhang Sheng’s letter to Yingying in “Initial Expectations” (part III, act 1), “Further Expectations” (part III, act 4), and “Hongniang in the Dock” (figs. 7 and 8). Even in scenes when Yingying and Hongniang appear together, the focus often shifts to Hongniang. One such example can be found in “Beauty’s Enchantment” on the famille-verte jar of about 1700 (fig. 43). Contrary to the norm of depicting Hongniang standing beside Yingying with her back to the viewer (figs. 21, 32, and 35), here she is posed as if she is in the spotlight. Standing between Yingying and Zhang Sheng in the middle of a garden, she holds a fan and points to the abbot Facong, who is making a whimsical face at her. Yingying and Zhang Sheng are far apart at opposite sides of the scene. Their bodies bend inward as if forming a frame for Hongniang and echoing the bulging shape of the jar.
Later, in porcelains of the Yongzheng and Qianlong periods, Yingying is sometimes left out altogether and only Hongniang remains, as in the decoration of a famille-rose plate produced around 1730 to 1745 (fig. 44). This plate shows the scene of "Repudiation of the Billet-Doux," as in earlier pieces (figs. 24-26), but here Yingying is missing altogether. Only Hongniang appears in the garden holding a fan and pointing to Zhang Sheng, who is about to jump over the wall. She gestures with her other hand to her mistress, Yingying, who is hidden (and thus omitted) in the unrolled part of the picture scroll that forms the cartouche.

This famille-rose ware was intended for European export, and the decoration represents a combination of Chinese and Western styles. The central scene is Chinese, but the roses and lilies in the border as well as the rich, bright color and overcrowded composition reflect European tastes. The influence of Western art is one of the characteristics of Chinese porcelains produced since the seventeenth century. Originally confined to export wares, it was incorporated into domestic wares after the Yongzheng and Qianlong periods and became most prominent during the eighteenth century. The fashion of combining Western elements in Chinese porcelain decoration can be found on several works (figs. 45, 47, and 51), as discussed below.

**Lighthearted Humor**

Contrary to the elegant and pellucid style of drawing on imperial wares, the decoration on folkwares of the eighteenth century was far more vigorous and ornamental. The designs were also sometimes crowded in composition and full of jest. One such example is a famille-rose vase of the Yongzheng period sold by Sotheby's, New York, in September 2000 (fig. 45). The body of this vase is painted in a distinct pink tone with three different scenes from the *Western Chamber* in the leaf-, fan- and peach-shaped cartouches reserved from the lotus- and peony-blossom background.
The scene in the fan-shaped frame represents the episode of the "Repudiation of the Billet-Doux," one of the most popular decorative motifs from this play during the Qing dynasty. It is the same scene depicted on plates in the Ashmolean Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum (figs. 25 and 26) but with reversed compositions and slight variations in detail. The image below this one, in the peach-shaped frame, represents a new scene not seen before. It shows a young scholar in a garden, kneeling to embrace the waist of a young woman. Apparently surprised and annoyed, the woman raises one hand over her head in a gesture to slap him. To the left, a young boy peeps from the window of the wall that encloses the garden. This new decorative motif probably depicts a scene from the beginning section of the episode of the "Repudiation of the Billet-Doux." In it Hongniang goes to the corner of the garden to see if Zhang has arrived. There, Zhang Sheng, who has just jumped over the wall of the garden, mistakes Hongniang for Yingying and embraces her.

The decoration enclosed within the large maple leaf is the most absurd and jocular of all. In this panel a young scholar is seated in a two-wheel carriage, a vehicle normally reserved for women and the disabled, while from a terrace high above ladies watch and bid him farewell. Judging from the context of the decoration on this vase, it is probably a comical representation of "A Feast with Tears" from part IV, act 3, of the Western Chamber. After Madame Cui forces Zhang Sheng to travel to the capital and take the examination as a condition for marrying Yingying, he makes the necessary preparations for his departure. He then goes with the Cui family and the abbot to the Pavilion of Farewell (Shili changting 十里長亭) for a parting feast arranged by Madame Cui. The decoration on this jar depicts the moment when the feast is over and Zhang Sheng is ready to take off for the capital.

The decoration here can be compared to the woodblock print illustration of the Jin Shengtan edition published in the early Kangxi period (fig. 46). In a different composition, this woodblock illustration shows Yingying accompanying Zhang Sheng beyond the Pavilion of Farewell in agony of their pending separation. The woodblock illustration of a person seated in a two-wheeled carriage pulled by a rickshaw driver is imitated on the vase, but the passenger has been comically switched from Yingying to Zhang Sheng.
The humorous representation of dramatic scenes on this vase has converted the Western Chamber into something of a farce, and this phenomenon was most likely caused by the influence of local music and dramas popular at the time. Contrary to the elegant and graceful style of performance in orthodox dramas, local plays for peasants and common folk added extra jokes and jocular actions to the choreography in order to amuse rustic audiences. Since these plays were considered "unrefined" and vulgar by the upper classes, government edicts were issued prohibiting their performances, even though these proclamations were never totally effective.\textsuperscript{127}

What is interesting is that the unusual and jocular scene of Zhang Sheng seated in a wheeled carriage with Yingying and Hongniang watching from an upper terrace appears again, this time on a snuff bottle of imperial quality from the Qianlong reign (fig. 47). It is finely and elegantly crafted with innovative features characteristic of that period. The influence of European art can also be seen both in the design and color of the floral pattern at the neck of the bottle and in the logical perspective of the building in the landscape. The upper floor terrace is depicted on one side of the snuff bottle and is shown in a diagonal composition to indicate background perspective. This method differs markedly from the flat and shallow frontal view on the famille-rose vase (fig. 45). Another new feature in the Qianlong decoration is the contemporary appearance of Yingying and Hongniang. Wearing plain clothes of an eighteenth-century style, they seem unpretentious, as if they were drawn from real life. This decoration resembles brush painting in the way it shows a refinement of line drawing, a subtlety in color range, and an application of textured strokes.

It is recorded in Yinliuzhai shuoci that figures painted on porcelains of the Qianlong period were incomparably refined. Fictional scenes were very popular and encyclopedic in content, including stories from the Han, Jin, and Tang periods as well as Romance of...
the Western Chamber, Romance of the Three Kingdoms, and The Water Margin, which were all considered superb.

The decoration of this snuff bottle of imperial quality is one of the finest examples among all such scenes.

In contrast to the decoration on the Qianlong snuff bottle, which was influenced by brush painting, the design on a vase of the Tongzhi period (1861–74) was probably taken directly from a stage performance (fig. 48). It shows the marriage scene from the last episode of “The Glorious Homecoming” (part V, act 4). In this scene, Zhang Sheng has been appointed to a top official position after passing the imperial examination, and he returns to the monastery. His rival in love, Zheng Heng, spread the rumor that Zhang was married in the capital. To clear his name, Zhang sent his old friend, General Du, to prove his innocence. Finally, with a joyful expression, the two lovers are brought together. As mentioned earlier, there was a tendency to dismiss the marriage scene in decoration during the early Qing dynasty due to the influence of the Jin Shengtan edition. In the performance of local plays, however, lighthearted and amusing programs were preferred; quite simply, general audiences did not appreciate or understand the theory of tragedy propagated by literary critics. Therefore, in the nineteenth century, when local plays were in vogue, porcelain decorators were influenced by popular taste, and the happy ending resurfaced as a welcome motif.

This marriage scene is depicted in a way that resembles a stage setting, with the roof, railings, and post represented realistically. A close-up view of the furnished hall shows figures wearing stage costumes with elaborate headdresses, garments, and make-up. Zhang Sheng, wearing a pink robe, bows to Madame Cui in front of
the offering table with two red candles. The other figures, including General Du, stand around the hall. Each one is depicted convincingly and vividly, with different poses and gestures. The application of red, green, and yellow colors enhances the joyful atmosphere of the occasion.

The style of this decoration can be compared to that in a pair of New Year woodblock prints that were produced in the well-known center of Taohuawu 桃花坞 (Dock of Peach Flowers), located in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, during the Tongzhi and Guangxu (1875–1908) periods (fig. 49). In this pair of woodblock prints, sixteen scenes from the drama (eight scenes in each print) are represented in sequence, with the titles and the names of the characters written in each compartment. Judging from the detailed depiction of props and settings, as well as the stage costumes and make-up, these scenes were likely based on actual performances of the Anhui Opera, which was popular in central China before it was absorbed into the Peking Opera. The New Year woodblock prints shown here are characterized by detailed architectural features and inscriptions of scene titles and character names. Actors and actresses in this print wear costumes similar to those on the Tongzhi vase. In addition, the realistic interior setting is comparable to that seen on the vase. Based on these similarities, it is possible to assert that the Tongzhi vase decoration is related to Anhui Opera performances but not to those of the Peking Opera, which have different styles of costumes, props, and minimal stage sets as indicated primarily by the actors’ symbolic gestures.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when Peking Opera was in vogue, scenes taken directly from stage performances were popular on porcelains, yet artists preferred action and military scenes, such as martial arts, fighting, or activities of soldiers and generals. The Western Chamber, categorized as a “non-military” drama, therefore, might have fallen into disuse, since none of its scenes as porcelain decoration has been identified with Peking Opera. This preference for military scenes also occurred in New Year woodblock prints of the late Qing dynasty, and decorations on porcelains might have been influenced by this phenomenon. Nevertheless, in the early twentieth century this drama continued to remain a favorite for porcelain decoration.
V. Professional Painters in the Making of “Art Pottery”: The Modern Period

In China during the twentieth century, socio-political events were closely reflected in art and strongly influenced developments in literature. Drama itself underwent immense change, chiefly with the introduction on a major scale of spoken drama in the European style and more recently of the almost wholesale rejection of traditional themes from Chinese drama. The past, however, has not been completely forgotten. During the early twentieth century, scholars expressed renewed interest in China’s ancient drama, and their endeavors and research filtered back into live theater performances and into the creation of dramatic literature. Nevertheless, the important role of traditional Chinese drama in society waned when the majority of audiences turned their interest towards Western types of performance and the cinema.

As a result of the general decline of interest in attending and performing traditional Chinese drama, combined with the deterioration of porcelain production in Jingdezhen during the 1930s and 1940s, the number of porcelain wares decorated with traditional dramatic themes also decreased. Consequently, only sporadic examples of porcelain decorated with Western Chamber scenes can be identified. Based on a study of these few examples, the specific feature in the development of porcelain decoration in this period can still be ascertained, that is, the role of professional painters in porcelain decoration and the emerging popularity of “art pottery.”

The involvement of professional painters in porcelain decoration can be traced to the Yongzheng period, when court painters were summoned to decorate enamelledware for the emperor, and again in the Qianlong period, when they produced wares for both civilian and court use. During the Qianlong period, polychrome ware became popular among commoners. In order to meet the demands of mass production, workshops were established that specialized in painting decorations on white porcelain bought from other Jingdezhen kilns. They operated until the government closures of the 1950s. These workshops were called Hongdian (red shops), because red or pink colors—the conventional symbols of happiness and auspiciousness—were the most commonly used pigments. All Hongdian were owned and operated by porcelain painters, and the larger ones hired apprentices for lower wages to run errands and do other menial tasks. From then on, painting on porcelain became an increasingly respected profession. Pottery painters also earned a higher salary than ordinary potters. Subsequently, this profession attracted talented artists from all over the country to Jingdezhen. As a consequence, the standard of porcelain decoration was elevated and in the early twentieth century reached a peak equaling the quality of brush paintings. This type of porcelain with painted decoration by professionals became the major element of “art pottery” in modern China and has remained popular to the present.
The refined and delicate decoration on the square brush holder (figs. 40 and 41) and the snuff bottle (fig. 47) of the Yongzheng and Qianlong periods was most likely executed by court painters of those respective times. In contrast, the enamel plate of the Jiaqing period (1796–1820) with “Fulfillment of the Billet-Doux” (part IV, act 1) was executed by Hongdian artists (fig. 50). This act describes how, after many torments and uncertainties, Yingying finally comes to Zhang Sheng’s room and fulfills her promise of spending the night with him. The main decoration on this plate shows Zhang Sheng embracing Yingying in his room, while Hongniang, who had encouraged Yingying to keep her promise, waits outside in the garden.

The reverse of this plate is inscribed with the four-character mark of its producer, Jiang Zhenglong zhi (Made by Jiang Zhenglong), which can be regarded as an indication of the rising status and independence of porcelain makers in the eighteenth century. Judging from contemporary practices of that time, Jiang was most likely the owner of a workshop and the supervisor of its productions. The decoration might have been executed by one of his apprentices, but the porcelain piece would have been approved and given any final touches by Jiang himself before it was sold. Certain painters took up the practice of adding a signature on porcelain wares in the twentieth century, when this profession reached unrivaled prestige and proficiency.

The decoration here is not as exquisite and graceful as on the previous two wares, but it is still quite lively and explicit. The design of the plate as a whole is well conceived. For example, echoing the theme of the central motif, the shallow cavetto along the border of the plate is decorated with butterflies and flowers—symbols associated with seduction. Thus, the main scene in the center and the supporting border motifs match and form a cohesive whole.

The industry of book carving and woodblock print illustration faded in the mid-nineteenth century, when it was gradually superseded by machines as well as
by lithography and silkscreen printing introduced from the West. Consequently, from the early twentieth century, similarities in style between porcelain decorations and new prints of European-style origin can be noted. The decoration of the polychrome plate by the renowned porcelain painter Cheng Shuijin 程水金 in 1946 is a fine example of this (fig. 51). The decoration shows a scene from “Repudiation of the Billet-Doux” and is painted in a composition different from the traditional designs seen on dishes (figs. 25 and 26). In the latter works, Zhang Sheng is shown at the moment he jumps over the garden wall. On this plate, however, Zhang is already in the garden, and Hongniang, standing between him and Yingying, mediates in this embarrassing situation. The four-character poem relevant to the scene, “Waiting for the Moon to Rise over the Western Chamber” (Xixiang daiyue 西廂待月), and the date and the name of the painter are inscribed on the plate. This same formula is used in traditional brush painting. The decoration on this plate, however, also shows Western influence in the inclusion of the acanthus leaf on the border and in the garden presented in perspective. The figures are also given a sense of three-dimensionality through the shading of their faces and clothes, which have photographic features similar to those in commercial posters of circa 1920 to 1949 (fig. 52).

Concomitant with the flourishing of foreign trade and commercial activities in Shanghai in the early twentieth century, Western aesthetics permeated and dominated popular art. Silkscreen-produced monthly calendars and commercial posters strongly reflect the realistic styles of Western painting. “Women of Beauty” continued to be the most popular genre for such commercial products, but scenes from traditional Chinese mythology, dramas, and novels were also represented. The decoration of this 1946 plate reflects the art style that was popular in Shanghai at the time—a combination of Western decorative motifs and techniques allied with traditional Chinese subject matter.
The scene of Zhang Sheng greeting Yingying in the garden (from "A Poem and Its Response") on a tall vase produced between 1980 and 1985 (fig. 53) demonstrates that the Western Chamber remained a well-liked theme. Figures were depicted in pseudo-Tang styles of clothes and hair fashions to give contemporary appeal to the scene. After 1949, with the founding of the People's Republic of China, the application of Western techniques for classical figural scenes became the norm for Chinese painting. This vase demonstrates the new orthodoxy in fashion. The seal of the porcelain painter Fu Yaosheng (1941–2003) is painted on the vase. In addition, the mark for Zhongguo Jingdezhen zhi 中國景德鎮 花 (Made in Jingdezhen, China) is carved on the base. This shows that the vase was produced in an officially designated kiln and was designed to meet the highest standards of this type of "art pottery."

VI. Trading in Forgeries and the Enthusiasm for Studio Pottery: Contemporary Phenomena

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Communist critics elaborated on political aspects of stage plays, giving special attention to their revolutionary implications. Henceforth, the Western Chamber was praised for its attitude toward social classes and its ability to fascinate the proletariat. In the 1950s the Western Chamber was selected by leading Communist scholars as one of the ten great works of classical Chinese literature, and with the high esteem accorded this play, it once more became a popular subject for various types of artistic creation, including stage performances, illustrated picture books, and even stamps. Interest in this story was similarly revived in the ceramic arts.

Since the early twentieth century, the Chinese government and private entrepreneurs have made efforts to introduce modern concepts and methods of industrial
design to the mechanical mass production of porcelain. Due to constant political turmoil, insufficient funds, and a lack of incentive and education, their efforts have met with setbacks and yielded limited results. The situation has remained virtually the same until the present day, with porcelain production in Jingdezhen being mainly a handicraft industry. The utilization and practice of industrial design have been kept to a minimum, while the majority of quality products remain “art pottery” types painted with traditional techniques. The vase decorated by Fu Yaosheng is one such example (fig. 53).

Since the 1980s and after the much-criticized Cultural Revolution (1966–76), the Chinese government has adopted a more open policy towards certain aspects of social control. Consequently, current Western art and the trade in antique markets have begun operating again (being strictly banned from public view and operation before the 1980s). This situation, heralded by China’s economic improvement and a greater openness to foreign contacts and influences, has encouraged people to create artworks in imitation of contemporary Western fashions and once more to produce imitations of antique porcelains.

Under these circumstances, new polarized trends of development in the ceramic arts can be detected. Objects made in imitation of antiques, in addition to blatant forgeries and fakes, have come into vogue and have been mass-produced to maximize financial profit. Another trend has been to create modern forms of studio pottery, in which practical function is not the main concern. This takes ceramics out of the codified confines of traditional vessel forms and brings it into the realm of pure artistic expression. In both types of production, the Western Chamber has again captured the attention and imagination of potters.

On account of the popularity of the Western Chamber, fakes decorated with this theme in the styles of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century wares have been produced in a very skillful and deceptive manner. On closer examination, however, the typical traits of the forger can be discerned. One example is a polychrome vase decorated with the Western Chamber scene “Beauty’s Enchantment” (fig. 54), which is almost identical in shape and decoration to one in the Beijing Palace Museum dated to the Shunzhi period (fig. 32). Careful observation reveals it to be a recent forgery. Unlike the seventeenth-century work, the colors are gaudy and applied in thin layers, and the proportions of the vase profile are incorrect. In addition, other details reveal its recent production. For example, in the scene where the aged abbot Facong guides Zhang Sheng around the temple and points at the building, here he appears as a young man clothed in bright yellow, a pigment not used in the seventeenth century. The decoration of this modern vase thus fails to represent the original look and content of the scene by unconsciously altering details of the original, even though the porcelain painter earnestly tried to make an identical copy.
Contrary to the outright financial aim of blatant forgeries, the ceramic artist Li Guizhen 李貴鎭 (born 1964) has pursued the avant-garde artistic wave of studio pottery. He turned the Western Chamber, for example, into an installation work that set a world record for its length. Fascinated and inspired by the Western Chamber picture book by Wang Shuhui 王叔暉 (1912–1985), Li Guizhen fired 128 pieces of polychrome ceramic tiles (each tile measures 40 by 40 centimeters) from 1997 to 2004. Each tile is painted with one scene copied from the picture book and presents the romance in its pictorial entirety. In an exhibition Li placed the ceramic tiles on the floor and arranged them in the form of the Chinese title characters—Xi 西, xiang 像, ji 記 (fig. 55). This impressive work attracted immediate attention and was accepted and listed in the Guinness World Book of Records as the longest tile in the world.152

Conclusion
This study demonstrates that representations on porcelain of the story of the Western Chamber cannot be merely confined to a relationship with the thirteenth-century play by Wang Shifu. They also relate to earlier poems inspired by The Story of Yingying written in the Song dynasty as well as to dramas and storytelling performances from the Song and Jin dynasties. These early literary works clearly inspired painters and pottery decorators. The study also shows that the development of representations of Western Chamber themes on porcelains relates closely to the evolution of imagery and style in Chinese literature, drama, woodcut illustration, and painting.

To recap, the earliest representation of this story on the Cizhou pillow of the Jin dynasty (fig. 1) is probably inspired by The Romance of the Western Chamber Medley, the storytelling text that was popular at the time, while decorations on porcelains from the Yuan, Ming, and Shunzhi periods were inspired by Wang's Western Chamber written during the Yuan dynasty, as well as the Southern version of Romance of the Western Chamber written during the Jiajing period. Since the Kangxi period, local dramas and the new, modified edition by Jin Shengtan influenced porcelain design. This decorative theme remained in use in the twentieth and even now into the twenty-first century.

The iconography and styles of decoration in this group of porcelains show that Jingdezhen potters and porcelain painters sensitively reflected and responded to contemporary literature and dramatic developments as well as artistic fashions, and they were often inspired to create new products in addition to their conventional repertoire. This spontaneity and swiftness in production must be regarded as an important factor in the success of the Jingdezhen porcelain industry.

In researching this subject, it can also be observed that, although styles of porcelain decoration have long been closely related to contemporary artistic
fashions, certain significant facets in their development are unique to the porcelain industry. For example, in the early Qing dynasty, when woodblock print illustrations for literary works suffered from severe decline due to highly restrictive government controls and manipulations, the application of narrative scenes from these very works on porcelain reached its golden age. Scenes from the *Western Chamber* were systematically used and porcelains were produced in sets to represent the complete story. In addition to the *Western Chamber* drama, other literary works banned by the government, such as *The Water Margin*, also enjoyed popularity as porcelain decoration. This kind of "counter-mainstream" phenomenon is an interesting topic worthy of further investigation, and I believe more studies on this theme will shed greater light on the porcelain industry in China as well as the complicated role and function it played in the cultural sphere.

The popularity of dramatic scenes as porcelain decoration for domestic markets seems to have been overlooked by modern scholars researching this subject, which led them to believe that scenes from this drama were mainly created for export wares and had disappeared from use by the nineteenth century.153 This study shows, on the contrary, that narrative designs (with scenes from dramas, novels, and other kinds of literature) on Chinese porcelain originated with and was sustained primarily by domestic markets. This fashion has been most enduring in the case of *Romance of the Western Chamber*, from its establishment as a popular literary form in the Jin dynasty up to contemporary times. Although more popular during certain periods than others, the *Western Chamber* as a subject has never completely died out. While similar motifs from this romance were used and copied on porcelains from one generation to the next, new motifs were also created to reflect and satisfy contemporary interests and tastes. Unfortunately, only a fraction of the original productions remain for our contemplation and appreciation. This study demonstrates that as long as people are entertained by interesting plots in the story, graceful prose, and lyrical songs, and are moved by expressions of romantic love
and compassion for human suffering, the Western Chamber will remain in performances, publications, and porcelain decoration.

Thus, this romance has provided modern scholars with one of the richest sources of themes for Chinese porcelain decoration and for academic investigation and research. This study also identifies and interprets many subjects of porcelain decoration that have not been previously understood. It verifies some characteristic features of different periods, reconsiders the dating of porcelains from the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, and more fully presents the nature of the relationship between decorative arts and popular culture in China. The results of this study will hopefully be useful in future examinations of other kinds of narrative themes on Chinese porcelain. These themes may prove to be not only rich in content and vast in quantity but also just as fascinating and intriguing as Romance of the Western Chamber.

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2 Since the beginning of the twentieth century, scholars have studied various decorative motifs in Chinese art, but it was not until the 1980s that narrative themes on Chinese porcelain and their deeper cultural meanings were recognized as subjects for serious study. Before about 1980, the West was virtually unaware of the narrative scenes from fiction on Chinese porcelain decoration. In many catalogues, they were simply described as “decoration with figures.” From December 1979 to January 1980, the exhibition *Romance Decoration on Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Chinese Porcelains* took place in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford University. This exhibition, in which I had the honor to serve as the guest curator, aroused awareness and interest in the rich literary content of Chinese ceramic decoration prior to the publication of an

Since the 1990s, further research into the iconography of narrative themes (and scenes) in the decoration of Chinese porcelain indicates an important advance in the study of Chinese art, in particular with regard to the field of Transitional Ware. Nowadays, many literary scenes in Chinese porcelain decoration previously ignored or misinterpreted are being identified and deciphered both in China and in the West. Some of the recently published books on Chinese porcelain decoration are as follows: Tie Yuan 钮原, ed., Ming Qing ciqi wenshi jianding 明清瓷器纹饰鉴定 (Authentication of the decorative patterns on porcelains of the Ming and Qing dynasties) (Beijing: Xinhua shudian, 2001); Kong Liuqing 孔六慶, Zhongguo ciqi hudu yishushi 中國瓷器繪畫藝術史 (History of the art of Chinese porcelain painting) (Nanjing: Dongnan daxue chubanshe, 2004); Lu Jun 陸軍, Zhongguo zuoxiao shiwen fazhanshi lunlang 中國古代陶瓷飾紋發展史論壇 (A brief history of the development of ancient Chinese porcelain decoration) (Beijing: Zhongguo yishu yanjiuyuan, 2006).

3 Wang Shifu, Moon and Zither, 3.

4 This piece of fiction is also known as Huizhen ji 會真記 (Story of an encounter with an immortal). It was translated by Arthur Waley in Anthology of Chinese Literature, compiled and edited by Cyril Birch (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 290–99; and Stephen Owen, ed., An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911 (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1996), 540–49. Short fiction written in prose form was a genre of literature popular during the Tang dynasty and is called chuanqi 傳奇 (“transmission of the strange”) in Chinese.

5 Ibid., 540.

6 Wu Guoqing 吳國欽, Xixiangji yishu tan 西湘記藝術論 (On the art of the Romance of the Western Chamber) (Guangdong: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1983), 7.


8 Medley of Romance of the Western Chamber was introduced and translated by Chen Li-Li in Master Tang’s Western Chamber Romance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). For further studies of this medley, refer to Kin Bunyko 金文京, Akamazi Norihiko 赤松紀彦 et al., Tō Kaiken Seisō shokūchô (no) kenkyû 西京探訪 (no) 研究 (Studies on the Medley of Romance of the Western Chamber) (Tokyo: Kyûko shoin, 1998).

9 There is some scholarly debate on the authorship of Romance of the Western Chamber. Wang Shifu is generally accepted as its author, but others believe the final part of the book was written either by Guan Hanqing 賁漢卿, another celebrated playwright of the Yuan dynasty and senior to Wang, or under their co-authorship; see Duan Qiming 段啓明, Xixiangji yishu 西湘記藝術 (Draft on Romance of the Western Chamber) (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1982), 67. Romance of the Western Chamber by Wang Shifu has been translated into the following English editions: S. I. Hsiung, trans., The Romance of the Western Chamber: A Chinese Play Written in the Thirteenth Century (London: Methuen, 1935; repr., 1969); Henry H. Hart, trans., The West Chamber: A Medieval Drama (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1936); William Dolby, trans., West Wing: China’s Most Famous Play, 1984; Wang Shifu, Moon and the Zither, 1984; Hsu Wen-Chin, “The Romance of the Western Chamber: Development in Literature and Its Reception in Society,” International Journal of Open University of Kaohsiung 1, no. 1 (2003), 133–53.


11 For a study and introduction to figural decoration on Chinese porcelain, see Liu Yi 劉毅, “Ciqi caishì renwu tian qi yin shan” 優器彩飾人物圖案起因初探 (A preliminary study on the cause of the emergence of figural decoration on porcelain), Jingdezhen taoci 景德鎮陶磁 (Jingdezhen ceramics), 1, no. 9 (1991), 40–47; 22; Tie Yuan, ed., Ming Qing ciqi wenshi jianding 明清瓷器紋飾 (Ming and Qing porcelain decoration), no. 1975, 74–94; Wang Congwee 吳聰威, “Tang Song taoci zhuangshi fazhan di yanjia — Yi Cizhou yao zhuangshi di yanjia wei zhongxin” 唐宋陶瓷裝飾發展的研究院 (Studies on the development of pottery decoration in the Tang and Song dynasties focusing on Cizhou kilns) (master’s thesis, Graduate School of Art History, National Taiwan University, Taipei, 1998).

12 For a study of shiün hua, refer to Shan Guoqiang 山國強, “Gudai shiün hua gallun” 古代仕女畫概論 (On ancient paintings of beautiful women), Guang cong bówuyuán yuánkān 故宮博物院院刊, 1995, 12.
Mary Fong pointed out that in Chinese painting, women are usually depicted as "beautiful but submissive, demure and agreeable, unassertive and pleasant," and they are an "object of male gaze." See Mary H. Fong, "Images of Women in Traditional Chinese Painting," *Women's Art Journal* 17, no. 1 (1996), 22–27. Lora Blanchard also observed that "the elite women of the Song dynasty are generally depicted engaged in four types of feminine pastime: spending idle, reflective moments in gardens or bedrooms, playing musical instruments, dressing and adorning themselves, and working with cloth." See Lora Blanchard, "Visualizing Love and Longing in Song Dynasty Paintings of Women" (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 2001), 44.

14 The titles of these plays are "Yingying liuqiao 梨鶯六幺" (Yingying's dance), "Hongguangzi 紅娘子" (Crimson Maiden), and "Zhang Gong Xixiangji 張拱西廂記" (Zhang Gong's Romance of the Western Chamber). See Zhang Geng and Guo Hancheng, *Zhongguo xiqu tongshi 中國戲曲通史*, 1, 180.


16 According to the written records in *Daguan Lu 大觀錄* (Record of wide spectacle), *Shuhua jianying 書畫鑒影* (Connoisseurship of painting and calligraphy), and visual evidence from woodblock prints of the Ming dynasty, painters during the Song and Yuan dynasties, such as Chen Juzhong 陳居中, Wang Yi 王義 (act. ca. 1279–1368), and Sheng Mao 盛懋 (act. ca. 1313–1362), reportedly did "portraits" of Yingying. See Dong Kang 董康, *Qianqiu jueyantu 千秋絕燕圖* (Pictures of peerless beauties in history), vol. 2 (ca. 1900); Hsu Wen-Chin, "A Study on the Representation of The Romance of the Western Chamber in Chinese Painting," *Zhenli daxue wenxue yuebao 真理大學人文學報* (Tamsui Oxford Journal of Arts) 3 (2005), 201–209.

17 The shape and style of this stoneware pillow is identical to another one decorated with a poem and an inscription dated 1204. Therefore, this pillow can be also dated to the thirteenth century, in the Jin dynasty. See 6000 Years of Chinese Art: Treasures from the *Shanghai Museum* (San Francisco: Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, 1983); pl. 87. Archaeologists in China also discovered a group of Cizhou pillows, with a similar shape and decorative style, all painted with narrative scenes. Most are dated to the Jin dynasty, and others to the Yuan dynasty. See Zhang Ziyi 張子英 ed., *Cizhouyaoyi cizhen 磁州窯枕* (Cizhou porcelain pillows) (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 2000).

18 This translation is quoted from Chen Lili, *Master Tsung's Western Chamber Romance*, 26.

19 This scene was attributed to the story of Tao Shan 陶珊 from the story of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms in 6000 Years of Chinese Art, pl. 87.

20 The title of the Western Chamber in this anthology is *Xinkai zhaihui qiniao xishi chuanyu jingang bei Xixiangji 新庵雅聚奇妙戲式全家錦囊北西廂記* (Newly printed, selectively collected, marvelous, in stage performance style, *Romance of the Western Chamber*). This anthology was edited by Xu Wenzhou 徐文昭 and reprinted by the Zhan Family at Jinxiangfang, Fuzhou, Fujian, and is now in the collection of Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo del Escorial in Spain.

21 Paintings of beautiful women like this were particularly popular during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. A handscroll depicting sixty famous women is also in the collection of the Field Museum in Chicago. Another one, titled "One Hundred Beauties," is in the National Palace Museum, Taipei; this one is inscribed with the spurious signature of Akasaka Shunjirō, a well-known Ming-dynasty painter Qiu Ying (Qiu Ying, ca. 1494–1552).

22 This vase was collected by E. A. Strelnine, a Latvian soldier who later opened an antique shop in Shanghai at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1930 he published the book *Guoyuexuan mingci 古月軒名瓷* (Illuminated wares of Guoyuexuan) (Shanghai: Shanghai shuidian chubanshe, 1930; repr. 1998). The vase is illustrated in this book with no date specified. "Guoyuexuan" ware has been a matter of controversy. Most believe it is a collective term for enameled wares produced during the Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong periods, which were imitated in later periods in great quantity. See E. A. Strelnine, ed., *Guoyuexuan mingci 古月軒名瓷* (Illuminated ware of Guoyuexuan), Preface; and Sheila Yorke Hardy, "Ku Yueh-Hsuan: A New Hypothesis," *Oriental Art* 2 (1949–50), 116–25.

23 There are about ten pieces of porcelain decorated with fictional and historical themes in this group of blue-and-white porcelains from the Yuan dynasty. They have been either excavated in China or are now held in private collections around the world. For illustrations of these porcelains, see Zhu Yuping 朱裕平,
Yuandai qinghuaci元代青花瓷 (Blue-and-white porcelains of the Yuan dynasty) (Shanghai: Wenhui chubanshe, 2000), 228–31; Margaret Medley, Yuan Porcelain and Stoneware (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), 13–31; Saitoku Tarō 萩村卓太郎, “Genda sometsuki こ (1)—Jiyun seiki nakaba no Genseika to Genkyoka 元代染付考（上）—十四世紀中葉の元青花と元曲” (Studies on ceramics of the Yuan dynasty—Mid-fourteenth century Yuan blue-and-white porcelain and Yuan drama, part 1), Ko bijutsu こびじゅつ 18 (1967), 25–41; Saitoku Tarō, “Genda sometsuki こ (2)—Jiyun seiki nakaba no Genseika to Genkyoka 元代染付考（下）—十四世紀中葉の元青花と元曲,” Ko bijutsu こびじゅつ 19 (1967), 59–74.

For an illustration of the jar, see Zhu Yuping, Yuandai qinghuaci, 229, pl. 8–58.


For Clunas’s confirmation, see Clunas, “West Chamber,” 71. Liu Liangyou 劉良佑 identifies the theme of decoration on this vase with the drama Qinghuaci 青花瓷 (Blue-shirt tears) by Ma Zhiyuan 馬致遠 of the Yuan dynasty. See Liu Liangyou, “Yuandai wansi dì zuaju renwu qinghuaci” 元代晚期的側劇人物青花瓷 (Blue-and-white porcelain of the late Yuan period decorated with drama scenes), Gugong wenwu yuekan 故宮文物月刊 6, no. 4 (1988), 93. Ni Yibin 吳以賓 agrees with this theory; see Ni Yibin, Kantu shuoci 看圖說瓷 (On narrative porcelain decorations) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), 95–106. Also see Yibin Ni, “‘The Shunzhi Emperor and the Popularity of Scenes from the Romance of the Western Wing on Porcelain,” in Michael Butler, Julia Curtis, Stephen Little, eds., Treasures from an Unknown Reign: Shunzhi Porcelain, 1644–1661 (Alexandria, VA: Art Services International, 2002), 71. His comparison of decoration on this vase with woodblock prints of a later period here does not seem to be an appropriate form of methodology.

27 Liu Lanhua 劉蘭華 and Zhang Bo 張柏, Zhongguo gudai ciqi wenshi 中國古代陶瓷紋飾 (Decorations on ancient Chinese pottery and ceramics) (Harbin: Harbin chubanshe, 1994), 211.

28 The drum-shaped censer is in the collection of the Jiangxi Provincial Museum and is illustrated in Jiangxi Yuan Ming Qing qinghuaci 江西元明清青花瓷 (Blue-and-white porcelain of the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties in Jiangxi province) (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University and Jiangxi Provincial Museum, 2002), pl. 147. The Jiangtai plate is illustrated in Hu Yanxi 胡雁溪, Mingdai minyao qinghuaci daguan 明代民窯青花大観 (Blue-and-white porcelain produced in private kilns during the Ming dynasty) (Beijing: Tsui chubanshe, 1993), pl. 71. Two ceramic fragments from the Hongzhai period painted with this drama are illustrated in Xiong Liao, ed., Zhongguo lidai qinghua huadian 中國歷代青花畫典, vol. 1, Renwu dongwu jian 聞人動物卷 (Figure and animal section), 11, 13.


30 An example of such disparate decoration can be found on a bowl of the Kangxi period illustrated in Julie Emerson, Porcelain Stories: From China to Europe (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum and University of Washington Press, 2000), 118.

31 The Western Chamber exerted a great influence on other works in Chinese literature. Both the structure and plot of the play were imitated by other playwrights of the Yuan dynasty as soon as it was published. The Western Chamber became a paragon of Chinese drama of the Caizi jiaren 子才佳人 (talented scholar and beautiful woman) category and thus had a great impact on later literary works. See Zhao Chunning 趙春寧, Xixiangji chuambo yanjù 西厢記傳播研究 (Studies on the dissemination of Romance of the Western Chamber) (Xiamen: Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 2005), 222–37. The most famous drama of the Ming dynasty with the theme of “burning nighttime incense” is Baiyu ting 拜月亭 (Moon-worshipping pavilion). The content of this drama also may have been influenced by that of the Western Chamber. Examples of porcelain dishes of the late Ming period decorated with women burning nighttime incense in a garden can be found in the cargo of a sunken ship unearthed by Captain Michael Hatcher in 1981. For illustrations of and an introduction to these pieces, see Colin Sheaf and Richard Kilburn, The Hatcher Porcelain Cargoes: The Complete Record (Oxford: Phaidon, 1988), pl. 94; Julia Curtiss, “Transitional Ware Made Plain: A Wreck from the South China Sea,” Oriental Art 31, no. 2 (1985), fig. 14, fig. 18b.

32 Examples of porcelain decorated with this theme are illustrated in the following publications: a blue-and-white round box of the Zhengde 正德 period (1505–1521) is in the Palace Museum, Beijing; see Kong Liuqing, Zhongguo taoci huihua yishushi 中國陶瓷詩畫史, 154, pl. 5–16. For a blue-and-white bowl of the Xuande period, see Ma Xiguǐ 馬希桂, Zhongguo qinghuaci 中國青花瓷 (Chinese blue-and-white) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999), pl. 181. For a meiping vase of the fifteenth century in the collection of the Tsui Museum of Art, see The Tsui
Museum of Art (徐氏藝術館) (Hong Kong: Tsui Museum of Art, 1991), pl. 71. For a blue-and-white jar of the fifteenth century, see the catalogue of a Sotheby’s sale in Fine Chinese Ceramics, Hong Kong, 13 November 1990, pl. 133.

33 Liu Liangyou and Ni Yibin have different opinions about the subject of decoration on this vase. See note 26.

34 Jiang Xingyu 蒋星煜, “Hongniang di pengzhang, yuewei, huigui he bianzou” 紅娘的繪製，越位、回歸和變奏 (The expansion, transcendence, regression and variation of Hongniang), Xixiangji yanjun 皆因 on xinhua (Studies and appreciation of Romance of the Western Chamber) (Shanghai: Shanghai chishu chubanshe, 2004), 144–46 (originally published in Hebei xuekan, 1991, no. 3).

35 A traditional method of applying decoration on porcelain is to place a piece of painted paper face down on the porcelain, thus reproducing the design in reverse. For a study of this Shunzhi-period period, see Hsu Wen-Chin, “Fictional Scenes on Chinese Transitional Porcelain (1620–ca. 1683) and Their Sources of Decoration,” Museum of Far Eastern Antiques 46 (1986), 21–22.


40 Zhou Huxin 周心慧, ed., Xinbian zhongguo banhuaishi tuhu 新編中國版畫史圖錄 (Newly compiled and illustrated catalogue on the history of Chinese woodblock prints) (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2000); Wang Bonin 王伯敏, Zhongguo banhua tongshi 中國版畫通史 (General history of Chinese woodblock prints) (Shijiazhuang: Hebei meishu chubanshe, 2002). The earliest extant woodblock print illustration to a dramatic work is the one-and-a-half pages of illustrations remaining in the incomplete imprint of the Xinbian jiaozheng Xixiangji 新編校正西廂記 (Newly annotated and commented Romance of the Western Chamber). This book can be dated to the late Yuan and early Ming dynasties. The remaining one-page illustration is on the theme of “Sun, the Flying Tiger, in His Camp” (孫飛虎圍帳) from part II, act I (“Alarm at the Monastery”); while the half-page illustration is perhaps from the scene of “Yingying Burning Nighttime Incense.” For a discussion of this edition and the illustrations, see Duan Miheng 段沫恆, “Xinbian jiaozheng Xixiangji canye di fuxian” 新編校正西廂記殘頁的發現 (The discovery of the remaining pages of the newly compiled and revised Romance of the Western Chamber), Xiqu yanju 戲曲研究, 7 (1982); Jiang Xingyu 蒋星煜, “Xinfuxian zuizao di Xixiangji canye” 新發現最早的西廂記殘頁 (The remaining pages of the earliest edition of Romance of the Western Chamber recently discovered). Xixiangji di wenxianxue yanjiu 西廂記的文獻學研究 (Studies of the documentation of Romance of the Western Chamber) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1997), 25–30.

41 For example, identical compositions can be found on a Yuan-dynasty blue-and-white jar decorated with the story of Guigu xinshan 黃谷下山 (Guigu coming from his mountain retreat) and the woodblock print illustration of the same theme in Xinbian quanxiang pinghua Leyi tuqi giluo chuqu 近刊全相平話樂毅圖齊七國春秋 (Newly printed, fully illustrated, narrative fiction of how Leyi took over the state of Qi in the Spring and Autumn periods) of the same period. See Ni Yibin, Kaifu shuoqi, 89–91.

These theater pillows were unearthed in the provinces of Jiangxi, Anhui, Hubei, and Shanxi. For discussions on them, see Wang Qingzheng (Wang Jianzhong, Jingdezhen di Yuandai caiqi 景德鎮的元代瓷器 (Yuan dynasty porcelain produced in Jingdezhen), in Zhongguo taoci quanji — Yuan 中国陶瓷全集—元 (The complete collection of Chinese ceramics—Yuan dynasty) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 2002), vol. 2, pls. 6, 7, 8; and Chen Jiejin 陈階君, “Gush di zhixiang yu yihan — Shitan Yuandaigong de guoyin xuexi zhi jian” (On the theatrical mural painting of the Yuan tomb discovered in Xilizhuang, Yuncheng, Shanxi, Wenwu 4 (1988), 76–78, 90; Yang Fudong 杨福东, "Yuncheng Xilizhuang Yuandai Ci liu zhouyi" (On the theatrical mural painting from the Yuan tomb discovered in Xilizhuang, Yuncheng), Zhonghua xi qu 中華戏曲 5, no. 1 (1988), 100–111.

A study of this pillow can be found in Fengcheng xian meishu chubanshe, "Jiangxi Fengcheng xian meishu tongshi" (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1981), vol. 1, 220–221 (2001). 69.

The latter "selection" form of drama (zhezi xì 折子戲) did not become popular until the Hongwu reign period (1368–1398) in the Ming dynasty. For studies and a discussion of the nature and performance of zhezi xì, see Zhou Yude 周育德, Zhongguo xi qu wenhua 中國戏曲文化 (On the culture of Chinese drama) (Beijing: Zhongguo youyi chubanshe, 1996), 96, 97; Wang Anqi 王安琦, "Zailun Mingdai zhezixi" 再論明代折子 戲 (Rethinking selected-act plays of the Ming dynasty), Mingdai xi qu wulan 明代 戲曲論 (Five discussions of Ming dramatists) (Sanchong: Da’an chubanshe, 1990), 1–47. For an introduction to the dissemination of zhezi xì on the Western Chamber, see Zhao Chunning, Xi xiangji chuanyo yanjiu, 114–23.

For studies of this mural painting, see Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo (Shanxi provincial academy), "Shanxi Yuncheng Xilizhuang Yuandai bihuamu" (Mural paintings discovered in Xilizhuang, Yuncheng, Shanxi), Wenwu 4 (1988), 76–78, 90; and Chen Jiejin, "Yuncheng Xilizhuang Yuandai Ci liu zhouyi" (On the theatrical mural painting from the Yuan tomb discovered in Xilizhuang, Yuncheng), Zhonghua xi qu 中華戏曲 5, no. 1 (1988), 100–111.

Tang Suying 汤蘇應, "Renwu ticai tu'an di Yuan qinghua ji xiangguan wenji" 人物題材圖案的元青花及相關文獻 (About blue-and-white porcelain decorated with figural scenes and some related issues), Jingdezhen taoci Jingdezhen taoci 5, no. 2 (cumulative issue no. 68), 44–46. Fang Lili 方李莉, Jingdezhen mingyao 景德鎮民窯 (Folk kilns in Jingdezhen) (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 2002).

A study of this pillow can be found in Fengcheng xian meishu chubanshe, "Jiangxi Fengcheng xian meishu tongshi" (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1981), vol. 1, 220–221 (2001). 69.

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For studies of this mural painting, see Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo (Shanxi provincial academy), "Shanxi Yuncheng Xilizhuang Yuandai bihuamu" (Mural paintings discovered in Xilizhuang, Yuncheng, Shanxi), Wenwu 4 (1988), 76–78, 90; and Chen Jiejin, "Yuncheng Xilizhuang Yuandai Ci liu zhouyi" (On the theatrical mural painting from the Yuan tomb discovered in Xilizhuang, Yuncheng), Zhonghua xi qu 中華戏曲 5, no. 1 (1988), 100–111.

Tang Suying 汤蘇應, "Renwu ticai tu'an di Yuan qinghua ji xiangguan wenji" 人物題材圖案的元青花及相關文獻 (About blue-and-white porcelain decorated with figural scenes and some related issues), Jingdezhen taoci Jingdezhen taoci 5, no. 2 (cumulative issue no. 68), 44–46. Fang Lili 方李莉, Jingdezhen mingyao 景德鎮民窯 (Folk kilns in Jingdezhen) (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 2002).

Zhout Xinhui 祝新慧, Zhongguo guanhuo tongshi 中國古版畫通史 (History of ancient Chinese woodblock printing) (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2000), 128–226. For introductions to Ming-dynasty woodblock print illustrations of this drama, see note 1.


Medley, Chinese Potter, 192–95; Feng Xianming, ed., Zhongguo taoci, 476.

For an introduction to the "guanda minshao" system in the late Ming dynasty, see Yu Pei-Chin, "The Manufacture of Imperial Porcelain at Civilian Kilns and the Stylistic Impact on Late Ming Period Wares," Orientations (October 1995), 362–64. Also see Medley, "Organization and Production at Jingdezhen," 69–82.


Chen Qinghuang 陳慶煌, Xi xiang ji di xi qu yishu (西湘記的戲曲藝術) (The Art of Xi xiangji drama) (Taipei: Liren shuju, 2003), 35–56. Zhao Chunning, Xi xiangji chuanbo yanjiu, 63–159.

Chen Qinghuang 陳慶煌, Xi xiang ji di xi qu yishu (西湘記的戲曲藝術) (The Art of Xi xiangji drama) (Taipei: Liren shuju, 2003), 35–56. Zhao Chunning, Xi xiangji chuanbo yanjiu, 63–159.

For a study of the bibliography of this drama, see Han Sheng 韓聲, "Xi xiang ji di gujin banben mu " (Selected catalogues of different editions of Romance of the Western Chamber), in Xi xiangji xin lun.


56 For a study of the changing format of woodblock illustrations to the Western Chamber in the Ming dynasty, see Ma Mengjing 馬孟晶, “Emu zhiwan—Cong Xixiangji banhua chatu lun wan Ming chuban wenhua de shijianxing zhi yanju” 蠟目之玩—從西廂記版畫插圖論明代出版文化對視覺性之關注. (Looking through the frame: Visuality in late-Ming illustrations to the Story of the Western Wing) Meiushishiyuan jikan 美術史研究集刊, 13 (2002), 201–79; Hsu Wen-Chin, “Yuqing zhihu” 92–106.

57 A jiajing-period bowl decorated with the scene of “Zhang Sheng Greeting Yingying and Hongniang in the Garden” is identified by Ni Yibin in his article “Shunzhi Emperor,” in Butler et al., Treasures from an Unknown Reign, 72, fig. 6. In the same article Ni identifies two more scenes with the Western Chamber: “The Triumphant Homecoming of Zhang Sheng” and “Captive Bandit in Front of General Du” in the foundation Baur bowl as “The Triumphant Homecoming of Zhang Sheng.” The illustration depicts twelve figures proceeding towards a pavilion in which a sage is seated. It is my feeling that this scene is probably connected to a story with Daoist implications rather than to this romance. I also do not agree with his attribution of the polychrome dish decoration as “Captive Bandit in Front of General Du.” In my studies, the scene of a general seated in front of a tent and interrogating a half-naked man kneeling before him is related to the woodblock print illustration to Xuan dan song yangi zhebing yingkezhan 新刊大宋演義中興英烈傳 (Newly printed biography of the heroic martyr in the revival of the Song dynasty). For the illustration of this woodblock print, see Zhou Xinhui 周心慧, Guben xiaoshuo banhua tu 華本小說版畫圖錄 (Pictorial catalogue of woodblock illustrations of ancient fiction) (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2000), 141. This biography, compiled by Xiong Damu 熊大木 of the Ming dynasty and published in 1552 in Fujian, is of the well-known Southern Song general Yue Fei 南飛 (1103–1142), who, despite defeating the enemy in battle, was betrayed by his comrade and wrongly beheaded by the government. Yue Fei thus became a national hero to later generations. The general in the jiajing dish decoration is more likely to be Yue Fei than General Du of the Western Chamber.

58 For an introduction to the art of the woodblock print illustration of this edition, see Yao Dajuin, “Pleasure of Reading Drama,” in Wang Shifu, Moon and Zither, 437–68.


61 Chinese scholars previously thought that the porcelain industry in jingdezhen came to a complete halt during the Transitional Period, so very little research was conducted on the ceramic production of this era. Extensive studies in the West, however, have provided evidence to the contrary, leading to a new understanding of the Chinese porcelain industry during the seventeenth century. An introduction to this historical revision is in Butler et al., Treasures from an Unknown Reign, 12–23. Also see Hsu Wen-Chin, “Mingno Qingchu jingdezhen
62 The Rolwagen vase and the bottle vase are studied and illustrated in Hsu Wen-Chin, "Fictional Scenes," pls. 22, 45. The third one is illustrated in Yiben Ni, "Shunzhi Emperor," 73. This list is not comprehensive, however, as the decoration on the blue-and-white brush pot in the collection of Xiao Naiyue 蕭乃岳 (in Singapore) can also be identified with "The Glorious Homecoming" from part V, act 4, of the Western Chamber. Its composition is comparable to that of the same theme in the 1948 woodblock print illustration. For an illustration of this brush pot, see Fang Lili, Jingdezhen mingyao 資本志岳 (Beijing: chubanshe, 1991), pl. 28. The graceful and delicate decoration on the blue-and-white brush pot in the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Köln, has also been identified with "A Feast with Tears" from this drama. See Adele Schlombs, China und die Hoffnung auf Glück: Die Sammlung Peter und Irene Ludwig (Heidelberg: Kehrer, 2000), pl. 31. Although its decoration represents a farewell scene between a young scholar and his lover, far too many attendants are present in the scene, which makes the attribution questionable; therefore, I do not accept it as a scene from the Western Chamber.

63 Hsiao Li-ling 蕭麗玲, "Banhua yu juchang—cong Shidetanben Pipajji kan Wanli chuqi xiqu banhuade teze" 版畫與劇場—從德暹本精校記看萬曆初期版畫版畫的特色" (Woodblock prints and theater: Characteristics of the "drama illustrations" of the early Wanli period as revealed in the Shitetang edition of the Pipaji), Yishuxue 藝術學 5 (1991), 133-84; Hsu Wen-Chin, "Youqing zhifuluan" 警慶之富倫, 81-85.

64 See note 60. "High Transitional porcelain" also shows the application of V-shaped dots on the ground, mountain-tops surrounded by clouds to separate the beginning and end of scenes, and incised decorations around the mouth and base of the porcelain.

65 For a more detailed study of this vase and its comparison with the woodblock print in the Wanhuaxian edition, see Hsu Wen-Chin, "Fictional Scenes," pls. 19, 20. 12.


70 For an introduction to and studies of the Hatcher wreck discovery, see Julia Curtis, "Transitional Ware Made Plain: A Wreck from the South China Sea," Oriental Art 31, no. 2 (1985), 161-73. See Sheaf and Kilburn, Hatcher Porcelain Cargoes. Kilburn believes that the porcelains in the shipwreck were most likely manufactured between 1640 and 1645 (ibid., 30).
For the identification and study of these two dishes, see Hsu Wen-Chin, “Fictional Scenes,” 20–21.

Ibid., 20.

Feng Xianming, ed., Zhongguo tuoci, 536, 544.

Denda Akira, “‘Zotei’ Mingkan gen zatsugeki saisoki mokuroku,” 107, 108. This edition was first published in the Chengzhon period by Chen Changqing in the Chunchengtang and was reprinted several times in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. The late Ming edition of this book in the collection of the Beijing National Library is not recorded by Denda Akira or other scholars who have studied the Western Chamber.

This box is illustrated in Takushin Kushi 久志卓真, Shina Minshuo toji zukan 明初陶磁捆 (Illustrated catalogue of the pottery and porcelain published in early Ming period) (Tokyo: Hounsha showa, 1943), amendment, pl. 6. He dates this box to the Chenghua period. What is interesting is that the other porcelains he dated to the Chenghua period and illustrated in the same amendment as this box (e.g., 1, 3, 6, 7, 10, 12, 14–16) all show characteristics of the Tianqi and Chengzhen periods but not of the Chenghua period. This box is also studied and illustrated in my article, “Fictional Scenes,” 23–25, pls. 46–48, 50–51. In this article, the box is dated to the early Kangxi period.

The refined round box inscribed with the six-character Chengzhon reign mark, formerly in the E. T. Chou collection, is evidence of this decorative manner and is also useful for dating this kind of porcelain. (For an illustration of this box, see Little, Chinese Ceramics of the Transitional Period, 13, figs. 14, 15.) Porcelains decorated with similar meandering border patterns can be seen in a holder dated 1635 (Kilburn, Transitional Wares and Their Forerunners, 132) and in Sheaf and Kilburn, Hatcher Porcelain Cargoes, pl. 81. This kind of pattern was particularly popular in porcelains made for the Japanese market during the Chongzhon period; see Saitoku Tarō, Ko-sometsuke shōzui 古染付祥瑞 (Chinese blue- and-white) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1972).

One such example inscribed with the Shunzhi reign mark is illustrated in Masahiko Satō, Chinese Ceramics (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill/Heibonsha, 1981), 208, pl. 290.

Two examples of early Kangxi round boxes are introduced and illustrated in Seventeenth Century Jingdezhen Porcelain, pls. 86, 88. One of them is decorated with the scene “Beauty’s Enchantment” on the lid.


The Manchu emperors of the Qing dynasty were lovers of drama and patrons of traditional Chinese culture. The government, however, displayed a duality of attitudes towards dramas. While this duality had been so in previous dynasties, much stern measures were now being taken. Statutes prohibiting and controlling dramas, plays, and actors abound in Qing regulations, and thousands of books were destroyed. See Dolby, History of Chinese Drama, 114, 134–41.

Wei Jinxi 房吉熙, Xuezheng quanshu 學政全書 (Plenary book of government administration), chap. 7, “Shufang jinli 書坊禁例 (Interdictions on book publication), Qing dynasty. Quoted from Wu Guoqin, Xixiangyi shu tan, 150.


Han Sheng, Xixiangyi gujin banben nulu jiyao, 182. For a study of the woodblock print illustration of the Western Chamber with comments by Jin Shengtian, see Hsu Wen-Chin, “Zhuti yu yixiang yanhai—Qingchaow Xixiangyi muke banhua chatu yanjiu,” 159–221.

Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸, Zhongguo wenshu yanjiu 中國文學研究 (Studies on Chinese literature) (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1990), vol. 1; Zhang Guoyu 張國育, annotator, Jin Shengtian piben Xixiangji 金盛炤批本西廂記 (Romance of the Western Chamber commented by Jin Shengtian) (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1986), preface.

Dolby, History of Chinese Drama, 131.

Some scholars argue that Jin’s edition transformed the drama into a new work, with the emphasis on Confucian morality being quite different from the unpretentious and candid quality of the original, although he did make the drama acceptable to a wider audience. Modern scholars’ studies on the Jin Shengtian edition are introduced in Lin Zongyi 林
Some of the ceramics decorated with multiple scenes from the Western Chamber are illustrated in the following publications: Hsu Wen-Chin, "Fictional Scenes," pl. 53; Little, Chinese Ceramics of the transitional Period, pl. 55; Christian Jorg, Chinese Ceramics in the Collection of the Rijks Museum, Amsterdam: The Ming and Qing Dynasties (London: Philip Wilson in association with the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, 1977), pl. 105; Sheila Keppel, China in 1700: Kangxi Porcelains at the Taft Museum (Cincinnati: Taft Museum Press, 1988), pls. 42, 44.


92 The inscription of poetry as decoration was an innovation of Changsha ware and reflects the popularity of writing and reading poems during the Tang dynasty. For an introduction to and studies on this aspect of Changsha ware, see Zhou Shirong 周世榮, ed., Changsha yao cihui yishu 長沙窯瓷繪藝術 (On the art of painting on Changsha ware) (Shanghai: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1994); Liao Wenhui 廖文惠, "Tang Changsha yao cimian zhuangshi yanjiu" 唐長沙窯繪面裝飾研究 (A study on the decoration of Changsha ware of the Tang dynasty), in Changsha yao 長沙窯 (Changsha ware) (Taipei: National History Museum, 1996), 36–52.

93 See Feng Xianming, ed., Zhongguo taoci, 536.

94 Other examples include "The Interruption of the Religious Service" dish in the Mason Wang collection (see Hsu Wen-Chin, "Fictional Scenes," pl. 29); a dish painted with the scene of General Du chasing after enemies (from "Alarm at the Monastery," part III, act 1), sold by Sotheby's on 31 March 1981 (lot no. 50); and a polychrome vase decorated with the scene of "A Feast with Tears" in the collection of the Shanghai Museum (see Seventeenth Century Jingdezhen Porcelain, 173). Two other dishes painted with scenes of "Zhang Sheng handing the letter of rescue to Monk Huiming" (from "Alarm at the Monastery") and "Hong-niang and Zhang Sheng walking down a bridge" (from "The Breach of Promise," part II, act 3), respectively, are of inferior quality compared to the previously mentioned pieces but can also be dated to the Shunzhi period of about 1650 to 1660. For illustrations of these two dishes, see Hsu Wen-Chin, "Fictional Scenes," pls. 32, 36.

95 Evelyn Rawski, Education and Popular Literacy in Ch'ing China (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979), 22.

96 For a study of the woodblock print illustration of the Western Chamber published in the Qing dynasty, see Hsu Wen-Chin, "Zhu di yi yi yu xingxiang zhaisu—Qingchao xixiangji muke banhua chatu yanjiu," 159–220.


98 This edition of the Western Chamber is in the collections of the National Palace Museum, Taipei; National Library, Taipei; and Beijing National Library. For studies on this edition, see Kobayashi Hiromitsu, "Kin Kōjū no hanga katsudō—Sutei 12 nen (1639) 'Chô Shino sensei seioku seshonbun' no sasie o choson tosa i kousatsu"; Xu Wenmei 許文美, "Shengqin yumende niyûg—in Lan Chen Hongshou Zhang Shenzhi xiansheng zhengbei Xixiangji miben ban huazhongde shùn xingxiang" 深情聖母的女性—論陳洪綬＜張深之先生正北西廂秘本＞版畫中的仕女形象 (On the representation of female images in the woodblock print illustrations of the Zhang Shenzhi xiansheng zhengbei Xixiangji miben designed by Chen Hongshou), Gugong xuexu jikan 18, no. 3 (2002), 154–55.

99 This bowl is in the Butler family collection and is introduced in Seventeenth Century Jingdezhen Porcelain, pl. 78.

100 For a study of painting in the late Ming dynasty, see James Cahill, The Distant Mountains: Chinese Painting of the Late Ming Dynasty, 1570–1644 (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill Press, 1982); Cahill, Compelling Image.

101 A passage from Yinhuazai shuoqi states, "The painting on porcelain of the Kangxi period is the best in the Qing dynasty. The painting of figures resembles those of Chen Hongshou, Xiao Yuncong 蕭雲從 (1596–1673); landscape drawings resemble those of Wang Hui 王恆 (1632–1717) and Wu Li 吳歷 (1632–1718); and flower paintings, those of Hua Yan 華貞 (1682–1756)" (康熙畫筆為清代冠，人物似陳洪綬，設色似書畫士石谷，吳墨井：花卉似華秋岳).
See Xu Zhuheng, *Yinhezi shuoci*, in *Meishi congshu* 美術叢書, Huang Binhong and Deng Shi, eds. (Jiangsu: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1986), 3, no. 6: 207. A passage in *Taoya* also states that "decorative figures in Kangxi (porcelain) are as jocular and grotesque as those in Chen Hongshou's paintings" 康熙人物掛詫似陳老蓮 (Chen Liu, *Taoya*, 57).

102 These three editions are: *Bei Xixiang ji*, published by Li Gaochen 李告鑫 in 1631; the 1639 edition; and *Li Zhuowu xiansheng pidian Xixiangji zhenben* 李卓吾先生點西厢記真本 (The genuine edition of *Romance of the Western Chamber* commented by Mr. Li Zhuowu) published by the Tianzhangge 天章閣 (Pavilion of heavenly notation) in 1640. For a study of Chen Hongshou and his woodblock print illustrations, see Kobayashi Hiromitsu, "Kin Kōjō no hanga katsudō—Sutei 12 nen (1639) Chōshūsho sensei seihoku seshonbon" no ssai o chuōshin toshite ichi kousatsu." Chen Hongshou designed a portrait of Yingying for the 1631 edition, all of the six woodblock print illustrations in the 1639 edition, and one illustration in the 1640 edition.

103 *Meihua dian* is a decorative pattern on women's clothes that started to appear on porcelain decoration of the Chongzhen period and became a common feature in the Shunzhi period (Tie Yuan, ed., *Ming Qing ciqi wenshi jianding*, 190). *Meihua dian* can be seen on the following two pieces mentioned in this article: the "Beauty’s Enchantment" Rolvagen vase of the Chongzhen period (fig. 21), and the "Hongniang in the Dock" dish of the Shunzhi period (fig. 8). A brush pot from the Shunzhi period decorated with the farewell scene from "A Feast with Tears" in this drama is also illustrated in *Tie Yuan* ed., *Mingqing ciqi wenshi jianding*, 190, pl. 10.


105 Ni Yiben speculates that the Jin Shengtang edition triggered the popularity of *Western Chamber* decoration during the Shunzhi period. See Yiben Ni, "Shunzhi Emperor and the Popularity of Scenes from the *Romance of the Western Chamber*," 68.


107 Yiben Ni, "Shunzhi Emperor," 68.

108 Among this group of porcelains are three plates decorated with the scenes of "Yingying Burning Nighttime Incense," "Hongniang Visiting Zhang Sheng," and "The Encounter of Yingying and Zhang Sheng" (from "Beauty’s Enchantment") in the collection of the Foundation Custodia, Paris (see Jean Mudge, *Chinese Export Porcelain in North America* [New York: C. N. Potter Press, 1986], pl. 154) and the Butler family collection (see *Seventeenth Century Jingdezhen Porcelain*, pls. 73, 74). A plate with a deep body decorated with a portrait of Yingying is also in the Wunkworth collection; see Soame Jenyns, *Later Chinese Porcelain* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), pl. XVIII/1.

109 These pieces were part of the group of porcelains decorated in underglaze blue and underglaze red, inscribed with *Zhonghe* tang marks, and produced between 1671 and 1673. For a discussion of this group of porcelains, see *Seventeenth Century Jingdezhen Porcelain*, 206. At the International Conference on Seventeenth-Century Chinese Porcelain that took place at the Shanghai Museum at 2005, Zhou Li 周麗麗 challenged the traditional attribution and reassigned them to the production of civilian kilns. See Ni Yiben, *Kantu shuozi*, 142.

110 For studies on the introduction of Western art to China in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, see Xiang Da 向達, "Ming Qing zhijì Zhongguo meishu suoshou xiyang zhì yingxiang" 明清之際中國美術所受西洋之影響 (Western influence on Chinese art during the late Ming and early Qing period), *Dongfang zuzhi* 東方雜誌 27, no. 1 (1930), 19–38; Michael Sullivan, "Some Possible Sources of European Influence on Late Ming and Early Ching Paintings," *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Chinese Painting* (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1979), 595–633; Marching Kao, "European Influences in Chinese Art, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Century," in Thomas H. C. Lee, ed., *China and Europe: Images and Influences in Sixteenth to..."
Eighteenth Centuries (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1991), 251–304; Mo Xiaoye 莫小也, Shi que shihua shiji chuanshaoshi yi xihua dongqian 十七—十八世紀傳教士與西畫東漸 (Jesuit priests and the introduction of Western painting to China in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) (Beijing: Zhongguo meishu xueyuan chubanshe, 2002).


The author would like to thank Professor Joan Stanley-Baker for pointing this out.

Judging from its quality and decorative techniques, the painting in cobalt blue and copper red is very likely to have been produced in the same factory and form the same set as the previous piece decorated with the scene of “Zhang Sheng Handing the Letter to Rescue Monk Huiming.”

Ma Meixin 马美信, Wan Ming wenxue xintan 講明文學新探 (New studies on late Ming literature) (Taipei: Shenghuan tushu gongsi, 1994), 96.


Elelments include the Li Zhiwu xiansheng piping bei Xi xiang 李卓吾先生批評北齊西響 (The northern style Romance of the Western Chamber commented by Li Zhiwu) published by the Rongyutang 容與堂 (Hall of tolerance and benevolence) in 1610 (now in the collection of the Beijing National Library); Panggu shuoren zenggai di gongben Xi xiangxi 潘谷獮人増改定本西響xiang (Romance of the Western Chamber, augmented and rectified by Pangu shuoren), published in 1621 (now in the collection of the National Library, Taipei).

For studies of the 1610 edition, see Hsu Wen-Chin, “Yaoqing zhihu” 97–101. The 1611 edition was commented on and annotated by the Ming scholar Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521–1593) and was reprinted several times in the Chongzhen period. For the illustrations, see Dong Kang, Qianjia juyan tu, vol. 1.

See note 45.

Dolby, History of Chinese Drama, 117–56; Wu Xinhui 吳新惠, Zhu Donglin 朱棟霖 ed., Zhongguo kunqu yishu 中國崑曲藝術 (The art of Chinese Kunqu) (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2004), 119; Lin Heyi 林耀宜, Ming qing xiqing xiaoyi 明清戲曲選彙 (Studies on drama in the Ming and Qing dynasties) (Taipei: Liren chubanshe, 2003), 197.


Dolby, History of Chinese Drama, 134–41. Quoted from Wang Liqi 王利器, Yuan Ming Qing sansai jinhui xiaoshuo xiqu shiliao 明清三代禁毁小說戏曲史料 (Historical documents of fiction and dramas banned or destroyed during the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties) (Beijing: Zhongguo chubanshe, 1958).

According to documentation by the Dutch East India Company, it shipped 3.2 million pieces of Chinese porcelain from 1602 to 1682. From 1729 to 1734, the number exceeded the previous eighty years to reach a total of 4.5 million pieces. This number sharply increased to 42.5 million pieces from 1730 and 1789, and it came to a peak in 1800. See C.J.A. Jorg, Porcelain and the Dutch China Trade (De Hague: M. Nijhoff Press, 1982), 149; and T. Volker, Porcelain and the Dutch East India Company (Leiden: E. J. Brill Press, 1954), 59, 227.

Many examples of nineteenth-century porcelain decorated with scenes from novels and dramas are introduced and illustrated in Tie Yuan, Ming Qing ciqi wenshi jianying, 204–208. Further examples are in Cha Liangfeng 賁良峰, ed., Zhongguo minjian fencai 中國民間粉彩 (Chinese famille rose produced in civilian kilns) (Changsha: Hunan meishu chubanshe, 1998), in Zhongguo minjian meishu congshu 中國民間美術叢書 (Collections of books on Chinese folk art).

See Jiang Xingyu, “Hongniangdi pengzhang, yuewei, huigui he bianzou.” Also see Zhao Chunxing, Xi xiangxi chuango yangju, 44.

Another example is Zhang Sheng introducing himself to Hongniang, from “Renting Quarters in the Monastery” (part 1, act 2) on a blue-and-white plaque: see Hu Yanxi 胡雁溪 and Yang Xiaolian 杨小涟 ed., Qingdai meiyou caici 500 tu 清代民衆彩瓷500圖 (500 pictures of polychrome ware produced in civilian kilns during the Qing...
dynasty) (Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe, 1996), pl. 99. Scenes from "Invitation to the Feast" can also be seen in three blue-and-white plates illustrated in Little, Chinese Ceramics of the Transi-
tional Period, pl. 29; Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art, Sotheby's, London, 11 December 1990, pl. 314; and Zhongguo gudong zhenguan 中國古代 道 (Chinese antiquities and curios) (Beijing: Hanhai yishupin baimai zhongxin, 1996), June, pl. 870. The same theme is found on a blue-and-white brush pot illustrated in Zhongguo lide qinghua huadian, 18. Scenes of “Hongniang in the Dock” can be seen in a leaf-shaped polychrome plate in the Victoria and Albert Museum (no. 789-1883) and in the blue-and-white bowl illustrated in Ma Xigu 馬希桂, Qingshua mingci 青花名瓷 (Renowned blue-and-white wares) (Taipei: Yishu tushu gongsi, 1993), 147.


128. Xu Zhiheng, Yintiaozhai shuwai, 201.


131. For an introduction to New Year woodblock prints of the late Qing dynasty, see Wang Shucun, Zhongguo minjian nianhua tushu, vol. 1, 24.

132. Tie Yuan and Xi Ming, Mingguo ciqi jianzhu—Wenshi, kuanshi, bianwe 元明國瓷鑑録—紋飾、款識、編號 (Connoisseurship of porcelain of the Republican era—Patterns, inscriptions, and authenticity) (Beijing: Huading chubanshe, 2004).

133. Dolby, History of Chinese Drama, 197.

134. Ibid., 230.

135. Deng Kuiyu 鄧書玉, Bainian Zhongguo taoci 百年中國陶瓷 (A hundred years of Chinese ceramics) (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1995), 67.

136. Some examples include a famille-rose vase decorated with the scene “Love and the Lute,” produced between 1930 and 1940; a famille-rose plate decorated with “The Repudiation of the Billet-Doux,” painted by Chen Shuijian 程永全, 1946 (to be discussed in the following passages, pl. 51); and a polychrome vase decorated with two scenes from the Western Chamber painted by Zhou Xiangfu 周湘甫, 1945–49. These three porcelains are illustrated in Hu Shangde 向詩德, ed., jingyi taoci 景義堂藏瓷 (Chinese porcelain in the Jingyi taoci collection) (Nanchang: Jiangxi meishu chubanshe, 2001), pls. 130, 240, 246.


141. For an introduction on Chen Shuijin, see Tie Yuan and Xi Ming, eds., Mingguo ciqi jianzhu—Wenshi, kuanshi, bianwe 元明國瓷鑑録—紋飾、款識、編號, 16.

143 Zuo Xuchu 左旭初, ed., Lao shangbiao 老商標 (Old trademarks) (Shanghai: Shanghai huabao chubanshe, 1999), 34.

144 After the Communist victory in China in 1949, a new type of painting, called caimohua 彩墨畫 ("color and ink painting"), was promoted by the government to “make the past serve the present.” This kind of new guohua 国画 ("national painting") was a synthesis of Western colors and Chinese ink, in which figures were the preferred subject and artists were ordered to paint from life. The decoration on this vase is a superb example of caimohua. See Michael Sullivan, Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 139–44; Julia Andrews, “The Victory of Socialist Realism: Oil Painting and the New Guohua,” in Julia Andrews and Kuizi Shen, eds., A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth-Century China (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1998), 228–77.

145 Fu Yaosheng’s biography is found in Xinhua yinghua—Eriishi shiji jingdezhen ciyi huigui, 251.

146 This form of ideology is revealed in eleven articles written on this play and compiled in Yuang Ming Qing xia Yuayin jiewenji 元明清戲曲研究論文集 (A collection of essays on drama in the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties) (Beijing: Zuoji chubanshe, 1957), 125–222. Also see Ho Shang-Hsien, “A Study of the Western Chamber: A Thirteenth Century Chinese Play” (PhD dissertation, University of Texas, 1976), introduction, 108.

147 The ten great classical literary works are The Red Chamber 紅樓夢, Romance of the Western Chamber, The Peony Pavilion 牡丹亭, The Plum in the Golden Vase 金瓶梅, The Water Margin, Romance of the Three Kingdoms 三國演義, Journey to the West 西遊記, On Encountering Sorrow 前途, Strange Tales from Make-do Studio 聊齋誌異, and The Scholars 儒林外史. Two picture books of this play are Xixiangji—Zhongguo shida gudian mingshu huaji 西廂記—中國十大古典名著畫集 (Romance of the Western Chamber—Illustrations to the ten great works of Chinese classical literature) (Taipei: Hanguang wenhua chubanshe, 1990); and Wang Shifu (revised by Wang Zengling 汪曾玲 and illustrated by Wang Shuhui 王淑慧), The Romance of the Western Chamber (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1958).

148 Deng Kuiyu, Bainian Zhongguo taoci, 69–79. "Lun jindai jingdezhen ciye kunjingzhong cihua xingqi di biranxing” 南近代景德鎮瓷業困境中“瓷畫”興起的必然性 (On the inevitable outcome of the upsurge of "porcelain painting") in Jindai jingdezhen during the hard times of the porcelain industry in the modern period, Zhongguo taoci gongye 中國陶瓷工業 14, no. 6 (December 2007), 18–24; Chen Songxian 池松賢, “Xiidai taoci vu chuanyongtaoci” 現代陶藝與傳統陶藝 (On the art of modern studio pottery and traditional pottery), Zhongguo taoci gongye (April 1995), 30–32.

149 From the 1960s through the 1980s, Taiwan was the world supplier of Chinese faqiu 仿青 ware (porcelain made in imitation of the ancients). After the 1980s, this kind of production moved to China, and Taiwan’s porcelain industry thereafter swiftly declined. See Hsu Wen-Chin and Zhou Yixun 周義雄, Yingge taoci shi 窯歌陶瓷史 (History of Yingge pottery production) (Banciao, Taipei County: Taipei xianli wenhua zhongxun, 1993), 62–64, 76, 95, 06. See also Wang Shouyu 王守瑜, “Taociyi—Lijing shaidai xil houdi dubian yu xianmáo” 陶瓷業—歷經時代洗禮後的陶瓷業 及現代陶藝 (The pottery industry—Transformation and the current situation after successive hardships), Lipin shijie zuozi 禮品世界雜誌 (Giftware World Monthly) 9 (1998), 73–85. For the production of modern porcelain fakes in China, see Peter Wain, “Chinese Porcelain Fakes: Ming to Mao,” Orientations (May 2006), 89–90.

150 The practice of studio pottery became popular around 1920 in Europe. The first major proponent of this artistic movement was the English potter Bernard Leach (1897–1979), who spent years working with the celebrated Japanese folk potter Hamada Shōji. Leach brought back to the West the informal and more spontaneous hand-thrown wares that have since spread throughout Europe and North America. He is now known as the “father of modern ceramics.” In the 1950s Peter Voulkos (1924–2002) further synthesized ceramics with elements of abstract expressionism, thus transforming this art from the status of a traditional craft to a vehicle for pure artistic expression. See Oliver Watson, British Studio Pottery (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1990); Kay Koening et al., Revolution in Clay: The Marer Collection of Contemporary Ceramics (Claremont, CA: Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, Scripps College, 1994); Martha D. Lynn, “From Vessel to Vehicle: An Introduction,” in Clay Today: Contemporary Ceramists and Their Works (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1990), 10–30. For the development of modern studio pottery in China, see Zhou Guoqian 周國禔, “Zhongguo minjian taocu yu xiaodi taoci” 中國民間陶藝與現代陶藝 (The Art of Chinese folk pottery and modern studio pottery), Taoci yanyu 陶藝研究 (Research on ceramics) 9, no. 1 (1994), 3–6; Xu Yake 許雅柯, “Xiidai taoci yu
kaifa yu tuizhan” 現代陶藝的開發與推展 (On the advancement and development of the art of modern studio pottery), *Shandong taoci* 山東陶瓷 20, no. 2 (June 1997), 39–42.

151 This fully illustrated picture book of the *Western Chamber* was first published in 1958 and reprinted in 1983. For other references, see note 147.

152 Zhang Yaohua 張耀華, “Shouwo jinis, yuanmeng Xixiangji—li canjiren taoyijia liguizhen he tadi jingshi zhizuo ciban lianhaanhua Xixiangji” 握手「基尼斯」・圓夢《西廂記》—記殘疾人陶 藝家李貴珍和他的驚世之作瓷板連環 畫《西廂記》(Handicapped pottery artist Li Guizhen and his serialized pictures of *Romance of the Western Chamber* made of ceramic tiles), *Jingdezhen taoci* 靖安陶瓷 17, no. 1 (2006), 44–45.

153 For example, Craig Clunas believes that by the late eighteenth century, scenes from dramas had disappeared from most ceramics produced for the domestic market (Clunas, “West Chamber,” 85). Ni Yibin states that after the 1660s and 1670s, “mass-produced copies of *Romance of the Western Wing* scenes were made mainly for export” (Yibin Ni, “Shunzhi Emperor,” 79).
Abstract

Focusing on a neglected artistic subject—the sparrow—this paper addresses how the changing association of min, the people, affected the pictorial representation of the sparrow, a metaphor for the masses during the Tang-Song transition. Rather than serving as a metaphor for the despised masses as in pre-Tang literature, the sparrow became a much-appreciated bird in both Song painting and poems, as well as among members of the imperial and non-court officials. This paper suggests that, instead of being an innocuous creature targeted at lighthearted viewers, the sparrow once functioned in some paintings as political arguments or comments about the life of the common people. In addition, the painting subject of the “picture of cold sparrows” was invented in the Song dynasty and was often associated with independent non-official scholars.

THE SPARROW WAS A POPULAR SUBJECT in paintings of the Song dynasty (960–1279). Among the extant paintings from this period that have the sparrow as their main subject, the majority are in small formats, such as round fans and albums. An exception is Cold Sparrows, a handscroll by Cui Bai now located in the Beijing Palace Museum (fig. 1). Within this genre is a special subgenre called “cold sparrow,” which primarily depicts sparrows in wintry weather as seen in the fan painting Cold Sparrows in the National Palace Museum, Taipei (fig. 2). As scholars such as Charles Hartman, Bai Qianshen, and Ellen Laing have suggested, different birds often have specific metaphorical meanings in Chinese painting.¹ A bird’s association in literature, its characteristics, or homonyms of its name could all play a part in these connotations. Despite the considerable quantity of sparrow paintings, much remains to be deciphered in order to reach a fuller understanding of these images. This paper will discuss the poetic associations of the cold sparrow in relation to its pictorial representation in the Song dynasty. It will be suggested that rather than simply decorative pictorial elements, the sparrow had, like many other species of birds in Song paintings, specific literary associations and cultural connotations that were encoded in various pictorial representations of the bird by Song artists.

Sparrow: The Historio-linguistic Development

The contemporary Chinese name for sparrows, maque (麻雀), is a modern development, not having come into use until the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). Initial steps to understanding the literature and art of the Song dynasty are to distinguish amongst the various terms for birds given in historical literature and then to deduce which one/ones denote the sparrow.
Among extant records, Li Shizhen's (李時珍; 1518–1593) *Compendium of Materia Medica* (*bencao gangmu 本草綱目*) is the earliest text that contains the name *maque*.

*Que* is a small bird with a short tail ... (*que*) nests between roofs and tiles, and is tame and (often) approaches the porch and gate steps just like guests, so it is also called *waque* (literally tile-*)que*), *binque* (guest-*)que*), and *jiabin* (honorable guest). Conventionally, old and spotty ones are called *maque* (spotted-*)que*), [and] young ones with yellowish beaks *huangque* (yellow*)que*).

雀, 短尾小鳥也…棲宿檐瓦之間，鴿近階除之際，如賓客然，故曰瓦雀，賓雀，又謂之佳賓也。俗呼老而斑者為麻雀，小而黃口者為黃雀。

From Li Shizhen's definition, it is clear that *maque*, *waque*, *binque*, *jiabin*, and *huangque* all refer to the same bird, the sparrow (*que*). Li's definition proved authoritative as most writers from the Qing dynasty followed his lead. When we turn to texts from earlier dynasties, however, this definition is less clear. Among all the names for the sparrow offered by Li only *que* and *huangque* are found. Though the sparrow as a type of bird most certainly existed in China before the Ming dynasty, it is still unclear whether both of these names can be equated with the modern term *maque*.

In present-day China, both of the terms *huangque* and *maque* are in use, but they designate birds of two different families. The *maque* is the sparrow of the Passeridae family (fig. 3), while the *huangque* is the Eurasian siskin of the finch family, Fringillidae (fig. 4). The living habitats, diet, calls, and appearances of the two birds are completely different. The description of *huangque* in early Chinese texts does not correspond with its modern counterpart, the Eurasian siskin. Instead, it overlaps on many occasions with *que*, the sparrow. As an example, the first century BCE book *Huainanzi* (淮南子) states that in the fall months *que* dive into the Changjiang River and transform into clams. Five centuries later, this same claim is made of the *huangque* in the *Shuiyi ji* (注異記; fifth century). In fact, into the Song and Yuan periods many writers seemed to believe that *que* and *huangque* were either the same bird, the sparrow, or were at least birds that were genealogically similar. Both Pan Zimu (潘自牧; active late twelfth century to early eleventh century) and Yin Jinxian (陰勤熙; active early fourteenth century) included literary references to *huangque* under the category of *que* in their books. Moreover, descriptions of *que* and *huangque* in both Pan and Yin's books coincide well with the definition of
the sparrow in the *Great Encyclopedia of China*, which states that “maque is a kind of bird that lives close to human beings. It resides in human inhabited areas or near fields . . . it mainly lives on cereal . . . during the spring and summer, it feeds partly on insects, and feeds nestlings exclusively with insects . . . builds nests under the roof or in holes in house walls.”

Therefore, it can be said securely that in the periods leading up to and including the Ming dynasty, the names *que* and *huangque* referred to the same bird, the sparrow. For the sake of clarity, this paper will not discriminate between these two terms when looking at pre-Ming texts but will translate them both as sparrow.

**Associations and Metaphoric Meanings of the Sparrow in Pre-Song Literature**

Considering the strong interrelation between painting and poetry, which began in the eleventh century, it is important to understand the poetic associations of sparrows before proceeding to discuss representations of them in Song-dynasty painting. This type of bird is a frequent subject in pre-Song literature and could elicit a rich range of affective responses and associations from readers. Some of these found their way into Song poetry but with new information added to old meanings or with the older connotations completely changed. Actually, the poetic associations of the sparrow underwent many changes even before the Song dynasty, most notably in the Tang dynasty (618–907). Many of these transformations reflect not only the changes of the social image of the people represented by the sparrow but also power relations among different social/political groups, and political ideology, accordingly.

1. The Sparrow as an Auspicious Symbol

Although they are dissimilar in modern Chinese, the traditional pronunciation of sparrow, *que* 雀, was the same as that of *jue* 鵲, meaning noble title. Two examples illustrate the use of *jue* as a rebus for sparrow in the literature of the pre-Song-dynasty periods. In the fifth-century book *Yiyuan* (異苑), the author Liu Shuijing (劉叔敬; circa 390–470) records that when Wei Zhaozhi (魏肇之) was born in Rencheng (任城), a sparrow flew into his hand. A diviner said it was an omen to be conferred with a noble title. In the *Liuzi* (劉子), a sixth-century text, it states village dwellers believed that those who see a *xizi* (蠅子) spider in the daytime take it as an auspicious omen of happiness; those who dream of sparrows at night believe it is an omen of being conferred with noble titles.

In the Song dynasty, however, this auspicious meaning of the sparrow was not as prevalent. Among the recorded Song paintings in the *Imperial Painting Catalog of the Xuanhe Era* (*Xuanhe huapu* 宣和畫譜), for example, only one painting, *Live
Oak, Sparrows and Deer (山鶴雀鹿圖) by Yi Yuanji （易元吉; active circa late eleventh century), has an image of a sparrow/sparrows that might possibly be read as a rebus for official titles. As Bai Qianshen suggests, Yi Yuanji frequently used deer as a rebus of official salary in his paintings; therefore, it is possible the sparrow in this painting is also a rebus but for official titles. This singular example is not sufficient for us to assume that the sparrow, as an auspicious symbol, was still in wide currency during the Song dynasty. There are few, if any, extant Song texts that relate the sparrow to an official title, and few of the extant sparrow paintings can offer any clues either. More often, it was another bird, the magpie, that was associated with bringing happiness and good luck to people. The Chinese characters for magpie, xique (喜鹊), are a homophone of xi (喜) the xizi (蜘蛛) spider) plus que (雀 the sparrow). It is not difficult to understand why the magpie came to be the new auspicious symbol. The sparrow, however, was laden with new associations in the Song dynasty, as will be discussed in the following section.

2. Hungry Creatures
Although it was an auspicious omen to humans in many early texts, the sparrow never lived an “auspicious” life itself. In fact, it was often depicted as a miserable creature that barely ate to its fill. Many poems detail both its hard life as it suffers from hunger in abandoned cities and empty barns, and its joy at finding unexpected food sources, such as overturned carts carrying grain. “Sparrow-in-abandoned-city” (鶴雀空城圖) actually became a set poem title no later than the Nanbeichao period (420–589), and many poets from the Tang and Five Dynasties periods wrote poems under this title. For example, Li Bai (李白; 701–762), the famous Tang writer, wrote the poem Sparrow-in-abandoned-city that presents a pathetic picture of the small birds.

*Sparrow-in-abandoned-city*
Li Bai

Crying piteously for food, the sparrows in an abandoned city,  
How pitiful their life is!  
They belong to the same group as wrens.  
Not the family of phoenixes.  
They nurture four fledglings,  
And they never eat to their fill.  
Eating the leftovers of your chaff,  
They often worry about the hawk’s attack.  
Daring not to take the risky journey to Taihang Mountain,
They feel ashamed to peck the millet from an overturned cart. The heavenly fate has decided your destiny, Stick to your part, suppress your desires! 

空城雀
李白
嗷嗷空城雀，身计何戚促。
本与鹓鶵群，不随鹓皇族。
提携四黄口，饮乳未尝足。
食君糠秕馀，常恐鸟遨逐。
恥涉太行险，羞营覆车粟。
天命有定端，守分绝所欲。

By grouping sparrows with wrens and contrasting them with the phoenix, Li Bai emphasizes the humbleness of sparrows, as did previous writers. It is not difficult, though, to sense the sympathy Li feels towards these little birds. Many Tang poems, like this one, follow a basic trope of the sparrow in an empty barn or abandoned city, which is understood as a destitute and pitiful creature struggling to fill itself and/or its family. This image persists throughout the poetry of the Tang and Song dynasties.

3. From an Incapable Petty Man to a Man of Talent and Integrity

Being small in size, large in number, and without special traits, such as a pleasant call or the ability to fly high or far away, the sparrow began to be used as a metaphor for the common people no later than the Qin (221–206 BCE) and Han (206 BCE–220 CE) dynasties. Although such literary associations are still found in some Tang literature, other, more positive meanings began to be assigned to this little creature.

The sparrow was often contrasted with larger birds, such as the phoenix, swan, or goose, all of which had long been associated with nobleness and high-mindedness. In employing this contrast, writers endeavored to emphasize the strong aspiration and ambition of a protagonist, as represented by those larger birds, against the mediocre, namely, the sparrow. A famous line from the Records of the Grand Historian (史记 Shiji; first century CE) exemplifies this sentiment.

The fleet-footed stallion cannot be harnessed with the worn-out nag; the phoenix does not fly with the flocks of little sparrows. No more so, therefore, does the worthy man stand side by side with the unworthy.
A story with similar connotations, which would have been as well known to the educated people of historical China as it is to those of modern China, is the legendary conversation between Chen Sheng (陳勝; died 208 BCE) and a laborer. Chen, who initially worked for a landlord on farms, later became a leader in the huge upheaval that led to the collapse of the Qin dynasty.

When Chen Sheng was young, he was working one day in the fields with the other hired men. Suddenly he stopped his plowing and went and stood on a hillock, wearing a look of profound discontent. After a long while he announced, “If I become rich and famous, I will not forget the rest of you!” The other farm hands laughed and answered, “You are nothing but a hired laborer. How could you ever become rich and famous?” Chen Sheng gave a great sigh. “Oh, well,” he said, “how could you little sparrows be expected to understand the ambitions of a swan?”

In both of the above records, sparrows, as a metaphor for people without aspiration and ambition, are contrasted with phoenixes, geese, and other birds representing dedicated and driven individuals.

In the Wei-Jin period (220–420), the dichotomy between humble and noble, incapable and capable, petty man and hero, as denoted by sparrows and large birds, still existed. In a famous poem by Ruan Ji (阮籍; 210–263), the poet compares himself to birds that could fly to the top of tall mountains and hills, while despising swallows and sparrows that can only rest in the forest on lower ground.

Poems of My Heart
Ruan Ji

Is it possible that life can last forever?
Worried and sad, my tears wet my garment.
The noble bird soars over mountains,
While swallows and sparrows rest among lower forests.
Dark clouds becloud the front yard,  
A bland zither tone saddens my heart.  
In the lofty mountains there are honking cranes,  
How could ever I follow them?²²

This poem could represent the affective image of the sparrow in most poems and other forms of literature before the Tang period. It took hundreds of years before the sparrow gained positive traits in Tang literature.  
Prior to the seventh century, the sparrow was not a creature that most writers championed. Tang-dynasty poets, on the other hand, began to imbue the sparrow with positive attributes for the first time. Although the contrast of sparrows with phoenixes and swans was still in use, the smaller bird was more often compared to falcons, such as the goshawk and hawk. The Tang-constructed sparrow, though still of humble origin and homely looking, was no longer singularly represented as morally petty. It could, instead, even be refined, inspiring, or talented. In fact, it was the first time in Chinese literature that intellectuals began to identify themselves proudly with the once-despised humble bird. Previously, Ruan Ji and other members of the literati had used phoenixes and cranes as the literary embodiment of themselves, while sparrows, being metaphorically the opposite—in capable, short-sighted, and lowly—were cited only to show the superiority of the larger birds. By contrast, Tang poets compared themselves directly to the smaller birds in order to suggest shared positive traits between the creature and themselves.

Poem Inscribed on a Temple on the Left Verge of a Road in Unbearable Anger after Failing the Civil Service Examination  
Yu Ye

This sparrow, without even chasing the tailwind, flew high,  
And looked down on goshawks and merlins, his spirits soaring.  
Although he thought that he could grow thousand-mile-feet,  
In the dusk, he still had to rest among wormwoods.²³
The author of the above poem, Yu Ye (于邺; active late ninth century), was an aspiring scholar who failed in his efforts to enter the state bureaucracy through the civil service examination. Within the poem, the sparrow certainly refers to Yu himself, a scholar most likely from a non-aristocratic background. Though a proud little creature that can fly high in the sky, it still has to rest in humble dwellings, just as the poet had failed to gain an official title, although he thought himself fully qualified. The sparrow is contrasted with goshawks and merlins, both larger and nobler birds. It would be natural then to think that these birds should represent something in opposition to Yu's position as a non-aristocratic failed scholar. The larger birds could thus signify government officials, aristocrats, or more generally, people in power. It is interesting that the aspiring poet not only chose the sparrow, a small bird looked down upon by Chen Sheng, Ruan Ji, and other famous figures in earlier periods, to be the embodiment of himself, but he also layered new meaning onto it: independent, self-respectful, aspiring, and capable. What remains unchanged from the traditional image of the sparrow is its humble origin. This is probably one of the reasons Yu Ye compared himself to this bird: he was a scholar of common origin who wanted to enter officialdom by his own merit through the civil service exam and was not like those from noble families who received their positions through their inherited status.

A poem by the famous Tang poet Hanshan (寒山; eighth century) offers another aspect of the sparrow as a refined bird. As in Yu Ye's poem, it is placed in opposition to the hawk.

*Untitled*
Hanshan

As long as I was living in the village,
They said I was the finest man around.
But yesterday I went to the city,
And even the dogs eyed me askance.
Some people jeered at my skimpy trousers,
Others said my jacket was too long.
If someone would poke out the eyes of the hawks,
We sparrows could dance wherever we please!
Here, the poet's persona, through the voice of the narrator, identifies with the sparrow. The narrator is considered a highly refined person while he lives in the country. When he goes to the city, however, he is despised because of his out-of-date clothing. In this sense, he is comparable to the sparrow, which does not have showy feathers but bears remarkable inner traits, much like the hero in Yu Ye's poem. After being subjected to humiliating comments, the narrator/hero does not lose a bit of dignity or confidence. Instead, he expresses his anger without fear or reservation. He would fight back bravely, literally poking out the hawk's eyes, to gain dignity for himself and those like him. In this sense, Hanshan's sparrow is even more heroic, independent, self-respecting, and less self-pitying than its depiction in Yu Ye's poem.

4. From Victim to Free Creature
Sparrows have long been food for hunters, prey for falcons, and in some cases, targets for sportsmen. Therefore, it is not surprising to see sparrows as victims in pre-Tang texts. Sympathy was rarely shown toward these small, feathered victims. In the Book of Odes, dated to the sixth century BCE, the sparrow is depicted as a harmful creature that damages people's homes by pecking holes in the roofs, similar to the rat that also causes destruction to buildings. When Confucius saw sparrows caught in a net, instead of showing benevolence toward them, he asked why only young sparrows, not full-grown ones, were caught. It is not surprising then to read that Qi Wenzhong (active circa mid-sixth century), a statesman in the Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE), instructed Jisun Xingfu (季孫行父; died 568 BCE), “If you see someone who treats the king respectfully, you should serve him as a filial son serves his parents; if he treats the king with no respect, you should kill him like a hawk chasing a sparrow” (見有禮于其君者，誅之如鷹鶻之逐鳥雀也). In Qi's opinion, the hawk is a positive figure comparable to a vigorous and loyal official who is authorized to kill unruly persons (and the sparrow) without feelings of guilt. This text from the sixth century BCE and its metaphorical references to hawks and sparrows are typical of that period, with no empathy shown toward the sparrow in Qi Wenzhong's words or in the comments of Confucius.

DECIPHERING THE COLD SPARROW
Bao Zhao (鲍照; circa 414–466), a famous poet in the Southern dynasties (420–589), wrote one of the earliest poems that shows sympathy toward the sparrow. His work, *Sparrow-in-abandoned-city*, gives a vivid description of this pitiful creature.

*Sparrow-in-abandoned-city*

Bao Zhao

The sparrow raises four fledglings,
In a corner of an abandoned city.
In the morning, it eats wild millet;
In the evening, it drinks from an icy river.
Flying high, it worries about hawks;
Flying low, it fears deadly nets.
What can it say about all the miseries,
There is really too much to worry about.
It is true that you cannot be compared to the qingniao bird, who flies far away to eat rice on the Jade Mountain. But you are better than swallows in the palace of Wu, whose nest was burned for no reason.
There are good and bad fates,
What else can you do, except give a long sigh?

Bao enjoyed great fame as a poet despite his obscure family background. Although he had political ambitions, he was never fully appreciated by those from the *shizu* (世族) genealogies, who were born with noble titles, wealth, and the associated political privileges of the times, including access to high-ranking official positions. Bao wrote many poems speaking on behalf of people whose backgrounds were similar to his, that is, common families from the *hanmen* (寒門) or *shuzu* (庶族) genealogies. The above poem could be read as a metaphorical cri-
tique on the fate of those average families, yet the use of the sparrow as a positive metaphor for the general population had not yet been well established in Bao’s time. Among extant texts, his poem stands out as the only one from this period to make this positive association. Even Bao himself in another work made a claim similar to Chen Sheng’s by stating an aspiring person should not be satisfied with a life of mingling with sparrows.33

By the Tang period, however, it had become common to express sympathy toward the sparrow in poetic terms. For example, besides Yu Ye and Hanshan, Li Bai,34 the famous poet and follower of Bao Zhao, also took the hard life of the sparrow as his subject in his poem Sparrow-in-abandoned-city. The work ends with a couplet that bears an equally resigned attitude toward an unchangeable destiny: “The heavenly mandate has decided your destiny. Stick to your part, suppress your desires!” (天命有定端，守份絕所慾)，35 Beyond the surface meaning is an implication of dissatisfaction with the unfairness with which contemporary society treated the social groups represented by the sparrow. Apparently, these groups were not the unworthy petty men of Chen Sheng or Ruan Ji’s time, but they were talented, refined, and aspiring scholars of non-aristocratic backgrounds, much like Bao Zhao and Yu Ye.

If, in the Tang dynasty, poets used the sparrow’s life, humble but free, as a platform for complaints, by the Song dynasty many poets lauded that image as something desirable.

Sparrow
Wang Chen

The Qin birds36 have all been caught,
The feathers of the Wu Palace swallows are disheveled (after the fire).
With a bow in the Qin people’s hand, (the Qin bird’s) home is in danger.
After the Wu Palace caught fire, (the swallow’s) nest was destroyed.
Do you know about the sparrows in the wild fields?
They hang around the hut’s roof all day long.
Humbly resting and pecking among wormwoods,
They have no fear of falcons and arrows.37

黃雀
王譚
畢通秦氏鳥，差池吳宮燕。
秦人挾彈巢若危，吳宮遺火巢空散。
不知野田雀，終日茅髻角。
卑棲鳴蓬艾間，不畏鷹鵰與繡鷹。

119 DECRYPTING THE COLD SPARROW
The so-called Qin bird is the same as the qinjíláo (秦吉了) that lives mainly in modern Guangdong province. It has colorful feathers and can be trained to emulate human speech. As a result, it was often captured and raised as pets. The “swallow in the Wu Palace” is a set phrase referring to an anecdote from the Qin dynasty, in which a janitor in the Wu Palace used a torch to get a better view of a swallow and accidentally burned its nest. These two birds, the swallow and the qinjíláo, had been used as metaphors for people who made a living by attaching themselves to powerful people or groups, as seen in Wei Zhuang’s famous couplet, “Those who attach themselves to others are the same as the Wu swallow; those who snuggle up to people are like the Yue bird” (託跡同吳燕，依人似越禽). The sparrow, on the other hand, was an undomesticated bird often associated with natural areas, hence its other appellation “sparrow in wild field” (野田雀). Song-of-sparrow-in-wild-field (野田黄雀行) as well as sparrow-in-wild-field (野田雀) were often taken as set titles in Tang-dynasty poetry. From the discussion of poems by Bao Zhao, Li Bai, and Wang Chen (active circa early thirteenth century), it is obvious that Tang and Song poets discredited the lifestyle of the “Wu swallow” and the “Yue bird.” In the eyes of these writers, especially the Song poets, the life of the sparrow may be difficult and humble, but it was still independent and free, and thus to a certain extent it was worthy of emulation. If we take the sparrow in Yu Yé’s poem as a frustrated scholar who wanted to enter the civil service but failed to do so, then the sparrow in Wang Chen’s poem represents scholars who prefer to remain independent from the government so they can enjoy more personal agency within their own lives.

The Cold Sparrow: A Special Category in Poetry and Painting in the Song Dynasty

Although the sparrow had been a frequent subject in pre-Song literature, the cold sparrow (hanque 寒雀), as a specific type, was a new addition to the metaphorical vocabulary of Song-dynasty poetry and painting. In the periods prior to the seventh century, few poems, if any, contain the compound word hanque (cold sparrow). In the Tang dynasty only eight poems in the Complete Collection of Tang Poems refer to this bird. Yet in the Complete Collection of Song Poems, more than two hundred poems contain the word hanque. While references to the cold sparrow were rare in painting prior to the Song dynasty, the Imperial Painting Catalog from the Xuanhe Era, compiled in the Northern Song dynasty, lists that of the seventy-four paintings with sparrows as the main subject, one-third, or twenty-four, were paintings of the cold sparrow. In other words, by the end of the Northern Song dynasty, the cold sparrow had become a very popular category in both painting and poetry.
As a new painting genre without a set visual vocabulary, the representation of the cold sparrow could have proven problematic for Song artists, yet there were copious literary images of the bird from which creators could choose: the creature humbly dwelling amongst wormwoods, seeking food while suffering from hunger, or even flying unboundedly, enjoying its freedom. With an array of associations and references, artists and patrons had a wide range of pictorial choices. For example, the cold sparrow is often linked with bitter wormwoods in poetic imagery, yet scenes of it resting among the leaves of this plant are found in few extant paintings, and references to it are rarely made in texts on the paintings. Instead, the plum flower or thorny/leafless twigs became the nesting spot for the sparrow in pictorial representations. Thus, a painting of an individual cold sparrow with specific sparrow-associated motifs highlights an artist's pictorial choices as well as his specific interests and concerns against a variety of available options. For an artist in the Song dynasty, the inclusion of objects in a painting was never an arbitrary choice, nor would his audience have viewed those choices as random. As claimed by the writer of the Imperial Painting Catalog of the Xuanhe Era, everything the artist includes in his painting has an explanation.

Yu Xi, hometown unknown, is good at drawing flowers and birds…. (The imperial collection) has two paintings by Yu, Peony and Two Chickens and Snowy Plum Flower and Two Pheasants. Because the chicken is a domestic bird, the peony is included in chicken paintings; the pheasant is a wild bird, so the snowy plum flower is painted together with the pheasants. In both of the above cases, Yu had good reasons [in composing his paintings in particular ways].

An artist could include the plum flower, withered bamboo, or snow in a sparrow painting to indicate wintry weather, but some motifs, such as plum flowers and bamboo, also had symbolic meanings beyond being seasonal signifiers. As Maggie Bickford points out, plum flowers embodied traits such as political integrity, friendship, endurance, and purity in the Song dynasty, with integrity and friendship being the essential two qualities. In a poem written on a painting of cold sparrows and plum flowers, the Yuan scholar Ouyang Xuan (歐陽玄; 1283–1357) suggests the birds deliberately chose to perch among the flowers.
Cold Sparrows and Plum Flower

Ouyang Xuan

In the first month of the year, the first plum twig just starts to bloom. Wandering bees and cold sparrows already know about it. Once they meet the plum flowers, the sparrows do not want to fly away hastily. Rather, they will stay with them until the end of the season.

寒雀梅
歐陽玄
斗柄初開第一枝，遊蜂寒雀已先知。
相逢不忍輕飛去，直與梅花了歲時。

By affiliation with the blossoming plums, the cold sparrows also embrace the traits represented by the flowers. As is stated in the last couplet, the sparrows would endure the cold weather and accompany the plum flowers throughout the harsh season. Therefore, in replacing wormwoods with plum flowers and bamboo, both of which were associated with integrity and purity, there is a pictorial correspondence to the change of the literary associations of the sparrow.

Cold Sparrows, Suffering People, and Ill-treated Scholars

Using seasonal indicators such as snow, plum flowers, and leafless tree twigs, modern scholars can differentiate between paintings of cold sparrows and those featuring other sparrows. From the extant paintings on sparrows, four can be designated as depictions of cold sparrows with little contention: Cold Sparrows by Cui Bai (fig. 1), Cold Sparrows by an anonymous Southern Song artist (fig. 2), Two Sparrows by an anonymous Southern Song artist (fig. 5), and Bamboo, Plum Flower and Cold Sparrows by an anonymous Song artist (fig. 6). The wintry season, clearly shown by the plum flowers, snow, and barren trees, marks these four works distinctively as cold sparrow paintings. There is, however, another kind of sparrow image that modern scholars tend to exclude from this genre, that of sparrows on paddies. An
example can be seen in a fan painting from the Museum of East Asian Art in Berlin (fig. 7). Although current art historians may not consider this painting or its subject matter to be part of the “cold sparrow” group, a viewer during the Song dynasty or later might have had different thoughts. For instance, in his book Shanhu wang (珊瑚網), the Ming-dynasty connoisseur Wang Keyu (汪珂玉; born 1587) wrote:

Paddies and Sparrows, painted by Emperor Xuanhe (Emperor Huizong), numbered 9th, on silk. Emperor Huizong favored calligraphy and painting... (Huizong) paid extra efforts in flower and bird paintings. In this album, the paddies are drooping, and on them cold sparrows are pecking. Their eyes were painted with black lacquer in the size of a soybean. They are above the painting surface, and look as if they could move...  

Wang’s assumption is that the sparrows in Emperor Huizong’s painting were “cold sparrows,” although none of the seasonal indicators, such as snow and plum flowers, appears to be included in the image. Further, it is interesting to note the words Wang used to describe the birds: they are on paddies “pecking” and they “look as if they could move.” Although the artist of the fan painting in the Berlin collection was not Emperor Huizong but was instead a painter in his court, Han Ruozhuo (韓若拙; active late eleventh to early twelfth century), as denoted by the
inscription, the two paintings do share many similarities. For example, they both
take the motif of a sparrow on a paddy as the main subject, and they both depict
the birds as being active. In Emperor Huizong's work, sparrows peck at rice, and in
Sparrows on Paddies (fig. 7), one bird bends down and looks at its partner, who is
also pecking at rice. It is not difficult to see the liveliness that Wang Keyu and other
connoisseurs appreciated. This characteristic can be found in Cui Ba's Cold Spar-
rows (fig. 1) as well. In Cui's painting, none of the nine sparrows is static. Instead,
they fly, plume, chirp, and turn their bodies or heads to interact with each other.
Wang Keyu's writing on the Yuan artist Wu Guan (呉瓘; circa mid-thirteenth cen-
tury) suggests such dynamism in painted depictions of birds was a greatly valued
quality.

Wu Guan's Sparrow and Plum Flowers, no. 20, on paper
Wu Yingzhi is from Wuhe... His plum flowers follow Yang Buzhi, and have
a very free flavor. The pecking and clawing of his cold sparrow is even livelier
and more vivid, not inferior to Qian Yutan at all.51

呉瓘梅雀 第二十幅 在紙上
呉瑩之為吾不入,…寫梅學楊補之。頗有逸趣。其寒雀爪啄更生動，宛
然不下錢玉藻也。

The liveliness praised in these texts can be seen in many of the paintings within
the general body of Song-dynasty sparrow paintings, such as Feeding Fledgling Spar-
rows in Spring (fig. 8) by an anonymous artist of the Southern Song dynasty. How-
ever, it is difficult to perceive such dynamism in the cold sparrow paintings (figs.
2 and 5), where inactivity has been highlighted within a context of harsh weather
conditions. In the fan painting (fig. 5), two sparrows perch quietly during a wintry
day. The bamboo leaves are withered, and some of the twigs are dead, as indicated
by the dry, curled bark. The leafless twig on which the birds rest is full of thorns,
suggesting an almost inhospitable environment for the two creatures. The posture
of the sparrow at the farther end of the twig alerts the viewer to the cold tempera-
tures. Its beak is plunged into the feathers on its back, a stance commonly used by
birds to keep warm. The closed eyes of the birds imply they are sleeping, but imag-
ine how difficult it must be, in such cold weather, to sleep on thorny twigs rather
than in a cozy nest. Looking at such an image, viewers can almost feel the chill that
the two sparrows are experiencing.

When Song-dynasty artists painted birds in a pair, it was often an indication
that the depicted birds were a couple. For instance, Emperor Huizong painted a
pair of Chinese bulbuls (白頭翁; pycnonotus sinensis) as a faithful couple in his
painting *Two Bulbuls on a Flowering Allspice Shrub* (fig. 9). The two birds in *Two Sparrows* (fig. 5) are very likely a couple as well, as the Yuan scholar Wu Cheng (吴澄; 1249–1333) believed when he saw a painting with similar imagery.

*On the Painting of Cold Sparrows*

Wu Cheng

There are no more tree leaves for them to depend on, 
Though they have beaks, to whom can they complain? 
Mouths shut, perching in a pair, they manage to keep themselves warm. 
And barely realize that they are resting on cold twigs. 

題寒雀圖

吳澄

更無樹葉可因依，有喙能鳴愁與誰。 
閉口雙棲聊自暖，怎知宿處是寒枝。

The character 憤 (*su*) has multiple meanings—to complain to or vent to someone, or to sue a person—that all suggest the person who takes the action of 憤 (*su*) has been wrongly treated. Although in the last couplet Wu Cheng celebrated the love between the two sparrows as the faithful couple who accompanies each other during adverse situations, he also implied the birds were suffering unduly. This imagery can be contrasted with some Song paintings that depicted joyful sparrow
families (Feeding Fledging Sparrows in Spring [fig. 8]) and happy couples (Sparrows on Paddies [fig. 7]).

The environment depicted in Cold Sparrows (fig. 2) is as unfriendly as the one constructed in Two Sparrows (fig. 5), if not worse. In this painting, three sparrows—therefore, not a couple—simply stand statically on leafless twigs. The artist used many visual clues to emphasize the wintry and inhospitable environment: the bamboo leaves are withered, the twigs on which the sparrows rest are leafless and appear to be half-dead, and falling snow covers both the bamboo and tree twigs. The drifting snow itself makes the conditions appear even worse for the creatures, as it is extremely difficult for birds to seek sustenance in snowy weather.

Depicting birds amidst falling snow was not a common motif within Song paintings, and contemporary viewers tended to read such an arrangement as an implication of a meaning more complex than seasonal indicators or simple pictorial decoration. For example, upon viewing a painting titled Snow and Sparrows (雪雀), Han Ju (韓駒; died 1135), a Northern Song scholar, wrote, “The artist only painted these birds flying in snow; who else can understand its meaning besides the artist himself?” (只畫山禽依雪飛, 斯人用意復誰知). Cold Sparrows (fig. 2),
with its similar motif of sparrows perching in falling snow, is comparable to the one Han wrote about, and it could possibly have provoked a similar response as well.

Poems from the Song dynasty do reveal that Song scholars believed paintings of the sparrow could harbor subtle meanings, including political dissent. In addition to Wu Cheng, who lamented for a sparrow couple, the twelfth-century scholar Zhu Lan (朱儁; 1129–after 1188) claimed that *Sparrows and Butterfly*, a painting by Huang Quan (黃筌; died 965), was actually a political criticism.

*Sparrows and Butterfly by Huang Quan*
Zhu Lan

The noisy hungry sparrows are fighting with each other, while there is only one butterfly, alone.
Among splendid palaces, I spot piles of ruins.
Who could penetrate the subtle meaning of the old man, Huang Quan?
In this painted image, there is criticism of the emperor.56

The "subtle meaning" in Huang Quan's painting may be opaque to a modern audience unfamiliar with the legacy of Chinese classical literature. For Zhu Lan and other twelfth-century scholars educated in classical literature, the subtleties of Huang's painting were much more perceivable. The butterfly in Huang's painting and Zhu's poem is actually a literary reference from *Soushen ji* (搜神記; written in the mid-fourth century), in which it was said that wheat transformed into butterflies after it decayed.57 The meager number of butterflies and the desperately hungry sparrows in Huang's painting were possibly meant to suggest people were starving or were living in abject poverty. This reading is accentuated by the reference to piles of ruins amid gorgeous palaces. Juxtaposing ruins with palaces, a symbol of imperial grandeur, very likely signified a dynastic disaster. Read along with the contrast of sparrows and the butterfly, this painting, according to Zhu, was actually a warning to the emperor, one stating that if he did not take good care of the common people, his reign would fall.

The birds in *Cold Sparrows* (fig. 2) and *Two Sparrows* (fig. 5) are similar to those in Huang Quan's painting *Sparrows and Butterfly*, in that all of the birds are suffering, as indicated by various visual clues. Accordingly, the connotations encoded in
the two paintings are probably similar to those in Huang’s work, namely, that the
government or the emperor was failing to take good care of the common people.
Since Hanshan, Yu Ye, and other poets also wrote of the sparrow as independent
and capable scholars from obscure origins, images such as the two cold sparrow
paintings (figs. 2 and 5) could also imply that the scholars of common backgrounds
were not well treated. It is not difficult to imagine that such connotations, called
“criticism of the emperor” by Zhu Lan, were not very pleasing to members
of the Song court.

These people seemed to prefer instead another kind of cold sparrow painting,
one that depicted happy and well-fed sparrows, much like those shown pecking
paddies. For example, Emperor Huizong himself, as recorded in Shanhu wangi,
painted a work titled Paddies and Sparrows. In two other paintings, currently
extant, also feature this subject and are both attributed to court painters: one, The
Contentment and Delight of an Abundant Harvest, was created by Li Di (fig. 10);
and the other, Sparrows on Paddies, was attributed to Han Ruozhuo (fig. 7). In
both of the available paintings, the dynamism, which Wang Keyu associated with
Emperor Huizong’s sparrows in his painting Paddies and Sparrows, can be easily
perceived. Since the sparrows in the extant works all peck on paddies or are about
to get a share of the food, this precludes any associations of starvation or suffer-
ing, and therefore it metaphorically suggests the common people or scholars also
were not enduring hardships. Given the sharp visual contrast between the suf-
fpiring cold sparrows in Cold Sparrows (fig. 2) and Two Sparrows (fig. 5) and the
same creatures happily enjoying food in such paintings as The Contentment and
Delight of an Abundant Harvest (fig. 10), it would not have been difficult for Song scholars, knowledgeable in both poetry and painting, to understand the nuances encoded in these images.

**Cold Sparrows, Independent Scholars**

Although the creatures in *Cold Sparrows* suffer from the harsh weather and inhospitable habitat, they are not depicted as ill-fated, desperate, or pitiful creatures; instead the artist imbued the sparrows with a discernible air of dignity. Unlike some Song poems that describe noisy cold sparrows busily searching for food, this artist chose to depict them differently. Gripping the twigs firmly, the sparrows are quiet and stationary, which makes them look self-contained, steady, and to some extent, even dignified.

These sparrows correspond well with those in a poem by Zhao Fan (趙蕃; 1143–1229).

*The First Piece from a Set of Ten Quatrains on Plum Flowers*

Zhao Fan

The cold sparrows are shaky because of the chill but remain quiet,
Why do they avoid people and pass beyond their dilapidated walls?
These cold jade granules can barely fill their stomachs,
Pecking through the frosty piles, they won’t feel wronged.  

梅花十絕句 之一

趙蕃

寒雀蕭蕭凍不喧，背人締底過颓垣。
似矜玉粒堪充飽，啄破霜包無酒寛。

In the last couplet, the poet writes that although the cold sparrows cannot eat a good meal, still they will not feel wronged. Why does Zhao introduce the issue of justice in a poem about sparrows? By whom could the cold sparrows have been wronged?

In the Song dynasty, poets still compared sparrows to larger birds, such as the goshawk and peacock. Such comparisons, however, were applied not as a means to establish a contrast of big and small, powerful and weak, capable and incapable, but to highlight the freedom that the cold sparrows enjoyed. In a poem by the monk Daoqian (道潛; active late eleventh century to early twelfth century), he compared cold sparrows with caged peacocks and expressed his preference for the humble yet free life of the sparrow.
Deserted garden, ancient moat, snow falls heavily.  
Slim bamboo and barren twigs cluster together.  
The cold sparrows have nothing to do but make hungry twitters,  
But, it is better than the peacock fed in a cage.  
Although temporarily he feels good after a feeding,  
Living year after year in a cage, he is the same as a prisoner of Chu!  
How can he compare to the sparrows, east and south in the field,  
They can roam freely in the warm wind and cloudless sky.

The freedom of the cold sparrow was actually the one trait of the bird that was most often appreciated by Song scholars. Besides the peacock, writers in the tenth to thirteenth century often compared the sparrow to another type of caged bird: the goshawk. During the Tang dynasty, as suggested in poems by Hanshan and Yu Ye, the hawk was used as a metaphor of people in power. This may, in part, stem back to the Western Han dynasty (202 BCE–8 CE) official Zhi Du (郅都; active mid-second century BCE), who was the first official in Chinese history to receive the nickname “goshawk” (蒼鷹). Zhi acquired this nickname because of his implacable style as a law officer. The goshawk continued to be used as a metaphor for officials into the Song dynasty (960–1279). Shi Miyuan (史彌遠; 1164–1233), a prime minister of the Southern Song dynasty, for example, equates the skill of controlling generals to that of raising goshawks. According to the History of the Song, after several military feats against the rebels in the liangnan (江南) region, many generals expected to be promoted, but Shi did not confer any advancements. When asked why, he answered, “The key to using generals is the same as raising the goshawk. If hungry, it will stay with the master; if fed to its fill, it will fly away” (御將之道，譬如養鷹，飢則依人，飽則飏去)
The metaphor of the goshawk for governmental officials likewise appears in Song poetry. In these works, the goshawk is not a powerful, heroic, or arrogant figure but a diligent, hardworking, yet poorly treated official.

*Song of a Caged Goshawk*

Zhang Lei

In the eighth month the millet is harvested and frosty fields are empty. The goshawk, feathers trimmed, has just been released from the cage. Sword-like tail feathers, hooked claws, its eyes like lightning. And its beak is as sharp as the newly whetted Longquan sword. The youth carried you on his arm to the suburb. Whenever the brushwood moves, your master shouts and the cold hare is startled to jump. Crouching, swooping downward, you will attack (the hare) as fast as a thunderbolt. Your feathers are adrift in the wind and your talons are covered in blood. You can catch hares but cannot eat them, Before filling half of your stomach, you have to catch more prey. The master has had enough of hares but you’re still hungry. Throughout your life, you’re unhappy because you are used by others. Sparrows chirp in wormwoods, Without desires, they peck wild millet when hungry. Although they are small and lack great capabilities, Unbridled, they enjoy freedom. 

Zhang Lei (張耒; 1054–1114) offers a distinct comparison between the lifestyles of sparrows and goshawks in the above poem. He constructs a vivid contrast...
between a goshawk that is poorly treated, despite his devoted work for his master, and the sparrow that lives a simple but content and free life. It is natural for the reader to link the caged goshawk with officials who are supposed to work diligently for the government and the emperor, just as the goshawk does for its master, and to associate the free sparrows with commoners or scholars in reclusion. Like the goshawk in his poem, Zhang experienced frustration, torment, and poverty in his own official career. He received his jinshi (進士) degree at an early age (around twenty) and was promoted to the position of imperial secretary (qiju sheren 起居侍從) during Emperor Shenzong’s reign (1067–1085). However, due to his close affiliation with several key figures in the yuanyou party, such as Su Shi (蘇軾; 1037–1101), Zhang was frequently demoted and was exiled during the reigns of emperors Zhezong (1086–1100) and Huizong (1100–1125). While in exile in Chenzhou (陳州; modern Huaiyang county, Henan province), Zhang lived in abject poverty.  

Although it is almost impossible to know the exact composition date of Song of the Caged Goshawk, Zhang was most likely to write such a work only after having experienced some or all of those political frustrations. In fact, Zhang abdicated all of his official titles and lived in Chenzhou in his later years, which can be read as his embrace of the unbridled lifestyle of the sparrow, such as he praised in his poem.

Zhang Lei was not the first who complained of the exhaustion and frustration of life as an official. Bai Juyi (白居易; 772–846), a writer much admired by Zhang, also wrote several poems on this topic. In one work, Returning Late, Going Out Early, Bai wearied of his tiresome official duties, and he expressed longings for retirement and a desire to regain his freedom. In another poem titled Hermit and Politician, Bai suggested another possible reason for his hesitation regarding an official’s lifestyle and his preference for reclusion, namely, elusive and unreliable imperial favor.

*Hermit and Politician*

Bai Juyi

“I was going to the City to sell the herbs I had plucked;  
On the way I rested by some trees at the Blue Gate.  
Along the road there came a horseman riding.  
Whose face was pale with a strange look of dread.  
Friends and relations, waiting to say good-bye,  
Pressed at his side, but he did not dare to pause.  
I, in wonder, asked the people around me,  
Who he was and what had happened to him.  
They told me this was a Privy Councilor,
Whose grave duties were like the pivot of State.  
His food allowance was ten thousand cash;  
Three times a day the Emperor came to his house.  
Yesterday his counsel was sought by the Throne;  
Today he is banished to the country of Yazhou.  
So always, the Counselors of Kings;  
Favor and ruin changed between dawn and dusk!”  
Green, green—the grass of the Eastern Suburb;  
And amid the grass, a road that leads to the hills.  
Resting in peace among the white clouds,  
Can the hermit doubt that he chose the better part?

As is most often the case with the trope of the recluse in Chinese literature, the hermit in Bai Juyi’s poem is not a common farmer but a person who has the potential, and possibly the required capability, to become an official. He consciously chooses, however, not to work for the emperor because of the uncertainty and perils that often accompany a government career. Zhang’s poem, Song of a Caged Goshawk, can be seen as a continuation of the Bai Juyi tradition. In addition, it is not difficult for readers to link the hermit in Bai’s poem to the sparrow in Zhang’s poem, just as it is to associate the demoted official to the unjustly treated goshawk. In poems by both Bai and Zhang, the demanding workload and the inconsiderate master, either superiors or the emperor, are the impetus for the complaints.

Given the range of associations and contrasts made between the various birds in poems, such as the works of the monk Daoqian, who contrasts the humble but free lifestyle of the sparrow to the hunger-free but bridled one of the peacock and goshawk, as well as Zhang Lei’s metaphorical allusion, through the goshawk, to
the unfair treatment of government officials, it is not difficult to understand why Zhao Fan alluded to the issue of justice upon viewing a painting depicting cold sparrows on a snowy day. The one who would transgress against the cold sparrow, as suggested in Zhao Fan's poem, therefore, is very possibly a superior official in the government or even the emperor. As both Zhao Fan and Daoqian refer to snow in their poems on cold sparrow paintings, it therefore seems snow was an important image through which Song artists stressed the humbleness and harshness of a cold sparrow's life. This in turn might not only elicit sympathy from the viewers but also inspire admiration from scholars such as Daoqian, Zhao Fan, and Zhang Lei.

The painting Cold Sparrows (fig. 2) was possibly one of the cold sparrow paintings upon which some Song scholars would have made comments similar to those of Daoqian and Zhao Fan. As the Song scholar Han Ju would notice, snow is one of the most remarkable features of this painting, since it not only covers the plants, but it also falls on the three animate creatures, the sparrows. Beyond the snow, the bamboo and tree twigs also correspond well with those in Daoqian's poem as being "slim" and "barren." Therefore, in addition to possibly being a warning to the emperor that the common people or capable scholars of obscure backgrounds were ill-treated, as suggested earlier in this paper, the painting Cold Sparrows could also be a depiction of scholars who chose not to become officials, whether due to the potential dangers caused by elusive or fickle imperial favor or because the government was not treating officials with respect and consideration.

A Song scholar's claim that he would forsake a life as a government official was often taken as a criticism of the current government. As Elisabeth Brotherton points out, most Song literati believed that to fulfill a scholar's responsibility, a scholar-official should serve the country by working for the government and should choose to retreat only under formidable political conditions. Thus, when an official or a scholar expressed his longings for retirement, the only justification was that something was wrong within the contemporary government. On many occasions during the Song dynasty, the decision of whether or not to enter into and remain in the civil bureaucracy was not merely taken as a personal preference for a carefree pastoral life over official duty, but instead it was understood to be a comment on the current government's worthiness to serve. Consequently, it is not surprising to read in Zhang Lei's poem that the goshawk envies the sparrow's life not just because of the assigned hard work but also due to the unfair treatment it receives from its master. And the reason for the poet and official Zhang Lei's longing for retreat, accordingly, is not because he was intimidated by his government responsibilities but because of the injustice he experienced as an official. In this sense, Zhang's poem, Song of a Caged Goshawk, is actually a political criticism.
It is for the above reason that many Song emperors made considerable attempts to lure recluses into government service, especially after natural disasters, such as floods and landslides, which were often considered omens of heaven's dissatisfaction with the current emperor and his government. In fact, recruiting recluses was such an important issue that an official astrological book contains a section instructing emperors about astrologically advantageous timing for summoning such figures.

Many Song emperors seemed to accept the theory of a connection between recluses and political performance. By successfully recruiting renowned hermits and scholars into the government and retaining them, emperors were able to display their political success. Considering the efforts Song emperors paid to the issue of eremitism, it is not difficult for even the modern scholar to imagine what a strong and provocative claim it was to both paint and use a fan with an image of suffering cold sparrows (fig. 2). These were not benign representations of feathered wildlife but actually were allusions to independent, strong-willed, and self-respectful scholars who refused to serve in the government.

Conclusion
The changing literary associations and metaphorical meanings of the sparrow reflect the profound social and intellectual change that occurred from the latter half of the Tang dynasty to the early Northern Song period. Referred to as the Tang-Song transition, many of the changes were predicated on the decline of politically powerful and historically significant aristocratic clans and the rise of non-aristocratic scholar-officials. In the non-feudal society of the Song dynasty, the sparrow, a bird that had long been associated with the masses and was once despised as being unworthy, gained new and positive images under a non-aristocratic intellectual milieu. Instead of differentiating themselves from the masses (represented by sparrows) to show their superiority as many scholar-officials did in previous dynasties, Song scholars began to take on the role of spokesmen for the sparrow, and hence for the masses, the people. In many cases, they adopted sparrows as the embodiment of themselves as capable scholars with obscure backgrounds.

As references to the sparrow, with its newly gained positive associations, entered into intellectual discourses, pictorial representations of this bird became unprecedentedly popular as well. Paintings of cold sparrows, which associate sparrows with such plants as plum flowers and bamboo and their metaphorically suggested traits of integrity and perseverance, were created as new additions to the genre of sparrow paintings in the Song dynasty. Together with Song literati, members of the imperial court, who gradually lost their cultural hegemony from the mid-eighth
century onward,\textsuperscript{81} began to utilize images of the sparrow as a platform to make their own political statements. 

As Alfreda Murck suggests, a painting of complaint often contains a wide range of possible meanings behind the images, which makes its hidden allusions difficult to penetrate even for contemporary Song viewers.\textsuperscript{82} Therefore, for viewers who were not familiar with literary references or pictorial tropes, the political connotations in images such as the two *Cold Sparrows* (figs. 2 and 5) could be rather elusive. Such opacity or obliqueness, however, should not be over-emphasized, or the information that the artist or poet intended to convey would have been thoroughly unperceivable, which, in most cases, went against the artist's or poet's motivation in creating the work. This is true especially for paintings or poems that commented on or criticized public issues, because on these occasions such works were often meant to evoke public consciousness or to call for general support. Many Song artists, as suggested in this paper, often used visual clues to invite viewers to ponder the hidden meaning of their paintings, such as the juxtaposition of piles of ruins with an imperial palace in *Butterfly and Sparrows* by Huang Quan\textsuperscript{83} and the falling snow in *Cold Sparrows*. 

Many of the sparrow paintings, such as *Cold Sparrows*, *Two Sparrows*, and *Sparrows on Paddies*, were painted on fans and originally had accompanying poems on the reverse side. Although none of these inscribed poems, beyond a few by Song emperors,\textsuperscript{84} has survived due to the process of repeated remounting, it is very likely that among the extant Song sparrow poems some were once composed as improvisations of sparrow paintings or were even written as inscriptions for such paintings. Read in conjunction with texts, and most especially poetry, from the Song dynasty, political connotations that were encoded in various depictions of the sparrow but were opaque to modern viewers have become accessible again.

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NOTES


2 Li Shizhen, Bencao gangmu 本草綱目, juan 48, p. 39.

3 He Kun, and Liang Guozhi, Qinding rehe zhi 欽定繡済志 (1781), juan 95, p. 10. Ji Yun et al., eds., Qinding xu tongshi 欽定續通志 (1789), juan 180, p. 11. Ji Yun et al., eds., Yuding yuan jian bei han 御定源淵編 (1780), juan 424, p. 1.

4 According to the Great Encyclopedia of China (Zhongguo da baike quanshu), the maque is a bird with feathers of various tones of brown and can be found in most parts of China. The huangque or the Eurasian siskin, on the other hand, has colorful feathers (yellow, green, and black) and migrates between mountain areas of northeastern and southeastern China. It nests in tall trees in mountainous areas and feeds on the nuts of conifers and weed seeds. Conversely, the maque (sparrow) lives close to people and builds nests under roofs or in holes in earthen walls. While the maque makes short, high-pitched chirps, the huangque "sings" in a more melodious way and can be taught to make a variety of new sounds. As a result, it is a popular yet rare bird that is a favored pet by modern bird lovers in northern China. In a word, it is almost impossible for a viewer to confuse the two kinds of birds even at first sight. See the Great Encyclopedia of China, shortened edition, s.v. "maque" (sparrow) and "huangque" (Eurasian siskin), Committee of the Great Encyclopedia of China.

5 The Song scholar Luo Yuan cited a text from a lost chapter in Huomana 洪南子, a book attributed to Liu An 劉安, which read that when August comes, sparrows will dive into the Changjiang River and transform into clams. See Luo Yuan, Erya yi 禹雅翼, juan 15, p. 3.

6 Ren Fang, Shuyiji 漢語記, juan 1, p. 7. It records that in the Huaihui River, huangque transform into clams when fall comes and then change back into huangque in the spring.

7 Both Pan Zimu (act. late twelfth–early eleventh century) and Yin Jinxiang (act. early fourteenth century) included writings on huangque under the category of que. See Pan Zimu, jizhuan yuanhai 记著海, 97 juan, 35–36, and Yin Jinxiang, Yanfu qianyi 領府群玉, juan 19, p. 8.


For the common practice of inter-reference between poetry and paintings among Song scholars, see Alfreda Murck, Poetry and Painting in Song China: The Subtle Art of Dissent (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2000), 259–62.

10 In the Han dictionary Shuowen jiezi 説文解字, under the character que 雀, the writer Xu Shen 許慎 (137–147) annotated that que 雀 is pronounced as jue 鵲. Xu Shen, Shuowen jiezi (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963), 76.

11 Liu Shujing, Yi yuan 翰苑, juan 4, p. 8.

13 Imperial Painting Catalog from the Xuande Era (xuande huapu 直和畫譜), juan 18, p. 9.
15 Ellen Liang suggests that the sparrows in a tenth-century painting by Huang Jucai, Pheasant, Brambles, and Sparrows, might be auspicious symbols for an official title. See Ellen Johnston Liang, "Auspicious Motifs in Ninth- to Thirteenth-Century Chinese Tombs," Ars Orientalis 33 (2003), 51. Valid as this speculation may be, more contextual information is needed to support such interpretation. Moreover, the fact that it is not, in a strict sense, a sparrow painting—a work with sparrows as the main subject—singles it out from the paintings under consideration.
17 Bao Zhao (412?–466) wrote one of the earliest poems titled Sparrow-in-abandoned-city: Bao Zhao, A Collection of Bao Mingyuan's Writings (Baomingyuan ji 鮑明遠集), juan 3, p. 5. The modern scholar Zhong Yousin argues that poets from later periods who wrote poems under the title Sparrow-in-abandoned-city continued the theme of Bao Zhao's poem, that is, using the sparrow as an embodiment of the poet himself to express his disappointment and frustration over his ill fate or more specifically, the difficulty he experienced in his pursuit of an official career. See Zhong Youxin, Bao Zhao the Social Poet 魏收詩人鮑照 (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1995), 206–207.
18 Cao Yin et al., ed., Yuding quanyutangshi 御定全唐詩 (1707), juan 25, pp. 10–11.
19 In Zhangzi xiuoyao, Xu You, comparing himself to a wren that is happy with nesting on a single twig, refused Yao's offer of his throne. See Guo Xiang (郭象: 252–312), Zhangzi zhu 孫子注, juan 1, p. 7. For a translated version of this chapter, see Burton Watson, trans., Zhangzi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 32.
21 Sima Qian, Records of the Grand Historian, 194. Also see Burton, trans., Records of the Grand Historian, 1.
22 Feng Weine (馮惟德; 1512–1572), Records of Ancient Poems (Gushi ji 古詩紀), juan 29, p. 12.
23 Cao Yin et al., Yuding quanyutangshi, juan 725, p. 4.
26 Authors unknown, compiled by Wang Su (王縉; 195–256), Confucius' Words and Deeds (Kongzi jiuyu 孔子家語), juan 4, p. 3.
27 Wang Daokun (王道焜; act. 1620s–1630s) and Zhao Ruyuan (趙恕園; act. 1620s–1630s), eds., Zhuozhuan with Commentaries by Master Du and Lin (Zhuozhuan Du Lin hezhuan 左傳杜林合注), juan 17, p. 18.
28 The qingmingqiao bird was one of the three legendary birds that attended the Queen Mother of the West 西王母. See Zhu Mouwei, Pianya 飛雅, juan 7, p. 10. It is very likely Bao Zhao cited the qingmingqiao bird as a metaphor for politically privileged ones from aristocratic families (shizu 世族) in contrast to sparrows, namely, the commoners.
29 Rice on the jade mountain (玉山禾) refers to the legendary cereal that grows on Kunlun Mountain, where the Queen Mother of the West lives. See Guo Pu, Shanhaijing 山海經, juan 2, p. 15.
30 The "swallow in the Wu Palace" is a set phrase referring to an anecdote in the Qin dynasty, in which a janitor in the Wu Palace used a torch in order to better see a swallow and burned its nest accidentally. See Yuan Kang, Yuejueshi 越絕史, juan 2, p. 2, and Ji Yun et al., eds., Peiwen yuanshi 佩文順府 (1780), 76 juan, 18.
31 Bao Zhao, A Collection of Bao Mingyuan's Writings (Baomingyuan ji), juan 3, p. 5. For an annotated reading of this poem, consult Zhu Sixin, A Study of Selected Poems by Bao Zhao 佩文詩選注与研究 (Wulumuqi: Xinjiang da xue ban she, 1997), 73–74.
32 For a discussion on Bao Zhao's lamentations on his failure to fulfill his political aspiration as a scholar from a common family, see Meng Zhi, "Probing into the Poor Scholar's Mentality in Bao Zhao's Poems" 朝鮮诗歌中寒士心态探微, Journal of Simao Teachers' College 思茅師范高等專科學校學報 21, no. 1 (2005), 45–51.
33 Chen Yanshou, The History of Southern Dynasties 南史, juan 13, p. 10.
35 Caoyin et al., Yuding quantangshi, juan 164, p. 12.
36 The Qin bird should be the bird’s name as qingjialao (青 Jackets), which live in the Lingnan area. It has nothing to do with the Qin dynasty or the Qin area (territory of the Qin state). Since the Lingnan area has also been referred to as the Yue area, qingjialao was often called the Yue bird, as in Wei Zhuang’s poem “Improvising on Master Xue’s Poem,” in Zhonghua shuju, ed., Complete Collection of Tang Poetry (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999). Wang Chen mistakenly thinks that qingjialao is from the Qin area, and he then mentions the people in Qin.
38 Bí Jūyí describes qingjialao as a bird versed in human language. See Bái Jūyí, “Qīngdǐláo, kòngzhèng yú lùn lì tèshù de Gōngchénrén” 秦吉了-寡民记也, Baishi chuangqing ji 白氏长慶集, juan 4, p. 17.
39 See Ji Yün et al., Peiwen yünfu, juan 76, p. 18.
40 The Yue bird in this couplet is the same bird as Qīngjialáo. See n. 36. For Wei Zhuang’s poem, see Wang Yanxu et al., eds., Yuding quantangshi juan 御定全唐詩錄, juan 94, p. 12.
42 This number is based on the database of Tang poetry offered by Beijing University. See chinese.pku.edu.cn/tangPoem/
43 This number was obtained from the trial version of the online database of Song poetry offered by Beijing University in 2006. That database is now unavailable, and a new one, which currently contains only part of Song poem, is under construction. For the link of the new database, see chinese.pku.edu.cn(songPoem/)
44 These seventy-four paintings contain only que (sparrow) in their titles. In addition to the seventy-four paintings, thirty-one paintings contain both que and other birds’ names in the title, which I exclude from the genre of sparrow painting. See Yù Jīnhuá, Imperial Painting Catalog from the Xuanhe Era 宣和畫譜 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982).
45 These cold sparrow paintings include works with titles including the words cold sparrow 寒雀, sparrow and snow 雪雀, and sparrow and plum flower 梅雀.
46 See Imperial Painting Catalog from the Xuanhe Era (xuánhé huàqu) juan 15, p. 5.
48 Dáobúng (斗柄) here was possibly an omission of dàobúng fù (斗柄附), which literally reads the handle of the beidou (北斗) constellation (the Big Dipper) returns to its original place, and means spring is back. See Ji Yün et al., Peiwei yünfu, juan 10, p. 18.
49 Ouyang Xuan, Guizhai wénjí 求緒文集, juan 3, p. 10.
50 Wang Keyu, Shanhu wang 珊瑚網, juan 13, p. 18.
51 Ibid., 26.
52 In the inscription on Two Bulbul on a Flowering Alhosp Shrub, which was written by Emperor Huizong, the attributed painter says the two bulbul will stay together for thousands of years until the feathers on their heads all become white, a popular trope for loving and faithful human couples.
54 For a comprehensive definition of 孟 (su), consult Ci Yuan 集言 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1978–93), s.v. “孟 (su):”
55 See Han Ju, Yangling ji 陽陵集, juan 3, p. 9.
56 Zhu Lan, Zhongzhou ji 中州集, juan 7, p. 9.
57 Gan Bao, Soushen ji 搜神記, juan 12, p. 3; Chen Dazhang, Shichuan minguo ji 詩傳名物集, juan 5, p. 31.
60 Ibid., 30939.
61 Prisoners of Chu (楚囚Chuqiu) originally referred to Chu citizens who were captured by the Jin army. See Fang Xuanling, History of Jin (Taipei: Dingwen Press, 1994), 1747. In later literature, it was used as a set word referring to those who were stuck in difficult circumstances and could do nothing to change their fate.
62 Daoqian, A Collection of Poems by Canhaozi 可寒子集, juan 12, p. 3. Also see Fu Xuancong, Complete Collection of Song Poems, 10807.
63 See n. 23 and n. 24.
64 Sima Qian, Records of the Grand Historian, juan 122, p. 3133.
65 Tuotuo (Yuan dynasty), The History of Song, edited by Yang Jialiu (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1978), juan 414, p. 12418. A similar record can also be found in Xu
emperors attempted to recruit Zhong Fang (仲方; 955–1015). Zhong was invited by emperors Taizong and Zhenzong to serve in the government at least four times, and each time he received generous imperial favor. After the third call, he did join the government, but he withdrew after only two or three months. See Tuotuo, *History of Song*, juan 50, pp. 117–18, 121, 128, 140, and 148. For the important role omens played in politics of the Song dynasty, see Peter C. Sturman, “Cranes above Kaifeng: The Auspicious Image at the Court of Huizong,” *Ars Orientalis* 20 (1990), 33–68.

As an example, Emperor Huizong, after completing his huge project of resetting the musical tones and composing the Dasheng Music (Dashengyue 大晟樂), conferred a decree promoting his own musical/political project. In the decree, one of the justifications and also one of the praises for his enterprise is that he managed to “recruit recluse from the wilderness” to help him regain the orthodox music that had been missing since the Eastern Zhou period. See Tuotuo, *History of Song*, juan 129, pp. 3001–3002.

Both Fu Bi (富弼; 1004–1083) and Sima Guang (司馬光; 1019–1086) were officials who enjoyed prestige and fame. Although they were against Emperor Shenzong and Wang Anshi’s New Policies, Fu and Sima had to submit their resignations tens of times before they received the emperor's sanction. See Tuotuo, *History of Song*, juan 313, p. 10256, and juan 327, pp. 10541–553.


Ibid.
“THE ABODE OF THE NĀGA KING”

Questions of Art, Audience, and Local Deities at the Ajañṭā Caves

Abstract

Many questions still surround the topic of audience at the fifth century CE Buddhist caves at Ajanṭā, India. In particular, it is not at all clear who had access to the site or was permitted to see the lavish interior decorations. The lack of visibility inside the dark rock-cut structures only increases the number of questions about the artwork's intended audience. In considering this inaccessibility, it is possible that some of the choices pertaining to the subject matter and placement of the artwork were directed primarily by concerns over an audience that was not human. There is evidence to suggest that much of the artwork may have been intended to maintain and appease the local nāga deity mentioned in the Cave 16 inscription. This assertion can be supported through the preponderance of narrative imagery associated with nāgas (and similar beings) at the site, the shift towards the depiction of nāgas in subsidiary positions inside the architectural space, and through the use of so-called decorative depictions of divine and semidivine witnesses at events featuring the Buddha and bodhisattvas. Ultimately, textual evidence provided by the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims Xuanzang and Faxian supports the idea that visual imagery may have been used as an apotropaic technique to calm intemperate local gods. This use of the built environment as a means of interceding with a divine figure embodied in a sculptural form may hold important links to the development of South Asian bhakti practices.

OVER THE YEARS, every aspect of the Ajanṭā Caves, from door hinges to garland hooks, has undergone careful scrutiny by scholars eager to uncover the historical circumstances surrounding the creation and use of these spectacular caves carved into the cliffs above a bend in the Waghora River (fig. 1). Despite the fascinating information and compelling conclusions this research has uncovered, some very basic aspects of the caves' history and use continue to elude us. For example, it is not at all clear who lived in or worshipped at these caves and who even saw their masterful decorations. These questions of audience have been circumstantially answered by late donative inscriptions left by merchants, which suggest Ajanṭā's remote location on the western Deccan Plateau may have been situated along a trade route. Likewise, earlier inscriptions left by regional figures of authority point to a political importance assigned to this rocky canyon. Aside from these few inscriptions, however, we know surprisingly little about who lived in, worshipped at, or visited these caves.

The caves themselves appear to have been constructed in two phases. The earliest examples, which date to the second or first century BCE, are characterized by simple ground plans that are almost entirely devoid of extant decoration. The caves
2

Waterfall near the Ajantā Caves.
Photo: author

of the second phase, which date to the late fifth century CE, are somewhat more varied in design and far more elaborate in both their sculptural and painted decoration. During both phases, the caves followed two basic floor plans. The first is often identified as a stūpa or caitya hall and is recognizable by its distinctive apsidal plan. This shape was designed to hold a stūpa at the back of the cave and to allow for circumambulation along the perimeter of the interior space. The second, and most common, cave type is the monastic residence, or vihāra. These caves invariably possess a large rectangular central chamber off of which radiate several smaller monastic cells. Examples of the vihāra plan that date to the second phase of construction also contain prominent shrines to the Buddha located along their back walls. Some variations on these general plans do occur at the site, but most caves conform to these core features of architectural design.

As Walter Spink has demonstrated, most of the caves of the second phase of construction show remarkably few signs of habitation or long-term occupation, which further compounds the questions surrounding their use. In some cases the decorative programs within specific caves have been examined in hope that the nature of the visual narratives and programmatic decoration might reveal something of their patronage or intended audience. Most notably, some scholars have linked Caves 1 and 2 to the Vākāṭaka ruler Hariśena, based in part on the observation that most of the narrative scenes in these caves pertain to kings and rulers. And, while this certainly may be the case, I would like to suggest that these same images, and others like them, also may have been intended for a very different type of ruler. The
authority figure to which I refer has the unusual quality of not even being human. Specifically, I am referring to the Nāga King (Nāgendra),5 which according to the Cave 16 inscription was a resident of this mountainside even prior to the creation of the Buddhist monastery.6 The veneration of nāgas, like the one resident at Ajanta, has a very long history in South Asia that goes back to the earliest textual and sculptural sources. These serpentine figures were local demigods associated with fertility, water, and rainfall, who could at times be angered into bringing about periods of flood or drought. In the case of Ajanta, the local Nāga King was more than likely associated initially with the Waghora River that cascades dramatically to the foot of the canyon just above the Ajanta Caves and makes a sharp bend along the valley floor (fig. 2).

Varahadeva, the donor who left the Cave 16 inscription, refers to this canyon wall as having originally been “the abode of the Nāga King,” but he also states he personally sponsored the construction of “a dwelling” for this same nāga, presumably because either the monastery had infringed on its old residence or as an act of personal devotion directed to the Nāga King itself.7 This new dwelling is almost certainly the large nāga shrine (fig. 3) located below Cave 16 on a path leading up from the river, thereby making the nāga a special inhabitant of the rock-cut monastery. The simple fact that an important donor believed the nāga to be present literally within the monastic complex may hold intriguing implications for the way we understand the artwork at Ajanta. In short, I would suggest the artistic decoration throughout many portions of the Ajanta Caves was not solely intended for human
eyes, and in many cases the decorative programs address the supernatural as much as (if not more than) they do the human.

The visual motifs employed at Ajantā reveal an intense interest in supernatural beings and provide some insight into the complex relationship between the monastery and the local gods. Others have already written on the economic benefits of this interaction. I, however, am more concerned with what this implied supernatural audience can reveal about issues of legitimacy and the manner in which artistic representations were understood to function in social and religious contexts.  

Local Deities in Iconic, Narrative, and Decorative Art
Representations of local gods and spirit-deities, which include a diverse catalog of beings, such as nāgas, yaksas, gandharvas, kimmaras, and many others, can be found in abundance throughout the site. The members of this impressive collection of supernatural figures are found in a variety of contexts, represented in both sculptural and painted forms. In some cases these figures occupy their own shrines and almost certainly served as icons for veneration. The well-known yakṣī Hariti and her consort Jambhala/Kubera have been given a place of prominence in Cave 2; whereas, large enshrined images of the Nāga King can be found in two locations—down from Cave 16 and directly outside Cave 19 (fig. 4). A shrine located just across the chamber from the image of Hariti in Cave 2 depicts two additional figures that are quite likely representations of the well-known yakṣa generals Maṇibhadra and Pūrṇabhadra (fig. 5).  

This attribution is not certain, but it is made more likely by...
the fact that a painted and labeled image of Manibhadra was identified in Cave 17, confirming that this demigod was known and singled out for veneration elsewhere at the site.¹¹

These figures and others like them are featured prominently in narrative scenes that can be found wherever painted materials have been preserved. The narratives display a somewhat surprising number of tales involving supernatural figures and demigods. By my count, approximately half of all the narrative material that can be seen in the extant paintings across the monastic complex depicts tales that relate directly to some type of spirit-deity, and of these, more involve nāgas than any other type.

The vast majority of these tales are taken directly from the Jātaka, or tales of the Buddha’s past lives. It is interesting to note that of the more than five hundred Jātaka tales known through textual materials, only a relatively small portion deals explicitly with supernatural beings.¹² At Ajanṭā, however, about half of all the narratives (and over half of all the Jātakas depicted) feature spirit-deities. It would seem the artists and patrons of Ajanṭā exhibited a preference by intentionally and predominantly selecting those tales that deal with supernatural beings for representation at the site. These Jātaka tales are quite diverse in their specifics, but as is typical for the genre, most involve a moral dilemma that is resolved by the future Buddha through his wisdom, generosity, and compassion. While the details always change, it is standard for them to conclude with the spirits and deities expressing their admiration for the Buddhist teachings.

Just to provide an example, I will quickly relate the story of Maitribala, which has been identified three times at Ajanṭā in Caves 1, 2, and 16.¹³ In this story the future Buddha is born as a king who is so righteous that dangerous yakṣas are actually
rendered powerless in his realm. When a group of brutish spirits confronts him, asking for human flesh to eat, the king offers them part of his own flesh and blood. The carnivorous yakṣas are so impressed by this behavior that they reform their evil ways and vow to behave properly in the future. At its core, this tale reinforces the protective qualities of the Buddhist teachings and their ability to tame destructive appetites, even those of predatory spirits.

Along with the iconic and narrative depictions of these supernatural beings is a third category of imagery that is easy to overlook, despite the fact these works are among the most pervasive at Ajantā. I am speaking of the artwork that is often categorized as decorative, even though these figures typically embellish architectural elements or adorn the edges of artwork depicting more prominent subject matter, such as narratives or images of bodhisattvas (fig. 6). With the exception of the caves dating to the second century BCE, this type of imagery is found throughout the rest of the site in both painted and sculptural forms. Representations of flying deities, divine couples, dwarf-like ganas, half-avian kinnaras, and the like can be seen acting as silent observers to the central images or to the primary narrative action. These figures often act as attendants or witnesses to the main subject matter, which make them easy to overlook or dismiss as insignificant. The prevalence of these so-called decorative images was certainly no accident, however, and it would be a mistake not to recognize them as some of the most widely represented figures at Ajanta.

Interestingly, these semidivine witnesses assembled to observe a great teacher or a miraculous event have a direct parallel in Buddhist literary sources. For example, in a passage from the Buddhacarita of the first or second century CE, we are presented with a description of the birth and first bath of the child who will become the Buddha. The text tells us that as the child lay on his bed,
yakṣa lords stood reverent, on guard with golden lotuses in their hands. The dwellers of heaven, themselves remaining invisible held up in the sky white umbrellas and bowing their heads in obeisance before his majesty, muttered the highest blessings that he might obtain enlightenment. The mighty snakes [nāgas] in their thirst for the most excellent law fanned him and with eyes shining with devotion bestrewed him with mandāra flowers.14

Here the authors took care to embellish their presentation of the central narrative with elaborate descriptions of the heavenly hosts who have gathered to celebrate and participate in a sacred event.

A similarly populated passage from the third-century Lalitavistara centers on the Śākyamuni’s arrival at Bodhgaya, the location in which he will undertake his meditation and eventually achieve enlightenment. The text relates that the gods Brahmā, Śakra, and the four directional guardians (lokapāla), with the assistance of sixteen devaputra, prepared the seat of the future Buddha. When they had done so, “the gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, and asuras compared their own abodes to cemeteries and expressed their admiration.” Once again, the importance of the event is underscored and validated by the presence of a host of supernatural witnesses. This literary trope is incredibly common in the Buddhist textual sources. In fact, this same text, the Lalitavistara, contains a chapter comprised almost entirely of supernatural and divine figures praising the Buddha on achieving enlightenment.15

The tendency to mark noteworthy events or signify the importance of individuals with an entourage or assembly of divine and spiritually powerful figures is equally strong within most Mahāyāna sūtras. It is rather standard protocol in these texts that each sermon or miraculous display is prefaced with an elaborate description of the noteworthy figures present at the auspicious event. If we take the Vimalakīrti-nīrdeśa Sūtra as an example, the text sets the stage for the Buddha’s sermon by providing a long description of those present. One section states:

There were also gathered there ten thousand Brahmās, at their head Brahmā Sikhin, who had come from the Aśoka universe with its four sectors to see, venerate, and serve the Buddha and to hear the Dharma from his own mouth. There were twelve thousand Śakras, from various four-sector universes. And there were other powerful gods: Brahmās, Śakras, Lokapālas, devas, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kimmaras, and mahoragas. Finally, there was the fourfold community, consisting of bhiksus, bhikṣunis, laymen, and laywomen.16
In each of these circumstances, an event in the Buddha's life or the occasion of a profound revelation of dhārma is highlighted by a complex and extended description of the audience and its supernatural membership. These litanies of impressive witnesses prepare the reader for the significance of the events that follow and heighten the spiritual impact of the story. The sanctity of the event is reinforced and attested through the presence of this host of heavenly adherents and august beings.

In both the literature and the artwork, these observers are admittedly secondary to the main event and the central actor, but they play a vital role in establishing and foreshadowing the profound nature of the event that is about to occur. If the frequency with which these divine observers are depicted at Ajanṭā is any indication, this type of validation may have been a dominant mode of visually indicating importance. As such, it would be a mistake to dismiss such figures as merely decorative and not recognize the manner in which such figures were employed to construct sanctity and convey legitimacy—yet their presence in these paintings may convey a second message as well. The artwork reinforces the notion that even the gods and spirits are eager to enjoy the benefits of following the Buddha's dhārma.

**Nāgas at Ajanṭā**

Nāgas are featured so prominently at the Ajanṭā Caves that at this point it may be helpful to concentrate exclusively on representations of these ophidian demigods. The Nāga King is the only supernatural being (apart from the Buddha) who is explicitly mentioned in inscriptions as a resident of the site, and the narrative imagery focuses particular attention on beings like him. It seems likely that nāgas, and the Nāga King in particular, were understood as having a special relationship to Ajanṭā. A closer look at the manner in which nāgas are represented may provide some insight.

As was previously noted, two large shrines dedicated to Nāgas are found at the site. The first of these, Cave 16, is located below the vihāra hall, and its donor mentions the Nāga King in his inscription (fig. 3). Cave 19, the second shrine, is located just outside the stūpa hall (fig. 4). In both cases a central male nāga with multiple serpent hoods is seated in a posture of "royal ease," with one leg up and the other hanging down. This posture is a standard means of indicating kingship and power in South Asia. Additionally, in both examples the nāga is seated on a high platform, and in one case he is attended by two female nāgas (nāginīs), each of whom has only a single serpent hood. The high platforms, reclining postures, multiple hoods, and attendant figures borrow from the imagery of kingship and signify a nāga of elevated status. Most likely, both were intended as representations of the Nāga King mentioned in the Cave 16 inscriptions, although it is certainly possible that two different Nāga Kings are being depicted.
These large nāga shrines are both located on the edges of Buddhist sacred space and presumably served as sites for devotion directed to the Nāga King himself. Inside the Buddhist space of the vihāras and stūpa halls, however, the representations of nāgas cease to function as clear objects of devotion and are more frequently participants in narrative scenes or are shown as subsidiary attendants. This can be seen sculpturally in Caves 1 and 20 (figs. 7 and 12), where beautifully carved but small nāgas stand on either side of the entryways to the main Buddha shrines that occupy the backs of these vihāras. A variation of this arrangement is also found in Caves 2 and 6. The upper registers of the two pillars flanking the path to the shrine in Cave 2 have been painted to depict seated nāgarājas, each served by three attendants. In the lower Cave 6, the same conceptual plan seems to be at work. Here, a nāgarāja has been prominently carved on the lintel of the doorway leading to the Buddha shrine. Additionally, a similar arrangement of artistic details has been noted by Leela Aditi Wood in Cave 17. She identifies the entire shrine antechamber as “Kubera’s realm” and constructs the way spirit-deities have been mapped onto the architectural space leading to the Buddha’s image. Among this imagery she identifies the presence of “Nāga Kings bearing fly whisks” that “stand on the half-sized front faces of the pilaster capitals.” Cave 26 also displays a distinctive sculptural nāga with attendants, but in this case the image has been placed inside the porch of the stūpa hall rather than outside the shrine, as was the case in the vihāras.

In these interior spaces the nāgas are transformed from objects of devotion into devotees. They cease to be the objects of worship in these contexts and are instead represented as adherents or guardians of the Buddhist Law, venerating the Blessed One alongside human visitors to the site. Some examples from the wall paintings help to make this point.

In Cave 1, several “decorative” images represent nāgas in both human and serpent form doing honor to stūpas. Additionally, four tales about nāgas are depicted on the walls, not including a fifth tale that features a nāga in a life scene of the Buddha, which will be discussed later. Among these tales are included a possible version of the story of Sudhana, in which a hunter agrees to help protect a lake-dwelling nāga from a snake charmer and thereby earns his gratitude, and the Campaka or Campeya Jātaka (fig. 8), which tells another tale of rescue involving the nāga of the Campa River who is liberated from captivity. Specifically, the latter tale begins when the nāga Campaka, finding it hard to concentrate on his meditations while surrounded by the luxuries of the nāga world, decides to travel to the human world in order to escape the distractions. Once there, he assumes his serpent form and is captured by a snake charmer. Campaka cannot escape because he is committed to non-violence and will not fight his way to freedom. Finally, a merchant recognizes
the nāga as more than an ordinary snake and purchases him from his captors. The two become friends, and the nāga preaches the value of Buddhist virtues.

The Saṅkhapāla Jātaka, seen on the northeastern wall of Cave 1, tells a remarkably similar story, only in this case the nāga is captured by hunters and is freed though the efforts of his nāginī wife and a human king. The final nāga-related narrative, seen on the southeastern wall of the main chamber in Cave 1, is possibly the Nāgakumāra Avadāna, which tells the story of a monk who had been a nāga in his past life. Out of a sense of dedication, he travels to the nāga realm in order to teach his former father, who benefits from the instruction on Buddhism.

The walls of Cave 2 contain two additional tales of nāgas. One is the exceptionally complex Vidhūrapaṇḍita Jātaka, in which the fame of the wise and virtuous Vidhūra is so great that a nāga queen devises an elaborate plan just to arrange an opportunity for him to preach in her presence (fig. 9). This tale is depicted on the right-hand wall when facing the back of the cave (roughly southeast), occupying a space above and between three cell doors. The final tale is another complicated story called the Bhūridatta Jātaka, which is depicted on the walls of the cave’s southeastern porch cell. Here, a ruler is forced to marry his daughter to a nāga king. The son born of this union seeks out the human world for meditation, and as with the nāgas in the other tales, he only finds captivity. Eventually he triumphs, preaches the dharma to the assembled nāgas, and forgives those who mistreated him.

Although these tales differ in significant ways, the narrative action in each revolves around a nāga who seeks moral improvement though a sermon, meditation, or a commitment to virtuous behavior. The nāga protagonists are generally adherents of the Buddhist moral code and are either reminded of this moral position by the humans or conversely take the time to instruct the humans on proper behavior. Rather than being represented as objects of devotion, these tales portray nāgas as seekers of higher spiritual states who, like humans, can benefit greatly from the Buddha’s teachings.
The assertion that the creators and donors at Ajañṭā had a preference for tales involving nāgas finds some further support in scenes intended to depict events from the life of the Buddha himself. In many cases, the artists have chosen to highlight the participation of nāgas at the core events in the Buddha’s biography. The presence of nāgas at these moments is mentioned in some of the literary sources, but it was by no means mandatory or even typical to depict them in the artwork. Here at Ajañṭā, special accommodations seem to have been made in order to ensure these beings were included whenever possible.

Taking the imagery from Caves 16 and 17, we can see representations of the prince Siddartha engaged in an archery contest, the First Sermon, a scene of the Buddha preaching in Indra’s heaven, and two possible representations of the Great Miracle at Śrāvasti. In each of these paintings, versions of the stories were chosen in which nāgas are mentioned, and the artists have made a point of including them in the visual depiction of the events.

Images of the Great Miracle at Śrāvasti (or Mahāprātihārya) occur quite frequently at Ajañṭā, but most of these works are later, intrusive sculptural additions to the site (fig. 10). However, at least three instances of this motif have been preserved in painting (Caves 2, 16, and 17), and a few sculptural examples still exist from the time of the caves’ initial excavation. The motif of the Great Miracle remained remarkably uniform over time, and a single event from this complicated narrative seems to have quickly become the accepted means of visually representing the story, despite the fact that this specific event does not occur in every version of the tale. To summarize, rivals representing a different religious order challenge the Buddha to a competition of miracles. Over the course of the next day, the Buddha magically makes a man fly, creates a supernatural conflagration, emits golden light, causes an earthquake, summons deities, rises into the air, and brings fire and water from his body. Despite this sequence of visually stunning miracles, the specific moment selected for depiction at Ajañṭā occurs towards the end of the events as told in the Divyāvadāna. The passage states that the nāgas Nanda and Upananda
wished to honor the Buddha so they lifted him on a lotus made of precious metals. Seated in this manner, the Buddha multiplies himself and fills the sky with his images. Significantly, it is this moment, in which two nāgas exalt the status of the Buddha, that was selected as a standard encapsulation of the entire complicated tale. Iconographically, this scene creates a visual hierarchy in which the large image of the seated Buddha is placed above the two smaller figures of the nāgas, who are frequently shown making gestures of reverence. This same pair of nāgas, Nanda and Upananda, is depicted in a second narrative seen near the front of the cave on the northwestern wall of Cave 2. In this example, they are part of a painting depicting the events that occur in relation to Siddhartha’s birth, and the two nāgas (identified in the textual accounts) are shown presenting the water used to bathe the newborn prince.

In Cave 16, in an interesting painted depiction of the Buddha preaching, two nāgas in postures of reverence are seated directly in front of the Buddha. Located just behind a group of monks but at the head of a large crowd of listeners, these nāgas occupy a visually prominent part of the composition. Additionally, Cave 16 contains an image depicting Siddhartha’s youth in the palace. In this rather unique scene, the prince has shot an arrow through his target, through some trees, and deep enough into the earth to bring forth a spring of water. In the painting a nāga, who presumably embodies the newly created freshwater spring, returns the arrow to Siddhartha.
A similar type of image in which the presence of water provides an opportunity to depict nāgas in the Buddha’s presence can be seen in Cave 9. In the course of this story detailing the Buddha’s conversion of the sage Kāsyapa, the god Indra creates a spring so that the Buddha can perform his ablutions. The creators of the painting may have intended to represent the brook in the form of two nāgas emerging from beneath the seated Buddha. This example, like the others, demonstrates the artists’ tendency to highlight visually moments that associate nāgas with the Buddha and to emphasize or reinforce the nāgas’ eagerness to support his actions.

One last example of the manner in which nāgas have been connected with the biography of the Buddha can be seen in Cave 17. In this case the story takes place in Indra’s heaven (Trāyastriṃśa), where the Buddha traveled in order to preach to his mother, who had died while he was still young (fig. 11). This scene presents a massive crowd of beings that has assembled to hear the Buddha’s sermon. In the right-hand side of the composition is a depiction of two nāgas startled from their prayers by the arrival of a mortal enemy, a hawk-like demigod called a garuda. In the Mūlasarvāstivādin version of this tale, however, the garuda announces that the nāgas are safe since it would not dare take a life during the Buddha’s sermon. What I find interesting about this tale is its emphasis on the benefits and protections nāgas enjoy simply by being in the presence of the Buddha. Whereas the other tales stress how devoted and loyal the nāgas are to the Buddha, this example suggests the benefits of that devotion.
If the frequent depiction of tales related to popular deities is indeed the outcome of an intentional process of selection, this begs the question, why? In order to answer this, it is important to understand how figural images were understood to function within South Asian religious contexts. Rather than simply being decoration, these images were believed to have an inherent link to what they represented. Stories that describe an occasion in which the Buddha’s own statue rises to greet him, such as the one in the Paññāsā Jātaka, help to reinforce the idea that these images were assigned far more agency than is typically acknowledged. For example, recent scholarship has shown that images of the Buddha (fig. 12) were treated as legal entities in the Mūlasārvastivādin monastic code (vinaya). These images literally “resided” in the vihāra with the other monks and were allowed to own property on their own behalf. Some of these same notions are reflected in the Cave 26 inscription at Ajanta by the monk Buddhahadra. He states that the Buddha “has won the state free of old-age and death and has departed for the City of Tranquility … and yet he accomplishes the aims of living beings. That is why extolling [his] qualities in homage is efficacious … a single flower offered to him is a primary cause for the fruits known as heaven and final emancipation.”

Main shrine, Cave 1.
Photo: American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS)
In this inscription, Buddhabhadra acknowledges that the Buddha has departed for nirvana but also emphasizes that offerings made directly to him are still capable of producing positive results. If this kind of immediacy is attributed to the Buddha, who has achieved his parinirvāṇa, how much more tangible must have been the presence of figures like the nāgas, who were understood as being very much part of the here and now. Yet, the presence of such demigods within the monastic complex almost certainly would have generated some unease. These beings were known for their capricious natures, and it seems likely that the public would look for comfort in assurances of the nāgas' continued favor and restraint.

Indeed, this anxiety can be seen in the textual records left by Xuanzang, a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim to India in the early seventh century. He relates the story of a lake-dwelling nāga who reforms his malicious ways but fears that he will forget his promise to behave properly. He states, "The nature of Nāgas is fierce and wicked, so that they are unable to control themselves; if by chance an angry heart arises in me it will be from forgetfulness of our present compact." To prevent this, he instructs the human king to leave a drum at a lakeside monastery. The monks in residence were enjoined to beat the drum whenever they saw dark clouds forming, and this sound served to remind the nāga of his promise to behave. Xuanzang tells a similar tale of a murderous nāga named Gopāla, who was converted by the Buddha himself. This nāga also fears that he might backslide into his old ways. The Buddha, therefore, leaves him his shadow, stating, "If an evil heart arises in you, you must look at my shadow, and because of its power of love and virtue your evil purpose will be stopped." As in the previous tale, the nāga fears his own nature and relies on external reminders in order to assure proper behavior. A related circumstance was recorded by the fourth-century pilgrim Faxian. He describes a monastery that is protected by a benign nāga who ensures good rains and harvests. In gratitude for this service, the nāga was built a "house" in the monastery, and he was given a daily blessing by monks, some of whom were required to eat in his residence. In this example, the nāga is maintained, housed, and fed by the monastery in exchange for his continued favor. There is no doubt that the nāga is in the service of the monastery, but it is also clear that the monks have obligations to him as well, which ensured his continued compliance.

Given these concerns, it is plausible that the construction of a Buddhist spiritual hierarchy required visible signs of ongoing vigilance. We know that the Nāga King at Ajanṭā received gifts, such as the "dwelling" offered by the donor of Cave 16 (fig. 3), and yet he was also supplanted from his position as the sole resident of this valley. His presence at the outskirts of the monastery implies a hierarchy in which the Buddha and his teachings occupy the apex. This leaves the nāga in a rather liminal space wherein visitors to the site could both worship the nāga and worship
alongside him. It is in this ill-defined context that the artwork may have played a useful role. Images and narratives may have functioned simultaneously as public reminders of Buddhism’s authority and as an apotropaic means of regulating the behavior of spirit-deities, like the shadow and drums in the stories. Additionally, the monastic institution gained legitimacy through this association with spirits and gods, much in the same way the “decorative” examples of these spirit-deities signified value in the artistic and literary contexts mentioned earlier. Ultimately, the public gained assurances of the ongoing benevolence of local gods, who also were understood to benefit from this relationship. As members of a divine congregation, the gods gained access to the teachings of the Buddha as well as to the guidance and protection of the monastic community, both of which were seen as conducive to earning a positive rebirth and eventual liberation.

Just as the nāgas in the stories preserved by the Chinese pilgrims needed reminders in order to ensure continued piety, the Nāga King at Ajañṭā was literally surrounded with narratives that reinforce the value of devotion and virtue. These visual narratives repeatedly include nāgas and other popular deities in their injunctions for proper behavior, and they often feature these same deities as exemplars of moral practice. Looking again at the caves, the extant iconic, narrative, and decorative representations consistently represent nāgas and similar deities as deeply desirous of benefiting from the Buddha’s teachings, and they frequently make a point of placing such beings directly in the presence of the Buddha or bodhisattvas. While these images certainly would have been comforting reminders to the public of Buddhism’s success in taming local gods, I would also suggest that these images were intended for more than just a human audience. Whether the selection of these narratives was the result of monastic guidance or due entirely to the preference of individual donors, tales related to nāgas and other spirit-deities seem to have remained a priority. Given concern over nāgas relapsing into bad behavior, as expressed in the textual accounts, it is possible that this artwork was understood to be both protective and edifying. It is well established that monks at times had a hand in taming and maintaining local gods, and at Ajañṭā it would seem that the built environment may have helped in that process. The visual narratives emphasize the lessons that the nāga realm is not conducive to enlightenment, that it is a rare treasure to be able to hear the teaching of the Buddha, and that anger leads only to suffering. Certainly these are useful lessons for anyone, but they are particularly appropriate for local gods associated with the monastery. The inscriptions make it clear that the Nāga King was understood to be quite literally present at the site. If this was held to be true by those artists, monks, and donors who built the site, it is, therefore, certainly worth expanding our own notions of audience to include all of the categories they would have recognized.
Such practices may, in fact, presage the well-articulated artistic traditions associated with later Hindu temple construction in which the built environment is carefully designed to be pleasing to the deity embodied during the ritual process.44 The _darsan_, or gaze of the deity, is recognized as a primary means through which interaction with the divine may be conducted, whether through the beautiful decorations of the temple chamber, offerings of light, or simply eye contact with devotees.45 In short, the temple itself is understood as a sacred abode within whose boundaries performance and decoration are instrumental in effective interaction with the divine.

This use of the visual as a technique for engaging the divine becomes particularly sophisticated and complex in practices associated with the Hindu _bhakti_ traditions. Examples of similar processes occur in Buddhist rituals as well. For instance, Richard Gombrich discusses image-making rituals in Sri Lanka wherein great importance is placed on the first thing an image of the Buddha "sees" when its eyes are ritually opened.46 These examples are united in their implicit assumption that regulating an image’s visual context constitutes a significant component in proper interaction with the sacred.

Simply put, in all of these cases the visual environment acts as a mechanism for influencing sacred beings embodied in sculptural form, and it may be that _Ajantā_ and similar sites, which contain artwork that appears to have been intended for local gods, were early iterations in the development of this practice. The major distinction seems to be that, while the later traditions primarily use artwork to construct a setting worthy enough to house powerful sacred forces, the caves at _Ajantā_ actively seek to regulate and limit the actions of the _nāgas_ through their decorative programs.

Scholars have frequently suggested that the artwork associated with early Buddhist sites served a didactic as well as a decorative function. It may be prudent, however, to extend that notion by asking for whom exactly these edifying tales were intended. The answer may require us to throw open concepts of audience and blur any solid boundaries between the categories of art and viewer. It can be revealing to consider that not all art was intended exclusively, or even primarily, for human eyes.

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NOTES

1 The quotation in the title is from the Ajanta Cave 16 inscription number 67. See Richard Scott Cohen, "Setting the Three Jewels: The Complex Culture at the Ajanta Caves" (dissertation, University of Michigan, 1995), 361.

2 For a complete listing of the Ajanta inscriptions see ibid., Appendix A, 325–86.


5 This Serpent King is also referred to as bhujagendra and possibly bhujanga. Cohen, "Setting the Three Jewels," Appendix A, 359–60.

6 Ibid., 361–62: "He had a splendid dwelling for the Lord of Ascetics excavated on the finest mountain: abode of a Naga king."


9 I have employed the hybrid term "spirit-deity" because this category of minor deities (such as yaksas, nāgas, devatās, gandharvas, etc.) holds a liminal position between the realms of ghosts (preta, bhūta) and gods (deva), and it frequently seems to share the nature of both. I do realize that combining several categories of supernatural beings under one collective title poses certain problems. However, given the fluidity and frequency with which the primary sources use these categories interchangeably, and the uniformity in the Buddhist response to all these types of beings, it is helpful to use this term within the confines of the present discussion. For a more complete discussion see ibid., 8–20.


11 Ibid., 27.

12 Since the artwork at Ajanta does not seem to refer to the Pali Jātaka, there may have been fewer than five hundred known to the creators of the site. Even within the Sanskrit Jātaka tradition, however, proportionately few tales deal explicitly with supernatural beings.

13 Dieter Schlingloff, Guide to the Ajanta Paintings: Narrative Wall Paintings, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Mushiram Manoharlal, 1999), 1, 15, 32. The Cave 1 and Cave 16 identifications are fairly clear, but the Cave 2 example is so damaged that no definitive attribution is possible.


16 Ibid., chap. 23, 536–57.


18 Zin, Guide to the Ajanta Paintings, 8.


20 Wood identifies these "decorative" scenes of worship on the pillars of Cave 1; ibid., 1049, fig. 326.
For the story of Sudhana see


Ibid., vol. VI, 80–113 (no. 543); Schlingloff, Guide to the Ajanta Paintings, 13.

The probability of this Śrāvasti scene in later “intrusive” imagery suggests the relationship between nāgas and the Buddha continued to be important in the minds of donors. It should also be noted, however, that the 100 or 1000 Buddha motif may be a variant manner of depicting the same tale. Just after he is lured by the nāga, the Buddha miraculously manifests multiple versions of himself. The motif seems to appear relatively late in the development of the caves.


Ibid., 36.

Ibid., 37.

Ibid., 23.

Ibid., 53.

For an example of an animate Buddha statue see Fa-Hien, A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms, trans. L. Legge (1886; repr., Dover Publications, 1965), 56–57. This is one of the versions of the well-known Prasenajit tale.


It is interesting to note that the donor of Cave 16, Vārihadeva, seems to refer to a similar type of stability in the relationship between the nāga and Ajañṭa. He writes, “May this cave founded for the three Jewels, [containing] a flawless gem of a pavilion inside, continue to be inhabited as long as ... by multitudes of serpent hoods [like] crowding clouds as long as the sun [shines] ...” Due to the fragmentary nature of the inscription, it is not entirely clear if he is requesting the continued presence of cloudy serpent hoods at the site or if he is using them as the second part of a simile to emphasize how long his cave will endure. The more probable interpretation is that this is a plea for his cave to survive as long as the sun and rain, but since he juxtaposes nāgas and clouds earlier in the inscription, it seems likely that his plea has both religious and meteorological connotations. See Cohen, “Setting the Three Jewels,” 358–62.


Ibid., 94. This story was apparently known even in the fourth century during the lifetime of Faxian since he mentions three of his companions made the journey to see the miraculous shadow. Fa-Hien, Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms, 36.

Ibid., 51–52.

See, for example, the nāga images placed directly outside the Buddha’s shrine in Caves 20 and 26.


COMPOSITION AS NARRATIVE

Sâhïbdîn’s Paintings for the Ayodhyâkânda of the Jagat Singh Ramâyaṇa

Abstract

The Jagat Singh Râmâyaṇa was commissioned in 1649 for the Royal Library in Udaipur, the capital city of Mewar, during the reign of Rana Jagat Singh (reigned 1628–52) and was finished in 1653. With six of the seven books of the epic completed, the Jagat Singh Râmâyaṇa is widely considered to be one of the most ambitious projects of all Mewar painting. Sâhïbdîn, the leading artist in the Mewari workshop, was responsible for the illustrations of book 2, the Ayodhyâkânda, and book 6, of Jagat Singh’s illustrated Râmâyaṇa manuscript. This paper shows that throughout the Ayodhyâkânda, Sâhïbdîn employed unique compositional approaches to convey intangible elements of the narrative, such as mood and emotion, that would otherwise be lost in his literal visualization of the actions and events of the Ayodhyâkânda. Through compositional means, he thus established a discernible contrast between the Ayodhyâkânda’s two settings—city and forest. In Sâhïbdîn’s hands, illustrations carry the narrative, with the accompanying text playing a secondary role.

While based on the early, indigenous Western Indian painting tradition, Sâhïbdîn’s artistic style also appears to have been influenced by Mughal and Popular Mughal art, possibly as a result of Karan Singh’s experience at the court of Delhi and his relationship with the future Shah Jahan. Under a patron who seems to have actively supported the illustrated manuscript tradition, Sâhïbdîn was allowed important opportunities to develop his style and to explore a wide range of expressive techniques. During Jagat Singh’s reign, Sâhïbdîn’s style thus became established as the illustrative mode of Mewar painting, and it was maintained with little modification under Jagat Singh’s immediate successors.

A RECENT EXHIBITION at the British Library brought to public view for the first time paintings from a magnificently illustrated seventeenth-century manuscript of the Râmâyaṇa, one of the great epic narratives of Indian literature.¹ The manuscript was commissioned by Rana Jagat Singh, ruler of the Rajput state of Mewar (now in Rajasthan, India). The first of its seven volumes was completed in 1649, while the final two books were finished in 1653, a few months after Jagat Singh’s death.²

The Jagat Singh Râmâyaṇa (fig. 1) rivaled in scale the great illustrated histories produced in the painting workshops of the Mughal emperor Akbar (reigned 1556–1605) and may have required an expansion of the royal painting workshop at the Mewari capital of Udaipur to execute it.³ The manuscript is widely considered to be one of the most ambitious projects of all Mewar painting, reflecting the “golden age” of manuscript illustration in Mewar before the general decline in quality and range of compositions became visible by the early eighteenth century. The British
Library exhibition, *The Ramayana: Love and Valour in India's Great Epic*, on view May through September 2008, displayed more than one hundred of the four hundred painted folios from the Jagat Singh *Rāmāyaṇa*—including thirty-four from the *Ayodhya-kāṇḍa*—folios that had previously been available only to scholars. The exhibition, accompanied by J. P. Losty’s smart and beautifully illustrated catalogue, has allowed a wider audience to appreciate the brilliance and complexity of the manuscript and its rich, and richly varied, paintings. This attention provides a context for a deeper analysis of the paintings and a greater consideration of their significance within the tradition of Indian painting. Here, I begin that project by exploring the compositional and narrative strategies employed by the artist Sāhibdin to illustrate the *Ayodhya-kāṇḍa*, the second of the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s seven books.

The Jagat Singh *Rāmāyaṇa* is unusually large in scale and scope, a monumental production more typical of the vast illustrated histories produced by the Mughal painting studio under Akbar than of seventeenth-century Rajput painting. At the time of its completion, it is thought the Jagat Singh *Rāmāyaṇa* contained approximately four hundred paintings; sixty-eight of these belong to the *Ayodhya-kāṇḍa*. Three artists were responsible for the illustrations to the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Manohar, a relatively conservative junior artist, was charged with the *Bālākāṇḍa*, *Āravyakāṇḍa*, and *Uttarakāṇḍa* (books 1, 3, and 7, respectively). An unidentified artist probably from the Deccan, or at least Deccani-trained, was assigned book 4, the *Kīśkindhākāṇḍa*, and possibly also book 5, the *Sundarākāṇḍa*. Sāhibdin, who appears to have been the principal artist in Jagat Singh’s workshop, was responsible for the *Ayodhya-kāṇḍa* and the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, books 2 and 6. The *Ayodhya-kāṇḍa* tells of Rāma’s exile into the forest and the start of his life there with his brother Lakṣmaṇa and his wife Sītā. The *Yuddhakāṇḍa* is the book of battles, in which Rāma fights and defeats the demon king Rāvana in order to gain the release of his abducted wife Sītā.

The *Yuddhakāṇḍa* is generally considered to be Sāhibdin’s highest achievement, and his role as the master artist of that volume is specifically noted in its colophon. The *Ayodhya-kāṇḍa* was completed two years before the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, and its illustrations are often more tentative and less technically proficient than those of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, with Sāhibdin collaborating more regularly on its paintings with other artists of his workshop. It is in the *Ayodhya-kāṇḍa* that the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative takes its first truly dramatic turn, triggering extreme shifts not only in action and setting but also in the mood of the many characters. These shifts allow for a broader range of compositional types than are found in Sāhibdin’s other work, including the later *Yuddhakāṇḍa* of this manuscript. It is this relationship—between narrative and composition in the *Ayodhya-kāṇḍa*—that I consider here. Sāhibdin’s compositional devices and arrangements for his paintings of the *Ayodhya-kāṇḍa* present
a regular and specific set of choices that are designed to convey the more intangible elements of the narrative, such as mood, which might otherwise be lost in the rather literal visualization of the events of the story. In particular, Sähībdīn’s compositional choices create a visual dichotomy between those scenes that take place in the city of Ayodhyā before Rāma’s exile and those that occur in the forest during his period of banishment. (I call these “inside” and “outside,” respectively.) Such compositional choices emphasize and make visible the richness of the text. Indeed, the narrative here is carried primarily by the illustrations, with the accompanying text playing a secondary role. Elements of this approach to manuscript illustration are visible in other works by Sähībdīn, but they are clearly asserted in his Ayodhyākānda. In these paintings the full expression of a specifically Mewari painting idiom can be discerned, one that evolved, matured, and became concretized through Sähībdīn’s effort. When we understand how these compositions work and how they contribute to the telling of the Ayodhyākānda’s tale, we gain not only a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between composition and narrative in a masterpiece of Rajput painting but also a deeper understanding of the relationship between Mughal and Rajput traditions, and we create a new model for the analysis of Indian manuscript painting.

Sähībdīn’s Compositions of the Ayodhyākānda

The core of the Rāmāyaṇa narrative, in particular the events that make up the second through sixth books of the epic (from the Ayodhyākānda through the Yuddhakānda), probably dates between the sixth and the third centuries BCE. The Bālakānda and Uttarakānda, the first and the seventh books, were probably added several centuries later. The Rāmāyaṇa is generally attributed to the poet Vālmiki, and most versions, even those that do not claim to have been written by Vālmiki, refer to his work in some way. Many versions of the Rāmāyaṇa are known, particularly those produced by Kamban, a South Indian poet writing in the eleventh century, and by the sixteenth-century poet Tulsi Das. There are distinctive northern and southern recensions, and eastern and western versions are known of the northern recension. Additionally, a long tradition of dramatic and dance-drama renditions of the story endures. The Jagat Singh Rāmāyaṇa closely follows those versions of the story that are attributed to Vālmiki, such as is found in Robert Goldman’s critical edition. The exact recension illustrated by Sähībdīn and copied out by Hīrānanda is not known, but it may be based on a northern, and probably a Bengali, version of the text.

It is useful at this point to summarize the key events of the Ayodhyākānda for the unfamiliar reader. The Ayodhyākānda opens in the city of Ayodhyā, which is ruled over by Daśaratha. He is the father of four noble sons: Rāma, Laksmaṇa,
Bharata, and Śatrughna. Here in Ayodhyā, Rāma lives peacefully with his wife Sītā. When Daśaratha moves to crown Rāma as the prince regent, however, Daśarathā's second wife, Kaikeyī, her mind poisoned by her scheming maid Mantharā, insists Daśaratha now grant her the two boons he had once promised her. She demands that Daśaratha exile Rāma to the Daṇḍaka forest for a period of fourteen years and that he crown her own son, Bharata, in place of Rāma. Because of his earlier promise, Daśaratha is compelled to agree to Kaikeyī's wishes, and so he informs Rāma of his decision. Rāma, the ever-dutiful son, willingly accepts this instruction and makes his way to the forest, accompanied by Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā, to live the life of a hermit. The trio first travels to the banks of the Ganges River, where they are hosted by Guha, the town chief. After they cross the Ganges, Rāma and his party travel deeper into the wild, to the hermitage of the ascetic Bharadvāja, before they make their way to the Citrakuta Hill. Meanwhile, Bharata, returning to Ayodhyā and learning of these events, seeks out Rāma in the forest and implores him to come back to Ayodhyā and to his rightful place on the throne. Rāma, in fidelity to his father's command, vows to stay in the forest until the period of his exile is complete. Rāma, Sītā, and Lakṣmaṇa happily reside among the forest hermits, while faithful Bharata vows to rule as Rāma's regent.

The city of Ayodhyā is the crucial starting place of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa and of the drama of the Rāmayāna as a whole. Ayodhyā represents the cosmic forces in balance and social stability at the microcosmic level. When the Ayodhyākāṇḍa begins, the cosmos and the social order are equally harmonious: Daśaratha rules peacefully over Ayodhyā. The citizens of Ayodhyā love Rāma and are secure in the knowledge that he will be Daśaratha's successor on the throne. As the Ayodhyākāṇḍa proceeds, however, order is disrupted by Kaikeyī's actions, and later (in the third book, the Aranyakāṇḍa) it is plunged into total disorder by Rāvana. As Harry M. Buck points out, Rāma's goal in the Rāmayāna is to restore the cosmic order. This occurs only near the end of the story, when Rāma has defeated Rāvana, has been reunited with Sītā, and has returned to Ayodhyā to take his place on the throne.15 The city of Ayodhyā symbolizes order, and the supernatural forces that begin to take over in the story do so only when the characters are outside Ayodhyā. Rāvana is not met in the Ayodhyākāṇḍa at all, and only at the end of the book is mention made of rāksasas (demons), several of whom Rāma must face as he travels deeper into the forest at the opening of the third book, the Aranyakāṇḍa.16 As I will show, the artist Sāhībdin's understanding and interpretation of the dichotomy between inside Ayodhyā and outside of it are key to the choices he makes in composing the book as a whole as well as in creating its individual compositions.

As Sheldon Pollock points out, the epic poets who narrated the Rāmayāṇa (as well as the Mahābhārata) were interested in the events and ways of life that could
be found principally in urban society, particularly the duty of the individual to his family, his class, and his community, and the problems of state and kingship. 17 By the time the Rāmāyana was composed, the city had become "the literary focal point of civilized life." 18 In contrast to the settled and ordered existence of the city was the wild forest where supernatural forces operated. "The contrast—at times tension—between the city and the forest, which was increasingly to command the attention of the urban poet, becomes palpable, perhaps for the first time in Indian history, here in the Ayodhyākāṇḍa." 19

In my initial viewings of the paintings of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa I discerned a clear contrast between the two settings—city and forest—and the types of events that occur in and because of them. This contrast, it seemed to me, was made visible primarily through alternation of compositional types. Subsequently, my exploration of writings on the literary tradition of the Rāmāyana, such as those by Pollock and Buck noted above (as well as works by others not here mentioned), seemed to support my initial conclusions concerning an inside/outside dichotomy. It is my contention that Sāhibdin’s illustrations to the Ayodhyākāṇḍa not only visualize the text of Vālmiki’s Rāmāyana in close and literal terms, but they also mirror the narrative dichotomy that divides the book into two parts. This dichotomy may be described as referring to “inside” and “outside;” “inside” serves to indicate Ayodhyā and all it connotes; “outside” designates the forest and all that is associated with it. More specifically, “inside” refers to the city and palace of Ayodhyā and all of the narrative events that take place in and around it, and, most significantly, to the period before Rāma’s exile. “Inside” thus stands for inclusion, for a kind of wholeness and the right order of things. The earlier paintings of the book that represent the events and settings of the “inside” are presented in sharp contrast to those later paintings that suggest “outside,” a term that I use to signify not only the forest but also the period of Rāma’s exile when the natural order of things is awry.

Sāhibdin uses different compositional approaches to distinguish the paintings of “inside” from those of “outside” in order to make the narrative dichotomy overt. In so doing he goes beyond literally depicting the narrative content of the story to evoke the tale’s shifting moods and those of its primary characters. Distinctions in the Ayodhyākāṇḍa between in and out, order and chaos, are apparent in the choice of compositional models from which the paintings are constructed. In other words, Sāhibdin makes use of distinct compositional approaches to separate the paintings of the first part of the book from those of the second. These changes of approach signal a deliberate intent on the part of the artist to delineate the literal progress of the narrative and to evoke the broader distinctions of mood that permeate each half of the book. Furthermore, small groups of paintings have specific compositional relationships that create drama and heighten mood. The visual
effect of the book as a whole is created by linking these smaller sets into a larger series, as well as by allowing compositional types from either part of the book to work in opposition. In all of this, compositional choice and narrative choice are intricately bound together.

The composition provides the support frame for the selected narrative mode, so the artist's compositional choices determine the resulting narrative mode. Once the artist becomes familiar with the text, he must then decide which events and episodes to illustrate, the sequence in which to place them, and the manner of assembling them. Those choices affect the way we view and understand that story through the illustrations. Continuous narrative is the preferred mode in the Ayodhyākāṇḍa, though it is used somewhat less frequently in the second half of the book, where both synoptic and monoscopic approaches are more widely adopted. In continuous narrative, multiple successive events are represented within a single frame, and the image of the protagonist(s) is repeated in the illustration of each event. The continuous narrative mode clearly conveys the progressive movement of the figures and events across time and space. In the synoptic narrative mode, multiple events and protagonists are also shown, but no clear indication of the sequence or order is given. In the monoscopic mode, each painting depicts only one scene or event. The horizontal orientation of the pages of the whole Rāmāyaṇa and the relatively large painted area facilitated Sāhibdin's extensive use of continuous or synoptic narrative approaches in the composition of the paintings of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa since ample room was available to show multiple groups of figures, to depict figures in movement, and to present multiple actions or activities.

Inside Ayodhya: Folios 1a–58a

The first thirty-one paintings in the book (folios 1a–58a) serve to ground the Ayodhyākāṇḍa in scenes of the “inside.” Here, Sāhibdin sets up specific compositional models that create visual expectations on the part of the viewer, leading to a smooth flow of the “reading” (viewing) and interpretation of the narrative. He also creates short sequences of compositions to accentuate the drama at specific points in the narrative. In this first section several types of compositions and compositional devices can be identified and discussed in terms of their effect on narrative function.

The first of these compositional types can be seen in the paintings of folios 3a, 4a, 6a, 7a, 11a, 15a, and 29a, all of which fall into a pattern of three-part composition. In these, the picture plane is divided into three areas or spaces. Three events are presented in continuous narrative, with each event illustrated within its own space. Often, these spaces are created by dividing the picture in half vertically, with one side further divided into horizontal registers; space may also be divided verti-
Caly into three roughly equal areas. In this approach, all elements of the narrative are in balance, that is, no one event among the three is more visually prominent. The reading of the events is sometimes linear (horizontally from left to right or right to left), although more often the figural groupings in their compositional supports are read in a circular or triangular manner. Furthermore, the first, or starting, event shifts location within the composition from one painting to the next. In these three-part compositions, in which directionality is not a focus of the narrative, there is no “natural” movement of the eye to which the artist must conform. By repeating the three-part composition the artist creates an expected viewing pattern that the observer quickly assimilates, facilitating an easy reading of the narrative. At the same time, shifting the position of the narrative starting point from one painting to the next challenges these very expectations and saves the paradigm from potential visual tedium.

An example of how this compositional formula plays out in both visual and narrative terms is folio 6a (fig. 2). In this illustration from the very beginning of the Ayodhyākāndā, Bharata and Satrughna have traveled to the home of Bharata’s grandfather.

A) Bharata’s grandfather rides out to greet him.
B) Bharata, Satrughna, Yudhājit, and the grandfather repair to an upper chamber in the palace.
C) They all converse.

Here, each moment of the narrative is located within its own compositional space. This separation of elements of continuous narrative into discrete spaces makes the narrative order clear and also indicates these are distinct moments. (A later group of paintings, folios 82a–85a, are also of the three-part type. They belong to a set of paintings in the second part of the book that are a special case for consideration and will be treated in detail below.)
A second group of paintings (folios 2a, 13a, 14a, 22a, 24a, 27a, 34a, and 46a) can be termed parallel compositions. In these, the picture is divided vertically into two halves that are equated in both visual and narrative terms. A central transitional space that both separates and links the two halves is sometimes rendered in a rather dramatic way through the manipulation of architectural features. The parallel composition is used to depict both sequential and concurrent episodes, and paintings in this group tend to be particularly visually interesting.

An example of parallel composition is folio 2a, the first painting in the book (fig. 3). At right, Bharata and Satrughna prepare to depart for the home of Bharata's grandfather, and they bid farewell to Daśaratha, Rama, and Lakṣmana. This event takes place in Daśaratha's throne room. At left, the two figures, now in the private apartments of the queens, bow and say goodbye to their mothers. The central space between these two architectural boxes is a transitional one, with two doors through which Bharata and Satrughna proceed when they move from Daśaratha's official chambers to the rooms of the queen mothers.

The parallel compositional type, which clarifies the sequential nature of events, equates the two architectural spaces even as it exaggerates the differences between them. In the example of folio 2a, the open, official space on the right side of the painting and the smaller, intimate space on the left are in sharp contrast. In the parallel compositional format, the center section created by the separation of two architectural elements consistently serves not only as a transition space but also as a frame for one or another figure whose presence is central to the action or mood of the painting, even when that figure is not the scene's main subject. The transitional section at center creates a frame for Bharata, who is flanked by a noticeably smaller Satrughna.

The use of a strong diagonal element within the transitional section is a feature of several parallel-compensation paintings and indicates the influence of Mughal painting on Sāhibdīn's style (see, for example, folio 14a [fig. 4]). Used to disrupt
the symmetry of the composition and to create a more active and dynamic pattern, the diagonal also has a narrative impact. In folio 14, for example, four actions are depicted (along with an atemporal event that defines the setting). Interior space is described at either side of the painting while exterior space is the transitional center. Here, a staircase that cuts a jagged slope between the painting's two halves links the third and fourth events, that is, Rāma departing in his chariot, followed by Rāma greeting his mother Kausalyā, who is placed at the painting's top left. Rāma moves towards the right edge of the page, so he appears to be moving away from his mother rather than towards her. The diagonal of the transitional space is particularly important, because it establishes a link between these last two events, without which they might seem disconnected. The diagonal movement between the two figures, however, draws them back together.

The diagonal element in compositions such as this suggests not only animation and motion but also instability. In two of a series of three paintings, folios 22a, 24a, and 27a, the strong central diagonal employed as a transitional feature reflects an upheaval in the narrative. These three paintings were clearly conceived as a narrative event and were intended to be viewed in sequence. In the first, folio 22a (fig. 5), the maid Mantharā poisons Kaikeyī's mind so that she demands Rāma's banishment. In this composition Mantharā descends the staircase at center. As the real perpetrator of the subsequent action, she is framed within the transitional space. The two-part staircase forming opposed angles leads the eye to both the right and left interior spaces, where the actions that Mantharā instigates unfold. As her backdrop, the double diagonals evoke the discord that Mantharā foments in the narrative.

In the next painting, folio 24a (fig. 6), Daśaratha finds Kaikeyī distraught and is then horrified by her demands that Rāma be exiled. The composition of the previous painting is mirrored here, although now the central figure framed within the transitional space is not a direct participant in the action of the narrative. (He may
be Sumantrā, judging by subsequently described events, or a waiting attendant figure.) In the third painting, folio 27a (fig. 7), Sumantrā, who was sent to fetch Rāma, meets the brahmans who have made preparations for the coronation. Here, the composition is simpler than the preceding two. Sumantrā is shown twice within the central frame as he participates in both actions described in the two halves of the picture. His repeated presence is pivotal in the change of mood between the distraught Daśaratha at one side and the expectant brahmans at the other.

A third type of composition expresses the artist’s clear intent to distinguish interior and exterior spaces in order to create dramatic tension, and these distinctions are plainly articulated even when there is no narrative necessity for them. Paintings that fall into this category are folios 7a, 12a, 50a, 51a, 53a, 56a, and 57a. As with three-part compositions, these works—which may be loosely termed interior/exterior—are also found primarily in the first part of the book, through folio 58a. Three paintings of this type appear later in the book (folios 76a, 80a, and 84a) and seem to be overt copies of earlier pictures, as will be discussed.

Conceived as a sequence, folios 50a, 51a, and 53a serve as examples of this compositional type. In folio 50a (fig. 8), Daśaratha, having summoned his queens to the palace, embraces Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and Sītā as they prepare to depart for the forest. Although the artist places all action related to the narrative within the confines of the palace, he also defines the wall, portal, and external space of the building. To create these two spaces of greatly unequal size, he places a broad vertical band off-center to divide the picture plane, with figures clustered in the middle of the larger section. Color contrasts between the two spaces enhance this visual disequilibrium. Outside figures have no bearing on the narrative and are present only to fill a potential visual void.

This compositional choice is a feature of Sāhibdin’s particular style and the influence of Mughal prototypes. It is also apparent in the works of the Yuddhakāṇḍa (also
by Sāhibdin) but not in the books illustrated by other artists. For example, compare this work to the first painting of the Bālākāṇḍa (fig. 20), which presents another scene that takes place entirely within the palace. In keeping with its narrative content, the Bālākāṇḍa work is concerned only with interior space. A different compositional choice was made to illustrate a similar scenario in the Ayodhyākāṇḍa.

The application of the inside/outside paradigm has a narrative impact whether or not the choice was made for extra-narrative reasons. These compositions attract attention to both inside and out, with each part drawing the focus of the viewer by its very contrast with the other. Here, the outside becomes a subtle part of the narrative; the looming, ever-present outside creates a sense of foreboding that foreshadows the impending exile. In the Ayodhyākāṇḍa the choice to depict the space both inside and outside is quite deliberate and indirectly reflects the involvement with the inclusion/exile dichotomy that pervades the book as a whole.

The composition of folio 53a (fig. 9) replicates the preceding painting. Kaikeyi brings coarse garments for Rāma, Laksmana, and Sītā; after Rāma and Laksmana put on their attire, she helps Sītā don hers. As before, the outside is an illustration of narrative and visual emptiness that contrasts to the crowded, familiar setting of inside, an inclusionary realm that is inhabited by all the loved ones Rāma will soon leave behind. Finally, in folio 53a, a narrative function is implicit in the division between interior and exterior areas. For example, the chariot in which Rāma will depart is brought to the gates of the palace, yet it is empty and horseless. It does not directly relate to the current action but anticipates the drama that will occur in the next section of the book. The exterior element functions in opposition to the crowded interior, as it already evokes a sense of emptiness at the separation and loss to come. Folios 50a–52a and 56a–57a, which adopt the inside/outside schism, are suitably placed at the transition between the two sections of the book: the city of Ayodhyā in the first part, and the forest outside that commences with folio 63a.
A. Kaikeyī sends for Rāma on Daśaratha’s behalf. Sumantrā looks to the king for confirmation.

B. The brahmans prepare for the coronation and gather gold pots of holy water, but the king does not emerge from his rooms. Sumantrā emerges from the palace and encounters the brahmans.

As seen in the preceding three paintings, the doorway is a recurring motif in illustrations of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa, and it is often included without regard to narrative. Of the thirty-one paintings in the book’s first half, only five do not include a doorway. That Sāhībdīn makes frequent use of this motif is another indication of Mughal influence on his style, as doorways often function in Mughal painting to emphasize the “reality” of architectural space. As used by Sāhībdīn, the repeated appearance of the doorway implies movement between spaces. The process of going or coming is stressed rather than the state of simply being, which is a more typical aspect of Rajasthani painting. Consequently, the narrative tone is active rather than static, turbulent rather than peaceful.

Outside Ayodhya: Folios 61a–129a

So far we have examined the “inside” portion of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa, those events that are centered in the city before Rāma’s banishment. The second half of the narrative is concerned with the “outside” world and the period of exile. Its illustrations are of two types: those that involve multiscenic passages in complex compositions that are often read in a diagonal or circular manner; and those that appear to repackace the simpler and more static compositions that are typical of the Ayodhya paintings. The first category is made up of twenty-one paintings set in the forest (folios 61a, 63a, 66a, 68a, 69a, 70a, 71a, 79a, 97a, 100a, 101a, 103a, 104a, 105a, 108a, 111a, 112a, 114a, 118a, 121a, and 126a). These paintings are counterpoised to illustrations in the earlier section of the narrative. No longer constrained by the presence of large architectural elements that anchor a composition, these forest scenes show much greater variation. The compositional frame and the placement and number of events it supports do not function in a parallel fashion here; the result is a different relationship between the space within a composition and action that takes place within that space. Approachd in a less gridlike manner, these compositions also
provide a change in mood, from order to chaos, that marks the progress of the narrative.

Folio 61a (fig. 10) is the first painting in the forest section. Here, the composition is split vertically, with the tree and rock at the bottom edge creating a central division. On the right, Rāma, Laksmana, Sītā, and Sumantrā spend the night in the forest surrounded by the people of Ayodhyā; at left, the heroes depart before the sleeping citizens awake. This composition frames a simple, two-part continuous narrative, with one moment of action on either side of the painting, although the sleeping figures participate in both episodes. At the same time, this is one of the most visually arresting paintings in the forest book. The steep angle at which the sleeping figures are placed, and the active juxtaposition of colors—yellow mats against a lilac ground—create a dizzying effect that signals disorder and underscores the sense of imbalance that permeates this outside/exile group of paintings.

The vertically split composition is used again, with similar narrative implications. In several paintings (see folios 63a, 108a, 112a, and 126a), distinct spaces are created by formal means, yet the narrative action is crowded into one area; the rest of the compositional space often serves only as a setting. In folio 108a (see fig. 19), for example, the work is divided, slightly off-center, by the hut of Bharadvāja, and narrative actions take place on the left side of this division. Although the group of onlookers on the right side is as visually significant as the actors on the left, this group does not directly participate in the events of the narrative but instead serves to mark its setting.

In folio 126a (fig. 11), the division of space into two halves is even more apparent, created by the central vertical of Citrakuta Hill and its distinctive earthy color set against the rest of the forest at right. The left side of the folio is crowded with the figures of Rāma, his brothers, mothers, and the sages of Ayodhyā making their farewells. The contrast between the four narrative moments captured here, read in a circular
Folio 53a

A. Dasaratha cries out and loses consciousness when he sees Rāma dressed in barkcloth.

B. Dasaratha commands Sumantrā to bring the best chariots and horses, and enough robes and jewelry to last Sītā for the fourteen years of exile. Obeying her father-in-law, Sītā casts off the coarse dress and is adorned in finery. She embraces Kausalyā.

C. Rāma, Laksmana, and Sītā bow before the mothers.

fashion, and the single event that dominates the right side of the page, is acute. At right, Bharata and his entourage, departing in their chariots, move towards the right edge of the page. The direction of the movement and the singularity of the moment emphasize the sense of separation that is central to this point in the narrative.

Other forest paintings use diagonal lines to divide the picture plane, forming pockets of distinct space within a narratively contiguous whole. These pockets often take the form of interlocking triangles; within them, one or many events may be shown. This type of illustration mimics in intention, though not in composition, the earlier paintings of the book in which a specific narrative moment is assigned to each compositional space. In the earlier paintings in the book, devices such as a diagonal staircase connect spaces that, because of their architectural frames, are clearly seen as distinct. In later these works such separational devices are constructed to break up spaces that literally flow together, allowing the continuous narrative to be read more easily. Contrasting colors set against each other further define the pockets of space in the forest illustrations, and as a result colors become codified: yellow for the wild forest, green for "tamer" areas (the places where hermits live), and rusty ochre for Citrakuta Hill.

This compositional style is adopted in folio 63a (fig. 1), which is visually divided into thirds. At right a tall tree slices off a vertical section of the painting, and at the center and left the long, sloping angle of the hill moves from the bottom center of the painting to the top left side. Complementary colors further distinguish these spaces, with the deep green of the forest in sharp contrast to the bright pink of Bharadvāja’s hill. Two trees, described in lighter shades of green and pink, reinforce the color contrast. Four narrative moments are dispersed among the three compositional spaces.

Here and in other forest paintings, the architectural elements are not the space-enclosing structures seen in the first half of the book, but instead they appear as
backgrounds. Buildings, such as Bharadvāja’s hermitage in this work or the hut in which Rāma and Sītā live (folios 70a, 71a, 111a, 112a, 114a, 116a, 121a, and 126a), are completely flat, as if they are backdrops on a stage. They are disproportionally small and offer little suggestion of a believable interior.

Four paintings (folios 66a, 69a, 79a, and 84a) use the motif of the river as a compositional foundation. The river is conceived as a broad band cutting a diagonal swath across the page from top to bottom, and once again the picture is divided into three spaces bounded by angular lines. Compositions are consistent among this group of paintings, but a different number of events is depicted in each. This trend generally appears in the latter half of the book, where the amount of narrative action differs from one painting to the next. As a result, the steady pacing established in the first part of the book gives way to a digressive flow to the reading of the forest paintings. A more complicated or circular arrangement of form is found when the number of stories to tell in each painting increases. In these river paintings two, four, five, or six narrative moments may be included within a relatively stable compositional frame. Folio 66a (fig. 12) illustrates five events of the narrative, beginning in the center of the page and moving in a counterclockwise direction. The six events of folio 79a (fig. 13) begin at bottom left, and the action moves circularly, concluding at top left.

The second category of paintings in this “outside” section of the book (folios 80a, 82a–85a, 89a, 90a, 93a, 96a, 106a, 107a, 127a, 128a, and 129a) are ones that return to the framework of architecturally defined spaces. They are also related to each other due to their decidedly inferior quality and an apparent reliance on compositional models from the first part of the book. Their tendencies toward simpler compositions and more awkward techniques are most likely the work of less-accomplished artists than Sāhibdin and the result of an increased pace of production.
Folios 82a, 83a, 84a, and 85a fall into the three-part compositional formula that was established for the first half of the book. This sequence takes place immediately following the death of Daśaratha. In folio 82a (fig. 14), swift messengers are instructed to fetch Bharata from his grandfather’s home; they arrive at the palace of Bharata’s grandfather (folio 83a [fig. 15]); Bharata leaves his grandfather for Ayodhyā (folio 84a [fig. 16]); Bharata and Śatrughna arrive in Ayodhyā to find their father’s palace empty (folio 85a [fig. 17]). Narratively, this sequence is rooted in the outside period of the later paintings, but compositionally these works look back directly to the first section of the book. For example, compare folio 85a from this series to folio 6a (fig. 2), which seems to be its compositional inspiration. The positioning of the two-storied building at the right edge of folio 6a, the grouping of a row of small rooms divided by columns at top, and a wall of variously colored panels at the bottom are duplicated in folio 85a. The placement of the figures in their chariots is also very similar. Likewise, folio 84a seems to be heavily influenced by folios 7a and 11a. The paintings in this set from folios 82a–85a are all of inferior quality; in folio 82a, for example, the non-figural elements appear to be hurried in their execution. This is also true of other works, such as folios 90a and 96a, which have an equally unfinished appearance and are missing the details that enliven the earlier works and make them more visually rich.

Folio 89a (fig. 18), another work that exhibits inferior draftsmanship, draws upon compositional models from the first part of the book, particularly folios 22a and 24a (figs. 5 and 6). Here, the space is divided into two horizontal registers into which random architectural elements are placed as a way to create frames for events. At the bottom right an attempt has been made to recreate the stairway that was earlier used to such dramatic effect in folios 22a and 24a. This work seems to have been made by an artist of lesser skill, and assuredly not by Sāhibdin. In addition to the change in quality of some of the later works, a distinct difference
in figural style is apparent after folio 103a. Here and for several subsequent paintings, Rāma is rendered in a pale gray rather than the characteristic dark blue of the book’s other paintings, and he and his brothers have a noticeably different profile. Erosion in compositional complexity is evident at this point.

All of these works point to the conclusion that the pace of production increased towards the end of the manuscript, and artists of lesser ability were assisting Sāhibdin. These artists likely relied upon Sāhibdin’s earlier paintings as models rather than working from pages on which the master had laid down the overall design.

The Ayodhyākāṇḍa of the Jagat Singh Rāmāyaṇa ends at folio 129a, with Bharata in residence in Nandigrāma and Rāma’s sandals installed on the throne as a reminder of Rāma’s rightful role as king. The critical edition of the text includes four more chapters, in which Rāma learns about Rāvana and leaves Citrakūta Hill with Lakṣmīna and Sītā for the hermitage of Atri and Anasuya. However, the most conspicuous divergences between the illustrations of the Jagat Singh Rāmāyaṇa and the narrative as presented in the critical edition of Vālmiki’s text are found in those paintings in which Bharata serves as a key figure. The first six paintings of the book illustrate Bharata’s visit to the home of his grandfather, an event that is accorded only two verses in the critical edition of the Vālmiki text. On the other hand, Bharata’s encounter with Kaikeyī and Mantharā after returning to Ayodhyā, described in chapters 66–68 and 72, is greatly condensed into just one painting (folio 89a [fig. 18]). Folio 104a is an unidentified composition that forms part of the sequence in which Bharata travels to Citrakūta Hill in pursuit of Rāma; it seems to represent an “extra” event or encounter, one not described in Vālmiki’s text. In all other regards, however, the illustrations are extraordinarily faithful to the Vālmiki text as presented in Goldman’s critical edition. The way the book concludes with Bharata rather than
Rāma, the significance he receives early in the book, and other variations apparent in the illustrations may point to a recension that deviates from Vālmīki in its emphasis on Bharata. Sheldon Pollock notes that some northern recensions do emphasize Bharatā’s role, or elaborate upon his activities, to a greater degree than Vālmīki, a point to which we will return.

A comment should be made about Sāhibdin’s consistent use of directionality and its impact on the viewer’s reading of the paintings. Many images in the narrative involve the movement of figures towards or away from some object. To depict these scenes, a consistent pattern of motion is created. Movement inwards, towards Ayodhya, is illustrated as proceeding left to right. Since this is also the usual direction for reading an illustrated Sanskrit manuscript, this directionality may seem more “natural” to the viewer. Movement outward and away is depicted right to left. Whenever Rāma approaches his father’s palace (folios 15a, 18a, and 30a), he does so from the left. Even in folio 14a (fig. 4), when Rāma leaves his father’s palace, the direction of movement is still left to right, since Rāma is continuing his journey by going towards his mother’s apartments. However, the departure from Ayodhya in folios 56a and 57a, and indeed in all the scenes in which Rāma, Laksmana, and Sitā travel towards the forest, proceeds from right to left. Bharata and Satrughna return to Ayodhya by traveling left to right. When they depart to find Rāma, they move from right to left, and when they return in dejection they again travel left to right. The integrity of the “inside” and “outside” spaces is reinforced by this consistent use of directionality, which enables the viewer to perceive in one quick glance the impact of the depicted action.

It is clear from this analysis of the paintings of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa that composition plays a key role in the visualization of the narrative on many levels. The sixty-eight paintings of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa function as a single unit, much like a linked chain. When it is broken down into smaller units, this whole functions on levels
Dasaratha is embalmed in oil, since no funeral can take place without the presence of Bharata.

As Vasistha presides, the ministers of state discuss what to do as they sit before an empty throne.

Swift messengers, their horses waiting outside, are instructed to retrieve Bharata.

beyond revealing basic moments of action. Individual compositions deliberately work in opposition one to another to emphasize the narrative dichotomy, or they are constructed into short sequences that create and heighten drama. The conception of both the whole and its parts is guided by distinctions between inside and outside, between order and chaos, that echo across the paintings and the varying compositional types that play off one another in different parts of the book. Thus, although the events of the story can be followed one painting at a time, nuanced meanings and the broader strokes of mood can be better perceived when they are seen in sequence.

The Ayodhyâkânda begins well for the protagonists but becomes increasingly bizarre and chaotic as the book progresses. Râma, his wife, and his brother seem to be unaffected by the twists and turns of events, while those around them are in despair, weighed down by anxiety. Sâhibdin's compositional approaches frame the telling of the story according to one or another narrative mode and mirror the story's changes and moods. He parcels out compositional types according to the needs of the narrative, the pace of production, and his own fancy. Composition and narrative strategy are intricately bound up with one another.

Works in the first section of the book make full use of architectural and other elements to break up space into separate compartments into which the discrete narrative events are placed. Several compositional models are repeated, which regularizes the depiction of events and makes the narrative easier to read. Once the setting changes to the forest in the second half of the book, the narrative strategies rely on different compositional formulas. Compositions are divided in diverse ways, and narrative sequences tend to become much more fluid, with more events occurring in each painting but with no consistent plan in their distribution. The second half of the book also describes events set in city and palace locations, but the compositional models for these paintings derive from those of
The messengers approach the palace of Bharata’s grandfather. Meanwhile, Bharata has a nightmare and is surrounded by concerned companions. In the palace of Bharata’s grandfather, the first group, and their treatment indicates a change in the pace of the book’s production.

The Jagat Singh Manuscript and the Text of the Ayodhya{kand}a

The Jagat Singh Râmâyana is in the traditional pothi format, derived from the configuration of earlier books on palm leaf and thus arranged along the horizontal. The Ayodhya{kand}a comprises 129 folios with 68 paintings. Each folio measures 21 centimeters high by 38.5 centimeters wide, with a painted area of 17 to 18 by 35 centimeters bounded by red and yellow borders that frequently extend to the edge of the page. Originally unbound, as is typical in the indigenous Indian manuscript tradition, the current binding was made for the Duke of Sussex in the early nineteenth century. Further, at that time the painted folios were reversed so that the images, actually painted on the verso, are now bound as recto.

It is clear from the way in which text pages are interspersed with the painted folios that the images were completed before the text was copied, as will be discussed in more detail below. Creating the finished paintings before copying the text onto the reverse seems to have occurred sporadically in the Udaipur workshop (to take one example, the Rasikapriyâ, painted by Sâhibdin around 1630–35, was made in this same way) as well as in the Mughal atelier and other painting workshops in Rajasthan.

Information in the colophon of each book suggests two directors were placed in charge of producing the seven books of the Jagat Singh Râmâyana. Acarya Jasvant, who may have been the court librarian or the studio administrator, was responsible for the first three books. These books seem to have been made in sequence, with the Bâlakand completed in 1649, the Ayodhyakand in 1650, and the Aranyakand in 1651. The remaining books may have been commissioned by Vyasa Jayadeva, another director named in the colophons of the Kâsîkîndhakand.
and the Uttarakaṇḍa. No director is mentioned, however, in the Yuddhaṁakaṇḍa’s colophon, and no colophon exists for the volume of the Sundaraṁakaṇḍa that is believed to be from the Jagat Singh set. With three artists principally responsible for these last four books, it is likely they were produced simultaneously and perhaps out of sequence: the Yuddhaṁakaṇḍa was finished in 1652, while the Kiṣkindhaṁakaṇḍa and the Uttarakaṇḍa were both finished in 1653, after Jagat Singh’s death. These books may have been rushed to completion following Jagat Singh’s death; Losty suggests the Kiṣkindha- and Sundaraṁakaṇḍas were never properly finished.

The colophon of the Ayodhyaṁakaṇḍa makes explicit reference to its production for the personal perusal of Jagat Singh. It does not specifically mention Sāhibdin as the painter of the Ayodhyaṁakaṇḍa, but he is listed as the artist in the colophon of the Yuddhaṁakaṇḍa. As senior artist, Sāhibdin would have been the master of the studio, and he, along with Manohar and the Deccani artist, would have been assisted by several junior painters and assistants. The standard practice seems to have been for the master artist to conceive and lay out the compositions and to draw the key figures, while the assistants were responsible for preparing pigments, burnishing the page, and doing much of the coloring. In the Ayodhyaṁakaṇḍa, one or another of these junior artists may have drawn a small number of the compositions, for the book contains some paintings of poor quality in terms of both overall compositional conception and drawing.

The significant variation in the number of paintings from one book to the next seems to stem from the great autonomy given to each master artist in matters concerning the production and design of these illustrations. For example, Sāhibdin’s two books, the Ayodhyaṁakaṇḍa and the Yuddhaṁakaṇḍa, contain sixty-eight and eighty-eight paintings, respectively, while the books produced by Manohar and his workshop, the Bālakanda and the Aranyakaṇḍa, contain seventy-nine and thirty-six paintings, respectively. Since the paintings in each book were made before the
text was copied, they were not required to conform to a specific number of text pages. As a result, the number of paintings needed to illustrate the book’s events was apparently determined by the chief artist. This decision directly influenced the content of the paintings. Sāhibdin could illustrate the Yuddhakāṇḍa in an extraordinarily literal manner because he allocated eighty-eight paintings in which to convey the story. The large number of paintings permits a variety of compositional types, from monoscopic paintings with a single figural group set in an open landscape, to densely crowded compositions with multiple figural groups relating to several events. On the other hand, Manohar and the artists of the Āranyakāṇḍa used less than half this number of paintings to illustrate that book. The paintings thus tend to be consistently dense, with each subdivided into horizontal registers enclosing multiple narrative spaces.

In practice, the events described in the text seem to have been assigned painting space in an inconsistent way. In the Ayodhyākāṇḍa, Sāhibdin certainly did not use a standard formula to allocate space, nor did he maintain a consistent relationship between textual events or episodes and the space used to illustrate them. Some chapters in the Ayodhyākāṇḍa are depicted in a remarkably concise manner. Folio 89a (fig. 18), for example, contains events described in four chapters (sargas 66, 67, 68, and 72). Other events that seem to have represented a broader range of artistic possibility to Sāhibdin were expanded to fill successive painted folios. Folios 70a and 71a, for example, convey the events of a single chapter, sarga 50, in which the wonders of Citradutia Hill are described extensively. Evidently Sāhibdin’s explicit choice to devote two paintings to this chapter was simply one of personal and artistic preference, which no doubt inspired the vibrancy of the drawing and palette.

Despite the obvious verve and individual spirit with which many of the folios are executed, Sāhibdin occasionally reuses his own compositions or shares them with his fellow artists. Folio 107a of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa, for example, seems to be
the source for folio 93a in the Uttarākānda. While each artist might have had his own studio and group of assistants, he likely was not working in isolation. Within the Ayodhyākānda itself, folio 104a is an almost exact duplicate of folio 100a. These two paintings may have been made at the same time. This possibility arises both from their striking compositional similarity and from the fact that in both works Bharata and Satrughna are dressed in princely garb. In the intervening folio, in which Bharata and the others cross the river, he and Satrughna have already adopted the ascetic dress they will wear for the remainder of the book. It is unlikely that the folios were bound out of sequence since both the folio and painting numbers are consistent with the current folio numbers. The pages were not necessarily painted in a strict sequence but only roughly so; it might even be that some similar compositions were painted at the same time. This almost assembly-line manner of approaching the production process lends itself to Sāhibdīn’s practice of composing sequences of paintings to convey an extended dramatic episode (see the sequences created by folios 51a, 53a, 56a, and 57a, or folios 22a and 24a).

The length of time taken to make each painting is not known. Vidya Dehejia has suggested a production time of approximately two weeks per painting, a time frame that seems plausible given the simplicity of some of the pages and the fact that each appears to have received only a single burnishing, rather than the multiple burnishings that were normally given to Mughal manuscript paintings. Some of Sāhibdīn’s more elaborate paintings and sequences of images are grand in conception, and such refined and highly detailed work might reasonably have demanded more than the average amount of time to complete.

Two points seem clear regarding the relationship between Sāhibdīn’s paintings and the text they were designed to accompany. First, the paintings took precedence over the text as the predominant form of expression. Made before the text was copied, the images are of a much higher quality as paintings than the text is as
The next morning, they discover the hermitage has been restored to its original state.

A. Bharata and Satrughna introduce Bharadväja to the three mothers. Bharadväja tells Bharata not to blame Kaikeyi.

B. Bharata, Satrughna, and sages bow to Bharadväja and depart for the Citrakuta Hill.

writing. Further, the number and content of the paintings, and not the layout of the text, dictated the format of the book as a whole—the text had to be manipulated to fit with the images. Second, the paintings closely and literally follow the form of the Rāmāyana attributed to Vālmiki, which is probably a standard and rather generic version of the epic with only slight variations that provide a clue as to its being a northern or northeastern recension. What is more, Sāhibdin seems to have made a serious effort to represent the epic literally, just as it unfolds sarga by sarga. Excluded episodes are primarily those that continue an action or a dialogue established in a previous sarga. Perhaps these scenes were not represented because their visualization would have led to a repetitive or mundane series of paintings.

That the images were the primary means of telling the story is clear from an examination of the text itself. The scribe Hirānanda, a Jain, frequently employed the Jain practice of marking the place for the string holes (used to bind the manuscripts on palm leaf in traditional pothi format books) with a cross-shaped design. In some folios of the Ayodhyākānda, especially the first ones, the cross was outlined in red and a red dot was placed at its center; red dots were also placed in the side margins. After folio 7 the red dots within the crosses are no longer used, and after folio 9 the red outlining of the cross disappears. Later, the cross was represented in one of several variations or eliminated altogether. Hirānanda did not attempt to establish a standard page format; indeed, he apparently made no advance plans as to the look and placement of the text on the page.

Hirānanda was also inconsistent in the number of lines he assigned to each page. He soon realized that constant line number adjustments were needed for the text on the obverse to match up with the illustration on the reverse of each folio. Each of the first three folios has nine lines of text per page. From folio 7 on, however, the number of lines per page begins to vary considerably. For example, folio 7 contains twelve lines of text on the obverse, folio 9 has fifteen lines of text on obverse and
reverse, and folio 13 has nineteen lines of text on obverse and reverse. The obverse of folio 66a contains twenty-two lines of text, more than on any other page in the manuscript, and apparently this was quite a difficult fit. On some folios Hirānanda clearly struggled to keep pace with the illustrations on the reverse of his text pages. This process of catching up becomes apparent by the fact that several folios with text only on obverse and reverse are often inserted between folios with paintings on the reverse. Undoubtedly, then, Hirānanda was writing the text after the paintings had been completed.

The handwriting itself is not of an especially high standard, with deletions, corrections, and additions visible on most text pages. A yellowish paint was frequently applied to cover an incorrect character so a new one could be rewritten over it. In many instances, however, Hirānanda did not cover the mistake but simply crossed it out with black ink and penned in the correct character above it. The scribe seems to have seen his task as a rather utilitarian one, and he did not take great pains to create writing that is formally beautiful. Overall, the writing has a hurried, scruffy quality that is not unusual in Sanskrit manuscripts, but it does suggest the text was not intended to have an aesthetic value of its own. That focus was to be entirely on the paintings.

The paintings in the Ayodhyākāṇḍa carry not only the aesthetic burden of the volume but also the narrative one. That Sāhibdin’s illustrations take the lead as the primary storytelling vehicle in the Ayodhyākāṇḍa attests to his very detailed and literal treatment of the story, which is made possible by the high image-to-text ratio. By this I do not mean to compare the number of Hirānanda’s text pages to the number of paintings, for this would not necessarily convey with accuracy the relationship between the two, particularly given the inconsistent number of lines per page. What is of greater interest is the way Sāhibdin develops the Ayodhyākāṇḍa according to the number of paintings he allotted to each of its chapters. Of the 107 sargas (chapters) in the critical edition of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa, only thirteen are not illustrated in some way in the book’s sixty-eight paintings.37 In other words, the paintings illustrate ninety-four out of 107 sargas, roughly one painting to describe every
one and one-third chapters of the book. Vishakha Desai has described Sāhibdin’s “highly developed visual vocabulary and the specificity of the word-image relationship” in the context of his illustrated Rasikapriyā.\(^3\) Below I will show how this relationship is equally visible in his other illustrated manuscripts.

Sāhibdin’s literal interpretation of text is clearly a key component of his approach. Those sargas that are omitted from explicit representation in the Ayodhyākānda apparently were left out because they involve ongoing dialogue rather than activity, or they would confuse the viewer/reader without adding anything of significance to the story. Both of these causes seem to be the reason for the omission of sarga 51–55, in which Sumantrā relates to Daśaratha the events of Rāma’s journey into the forest, a journey that had been extensively depicted in a previous sequence of illustrations. Certainly, Sāhibdin made well-formed choices that enhanced the literal unfolding of the narrative.

A more interesting phenomenon related to the pace of Sāhibdin’s storytelling is the way in which events are seemingly protracted across several paintings in some cases, while they are contracted into a single painting in others. As mentioned earlier, the first six paintings in the Ayodhyākānda illustrate events that, in the critical edition, fall within the first sarga of the book. These paintings describe the departure of Bharata and Šatrughnā from Ayodhyā, their journey to and arrival at the home of Bharata’s grandfather, and the selection of Rāma as prince regent by the king and his ministers in Ayodhyā. Given Sāhibdin’s seemingly literal-minded approach, this may well be another example of a literal interpretation of the text, which was probably a northern or northeastern recension that emphasized these events. Pollock describes the type of recension that might have served as his primary source: “The N [northern] recension, however, in various interpolations after verse 4, describes Bharata’s departure, voyage, arrival and stay among the Kekayas, ... his course of education there (which includes learning how to write) ... ; and his dispatch of a messenger to Dasaratha informing him that he is ready to return home.”\(^3\)

At the opposite end of this phenomenon, events in several chapters may be compacted into a single painting, but for altogether different reasons from what has been described. For example, folio 34a depicts six sequential moments of action, events that are described in the seven chapters from sarga 16 to 22. Key events of these chapters are included, as indicated by the discrete figural groupings arranged in a circular sequence across the page. As Losty has pointed out, Sāhibdin was a master at creating compositions that revolved around effective figural groupings.\(^4\) Here, the seemingly swift-moving visual sequencing of the figural groups lends immediacy to these most crucial of moments, when Rāma is told of his banishment and must convey the news to his mother.
Sâhibdin deliberately puts an intense sequence of events into one visual field here, but at other times he allows the drama to unfold across several paintings, as in the series illustrating Râma's departure from Ayodhya (folios 50a, 51a, 53a, 56a, and 57a). The artist seems to change the pace of the visual narrative consciously as a way to control the storytelling process. Clearly, the compositions of the Ayodhyâkânâda serve as the primary "text" and supersede Hirânanda's written accompaniment.

Sâhibdin, the Jagat Singh Râmâyana, and the Development of Mewari Painting

My assertions about the relationship between image and narrative in Sâhibdin's work lead to questions about the origin and originality of his approach. Was it unique to Sâhibdin, or did it occur more widely—in Mewari or other Rajput painting traditions, for example, or in the Mughal school? To address this, it is important to come to some understanding of Sâhibdin as an artist and to consider which elements of his style were inherited from the historical Western Indian and so-called Caurapâñcâśikâ traditions and what elements he himself seems to have grafted onto those traditions.

Little can be said about a specific Mewari painting style before the beginning of the seventeenth century. Until that time Mewari artists and those from neighboring Rajput states seem to have followed the general features of the Western Indian and so-called Caurapâñcâśikâ painting traditions. A very early dated painting set believed to be of Mewar origin, the Supasamacharâryam of 1423, follows many of the standard conventions of the Western Indian style, including a palette limited to a few basic colors that were applied without modeling and a generally stylized treatment of figures. Likewise, the Chawand Râgamâlâ of 1605, the earliest inscribed Mewari illustrated manuscript, is clearly consistent with this earlier Mewari expression of the Western Indian style. Its paintings, nearly square in format, are subdivided into small square or rectangular compartments that are filled in with a few, unmodulated bright colors. Figures are angular, with faces shown in profile, and they are unnaturally large in relationship to the architectural elements. The compositions are conceived in terms of horizontal registers: a thin strip along the bottom edge of the painting marks the ground, which is topped by a forest or pavilion in a wide horizontal band in the center of the composition; a band of blue with a white border at the top edge indicates the sky. The consistency in style among these works suggests that the years between the series of 1423 and 1605 saw little change in the traditional mode of painting.

With the influence of Mughal, Popular Mughal, and subimperial Mughal painting during the latter part of the sixteenth century, however, individual Hindu kingdoms seem to have begun to develop their own modes of expression that may
have been affected by the movement of itinerant artists during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{43} Much of Mughal painting was based on the format, techniques, and subject matter of Persian painting, displaying its interest in fine, detailed drawing and the extensive use of gold mixed with a soft and varied palette. Additionally, Mughal painters adopted Persian motifs, such as a regularly patterned landscape ground and exaggerated, vertical rock forms. Mughal artists, however, were also interested in exploring motifs and techniques derived from other sources, including the use of volumetric modeling and shading and the perspectival effects common in European art. The unique modes of expression that developed in various Hindu kingdoms were, in part, in response to the awareness among local artists to these elements of Mughal painting, as well as the degree to which they were willing to adopt those characteristics. Further, the extent that Mughal influence was felt in each kingdom often correlated with the ruler’s political relationship with the Mughal emperor.\textsuperscript{44}

In many respects, Sâhibdin’s style can be seen as a hybrid of indigenous and Mughal influences (folios 27a, 69a, or 101a, for example). His works are rooted in the traditional Western Indian and Caurapancäsika painting idioms. This is especially visible in his use of a vivid palette to achieve an energetic and emotive effect as well as in an approach to composition grounded in the architectural frames in which figures are contained. At the same time, compositional techniques derived from Mughal painting are clearly visible in his work. These include the use of compositional diagonals, a diminished figural scale, and descriptions of the exteriors of architectural spaces.

Also evident in Sâhibdin’s paintings is a preference for certain motifs found in Mughal painting, such as distinctly defined hills and rocks (folio 71a, for example)\textsuperscript{45} and the depiction of rectangular canopies overhanging the entrances to tents and pavilions (see folio 104a). These motifs are visible in Mughal and subimperial Mughal painting. In a typical example of Akbari painting, a page from the circa 1589 Baburnama,\textsuperscript{46} the Mughal use of diagonal elements in the landscape lends a sense of dynamism to the scene and suggests a relatively naturalistic recession of the landscape into the distance. The varied Mughal palette, with an emphasis on pastels, and the Persian-inspired mountain forms are also seen here. A page from the Mughal Akhbar-î-Barmakiyan of circa 1595 underscores Mughal interest in the soft, volumetric modeling of figures and portraits. Also seen here is the canopy motif that Sâhibdin frequently adopts.\textsuperscript{47} Subimperial and Popular Mughal paintings from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries share many of these characteristically Mughal features, including a vertical format, a high horizon line, the presence of text panels within the illustrative frame, and the naturalistic treatment of numerous landscape elements.
Although it is uncertain if Sãhibdin was exposed to any specific Mughal manuscript or album, it is clear that these types of works influenced the evolution of his characteristic Mewari idiom. He painted in a style most closely associated with Hindu and Jain painting, even though he was a Muslim. As is well known, many Muslim artists were employed in Rajput painting studios, including Nasiruddin, the artist responsible for the 1605 Chawand Rägamålā. Most scholars agree Sãhibdin was aware of current trends in Mughal painting, and he deliberately modified his style in light of Mughal developments. Indeed, there is reason to suppose, as Losty, Pramod Chandra, and others have done, that the higher degree of Mughal influence in Sãhibdin’s work, when compared to that of Manohar and other Mewari painters, results from his experience of working in the Mughal atelier or, more likely, at Popular Mughal centers such as Agra. This Mughal influence is an important element of Sãhibdin’s style and is key to understanding its distinctiveness.

Blending local and Mughal idioms is visible from the start of Sãhibdin’s career. His earliest known work is the Rägamålā of 1628 (fig. 21), which was probably commissioned during the final months of the reign of Karan Singh (reigned 1620–28). Its compositions and figural groupings show a clear debt to the Chawand Rägamålā. The artist, however, also incorporates formal methods derived from Mughal painting. In particular, he uses a more naturalistic scale in the relationship between figures and architecture, he defines figures with some modeling and shading, and he employs a finer, more detailed drawing technique overall.
Sāhibdin's figures, and particularly the faces, tend to be exceptionally well painted with fine details, and the women are more elongated than is generally seen in Mewari painting.

One of Sāhibdin's key contributions to the seventeenth-century Mewari painting style is the expanded use of diagonal passages in his compositions, which he adopted from Mughal painting and particularly from the style produced during Akbar's reign. This new focus on the diagonal contrasts with the horizontal stacking of compositional elements that derived from the earlier, pre-Mughal Western Indian painting style; the horizontal stacking device is seen, for example, in the Chawand Rāgamālā, and it appears as a regular feature in other early sets of Mewari paintings. Sāhibdin frequently created compositional diagonals through simple means. Rivers and other landscape elements slant sharply, or paired events are placed in diagonally opposed corners of the composition, as is seen in "The Proud Nayika and the Servants of Kama" and other paintings from the circa 1635 Rasikapriyā series (fig. 22). Intervening landscape elements, with wild, overgrowing trees that convey the strong emotions of the hero and heroine enclosed within architectural frames, link these diagonally opposed spaces. Similar patterns and motifs (especially that of a river running diagonally across a page) can be found in works produced in earlier regional schools that derived from the Western Indian tradition. These motifs, however, were generally treated as decorative surface patterns; they do not indicate an attempt to deny or move away from the stable horizontal frame that characterized traditional painting. In the Mughal vernacular,
diagonal elements were often used to create an impression of naturalistic depth and a sense of movement. This contributes to the perception that the painting depicts an immediate and specific moment, in contrast to the often stiff and frozen effect of Hindu paintings of this period. Sāhibdīn deliberately adopts this use of diagonal elements as a way to convey a sense of immediacy. His ability to create interesting compositions that break away from, or are entirely free of, the compartmentalization of traditional Mewari painting reveals his understanding of the Popular Mughal painting idiom.

Despite the incorporation of the diagonal into some of his compositions, Sāhibdīn does not abandon the more traditional format of horizontal registers. Indeed, many paintings in the Ayodhyākāṇḍa rely on this compositional type, with architectural elements frequently anchoring a corner or the side of the picture that frames the protagonists. (Most of these works are found in the first part of the book; see, for example, folios 22a, 29a, and 48a.) Sāhibdīn's compositional skill is clearly evident in the way he combines architectural elements of varying size and shape to visualize a plethora of individual structures and building compounds (see folios 2a [fig. 3] and 11a). In so doing he establishes multiple usable spaces within which individual figures and figural groups function, but he skillfully prevents monotony from one painting to the next by avoiding the recurrent use of the same-sized architectural "box." Further, Sāhibdīn frequently reintroduces a diagonal element to the composition. For example, he uses the Mughal motif of a canopy suspended over a tent or pavilion entrance. He allows the triangular canopy to project from the side so that the rigidly square or rectangular structure seems unbalanced (see folios 13a, 41a, or 104a). Other motifs, such as the sharply cut staircase, also reintroduce the diagonal into a painting (see folios 6a and 14a [figs. 2 and 4] as well as folios 22a and 24a [figs. 5 and 6]).

Andrew Topsfield has pointed out the manner in which Sāhibdīn alternates between the traditional register format of Mewari painting and what may be considered the more spatially adventurous type of composition influenced by Mughal and Popular Mughal styles. As we have seen, Sāhibdīn uses these different styles quite deliberately in the Ayodhyākāṇḍa to set up and reinforce the opposition between the city of Ayodhyā (and the events that take place there) and the forest setting. In the city scenes Sāhibdīn relies heavily on compositions with a horizontal emphasis or are made up of multiple boxlike rooms and pavilions linked together (although his compositions are never quite so rigidly compartmentalized as seen in works by other Mewari artists). In the forest, the sense of rigidity dissipates, compositional diagonals are abundant, and a great deal of expressiveness is captured in the multicolored hills dotted with verdant vegetation (see folios 61a, 66a, 68a, or 79a, for examples).
In the course of his career, Şahibdin also alternated between paintings that primarily evoke a poetic sentiment and those that tell an epic tale. Much of his early work, from the 1620s and 1630s, illustrates poetic and devotional texts, such as the Gita Govinda and the Rasikapriyā. (He illustrated each text twice during this early period.) Their composition and style tend to follow those seen in his 1628 Rāgamālā; they are vertical rather than horizontal in format, and in content they focus chiefly on the emotional intensity felt by the figures and how that is conveyed in the overall theme of the text. In his illustrations to such poetic texts Şahibdin demonstrates his ability to capture in the accompanying paintings not only the exact narrative content but also the metaphoric and descriptive passages of the text. Vishakha Desai has discussed the manner in which Şahibdin presents these elements in his illustrations to the Rasikapriyā of circa 1635.

The primary forms are main compositional and figural elements that convey the principal meaning of the text. The secondary elements visualize the more subtle literary nuances of text and provide a greater degree of visual specificity. The tertiary forms can be understood as visual conventions that help create an aesthetically cohesive image without necessarily carrying any specific textual meaning.... The distinguishing characteristic of the Şahibdin Rasikapriya is the well integrated relationship among the primary, secondary, and tertiary visual elements as carriers of layered literary meaning.54

In his early works, and in the Rasikapriyā and Gita Govinda sets in particular, Şahibdin became well versed in capturing the mood of a text by referring to a specific motif or compositional structure. To intensify emotive effect, for example, he frequently places a globular white vessel in the lower foreground; the swelling form of the vessel echoes that of the heroine and heightens the sense of the longing felt by the hero and heroine. These vessels are shown paired when the moment of the lovers’ union is at hand.55 At other times, he draws paired cypress and plantain trees to suggest the union of lovers. In other examples Şahibdin makes even more literal references to the metaphorical elements of the text, as in a scene from the circa 1635 Rasikapriyā in which the lovelorn heroine refuses the garland and red powder offered by her maid. The garland, she says, feels to her like a snake and the red powder like fire. In the foreground of the painting are the snake and the fire, the metaphorical elements made visible.56

The heightened emotions of the archetypal lovers of the Gita Govinda and the Rasikapriyā are equally captured in the dense, ripe vegetation that serves as a background for the figures and that sometimes functions as part of a compo-
sitional device to emphasize the separation between the figures. For example, in Sāhibdīn's illustration to the twelfth song of the Gita Govinda in the 1629 set, the artist places in opposite corners of the composition two pavilions in which the separated lovers sit. In this arrangement, the structures seem to tug at the corners of the painting, pulling the lovers farther apart. The intervening space, which forms a diagonal in the opposite direction, is densely packed with flowering trees that are characteristic of the rainy season; this reinforces the mood of longing felt by the figures. Topsfield discusses other similar moments in this Rasikapriya: "It is above all in his resourceful approach to the many Rasikapriya stanzas in which little occurs except the evocation of a particular mood or sentiment that Sāhibdīn shows his originality as an illustrator." In such works Sāhibdīn proves himself to be a master at conveying mood, not just through visualizations of literary metaphors but in the way he composes the picture. While the use of certain colors or motifs to suggest mood—the paired goblets referring to the pairing of lovers, or the color red to imply the intense heat of passion—is not atypical of Indian painting, appearing as a visual counterpart to poetic text passages, Sāhibdīn moves beyond color and motif to the very composition itself in his quest for a complete rendering of the text. Here we see the beginnings of the compositional tendencies that are expressed more fully in the Ayodhyākāṇḍa.

Sāhibdīn's later work, from the 1640s and 1650s, including his paintings for the Rāmāyaṇa, is consistent with the earlier paintings in terms of the palette and the fine quality of the draftsmanship. However, due to the significantly greater amount of text to be accommodated in the narrative works as compared to poetic works, such as the Gita Govinda, the later paintings are generally done in the more traditional horizontal format, which allows for maximum expression of the events both textually and visually. The events themselves are now the primary focus of the paintings rather than the emotions felt by the figures or a specific mood within the text that the image is designed to convey. In works such as the 1648 Bhāgavata Purāṇa and the Rāmāyaṇa, Sāhibdīn is concerned primarily with the narrative content of the epic rather than with the metaphoric passages of the text.

The Bhāgavata Purāṇa of 1648 is more closely related in conception and style to the Rāmāyaṇa than to any of Sāhibdīn's earlier works. In many ways it seems to have served as a stylistic prelude and testing ground for many of the complex multiple-scene paintings of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa (just as the Ayodhyākāṇḍa led to the even more expansive and complicated compositions of the Yuddhakāṇḍa). Eighty-eight of the 129 illustrations in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa cover the full page, and each of these is roughly equivalent in size to the paintings of the Rāmāyaṇa.
Sâhibdin's name appears at the foot of two paintings in the incomplete manuscript; many other of its paintings are very simple in conception and execution and were probably done by his assistants. In works that are clearly by Sâhibdin, such as folio 5b of canto 8 (reproduced in Jeremiah Losty, Art of the Book in India, plate xxxiii), the high viewpoint, the mix of bright and pastel colors in carefully selected contrasts, and particularly the complex array of figure and animal groups, skillfully separated by trees and sprays, suggest Sâhibdin's dynamic forest compositions in the second half of the Ayodhyâkânda. In particular, the artist's ability to convey simultaneous action through figure groupings, without framing those figures in boxlike settings or in horizontal registers (a key element to his Ayodhyâkânda compositions), is apparent in certain works of the Bhâgavata Purâna.

It is significant that in these later epic works Sâhibdin does not abandon his earlier interest in conveying the mood of the poetry of the Gita Govinda and the Rasikapriya. Later narrative paintings, however, express mood primarily through compositional means, with little reliance on the placement of symbolic motifs, which is such an important feature of his earlier illustrations. When Sâhibdin does make symbolic allusions, they are generalized and subtle, and they more specifically relate to the narrative. Throughout the Ayodhyâkânda, for example, Sâhibdin seems to reserve descriptions of floral and vegetal forms for those paintings that refer to the chaotic world of the "outside." In almost all the compositions within the city, exterior spaces—the gardens and parks surrounding the palace and other city buildings—are conspicuously devoid of plant life (see folios 3a, 5a, 6a, 13a, or 14a). Decorative detail is focused instead on the figures themselves, in the lively interactions among minor figures in large groupings (for example, see folio 17a), and in the colorful, multipatterned textiles worn by the female figures. On the other hand, the forest pictures appear to explode with brightly colored trees and flowering shrubs. This contrast heightens the distinction between these "outside" paintings and those of the city or the "inside" that Sâhibdin establishes. The abundance of the forest recalls the treatment of bowers and forests in his earlier works, in which the burgeoning plant life serves as a symbolic expression of the passion felt by the key characters. Sâhibdin clearly displays an ability to evoke mood and emotion—even while focusing primarily on narrative—that distinguishes his style from that of other early Mewari painters. This feature of his work was influential in determining the Mewari painting style. His compositions for the Râmâyâna, which were among his final works, no doubt occupied him almost exclusively during the period in which they were made. They represent the culmination of his ability to evoke the intangible elements of the narrative within paintings.
Sâhibdîn’s style became widely employed by other artists, and it ultimately served as the illustrative manner of Mewar painting. Artists working under Raj Singh and Jai Singh, the successors to Jagat Singh, maintained Sâhibdîn’s style with little modification. Several coincident factors provided the possibility for the expansion of Sâhibdîn’s own creative expression into the formation of a full-fledged regional style, but it appears that his relationship with his patron, Jagat Singh, was key. Although much has been written about Sâhibdîn, his role at the court of Jagat Singh has yet to be fully considered. Clearly, he interacted with Jagat Singh at a fortuitous moment in the history of Mewari art. The Mewar court atelier was formally established only when Jagat Singh succeeded his father, Karan Singh, on the throne in 1628. One of Jagat Singh’s early projects was rebuilding the royal library following the depredations of the later sixteenth century. The first extant dated work by Sâhibdîn was produced that same year. Indeed, Sâhibdîn is likely to have been the director of the court atelier; he is one of only two artists known by name who were active in Udaipur during the Jagat Singh period. (The other was Manahor, who worked on book 1, and possibly also books 3 and 7, of the Râmâyâna.) Sâhibdîn’s interest in idioms derived from Mughal and Popular Mughal painting may have been strengthened, at least in part, as a result of the complex relationship between the Mughal and Mewar courts, including Jagat Singh’s own appreciation of Mughal taste, culture, and art.

The Mughals considered the Mewar kingdom to be the most powerful of the Rajasthani states, for the Mewars had led the resistance against Mughal overlordship and were the last of the Rajasthani states to succumb to Mughal authority. When Rana Amar Singh was finally forced to submit to Emperor Jahangir in February 1615, the Mewars were spared much of the humiliation that other Rajasthani courts suffered, and they retained a higher degree of autonomy than their counterparts. Under Karan Singh, Jagat Singh’s father, close links were developed between the Mughal and Mewar states. As the eldest son of the defeated Rana Amar Singh (reigned 1597–1620), Karan Singh was sent to court “as a mark of the Rana’s capitulation to the imperialists.” While there he was treated with great deference and respect. In his memoirs Jahangir makes several mentions of his attempts to please and impress Karan Singh. In 1623, when Prince Khurram, the future Shah Jahan, rebelled against his father, Jahangir, he took refuge with Karan Singh in the Mewar capital city of Udaipur. By then Karan Singh had become the ruler of Mewar. He built Prince Khurram a special residence in Udaipur, and there the rebel prince enjoyed Karan’s hospitality for approximately four months. Several portraits of Karan Singh, and at least two of his brother Bhim Singh, were produced during the reign of Shah Jahan.
Like his father, Jagat Singh also attended the Mughal emperor at court in Ajmer and Agra. He visited Jahangir’s court for the first time at Ajmer in July 1615, when he was just ten years old, and Jahangir’s diary records several subsequent meetings from 1616 to 1623. When he ascended the throne late in 1628, Jagat Singh preserved the close relationship with the Mughal court that his father and his uncle had established. He received gifts and titles from Shah Jahan and even sent troops to aid Shah Jahan in the Deccan. Despite a number of minor skirmishes between Mewar and Mughal forces, this relationship persisted throughout Jagat Singh’s reign. This new era of relative peace is said to have led to a resurgence in the arts, especially architecture. James Tod, in his Annals and Antiquities of Rajast’han, characterized the period of Jagat Singh’s rule thus:

The twenty-six years during which Juggut Sing occupied the throne passed in uninterrupted tranquility: a state unfruitful to the bard, who flourishes only amidst agitation and strife. This period was devoted to the cultivation of the peaceful arts, especially architecture; and to Juggut Sing Oodipoor is indebted for those magnificent works which bear his name, and excite our astonishment, after all the disasters we have related, at the resources he found to accomplish them.

Painting, too, flourished during this period, and many illustrated manuscripts were produced for the royal library of Jagat Singh. Included among these are several important sets of illustrated manuscript paintings created by Sāhibdīn and his studio: a Rāgamālā series dated to 1628; two Rasikapriyā sets of the 1630s attributed, at least in part, to Sāhibdīn; two versions of the Gita Govinda from 1629 and circa 1635; a Suryavansaprakāsha of 1645; and a Bhāgavata Purāṇa of 1648. The Rāmāyaṇa of 1649–53 was the most monumental commission undertaken by the Mewar court workshops up to that time.

The production of the Rāmāyaṇa on such a monumental scale in Jagat Singh’s workshop may be related to the Mewars’ strongly held belief that they were lineal descendants of Rāma. The Sesodiya family, considered themselves to be of the same solar lineage as Rāma himself, and thus they traced their ancestry back directly to Rāma. As Tod points out, “At Oodipoor the sun has universal precedence; his portal (Surya-pol) is the chief entrance to the city; his name gives dignity to the chief apartment or hall (Surya-mahal) of the palace; and from the balcony of the sun (Surya-gokra) the descendant of Rāma shows himself in the dark monsoon as the sun’s representative.”

The creation of the Rāmāyaṇa on this large scale may have served as a family history of the Mewar ruling house in the same manner as the monumental illus-
trated histories of the Mughals, the Genghis-, Timur-, Babur- and Akbarnamas. As Losty explains, "It is not surprising then that the Rāmāyaṇa should have been the text selected for this grandiose treatment for it concerns the great hero of the Solar race, Rāma, the ancestor of the Rana of Udaipur, the present head of the Suryavamsa, and it may be seen as a Hindu reaction to, and imitation of, the ancestor-glorifying traditions of the Mughals."74 The personal familiarity of some of the Mewar rulers, especially Jagat Singh and his father, Karan Singh, with Mughal manuscript painting may have been another impetus for the production of this monumental Rāmāyaṇa in the workshops of Udaipur. The inventory of the royal library at Udaipur, carried out in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century under the reign of Maharana Fateh Singh, reveals the presence of numerous Mughal paintings in the collection, including works of the style of the Akbari and Jahangiri periods.75 It is likely that at least some of these works were in the collection of the royal library in the early seventeenth century and possibly were brought to court by Karan Singh.76 As chief artist in the Udaipur atelier, Sāhibdīn would have had ample opportunity to study such paintings. Losty even suggests the possibility that Sāhibdīn traveled to the court of Jahangir himself, in the company of Karan Singh or Jagat Singh.77

The relatively peaceful relationship between the Mughal and Mewar courts during Jagat Singh's reign resulted in greater resources for all types of artistic production than had heretofore been available. Jagat Singh seems to have been an active and generous patron who provided multiple opportunities for the artist to develop the transition from works that were more closely related to Western Indian style, such as the Chawand Rāgamālā, to those that included Sāhibdīn's awareness of Mughal painting techniques and motifs, and his literal-minded interpretations of texts and subtexts. Under a patron who seems to have actively supported the illustrated manuscript tradition, Sāhibdīn was allowed important opportunities to develop his own style and to explore a wide range of expressive techniques.

Conclusion

In this examination of the paintings of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa of Jagat Singh's Rāmāyaṇa, I have shown that Sāhibdīn establishes a discernible contrast between the two settings of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa—city and forest—and between the types of events that occur in and because of these different settings. This contrast is illustrated by Sāhibdīn's alternation of compositional types: he creates specific and distinct sets of compositional approaches to convey elements of the narrative that otherwise would have been lost in his literal visualization of the story. In particular, the artist distinguishes between the space and time in which the characters
exist before Rāma’s exile from that in which they exist following it. He does this by structuring his compositions according to where they fall in the narrative. For events taking place inside Ayodhyā, the compositional field is divided into visually discrete domains that are organized to create dramatic tension between narrative moments. Compositions depicting later events, such as those “outside” Ayodhyā, are less rigidly constrained within visually delineated subdivisions, with larger and looser arrangements of figures and more complicated relationships between figures. To my knowledge, no artist before Sāhibdin had utilized such subtle compositional and artistic means to convey the emotion and drama of the Rāmāyana. The consistency with which Sāhibdin employed these formal devices suggests that they were not merely intuitive but reflected a deep understanding of how visual elements can enhance the artist’s communication of fundamental moods and ideas to the viewer.

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NOTES

1 The British Library exhibition, *The Ramayana: Love and Valour in India’s Great Epic*, can be accessed online at www.bl.uk/onlinelibrary/whatson/exhibitions/ramayana/.

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2 Jeremiah P. Losty, *The Art of the Book in India* (London: British Library, 1982), 125. See also Appendix B for a brief summary of the historiography of the Jagat Singh *Rāmāyana*, in which the contribution of Losty and others to our understanding of the manuscript is discussed.

3 Jeremiah P. Losty, “Sāhib-din’s *Gītā-Govinda* Illustrations,” *Chhavi-2, Rai Krishnadasa Felicitation Volume* (Banaras: Bharat Kala Bhavan, 1981), 233. As Topsfield explains in n. 2, the name Sāhib-din is an approximate spelling of the artist’s name and seems to be a corrupt form of Shihab ud-Din.

4 The following folios from the *Ayodhya-kanda* are reproduced in Jeremiah P. Losty, *The Ramayana: Love and Valour in India’s Great Epic, The Mewar Ramayana Manuscripts* (New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2008): 2a, 14a, 16a, 24a, 34a, 46a, 50a, 51a, 53a, 56a, 57a, 58a, 61a, 66a, 68a, 69a, 70a, 71a, 80a, 89a, 90a, 93a, 96a, 97a, 101a, 103a, 108a, 111a, 112a, 114a, 118a, 121a, 126a, and 129a.


6 Andrew Topsfield, “Sāhib-din’s *Gītā-Govinda* Illustrations,” *Chhavi-2, Rai Krishnadasa Felicitation Volume* (Banaras: Bharat Kala Bhavan, 1981), 233. As Topsfield explains in n. 2, the name Sāhib-din is an approximate spelling of the artist’s name and seems to be a corrupt form of Shihab ud-Din.

7 Losty, *Art of the Book in India*, 129.

8 Ibid., 126–28.


10 The history of the *Rāmāyana* as a single and specific epic narrative is long and complex. Elements and abbreviations of the *Rāmāyana* story date back to some of the Purāṇas, including the *Visnupurāṇa*. The core of the epic was transmitted orally by wandering bards for several centuries before it was written down.

According to J. L. Brockington, the first and final books did not become a part of the epic until approximately the second to third centuries CE. See J. L. Brockington, *Righteous Rama*, chap. 10 and appendix, discussed in W. L. Smith, *Ramayana Traditions in Eastern India* (Stockholm: University of Stockholm, 1988), 11–21. Versions of the *Rāmāyana* exist in all of the major and most of the minor Indian languages, and it appears throughout Southeast and East Asia, with several other *Rāmāyānas* in Sanskrit.

Some versions differ only slightly in details while others show significant plot-altering variations. Although Vālmiki is designated as the author of the epic, “Vālmiki” is almost certainly a generic term of authorship.

12 Ibid., 23.
14 Jeremiah P. Losty, personal communication, September 1998.
16 Ibid., 19–20.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., 3–4.
21 In addition to those images reproduced here, most of these folios are reproduced in Losty, *The Ramayana: Love and Valour in India's Great Epic*.
22 Reproduced in Losty, *The Ramayana: Love and Valour in India's Great Epic*.
23 The Jagat Singh *Rāmāyana* remained in the Royal Library in Udaipur until about 1820, at which time four of the volumes (*Ayodhyā, Kiśkindhā, Yuddha, and Uttara Kāṇḍa*) were given to Colonel James Tod by Maharana Bhim Singh. Tod in turn presented the books to the Duke of Sussex, and the British Library acquired them in 1844 when the Sussex collection was sold. See Losty, *Art of the Book in India*, 127.
24 Losty, personal communication.
26 This was a typical practice with the manuscripts on which Sāhibdin worked; see Ibid.
28 Ibid., 129.
29 Ibid., 128–29.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 126.
32 Losty, "Sāhib Din's Book of Battles," 102.
33 See, for example, fol. 89, which depicts Bharata's confrontation with Kaikēyē on his return to Ayodhyā. The composition includes motifs and devices employed by Sāhibdin, such as the sharply angled staircase from which Mantharā flees or the alternation of figural groupings between outside and inside the frontally conceived architectural boxes. The painting as a whole, however, is awkwardly composed, and certain passages (including the transition to the staircase) make no logical spatial sense. The composition was likely drawn by a less-sophisticated artist than Sāhibdin, though one who was familiar with his work. Other paintings in the second half of the book show a more traditional architectural treatment that closely resembles Manohar's work in the *Balākāṇḍa* rather than Sāhibdin's (see fol. 82, 106, 107, and 128). The presence of the lower quality or different compositions toward the end of the book may support the suggestion made earlier that the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* was rushed to completion.
34 John Seyller, personal communication, August 1998.
35 Deheja, "Treatment of Narrative in Jagat Singh's 'Rāmāyana'" 323.
37 See Appendix 1, in which the sarga(s) and verses related to each painting are given. Those sargas (according to the critical edition) that are not made visible in the paintings include 38–40, 42, 45, 51–55, 71–72, and 87.
38 Desai, "From Illustrations to Icons," 101.
39 Pollock, n. 4 to sarga 1, 327.
40 Losty, *Art of the Book in India*, 127.
45 All paintings of the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* are reproduced here. Chapter, or sarga, numbers given for each image, and quotations from the text, derive from the critical edition of the *Rāmāyana*; see n. 12.
46 The work is titled "Bābur Races Qasim Beg and Qambar 'Ali' and is reproduced in Sheila R. Canby, *Princes, Poets and Paladins* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1998), fig. 83.
47 "The Munificence of Jāfar al-Baramakī to 'Abd al-Malik"; ibid., fig. 87.
49 Topsfield, "Sāhibdin's 'Gītā-Govinda Illustrations'" 233.
50 See ibid. for a fuller discussion of this point.
See, for example, "Krishna and Radha Steal an Underwater Kiss," folio from the ca. 1635 Rasikāpriyā, in the Government Museum, Udaipur. It is discussed and reproduced as fig. 6 in Topsfield, "Sahibdin’s Illustrations to the Rasikāpriyā."

52 Reproduced as fig. 14 in ibid.


54 See Desai, “From Illustrations to Icons,” 97–127.

55 For example, see fig. 2 from the 1628 Rāgamālā, and fig. 13 from the ca. 1635 Rasikāpriyā, in Topsfield, “Sahibdin’s Illustrations to the Rasikāpriyā.”

56 See Desai, “From Illustrations to Icons,” 104–105 and fig. 4.


58 Ibid., 237.

59 Topsfield, “Sahibdin’s Illustrations to the Rasikāpriyā.”


60 Losty, Art of the Book in India, 124.

61 Andrew Topsfield, Paintings from Rajasthan in the National Gallery of Victoria (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1980), 11.

62 Losty, Art of the Book in India, 105.

63 Ibid. According to Topsfield ("Sahibdin’s Gita Govinda Illustrations"), Sahibdin’s name, in one form or another, is found in colophons and ascriptions dated in 1628, 1629, 1648, and 1655. His name also appears in the colophon of the Ramayana Yuddhakāyāda.


66 Karan Singh’s portrait is included in two paintings in the Padshahnama: “Jahangir Receives Prince Khurram on the Return from the Mewar Campaign,” a painting of ca. 1635 by Balchand of an event that occurred in 1615, and “Jahangir Receives Prince Khurram on His Return from the Mewar Campaign,” another depiction of the same event painted by Murar in ca. 1640. Karan and Bhim Singh are also believed to be included in another work by Murar of ca. 1640 that describes the event of 1617, “Jahangir Receives Prince Khurram on His Return from the Deccan.” See Beach and Koch, King of the World, cat. nos. 5, 8, 9, and 38. Karan’s portrait was also painted individually and was included within an album.


68 Losty, Ramayana, 8–9.

69 Chandra, “Paintings from an Illustrated Version of the Ramayana,” 33–49.

70 Sharma, Mewar and the Mughal Emperors, 132, characterizes Jagat Singh’s attitude toward Mughal authority as follows: “On the whole the Rana maintained a kind of balance between his personal ambitions and the suzerainty of Delhi by asserting his authority, whenever the emperor’s attention was occupied elsewhere and offering submission when the imperial weight seemed to be dangerous.”


73 Tod, Annals and Antiquities of Rajast’han, 451.

74 Losty, Art of the Book in India, 125.


76 No record of paintings commissioned by or given as gifts to Karan is known. Jahangir describes many types of gifts that were given to Karan, including the usual horses, elephants, jeweled armory, and robes of honor, but also “carpets, state cushions perforved, vessels of gold...etc. (Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, tenth year of the reign). Also in that year Jahangir states that statues of Rana Amar Singh and of Karan Singh were sculpted in white marble and placed in the gardens at Agra.
THE MARCY-INDJOUDjian COPE

Abstract
The Marcy-Indjoudjian cope has long been a source of speculation and debate. Questions concerning its origins and ownership have endured since the Victoria and Albert Museum acquired the first fragment of this glorious garment from the French dealer Louis Marcy in 1894. The addition of fragments in 1926 and 1930 from the Indjoudjian brothers contributed to the mystery of the provenance and iconography of this remarkable work of art. Recent scholarship has proposed the vestment was produced possibly for use by the Augustinians in Roman Catholic rites.

Careful study of the Marcy-Indjoudjian cope (shourdjar) now confirms it was made in the Armenian colony of New Julfa (Isfahan) in the early seventeenth century, following the mass movement of Armenians from their homeland as ordered by Shah 'Abbas I. Reexamination and proper translation of the letters stitched into the cope verify its Armenian origins and its creation by a highly skilled artist named Yakob. Evidence suggests the cope was commissioned by the wealthy merchant khodja Nazar and presented in the late 1620s by Shah Safi to Movses vardepet Tathevatsi, perhaps in commemoration of his election to the Catholicate of All Armenians. Eventually the cope found its way into the treasury of the Armenian Cathedral of St. James in Jerusalem. Here, the consummate skill of the Armenian artist, well aware of current creative styles and the desires of his patron, is evident in the harmonious composition, delicate lines, rich colors, and overall theological message.

THE SUBJECT OF THIS STUDY is an Armenian shourdjar (cope) in the textile collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Known as the “Marcy-Indjoudjian cope,” it is made up of several fragments that were acquired at various times and have since been restored to their original state (figs. 1–3). The first fragment entered the museum’s collections on 15 December 1894 when it was bought from the French dealer Louis Marcy. Further fragments spotted by Arthur Pope in the possession of A. and M. Indjoudjian of Paris and Constantinople were added in 1926 and 1930. Research published on the cope by F. R. Martin (1908), A. F. Kendrick and C.E.C. Tattersall (1924), A. U. Pope (1938–39), and Ian Bennett (1987) all agree with Kendrick and Tattersall that the vestment is “one of the most remarkable works of art in existence.” Each one has expressed varied opinions on its provenance and almost nothing on its iconography and ownership. In a recent study by Pedro de Moura Carvalho, it was suggested that the cope was “manufactured with the purpose of being used in Roman Catholic rites, possibly for the Augustinians.” Close examination of the cope, in terms of its history, construction, and inscriptions, confirms that this is not the case.
All the experts do agree that the cope was made in New Julfa (Isfahan). The Armenian colony of New Julfa came into existence at the very beginning of the seventeenth century. The rise of the Armenian colony in New Julfa as a major commercial center during the second half of the seventeenth century has been well discussed by both Western and Armenian scholars, which I need not repeat here except by mentioning the more recent research.\(^4\)

Intermittently throughout the sixteenth century, historical Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan were the arena of Ottoman and Safavid wars. Historical Armenia served as a battlefield between the two contending empires. Their wars had a destructive impact on the peoples and the economy of the region. The Safavid and Ottoman devastations are reflected in the Armenian chronicles and in the colophons of manuscripts written during the period. The Armenian chronicler Hovhannes Archishetsi bemoans the invasion of Shah Tahmasb’s forces into the region of Van and the ensuing wars in these words:

There came an epidemic of death... How many fathers and mothers were rendered sonless and daughterless, how many sisters brotherless and brothers sisterless? How many pretty brides and bridegrooms were separated, and how many brothers and sisters died the same night? Who can recount the sorrow and misery of parents and families, loved ones and those of the friends, only God who created them knows.\(^5\)

These conditions, coupled with heavy taxation, resulted in the first wave of immigration of Armenians from historical Armenia into Isfahan. According to Arakel Davrizhetsi, a contemporary historian, the first wave of immigration included Armenian nobles and property owners as well as peasants. Among the notables he mentions are “Sarukhan beg and his brother Nazar ... Jala beg and

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Front of restored cope, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
his cousins—Oghlan Keshish and Ghalabeg, Melik Sujum, Melik Pashik, Melik Haigazn, Melik Baben—and the entire inhabitants of four Armenian villages emigrated to Persia, and asked for the Shah’s protection and settled in Isfahan.6

By this time, several Armenian merchants were already in Isfahan. One of them was khodja Nazar, who had received a royal edict in 1586 that granted him protection and freedom to trade within the realm of Safavid Iran. Shah ‘Abbas accepted various Armenians into his service and, according to Sir Anthony Sherley, was impressed with their competence and abilities.7

The second phase of Armenian immigration to Isfahan is linked with the 1603 campaign of Shah ‘Abbas, when the Safavid ruler violated the treaty of 1590 and invaded Ottoman territory. When the Ottomans compelled his armies to retreat, the shah not only razed the territories he had conquered, but he also forcibly relocated some 300,000 Armenians, mostly from the major commercial town of Julfa and its environs in Nakhjidjevan, to central and southern Iran. Scribes who copied manuscripts in Julfa give heartrending accounts of the event. The scribe of the manuscript of a Four Gospels dated 1609

copied in the episcopate over our village of Djulaloy of Archbishop Mesrop, and in the reign of Shah Abbas who in the year 1052 [= 1603 ce] came with a great army against the royal city of Davrezh, to avenge his sire’s blood; and he utterly destroyed the race of Osman by his valor and his resources; and crossing the Araxes. He entered the canton of Ararat and attacked the fortress at Erevan, and he slew the enemy and laid waste all the country in the year 1053. Mourning fell upon Armenia, for he destroyed and made desolate all houses and habitations, so that men fled and hid themselves in fortresses and clefts of rocks. Some he found and slew, others he led captive and sent to that city of Shawsh [Shosh] or Aspahan [Isfahan] ... and
he settled us on the south side of the river Zabdae, or Aghi, where he built houses and habitations and churches for our prayers, and we named the village Tchadjoghay, and not Djogha, for though the king’s heart was well disposed towards the Christians, yet the inhabitants of the city were evil and opposed our religion....

It should be noted that this manuscript was commissioned and copied for Khodja Teridjan and his son Karapet by the most famous artist working in Julfa, Mesrop of Khizan. The inhabitants of the Armenian city of Julfa on the left bank of the river Arax welcomed the shah with open arms and enthusiasm. “They handed him the silver keys of the city, and gave him impressive reception: a procession of the clergy, nobility, and notables of the city, all dressed finely for the occasion, received him with candles, incense, religious and secular songs. The shah was housed in the residence of Khodja Khatchik, who offered to him trays full of gold coins as his token gift. During the reception wine was offered from golden cups.”

Julfa emerged as a major commercial center during the second half of the sixteenth century. The sphere of its commercial and financial transactions reached India as well as Venice and other cities in Italy. The city became an important center of east-west trade, and many of the merchants in Julfa served as either representatives or brokers of various European commercial firms and interests.

It was the appealing combination of the wealth of the Julfa merchants and their international position that prompted Shah ‘Abbas I to transplant the Armenians of Julfa en masse from their homeland to Isfahan. In doing so, the shah aimed to achieve a variety of short- and long-term objectives. His military objective was to depopulate and lay waste to the territories between the retreating Safavid forces and the advancing Ottoman army. By relocating the merchants who carried on trade among Persia, Central Asia and India, and the Mediterranean, which until then had been conducted to the benefit of the Ottoman Empire, they were made to serve Persia. Moving the Julfa Armenians was crucial to achieving this objective. On the transformation of his capital Isfahan into a major trade center, Shah ‘Abbas also wanted, through the intermediary of the Armenian entrepreneurs, to control the silk industry, which was a state monopoly. The silk crop of the Caspian provinces constituted the chief commodity in the Iranian export trade, and its marketing in Europe was entrusted by Shah ‘Abbas to the Armenians. The French traveler Jean-Baptiste Tavernier relates that he “chose from among them those whom he judged most suitable and intelligent in matters of commerce, and gave to each of them, according to his capacity, bales of silk, for which they were to pay a reasonable sum on their return. The excess of the price they were able to attain was to be a reward for their troubles, and to cover the expenses of travel.” So successful and prolonged
was this venture in state capitalism that another traveler, the Italian Pietro della Valle, found cause to remark, "The Armenians are in relation to the king of Persia as the Genovese are in relation to the king of Spain; they cannot live without the king, nor he without them."12

The importation of European goods into Persia and their passage across Persia to India and Central Asia were also secured largely by Armenian commercial enterprise. Among the objects Armenians brought back from Europe, partly for exchange en route against provisions and partly for sale in the bazaars of Isfahan, were not only the celebrated Dutch and English broadcloth but also items such as clocks, mirrors, imitation pearls, and in general "things light in weight but heavy in price."13 The ultimate prize of this policy was that the shah established control and won favor over a specific ethnic group that could deal with and compete as Persian subjects against European merchants.

In an age when European power was growing, simply to be a Christian gave an Asian merchant a significant advantage in any dealings in Europe or with Europeans. This factor may in large measure account for the growing importance of Christian merchants in the Middle East in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. The Armenians were well aware of the advantage their Christian faith gave them in trading with Europeans, and they exploited it to the full in negotiations for trading rights in Italy, Russia, and elsewhere. The presence of large Armenian colonies in Aleppo, Amsterdam, Izmir, Lvov, Marseille, and Venice was also an advantage as intermediaries. The growing Armenian colony soon built numerous churches, thirteen of which are still in existence. Arakel Davrizhetsi says, "Similar to their splendid houses, worthy to the glory of God, they built churches with heaven-like altars, which were completely covered in various colors, gold, and laijvard [lapis lazuli], and paintings depicting events from the Life of Christ, and pictures of saints. And on all the domes of their churches, they placed the sign of the Cross, as crowns signifying the pride of the Christians."14 Khatchatour Khizantsi, in the colophon of the Gospels he copied in 1607 in Isfahan, says,

If a while ago in the city of Shosh [the name Armenians gave to Isfahan] the Persians saw a Christian merchant they would plaster his face with their spittle ... but now thanks to God our enslaved nation freely worships, has erected everywhere churches, and has magnificently decorated them. The church beadle rings the bells louder than the Turkish mullah. The dead are buried in procession with crucifix and shourdjar-wearing clergy. On the day of the Revelation [i.e., Christmas and Epiphany] they freely bless the water, singing the hymns as if in the times of the Enlightener and King Trdat.15
Montesquieu acknowledges Shah 'Abbas's tolerance towards the Christians. The shah “understood that the proscription of the Armenians would have extirpated in a single day all the merchants and almost all the artisans in the kingdom. I am sure that the great Shah 'Abbas would rather have lost both his arms than have signed such an order; in sending to the Mogul and to the other kings in India the most industrious of his subjects, he would have felt that he was giving away half of his dominion.”

The two largest churches are All Savior’s Cathedral, constructed in 1606, and the Church of Bethlehem, built in 1627. The Armenian community of Isfahan formed a new diocese under the jurisdiction of the Catholicate of the Holy See of Echmiadzin. It had its own primate, who had jurisdiction over the Armenians in Shiraz, Hamadan, Rasht, Anzali, Kashan, Qazvin, Tehran, Basra, and Baghdad and over seventy-five villages.

In a very short period, expatriate Armenians made New Julfa a great suburb of Isfahan, gaining universal recognition as an important center of trade, commerce, and the arts, as is glowingly described by all European travelers who visited Isfahan in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The Artistic Milieu

The Victoria and Albert Museum has in its Islamic collections many objects (ceramics, textiles, and bronzes) with Armenian inscriptions. A short but informative study by D. M. Stuart-Brown, called “Armenian exhibits in the Victoria and Albert Museum,” provides a general survey of the holdings in addition to an unpublished survey of Armenian inscriptions on Iranian bronzes in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Among the ceramic collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum are a plate (no. 2714–1876) and a wine bottle (no. 1248–1876). The owners of these items were Nazareth and Safraz, a father and son who were famous Armenian merchant princes in New Julfa. Nazareth, the father, died in 1636 and is better known as khodja Nazar. His eldest son, Safraz, is known as Safraz Beg or khodja Safraz, and he died in 1656. They possessed great prestige at the Safavid court of Shah 'Abbas and his successor, Shah Safi. They amassed tremendous wealth and entertained royalty, which a number of European travelers recorded in their impressions. Sir Thomas Herbert recounted his visit to khodja Nazar’s home in 1628 in these words: “Hodge-Nazar, the Armenian Prince, was visited by the Ambassador at his home in Jelphey. A Christian he professes himself, but (I must be bold to say) his house was furnished with beastly pictures, such ugly postures as indeed are not fit to be remembered [i.e., nude females]. Amongst other rare meats, I took most notice of roasted pig, in regard that it was the first we saw in Persia and is meat equally
offensive to Jews and Mohametans. The flagons and bowls in his house were all of gold, vials of sweet water for perfume, and glasses of Shiraz wine were emptied for our better entertainment. " The Dutch traveler Adam Olearius described a feast at khodja Safraz's home.

Serferas-bac, having received the Ambassadors with much respect, and done his civilities to the Chiefest of the Retinue, conducted them through a spacious arched gallery, into a great garden, at the end whereof we found an open hall, according to the fashion of the Country, where we were entreated to sit down on the ground. The cloth, which was of gold and silver brocade, was covered with all sorts of fruits and conserves, and we drank of certain prepared water, much like _Ros Solis_, but incomparably more delicate, and more precious. Having taken away the fruits, they laid an Indian cotton cloth, and meat was brought up in silver dishes.... [We were] conducted through a very noble apartment, into another hall, which looked into the garden. It was arched all about, and there were on the walls certain pictures representing the women of most nations in the world, dressed according to the mode of their several countries. The floor was covered with rich tapestry, on which were laid cushions of flowered satin, groundwork thereof gold and silver. 

A Venetian receipt for paintings dated 17 February 1620 bought by _khodja_ Safraz, the _kalantar_, lists the purchase of the following works of art: Nativity, a Madonna, the Savior, a female nude undressing, the Magdalen nude and in a habit, a Venetian female portrait, a woman with disheveled hair, alias Cassandra, and the last queen of Cyprus (i.e., Caterina Cornaro).

Arakel Davrizhetsi devotes chapter 29 in his _History_ to the culture, art, and literature of the period and in this context presents the careers of three Armenian artists: Minas, Zohrabjian, and Yakobian. The artist Minas was born in New Julfa, and when Davrizhetsi was completing his _History_ in 1662, Minas was still alive and active, for he comments, “May God keep him safe in his Christian faith, guard his life along with his family for many years to come.” Minas was an artist by profession, and for a brief time he had been in Aleppo and had been a pupil of a _frankish_ (European) master. He was well known for his portraits of figures from various nations: Armenians, Jews, Indians, Franks, Russians, and Georgians. He painted on paper, wood, bronze, and cloth using paint, charcoal, or olive oil. The wealthy merchants in New Julfa hired him to decorate their houses with wall paintings. Among them was _khodja_ Safraz, whose home he decorated with flowers and portraits. After Shah Safi had seen the wall painting in the home of _khodja_ Safraz, he appointed...
An ordination manual depicts Bishop Yovhannes wearing a miter and an ornate chasuble (shourdjar) as he ordains a priest. Armenia, Erevan, Matenadaran ms. 197, fol. 341b.

Minas as his court artist. This would have been during the first reign of Shah Safi between 1629 and 1642. In the museum of the Church of the All Savior’s in New Julfa are two portraits of the merchants Yakobjan Velijanian and Voskan Velijanian painted by Minas.23

In a manuscript of the History, copied at the author’s request in 1665 and now kept in Venice (ms. 127), Voskan Erevantsi knowingly decided to delete chapter 29 from the edition he published in Amsterdam in 1669. According to Mirzoyan, Erevantsi felt Arakel Davrizhetsi’s evaluation of the merits of Minas’s accomplishments were naive and exaggerated in light of what he had witnessed in Dutch art.24 The section was reinserted in subsequent editions, beginning with the second edition printed in Ejmiadsin in 1884.

The Iconography of the Shourdjar

A shourdjar is a liturgical vestment worn by Armenian clergy when officiating the Divine Liturgy and the sacraments of the Armenian Orthodox Church. The word shourdjar means literally “that one drapes around.” It was introduced into the Armenian Church in the thirteenth century and is first mentioned by Nerses Lambronatsi (1153–1192) in his Commentary on the Divine Liturgy.25 It is a vestment of the same shape as the philon [= felonis = phelonion, correspondent of the Western chasuble], which was the only overall black vestment used during offices in the
Eastern churches until the thirteenth century. Ordination manuals (Mashtots) are important sources for the study of the development of liturgical garments in Armenia. In an ordination manual copied and illuminated by the artist Sarkis Pidsak in 1328, the officiating bishop in an ordination of a deacon is shown wearing an ornate shourdjar (fig. 4).²⁶

The shourdjar worn by all ranks of the clergy is semicircular in shape and made of rich materials of various colors or a combination of colors, provided one color dominates. To be exact, the shape of the shourdjar is that of a segment of which the chord is four inches away from the center of the circle, having a radius equal to the height of a man to the shoulder, plus four inches. The other parts of the vestments, which must match in color and decoration with the shourdjar, are the maniple, pallium, and epigonation (worn by patriarchs only), stole, and amice. Each part of the vestment is worn accompanied by a prayer, which explains its symbolism. The prayer said by the celebrant over the cope reads, “In thy mercy, O Lord, clothe me with a radiant garment and fortify me against the influence of the evil one, that I may be worthy to glorify thy glorious name, by the grace…”²⁷

A Qajar polychrome lacquer papier-mâché mirror case dated 1857–58 was recently auctioned in London (fig. 5).²⁸ The scene on the upper cover was described as a large central shaped cartouche depicting “an Orthodox priest and in the background a stylized church.” The Orthodox priest in question is an Armenian celibate.

Manuscript of the Four Gospels, copied by the scribe Yovhannes in 1297. Grigor Tatevatsi (1344?–1409) restored the manuscripts in 1378 and painted the Canons of the Letter of Eusebius to Carpianus, as well as two scenes from the Life of Christ cycle, including this Annunciation miniature. Gulbenkian Foundation. Photo: Ara Güter.

The cope in the Victoria and Albert Museum (no. 477–1894) is similar to this vestment. It is made up of “dense silk pile that gives it the appearance of velvet” in luxurious brocading with silver and gilt thread of scrollwork and vegetation on a red ground with two images representing major feasts of the Christian Church: the Annunciation and the Crucifixion.

Physical description of the cope
4 feet 11 inches x 7 feet 9 inches (1.50 meters x 2.35 meters)
Warp: Two-ply yellow silk; 52 to one inch; on two levels
Weft: Pink silk; three shoots after each row of knots
Knots: Silk; Sehna type; 25 to one inch; 650 to the square inch
Colors: Eleven; crimson (field), medium blue (inner border), green, greenish yellow, apricot, light blue, yellow, light brown, flesh, very light green,
black. Some of the lighter colors are not clear and are difficult to place in order.

Metal thread: Tapestry-woven on alternate warp threads of the upper set, six lines of metal thread being equivalent to one row of knots. It is of two kinds: gold and silver. The former consists of a strip of gilded silver wound round a core of orange-colored silk, and the latter of a strip of silver wound round a core of white silk. The round of the outer border is of gold thread.\textsuperscript{28}

When the cope is worn, the composite image of the Annunciation appears at the front of the celebrant, with the image of Archangel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary on either side of the buckle in a vertical position facing each other (fig. 2). The image of the Crucifixion adorns the back of the celebrant in full view of the congregation (fig. 3). It is worth mentioning that during the entire performance of the Armenian liturgy, the celebrant faces the altar with his back to the congregation. The scenes on the shourdjar reproduce faithfully in content, style, and composition the images found in Armenian manuscript illuminations (figs. 6 and 7). The formulae, ornaments, and color scheme used are Armenian.

The Annunciation scene represents the narrative as recorded by the Gospel of St. Luke 1:31. The magnificent angel of the Annunciation, clad in a pale gold tunic that turns to brown and light green, has large, elegant shaped wings, one raised over his shoulder and the other falling down at his side (fig. 8). Carrying a herald's
staff, he approaches gracefully, hand stretched out towards the Virgin Mary, who is positioned on the opposite side of the buckle. The Virgin Mary, clad in a green dress with a gold mantle, is depicted as a shy maiden with a restrained expression, who hardly dares listen to the words of the angel (fig. 9). The green color of the Virgin's dress matches the color of the angel's wings. The positioning of her hands suggests she is spinning thread. The Virgin holds a spindle pointing downward. The source of this iconography is the Protoevangelium of James. In the Protoevangelium, Mary and the other virgins are given the task of weaving a veil (curtain) for the temple. Mary received the task of spinning the purple and scarlet threads. She heard a voice at the well calling her “highly favored” and “blessed among women.” She looked to the left and right and saw no one. Trembling, she returned home and put down her pitcher. She took up the purple thread to go on with the job, and suddenly she saw the angel by her side. Mary heard him say, “Don’t be afraid, for you have found favor with the Lord of all things, and you will conceive his word.” In the British Library’s Armenian manuscript of The Lives of the Saints copied in Constantinople in 1652, the Virgin Mary is depicted twice in the Annunciation scene—once at the well holding a jar of water, and then in the house holding a spindle—and in both instances she is in the presence of the Archangel Gabriel.30

Also familiar to Armenian painters was the composition of the Crucifixion, which depicts Mary and John standing on either side of the cross. No image better embodies the spirit of Armenian theology than the miniature of the Crucifixion showing the most central act of Christ’s redeeming work and the most powerful symbol of the Divine Liturgy. The basic composition of the Crucifixion in Armenian art was well fixed by the thirteenth century.31 The characteristic feature is not the number of figures but their postures. The large cross is set against a plain gold ground, with no distracting elements of scenery (fig. 10). On the cross hangs, or rather stands, the figure of Christ, for he is shown virtually upright with his arms extended horizontally from a powerful chest. This in itself sets the image apart from the general run of Crucifixions in which Christ is clearly suspended, limp and dead. Instead, here Christ gives an unmistakable impression of strength and self-contained power. Christ is dead, but there are no wounds and no blood. The horizontal board on which his feet are nailed serves more as a footrest. This upright position of Christ is fairly standard in Armenian art.

The prominent placement of Mary and John on either side of the cross (fig. 3) combines the account of all three synoptic Gospels and of St. John 19:25–27, in which Christ, seeing the two of them standing nearby, committed his mother to John’s care. The postures of the two figures are also quite remarkable. The Virgin Mary holds one hand to her breast and points with the other towards her son; in European art she is usually shown with her eyes downcast in sorrow. Similarly, John

does not hold his head in grief or wipe away his tears. On the contrary, he looks straight across at the Virgin Mary. St. John is also depicted as the Gospels describe him, wearing a himation (cloak) over a fleece (Gk. melote) or camel's hair garment (Matt. 3:4). His untidy hair and beard are symbols of his asceticism. The two circles next to him in silver thread are stones, a reference to the saying, "Broad of vipers God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Matt. 3:7). Just above Mary's head and parallel to John's view is a very stylistic depiction of a bush with an axe embedded in its stem. This element of iconography is also found in the miniature of Christ's Baptism that illustrates the verse, "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire" (Matt. 3:10). Finally, the suggestion that the figure next to the cross is Judas, because he seems to be holding a pouch filled with the thirty silver pieces he received for his betrayal of Jesus, does not feature in Armenian iconography. In fact, the position of St. John's hands is a visualization of the Gospel narrative: "His winnowing fork in his hands, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:12). In both miniatures the gestures are literal interpretations of the text.
The iconography of the Crucifixion is dictated by the theology of the Armenian Church. After it rejected the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE), the Armenian Church held the doctrine that Christ's human and divine natures were so united that in everything he did "both God and man were inseparably present." This understanding of the Crucifixion is fundamentally different from the teaching of the Catholic Church, which holds the view that Christ suffered and died in his human nature, but he who suffers and dies therein is a divine person, the King of Heaven, *superbonus rex*, come down to earth. The most controversial point in Armenian theology directly contravening the above doctrine is the presence in the Trisagion of the phrase "who was crucified for us." In an Armenian commentary, the Crucifixion is explained as "God was crucified in his body and he was on the cherubic throne; God died in his body and he was glorified with the Father; God was in the tomb and he was inseparable from the Father's bosom." An echo of this theology is also present in the meditation of the Armenian author Agathangeghos on the mystery of God nailed on the cross: "But the Godhead who reaches above the heavens, beyond the infinite ... was contained and nailed to the wood of the cross, filling and extending in both the material and non-material sphere."

David Anyaght [the Invincible] in a Hymn to the Cross, which he defines with the Christological predicate *Astuadsènkal*, meaning "receiver of God," says of the cross, "Blessed are you, Holy Wood, adorned by God, or truly plant, that through the Lamb hanged on you as on the tree sabek, saved from death not only Isaac, but the entire progeny of Adam." The Cross is not merely an object of veneration but also of worship, for the intelligible Wood is not to be separated from the reality of Christ himself. In the Book of Revelations, where the Revised Standard Version has the expression "tree of life," the Armenian translates the Greek literally as *payt* (wood). This is how the exeges Step'anos Siwetsi (680-735) and Anania Sanahentsi (1000-1070) explain the Crucifixion miniature.

The "tree of life" or the "wood of life" is beautifully represented under the arms of Christ. In a manuscript of the Four Gospels copied in the seventeenth century (V & A, ms. W. 546), the Crucifixion miniature (fol. 16v) has this inscription: "He is the wood of life for all those who seek refuge in him." At the foot of the cross, in a section now missing from the cope, there would have been a small mount incorporating a skull to represent Adam. All the elements I have focused on are listed under the miniature of the Crucifixion in a manuscript of the Four Gospels copied in 1477 CE: the Crucifixion, the Sun, the Moon, Christ, the Mother of the Lord, John the Evangelist, and Adam's Head (ms. W. 540, fol. 1v). In another manuscript the miniature of the Crucifixion has this dedicatory inscription: "The Crucifixion of Christ, whom the Jews crucified above Adam's head and the Theotokos and John were there."
The Virgin Mary is the eternal intermediary between man and God. The Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Church begins with the prayer, “The holy Mother of God and all the saints, let us hold as intercessor with the Father in heaven.” For the mystic poet Gregory of Narek, Mary is herself the “living Paradise of delight, the tree of immortal life.” The hymn sung on the feast of the Annunciation describes the Blessed Virgin as paradise: “O thou living Eden, soil of the immortal plant, the verdant place of the flower born of the bosom of the Father.” In a miniature of the Annunciation in the manuscript of the Four Gospels (Venice, twelfth century, ms. 141, fol. 124, and Matenadaran, ms. 6305), the tree is located between the approaching angel and the Virgin Mary.

Armenian artists were familiar with Western models and borrowed details from foreign sources and integrated them into their compositions, but these Western features did not dominate because the content of the composition was dictated more by theology than by iconographic schemes. Pedro de Moura Carvalho argues that the cope was “manufactured with the purpose of being used in Roman Catholic rites” because the inscription on the label INRI is in Latin. The equivalent wording in Armenian is YNT’Y [= Y(isus) N(azovretsi) T’(agavor) Y(reits)] (Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews). This element crept into the miniature of the Crucifixion from Jan Theodor De Bry’s Bible, which was published at Mainz in 1609, but this is not an argument for concluding the cope was intended for use in the Catholic Church. Of the fourteen miniatures in the New Julfa Bible copied in New Julfa from 1643 to 1645 (Jerusalem, ms. 1934), ten depend on De Bry’s Bible of 1609.
The Crucifixion, by Grigor Marzvanesti. Engraving based on a woodcut by Christoffel Van Sichern. Marzvanesti replaced the initials INRI with the Armenian equivalent YNT’Y and Van Sichern’s initials (CVS) with his monogram GR at the foot of the cross.

All of the Apocalypse miniatures depend ultimately on Albrecht Dürer’s engravings of 1496 to 1498. The first Armenian Bible printed in Amsterdam in 1666 by Voskan Erevantsi reproduces the entire engravings of the Dutch artist Christoffel Van Sichern (fig. 11). All of Van Sichern’s woodcuts are signed with his initials CVS; others he copied retain the initials HG (Hendrik Golzius), and some also have Dürer’s monogram. The popularity of Voskan’s Bible helped to spread Van Sichern’s engravings throughout the entire Armenian diaspora. His engravings were continuously used in other printing centers in Marseille and Constantinople. A collection of such carved wood blocks not only found their way to the printing press established in New Julfa in 1636 but also were sources of inspiration for the paintings on the walls of Amenap’rkitch (All Savior’s) Cathedral and the Bethlehem Church. A woodcut of the Heavenly Jerusalem was in use in St. James’s printing press in Jerusalem. Soon after the formative years of Armenian printing, a number of Armenian engravers emerged who, while still using the woodcuts of Van Sichern, made serious effort to alter Western images to suit Armenian iconography. Grigor Marzvanetsi, the first layman to make printing his sole profession and business, was also a competent artist and engraver. In several books printed by him in his printing house, he reused Van Sichern’s engravings, including that of the Crucifixion, but he replaced the initials INRI with the Armenian equivalent YNT’Y and replaced the initials CVS with his monogram GR (Grigor) placed at the foot of the cross (fig. 12). In the same book he also placed an engraving of the Crucifixion in an imitation of Armenian iconography. 37
Printing was introduced into Persia by Khatchatour vardapet Kesaratsi, the prelate of New Julfa from 1620 to 1646. This pioneering operation began in 1636 and produced its first title in 1638. Dikran Kouymjian, in his study of the design features of leather manuscript bindings executed in New Julfa from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century, identifies 115 inscribed bindings crafted in various countries. Ninety of them are from New Julfa, and all have very distinctive localized features. The earliest example is a manuscript dated 1658, which shows on its lower cover the Virgin standing on a crescent inside a circle. The upper cover has a stamp of the Crucifixion. In both instances the inscription accompanying the images is in Armenian script: MARIAM (Mary) and Ι[isus]Χ[ristos] (Jesus Christ). The Crucifixion scene on the upper cover of one book (see Matenadaran ms. 3036, dated 1663) was repeated four times on the covers of a New Julfa manuscript (no. 1), which is also dated 1663. Of the ninety inscribed bindings identified by Kouymjian as being from New Julfa, most have stamps of the Crucifixion and the Virgin on the upper and lower covers, respectively, inscribed in Armenian letters. The conclusion to draw from this is that some of the stamps were fashioned in New Julfa; others were clearly imported from the West.

In addition, the legend INRI and its equivalent YNT’Y were not the only format in use among Armenian artists. As in these examples, full descriptions were placed over the image in most Armenian manuscripts. The legends vary from region to region, i.e., “This is the King of the Jews” (Los Angeles, University of Southern California, Edward L. Doheny Jr. Memorial Library, Special Collections, Armenian ms. 1), or “Jesus Christ King of the Jews” (Goodspeed, ms. 949), or “This is the King of the Jews, Lord God Jesus Christ” (New Julfa, ms. 47[43]), or “This is the King of the Jews and this is what the emperor wrote” (New Julfa, ms. 396[105]). A manuscript of the Four Gospels from the seventeenth century (ms. W. 546) has the inscription, “He is the wood of life for all those who seek refuge in him,” which fits the theological interpretation of the event as outlined above. In the manuscript of the Four Gospels dated 1655 that was copied in New Julfa (Chester Beatty Library, 578, pl. 53a), the inscription for the Crucifixion reads, “The Crucifixion of Christ, whom the Jews crucified above Adam’s head, and the Theotokos and John were there.” In three manuscripts now in the British Library’s collection (Or. 13, 895 [1658], Or. 14161 [1695], and Or. 15274 [1666]), the legend is in Armenian letters.38 There are also instances in Armenian miniatures where the artist placed the inscription in three scripts: Armenian, Latin, and Greek. In a twelfth-century manuscript (Venice, ms. 141, fol. 66), the miniature of the Entombment has the inscription “And they put Jesus in a tomb that was hewn out of rock” in Armenian, with the sigla of Christ and the inscription on the titulus in Latin and the Greek initials IC XC.39
Aesthetics and the Use of Colors
Another of Carvalho’s arguments for attributing the shourdjar to Augustinians or one of the other Roman Catholic orders is because “the Virgin [is] wearing green robes and that might indicate the origin of the prototype.” In the calendar of the Armenian Church the three Sundays following Easter are called “Colorful Sundays” (Gounagegh Kirakiner). The first Sunday after Easter, called “New Sunday,” has white as its symbol; the second Sunday, representing the establishment of the Church, is symbolized by green; and the third is named “Red Sunday,” in memory of the period when Christians were persecuted for their faith.

In patristic literature Grigor Tathevatsi (1344–1409) in his Book of Sermons comments on the vestments of the liturgy by saying, “On New Sunday or White Sunday the shourdjar worn should be white; on the Sunday of the World Church or Green Sunday [yashkhamatran = Martyrium] green should be the color of the vestment; and on the third Sunday called Red Sunday the color designated is red.” The author Simeon vardapet Aparantsi (1550–1615) also postulates that “the shourdjar worn on Green Sunday should have the image of the Crucifixion” (Liturgy ms. 1284 CE).

Armenian commentaries on the Eusebian Canon Tables are unique sources for the study of medieval Armenian Christian art. There are thirteen such commentaries. The most studied and available to Western scholars in translation are those by Stepanos Siwnetsi, Nerses IV Klayetsi, called Shnorhali (1102–1173), and Grigor Tathevatsi. These texts deal with the aesthetic, symbolic, and iconographic aspects and architectural composition of the canon tables. They also comment on the various symbolic and psychological meanings of the colors, the floral and animal motifs, and the special symbolism of the numbers. According to the authors of these commentaries, the Canon Tables are endowed with four colors: red, green, black, and blue. The color green signifies the immortality of the sacred hierarchies—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost united—while the “red fiery altar” is a symbol of Christ’s blood, and the gold represents the ecclesiastical status.

In his commentary Shnorhali divides everything in the world into two parts: “necessities and enjoyment, i.e., what is necessary for life, as light, air, earth, and objects originating from them, and that which gives pleasure and softens the feelings, possible to live without, but that will be an unwise and lifeless existence.” Bright colors are mentioned among a number of enjoyments (wine, fruit, spices, delicacies, incense, and pleasant sounds). Those features that seem “unimportant are greatly useful for perfected ones, namely, the initiated.” He maintains that color, taste, and smell help the viewer ascend to the spiritual and to the rational enjoyment of the good tidings of God, “which eye has not seen and the ear has not heard, and which the heart of man has not recalled, which God has prepared for his loved ones.”
The first premises behind such an approach to art is the frank acceptance that the sensuous is good in itself and therefore worthy of serious attention by intellectuals. According to Nerses, "God gave the lover of material things an understanding of the heavenly." The second premise is that the most profound meanings contained in art must be cloaked in mystery. This is exactly the reverse of the role symbols have in Western medieval art, which is didactic in intent and depends on spelling out all meanings explicitly, thus removing all mystery. Hence, for Nerses Shnorhali, the sensual pleasures received from manuscript illuminations are not for the simple folk but are rather "baths of sight and hearing for those approaching the soaring peaks of God."45 "The red, the color of wine, is on account of Melchizedek's bringing forth the mysteries in the type of Christ ... the red becomes brighter and the lily blossoms, because the cross has come near and the oracles approached the Resurrection, announcing the salvation of the gentiles through the blood of Christ" (Step’anos Siwnetsi). In Nerses Shnorhali's view, "Green [and black] are symbolic of the incomprehensibility of God, which is hidden from them; for by means of the church through the incarnation of the Son." The foliage and vegetation surrounding the "tree of life" (Crucifixion) "is the house of the Lord that water is caused to spring which flows in life everlasting; it is this which is walled around, not by the terrifying fire and the flaming Seraphic sword, but by the luxurious floral and colorful garden."46

Gregory of Magistros, in his Letters written to reject the views of the Tondrakians, an Armenian iconoclastic sect that accused the Armenian Church of idolatry, explains the depiction of the Crucifixion scene as the focus of prayers of intercession in these terms: "When you see the sign of the cross you shall pray, because it reminds you that Jesus Christ was crucified for you; and you must regard
thystself as crucified along with Him. In its presence you shall lay aside all earthly thoughts, and greet it with pure lips and say: ‘Christ, thou Son of God, be thou merciful to me.’ "

Presented in Treasures from the Ark: 1700 Years of Armenian Christian Art, an exhibition held at the British Library in 2001, were two embroidered items with pictorial embellishments similar to the composition seen on this cope. They included a pair of maniples (bazpans) worn by members of the clergy on the left and right forearm over the sleeves of the alb (fig. 13). The central figure on the left cuff is the Archangel Gabriel. On the right cuff is the Virgin Mary holding a lily and standing in front of a throne with a table; near her hover two angels. The two sections together make up the scene of the Annunciation (Holy Edjmiadsin Treasury, no. 38a–b). On a pair of embroidered infulae or fanons are lappets (artakhouraks) that hang from the lower edge of the amice (vakas) about fifteen centimeters away from the center on either side (fig. 14). Embroidered with several layers of gold thread in relief on red silk, the central figure on the left is that of the Archangel Gabriel. The name Gabriel is inscribed in the outer border in the middle, between the figure and the floral decoration (Holy Edjmiadsin Treasury, no. 538a–b). The right lappet has the full standing frontal figure of the Virgin Mary looking towards the approaching Archangel Gabriel. Her name, Surb Mariam (Holy Mary), is embroidered in the outer margin close to the image of the dove representing the Holy Spirit. The entire scene of the Annunciation on the bazpans is executed in luxurious red silk with designs of grapes, vines, and foliage embroidered in gold thread. The Virgin Mary stands on a green cushion. In the case of the artakhouraks, the garment worn by the Archangel Gabriel is in green-colored silk. Both of the artakhouraks are on a green-colored silk background. It is obligatory that the colors of the maniple, stole, amice, infulae, and cope be of the same color.
Another custom in the Armenian Church is to use alternate altar frontals appropriate to major feast days. Richly embroidered silk panels stretched over frames that exactly fit the front of the altar are common features of such decorations. Among the most beautifully decorated altar frontals is the one dated 1619 in the treasury of St. James’s Monastery in Jerusalem. Used on the feast day of St. Peter and St. Paul, it depicts an angel bringing the head of St. James to the Virgin. Sixteen surrounding scenes represent the Passion of Christ, starting with the Annunciation to the Virgin. Each of the scenes bears an inscription. The whole altar frontal is on green silk, with each scene embroidered in gold and silver threads.49

The earliest dated textile that has set the pattern for Armenian liturgical embroidery is a processional banner inscribed with the year 1448 CE. That is the year when the Holy See of the Armenian Catholicate was moved from the kingdom of Cilicia, following its collapse in 1375, to a site in Vagharshapat. On the back is the figure of Christ enthroned and raising his hand in blessing (fig. 15). He is surrounded by the symbols of the Four Evangelists arranged according to the text of Revelation 4:7. The arch above Christ’s head represents the heavens, above which are seen the symbols of the sun and the moon amongst stars. The initials );$ and UNUSED = Jesus Christ] are woven into the material. The front of the banner has the full-face frontal figures of St. Gregory the Enlightener standing between King Trdat and St. Hripsime (fig. 16). Their names appear above their heads: UNUSED - (Trdat - S[our]b Grigor - S[our]b Hripsime). St. Gregory wears a miter, a short white silk shourdjar adorned with crosses in black, and a pallium woven with silver threads. The king, with his hands raised, is dressed in a red tunic with a gold belt, while the identical tunic of St. Hripsime is green. She wears a red cope with slippers of matching color. The fine embroidery has a painterly quality.50 In the miniatures of Armenian manuscripts are found numerous
representations of saints depicted in *shourdjars* (fig. 17) and the Virgin Mary dressed in a green-colored silk tunic.

John Carswell, in his major work on the Armenian churches and buildings in New Julfa, lists the following scenes of the Annunciation and the Crucifixion amongst the wall paintings.

**Annunciation**

Pl. 8. All Savior’s Cathedral, wall painting, 1658–63
Pl. 13. All Savior’s Cathedral, tile panel, 1717
Pl. 19. Church of St. George, tile panel, 1610–11
Pl. 27. Church of St. Stephen, stucco panel, 1642/43
Pl. 52. Church of St. Sargis, tile panel, 1705
Pl. 67. Church of St. Gregory, wall painting, 1710

**Crucifixion**

Pl. 58. Church of St. Nerses, wall painting, 1666/67
Pl. 61. Church of St. Nerses, the altar, painting, 1724
Pl. 62. Church of St. Nerses, wooden cross, 1721. Legend in Armenian:  XBOOLE 2 [INRI]
Pl. 64. Church of St. Nicholas, painted wooden cross (Dutch, eighteenth century). Legend in Armenian:  XBOOLE 2 [INRI]
Pl. 88. The Museum, stole embroidered with gold and silver thread, dated 1775

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St. Gregory the Enlightener wearing a *shourdjar* and blessing King Trdat and Queen Ashken when they converted to Christianity in 301 CE. This image comes from a manuscript of the *Lives of the Fathers* (Synaxarion), which was copied on the command of Khodja Skandar in 1658, during the Catholicate of Ter Khatchatour of Cilicia (1657–77). Lebanon, Antelias, Library of the Holy See of Cilicia, ms no. 124, fol. 7b.
The Armenian Inscription on the Shourdjar

In his article Carvalho suggests that the association of the cope to the Isfahan Armenian community, as noted in the records of the Victoria and Albert Museum, was the result of misinformation provided by the "Indjoudjian Armenian dealers, eager to associate such precious textiles to the presence of their fellow-citizens in the capital of the empire."\(^{52}\) He quotes several lines from the article by Donald King, former Keeper of Textiles at the Victoria and Albert Museum, but he does not take into consideration Mr. King’s other recollection that "the Annunciation group on the front of the vestment had a larger inscription, of which there are some remains near the archangel's head, but unfortunately so fragmentary that it is hard to be sure what script was used. These letters merit further study, since they could well throw light on the origin of the vestment. Even better would be the rediscovery of the inscription, which was rumoured to be 'somewhere about' in 1926."\(^{53}\)

In 2003 I was invited to the Victoria and Albert Museum to view the cope in the conservation studio. I expressed the view that the cope was of Armenian origin and had been made for use in the Armenian Church. Several months later I was called back to the museum by the chief conservator, who had recovered the "fragmentary script" first mentioned by Donald King.\(^{54}\)

First, the Indjoudjian brothers should be counted among the notable group of Armenian dealers and connoisseurs of Islamic and Armenian art who operated in the field during the first half of the last century: Calouste Gulbenkian, Dikran Khan Kelekian,\(^{55}\) Hakob Kevorkian, Harout'ïwn Kudian, and Harout'ïwn Hazarian.\(^{56}\) Four manuscripts copied and illuminated in Tokat by Mkrtitch Djahenkal between 1656 and 1679 were part of the Indjoudjian collection, before they were acquired by Margosian-Esmerian in Paris. (They are now in the Erevan-Matenadaran collection.)\(^{57}\) It is thanks both to the perceptiveness and taste of the Indjoudjian brothers that fragments of such a remarkable work have been saved and to the farsightedness of Arthur Pope that they were secured for the Victoria and Albert Museum. It would be accurate to assume that the Indjoudjians were attracted to the cope for its Armenian inscription.

Since inscriptions are inseparable parts of Armenian works of art, it would have been unusual if a work with such an impressive artistic and historic provenance had not been inscribed. Armenian artists always included an inscription as a way to describe the scene. In the miniature scenes of the Annunciation, some inscriptions quote the Gospel directly and others paraphrase it.

To reconstruct the inscription on the cope, it is useful to look at inscriptions found on Armenian artifacts that depict the Annunciation and the Crucifixion. Here are a few examples of legends used on artifacts of Armenian origin that will assist in the reconstruction of the inscription on this cope.
1. Walters Art Museum, ms. W. 540, 1475 CE, fol. 128

Translation: "And the angel said unto her, fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus" (Lk. 1:30)

2. Walters Art Museum, ms. W. 543, 1455 CE, fol. 5

Translation: "Gabriel announces to the Virgin Mary"

3. New Julfa, ms. 47(43), 1330 CE, fol. lv

Translation: "Greetings [...] Rejoice the Lord is with you" (Lk. 1:29)

4. Erevan, Matenadaran, ms. 6325, 16th century, fol. 6a

Translation: "Rejoice [...] This is the angel Gabriel [...] Theotokos"

Among the ecclesiastical objects with inscriptions catalogued by Evgene Mousheghyan are several shourdjars that will assist to recover the full inscription on this cope.

1. No. 98. Shourdjar, 1601 CE (fig. 18A, B)

Inscription:

Enlivening this semicircular cope are identical images of Christ sitting on a throne that is supported by an angel, eagle, calf, and lion. The Armenian inscription is the words of the Trisagion. The four corners of each Cross have the monogram

2. No. 102. Shourdjar, 1649 CE
This cope is made of white silk embroidered with threads of many colors. In the middle is the Crucifixion scene, with grape vines and palm leaves on either side; the fruits are composed of the bust portraits of the Twelve Apostles. The entire background of the shourdjar is made up of grapes, flowers, and foliage. The label on the cross reads:

$$B \text{ (Junu) } B (\text{Junu}) B (\text{Junu}) B (\text{Junu})$$

The letters in bold are YNT’H [= INRI].

Of the two other shourdjars the first consists of sky blue silk with the scene of the Crucifixion and the year 1702. Twenty-one lines of inscription are placed on the borders of the four bars of the cross. The last cope is also made of sky blue silk, and the eight lines of inscription are placed on a piece of cloth in the shape of a cross.

In the published colophons of Armenian manuscripts dated between 1601 and 1620 are countless memorials listing donations made by wealthy merchants to their local churches. Of these, two are of particular interest since they are associated with cope made and donated to churches in New Julfa.

"Remember before Christ Khodja Gharpdjan and his brother Khodja Shkhidjan, who received through their honest earnings two zarbaf shourdjars and a silver chalice and gave it to the church of St. Thomas the Apostle" (Menologium, 1601).

"Remember and seek mercy for the sins of Mahdesi Hamosh who gave a shourdjar worth forty ghoroush to the church of Saint Georg ‘the General’" (Book of Rituals, 1613).
The cope in the Victoria and Albert Museum bears the remnants of a total of seven letters. Above I have quoted two categories of inscriptions, the first pertaining to the image and the second being a memorial to the recipient. The inscription on this cope could either be a legend describing the Annunciation scene or a memorial to the patron or the recipient (fig. 19).

1. The seven letters of the Armenian alphabet in large uncial letters (erkatagir), numbered one to seven, could be either of these three letters—א', ג, ד—or the marks left by the sewing of the metal buckles. In the event of it being a letter, it is most likely the first letter of the name.

2. The second letter is definitely the letter ג in the name ש(מיו)ג(ה). It could also be the first letter of the male name ג(ומנף), i.e., יקוב.

3. The letter ג is the first letter of the title ש(ומנף) ג(תר) [= TATS (Lord)]. In this context it is the first letter of the word ג(ומנף) ג(תר) [= TATS (Lord)].
20
Carpet made of fine silk and metal threads embroidered in Isfahan during the reign of Shah 'Abbas I.

4. The horizontal line could be the base of the uncial letter 'b' or 'U' (N or S). In this reconstruction it is the pronoun 'b' (U[b]) [= N (MA) (him/her)].

5. This letter is the same as number three, but here it stands for the noun S(p) [= T (ER) (Lord)].

6, 7. The two letters at the foot of the angel are the abbreviation for Û (wunu) Ú
The full text on this analysis should read: ß (h2wunuš) S (wrh) Û (dw) S (tp) Û (wunu) Ú
Translation: “In memory of [...] [and] the Lord God shall give him” (Lk. 1:32).

Who Was the Probable Weaver of the Isfahan Shourdjar?
Arakel Davrizhetsi in his account of the cultural scene in New Julfa in the seventeenth century (chapter 29) and Y. Ter Yovhaneants in his History mention two artists, namely, Minas and Yakobjan. According to the diarist Zakaria Agouletsi, Yakobjan died "on March 29th, 1671." Yakobjan was the artist whom Khatchatour Keseratsi sent to Europe to learn the technique of printing. When he returned to New Julfa, he was appointed durgar (master carpenter) by Shah 'Abbas and received a salary of thirty tumans. In nine Armenian sources he is mentioned as Jean Jacques (Yakob Yovhannisian).

In July 1988, I was invited by Jack Franses to see a carpet made of fine silk and metal threads that was embroidered in Isfahan during the reign of Shah 'Abbas I (fig. 20), and I was asked to contribute a brief note on the history of the Armenian colony in New Julfa. In that same year Marian Wenzel published her article on the carpet, calling it a "Polonaise" type carpet with "the startling discovery of an Armenian inscription." In the concluding paragraph of her study she states, "It seems possible to claim with a good deal of confidence that the Yakob carpet is a representative of a hitherto unrecognized 'Polonaise' from an Armenian workshop in
Persia, or possibly from an Armenian craftsman working in a Persian court workshop, made late in the reign of Shah Abbas."\(^{66}\)

The Armenian inscription is much more conclusive (fig. 21).

1. The Armenian name ְּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּּ
Two Armenian manuscripts in the holdings of the University of California, Los Angeles, employ the Azarian system of dating. The first is a miscellany copied during the reign of Shah ‘Abbas in the village of Zazeran near Isfahan. The date recorded is “on 12 Adam [= 1 May] in the year 183,” which corresponds to 1799. The wording in an inscription on the binding of a manuscript with the stamp of the Crucifixion inscribed with the letters INRI gives the date as being “written in the year 1174 of the Great [Armenian] Era [= 1725], in the year 110 of the Lesser Era, completed on Adam 12,” which converts to 16 May 1725. Azaria’s calendar did not gain wide acceptance, and as all the examples indicate it was used mainly by the Armenian communities in Iran, especially in New Julfa, and in India. By this calculation the Yakob carpet was made in the “Azarian era” of 3 (3 + 1616 = 1619 CE).

Another instance of misidentification was discovered while checking the hand-knotted oriental pile rugs described by Leonard Harrow and Jack Franes. Item number eight is described as a very important creation that stands out among the collection’s Persian pieces because of the power of its design as well as its function as a portiere that covered a doorway in an Armenian Church. The design has all the features of an Armenian illuminated canon table, with the elements of scrolls, acanthus leaves, crosses, vegetal motifs, peacocks, and lions in combat. Above all, the most crucial feature is the presence of Armenian letters well hidden in the foliage. They provide all the data needed to date the item and to determine its provenance, but the authors have deciphered the letters incorrectly. Approximately seven centimeters down from the top of the rug is a frieze in the right and left outer margins, and next to it in the small open space below is the Armenian initial տ (d). Then two centimeters up from below that in the corner of the right margin hidden among foliage are the letters Պ b. These three letters taken together spell the name Պ[P [-Dav]. Պ b’ = Davit Vth (Enegethti) (Davit the fifth)], who was Catholicos of All Armenians from 1801 to 1807. The letter b here has the numerical value of five, and it is also the initial letter of the name of the place of his birth. The rug is dedicated to the Catholicos of All Armenians, Davit Vth Enegethti.

Arthur Upham Pope, in his very famous study “The myth of the Armenian dragon carpets,” held the erroneous view that “there is no record nor even local tradition that rug weaving was ever carried on in Armenia to any extent,” and to prove to his readers that his views do “not rest on negative criticism only,” he cites “one genuine Armenian carpet in existence which holds true to Armenian style” in the collection of Herr Wilhelm Holzman in Berlin. The inscription on this rug is not in Armenian, and the “devices” used in it have no resemblance to illuminations in Armenian manuscripts. All the letters around the border are in Slavonic and Georgian. I would invite others to have a second look at this study and the image on which the conclusion rests.
The letter 8 on the Marcy-Indjoudjian cope could also be the initial letter of the name Yakob, as in the Yakob of the “Polonaise” carpet. Another craftsman in the mold of Yakob was the potter Abraham of Kutahya, who made pottery in a variety of designs “to please every possible variety of customer.” Such examples could be multiplied several fold.

**Who Was the Recipient of This Cope?**

The most prominent figure in the Armenian Church in the seventeenth century was Movses vardapat Tathevatsi (1577–1632). In 1610 he visited St. James’s Convent in Jerusalem, where Patriarch Grigor Paronter (1613–45) appointed him sacristan of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (fig. 22). While in Jerusalem Movses mastered the craft of producing pure white smokeless candles for use in church services. When Shah ’Abbas heard about Movses’s expertise, he sent two emissaries, Bayindur Beg and Amirkhan, to invite Movses to Isfahan, where he would teach royal artisans the art of making white candles. Movses arrived in New Julfa in 1626. Arafěl Davrizhetsi records, “Movses worked for eight months before meeting the Shah in Fahrabad, where the Shah was resting after capturing Baghdad. Khodja Nazar introduced Movses to the Shah, who then presented him with some candles. Shah ’Abbas gave 100 litres of wax to Movses to make white candles.”

Arafěl Davrizhetsi and the Italian traveler Pierto della Valle testify that Shah ’Abbas had the habit of attending Christian ceremonies. In 1627 the shah expressed his desire to khodja Nazar to make a special lavish arrangement for the celebration of Epiphany. On the day of the feast Movses vardapat led the ceremony, with priests splendidly vested in “white stoles and caps of cloth of gold upon their heads, with long labels hanging down to their middle, but more gorgeous was the attire of the Patriarch, being all over richly embroidered with gold and adorned with costly gems, processed to the river, with crosses, silver bells, and a great number of lighted candles.” The shah rode into the river with his two sons, and “puis il commença
The top inscription records: “The cope is in memory of Ter Grigor archbishop of Holy Jerusalem to my [spiritual] parent from Yakob in [the Armenian Era] 1063” [+ 551 = 1614 CE].

The bottom inscription states: “Remember haji Marok’ from Constantinople who made this cope.”

avec son hurem active et incapable d’aucun repos, a faire l’office de maitre des Ceremonies.” The river was blessed with holy oil (miwron) to symbolize Christ’s Baptism in the river Jordan. The Armenian Church regards the Baptism (and not Christmas celebrated on 25 December) as the event at which Christ was revealed to mankind as the Son of God. After the ceremony Shah ‘Abbas was entertained by khodja Safar’s three sons and their uncle Nazar. Impressed with the proceedings, the shah asked khodja Nazar, “What does your vardapet wish to have? What can we offer, treasure, property, or anything else?” Khodja Nazar requested the shah to appoint Movses sacristan for the Cathedral of the Holy See of Edjmiadsin.

In 1627 Movses vardapet, with the consent of the shah as decreed in a royal firman, departed from Fahrabad for Erevan. On arrival Movses found the Holy See, in the words of the Psalmist, like “Jerusalem on heaps” (Ps. 79:1) and “a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city” (Is. 1:8). The cathedral had been emptied of its treasures and its manuscripts. Services were not held, for the clergy had no vestments or shourdjars to wear while celebrating the Holy Mass or the Holy Hours. The Holy altar did not have frontals. A colophon in a manuscript written in 1628–29 testifies to the degree of patronage and favor Movses vardapet enjoyed “during his prelacy over all the Armenians, and when Khatchatour vardapet was the primate of our see of New Julfa; and during the reign over the Persians of Shah ‘Abbas, the victorious king, and when the prince of the Armenians was khodja Nazar, a friend and intimate of the king...”

Following the death of Shah ‘Abbas, his son Shah Safi succeeded him on the Persian throne. During his reign the Holy See was in great debt, which khodja Nazar persuaded the shah to cancel by royal edict in honor of Movses’s election to the Catholicate of All Armenians on 13 January 1629. Evidence suggests the cope was commissioned by his patron khodja Nazar and presented to Movses by the shah.

Movses Tathevatsi’s career as sacristan of the Holy Sepulchre and later as Catholicos of All Armenians coincided with the patriarchate in Jerusalem of Grigor Paronter. During this time in the early seventeenth century, the bankrupt Armenian Brotherhood of St. James did not have a single gurush in its treasury. Most of its properties, church vessels, and vestments had been seized, sold, or pledged as security for payment of its mountainous debts. In partnership with the Latin and Greek churches, the Armenians had custody over the Holy places. The Brotherhood spent large sums of money to protect and safeguard its privileges and possessions, which were virtually purchased time and time again from avaricious officials. In 1611 Grigor Paronter appointed Movses Tathevatsi a nutrak (nuncio) of
the Brotherhood of St. James. Wealthy merchants from New Julfa, including khodja Safar, Panos, Voskan, and Awetik; traveled to Amid, Constantinople, Poland, and Aleppo to collect funds, pay creditors, and finance mortgages. A manuscript in St. James's collection (no. 322), which has a biography of the Patriarch Grigor Paronter, lists in detail the ecclesiastical objects that were donated to the Patriarchate. A list of itemized donations includes fifty-seven luxurious silk copies. The memorial attached to the list of donations has added significance, for it states, "God have mercy on Tèr Movses Tathevatsi, who with bishop Ghoukas came bringing two large silver lamps, one altar frontal for St. James's main altar [awag], one silver censer, one silver incense holder, and eleven censers made of copper. He came to Jerusalem in the year 1613." In the same manuscript (fol. 20b), khodja Mateos, son of khodja Marut’in, gave a fine silk shourdjar: "khodja Mateos son of khodja Eghnazar gave to Jerusalem in memory of his parents, a gold chalice, a large splendid cross, one silver lamp, one curtain, one altar cover." Another account of khodja Nazar's visit to the Holy City from New Julfa is dated 17 April 1626 (fol. 48a). This coincides with the year when Movses Tathevatsi was appointed sacristan and Shah 'Abbas attended the Armenian Epiphany with khodja Nazar. Pilgrimage was a visible expression of piety that was particularly suited to the life of the traveling merchant. Jerusalem was the ultimate pilgrimage, and successfully reaching it bestowed on the pilgrim the title mahdesi (from the Arabic maqdisi). Undoubtedly the Islamic imprint went deeper than the name, and the example of the Hajj as the perfect occasion to combine commerce and piety exerted an influence on the Armenian pilgrimage tradition. Jerusalem was not a major commercial center, but pilgrimage to Jerusalem became an obligatory stop for Armenian silk merchants entering or leaving Iran via Erevan.

Arthur Upham, who knew the Indjoudjians personally when they made their bequests, as well as Ian Bennett, John Carswell, and Donald King, all agree the cope was made in New Julfa and then found its way into the treasury of the Armenian Cathedral of St. James in Jerusalem.

Conclusion

Armenian culture has been in close proximity with Islamic art since the seventh century, with the high points being during the Ottoman and Safavid periods. The borrowings from Islamic art were never simple plagiarism, for the objects produced in an Islamic style were for the Islamic market and those closer to the Armenian style were for Christian patrons and were made for use in Christian institutions. The result is not an amalgam but a new creation in which the artist, while fully appreciative of current creative styles in neighboring countries, is guided throughout by a sense of his own Christian tradition. The consummate skill
of the Armenian artist comes to the fore in textiles in the harmony of the composition, the delicacy of line of the individual motifs, the rich colors, and the overall theological message intended to communicate to the viewer. To the list of some of the splendid objects associated with this milieu, we should add the magnificent astrolabe found by this author and belonging to the Armenian physician Amir Dovlat of Amasia (1420/25–1496), dated 1479 and auctioned in December 1997, the Yakob “Polonaise” carpet, and the Yakob cope.

Iranian art or art with Iranian features were often created by artists from Armenia, Albania, Georgia, and even Central Asia. In terms of origin, the term Iranian must be placed in brackets and considered in many ways. Armenians and Georgians melded cultural features from Iran and in the process devised a joint creation, a new aesthetic idiom. Since the socio-economic and ideological preconditions existed, such an exchange of experience was technically possible due to the constant direct contact and cooperation between artists who represented various cultures in the towns of Iran, Armenia, and Georgia.

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NOTES


10. Y. T’er Yovhaneants, *Patmout’iwn Nor Djoqhayoun vor Yaspahan* (History of New Julfa also called Isfahan) (New Julfa, 1880), vol. 1, 95–99, 175–76.


21 Adam Olearius, *The Voyages and Travels of the Ambassadors ... faithfully rendered into English* by John Davies (London, 1662), 276.


28 Christie's, *London, Islamic Art and Manuscripts*, 26 April 2005, lot 199 (p. 154). The scene on the reverse side, described as an extensive luncheon, is in fact the meal eaten after the home blessing with the three clergy at the head of the table. In the foreground are the mountains of Ararat and Masis as well as Noah's ark.

29 This is according to Kendrick and Tattersall, *Fine Carpets*.


31 Cf. Venice 1635 (1193 ce), Jerusalem 2563 (1272 ce), Matenadaran 197 (1262 ce), Jerusalem 1956 (1269 ce), Matenadaran 10675 (1268 ce). Images in Sirarpie Der Nersessian, *Miniature Painting*.


33 Ibid., 93.


35 Carvalho, "Safavid cope?" 22.


40 Carvalho, “Safavid cope?” 22–23.


44 Vrej Nersessian, Treasures from the Ark, 79–82.

45 Ibid., 80

46 Translated by Russell James. Ibid., 207.

47 Ibid., 137–38.

48 Ibid., 133.

49 Ibid., 129.

50 Sylvia Agemian, Manuscrits arméniens enluminés du Catholicoïssat de Cilicie (Bayreuth, 1991).

51 Carwell, New Julfa.

52 Carvalho, “Safavid cope?” 22.


55 Dikran Khan Kelekin, while on pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1912, saw the Artavan mosaic, discovered in 1884 at the Damascus Gate, and offered 250 gold pieces to buy the mosaic and have it removed and reconstructed in the compound of St. James’s Convent. The Brotherhood objected and instead bought the house in which it was found for the sum of 600 gold pieces. See Bishop Mkrtich Aghawouni, Miabank'ev aytselew' Hay Eramasaghem (The Brotherhood and visitors to Armenian Jerusalem) (Jerusalem, 1929), 507.


57 Sirapie Der Nersessian, Walters Art Gallery, 66, n. 7.

58 Ibid., fig. 209, fig. 140; Nersessian and Mekhitarian, Armenian miniatures from Isfahan, fig. 51; Harvard Hakobyan, Haykakan manrankartchout'yon Vaspourakan (Miniatures from the Vaspourakan school) (Erevan, 1978), pl. 77.

59 Evgen Mousheghyan, Hayren ardanagroult'amb ararkar' (Objects with Armenian inscriptions) (Erevan, 1964).


61 Davrizhetsi, Paimout'yon (1990); Loreta Daneghyan, Arevk Davrizhetsou erke vorpes Sefyan Irani XVII dari pay- moutyan skzieghbyour (The History of Arakel Davrizhetsi as a primary source for Safavid Iran in the XVII century) (Erevan, 1978). Also see Yovhaneants, Paimout'yon Nor Djoughayoun, vol. 1, chaps. 52–55.

62 M. M. Ghazaryan, “Nor Djoughayi XVII dari hay nkarartchoutyounë” (Armenian artists of New Julfa in the XVII century), Patma Banasarakan Han (1978), 193–202; H. N. Andranikyan, “Minas,” Bazaranev 3 (1907); A. Eremyan, “Nkaritch Minasi kyank'ev steqhsagordsout'yan himnakn gdsere” (The life and career of the artist Minas), Anahit (May–August 1938); Zak'aria Agouletsi, Oragout'yon (Diary) (Erevan, 1938), 103.


64 Letter from John Shillingford, director, Blaketon Hall Ltd., written on behalf of Jack Fransen, 20 July 1988.

65 Marian Wenzel, “Carpet and wall painting design in Persia: An Armenian inscribed Polonaise carpet,” Apollo (July 1988), 4–11. The silk and metal thread Bernheimer “Polonaise” carpet was auctioned at Christie’s on 14 February 1996, lot 50, 60.

66 Ibid., 11.

67 H. S. Badalyan, Hayots tomari patmout'youn (History of the Armenian

68 Mesrov Seth, Armenians in India (Calcutta, 1983), no. 57, 127; Yovhaneants, Patmout' iwn Nor Djoughayou, vol. 1, 314.

69 Avedis K. Sanjian, Medieval Armenian Manuscripts at the University of California, Los Angeles (Berkeley, 1999), 237, 241.


71 Arthur Upham Pope, "The myth of the Armenian dragon carpets," Jahrhuch der Asiatischen Kunst 11 (1925), 152 (ill. 6); Armenag Bey Sakisian, in his article "Les tapis a dragons et leur origine Armenienne," Revue Syrie (1928), 238–56, does not comment on the said Armenian inscription; V. Sassouni, "Rugs with Armenian inscriptions and associated designs," Ati del terzo simposio internazionale de arte Armenia 183 (Venice, 1984), 493–503.

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73 Vrej Nersessian, Treasures from the Ark, 146–47.

74 Maghak'ia Ormanian, A'zapotoum (History of the nation) (Beirut, 1960), vol. 2, part 1, 2390–422.

75 Aghawouni, Miabank' ev aysouk Hay Erousaghemi, 308–309; Tigran Sawalaneants, Patmout' iwn Erousaghemi (History of Jerusalem), modern Armenian translation by Mesrop Nshanian (Jerusalem, 2000), 570–71. Others have failed to spot the inscription on the cope, which provides the details needed to determine its precise provenance. See Bezalel Narkis, Armenian Art Treasures of Jerusalem (New York: Phaidon, 1980), fig. 189, p. 158; Arseg Mekhitarian, Treasures of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem (Jerusalem, 1969), entry no. 74, p. 40; and Michael E. Stone, 'Epigraphica VIII, REA 28 (2001–2002).

76 Carswell, New Julfa, Appendix, 78–80; Davrizhetsi, Patmout' iwn (1896), 236–37.

77 Carswell, New Julfa, pl. 6, 78–80.

78 Davrizhetsi, Patmout' iwn, (1896), chap. 29, 302–303.

79 Sirarpie Der Nersessian, Chester Beatty Library, ms. no. 615, 185–86.

80 Sawalaneants, Patmout' iwn Erousaghemi, 569.

81 Norayr Pogharian, Alp, Mayr Tsouatsak (Grand catalogue of the manuscripts of St. James Convent) (Jerusalem, 1995), 102–11.

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ENRICHED NARRATIVES AND EMPOWERED IMAGES IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY OTTOMAN MANUSCRIPTS

Abstract
Illustrated manuscripts of Ottoman history are perhaps the best-known artistic products of the Ottoman court. Very popular in the second half of the sixteenth century, such illustrated histories ceased to be produced in large numbers in the seventeenth century. Scholars have tried to propose various explanations for the decreased production, often linking this phenomenon to a decline in political power. This is far from the truth: during the seventeenth century other types of artistic products became more popular, namely, albums that showcase examples of calligraphy, painting, and drawing. The reasons behind the increased production of albums are explored through three manuscripts—books, not albums—that were made at the court of Ahmed I (reigned 1603–17). By examining their word-image relationships, it becomes apparent that these manuscripts function differently from the illustrated histories of the sixteenth century. The growing preference for albums in the Ottoman context was likely correlated with a new understanding of the illustrated book. The paintings in these new books have as much, if not more, narrative drive than the text, and the images are no longer closely anchored in verbal accounts. In this new formulation of the book, image and text have independent and equally indispensable roles for the transmission of meaning.

Along with new types of books, the seventeenth century also brought about new audiences: artists and album compilers were now a part of patronage circles. The career trajectories of Nakkaş Hasan and Kalender Efendi—artists and album compilers who also served in the imperial council as viziers and were part of the Ottoman elite—indicate a social change that might well be correlated with the changing image-text relationships of Ottoman manuscripts. An examination of their careers also shows that the arts of the book did not lose their primacy in the seventeenth century. In the end, the move from illustrated history to album should not be seen as the abandonment of a traditional form. The illustrated history was produced during a certain period to meet specific needs and to cater to new audiences, and its disappearance signals the declining importance of its function and changing notions of the book. Ultimately, the artistic products of the Ottomans are best understood not as timeless products but in terms of their historical specificity.

THE MOST-RENOVED PRODUCTS of the Ottoman manuscript studios are the illustrated histories produced during the second half of the sixteenth century. Such official histories, which put forth a majestic image of the Ottoman court, have come to dominate most studies on Ottoman arts of the book. Commanding as they are, these books represent only one moment in the long and varied history of Ottoman art: their popularity did not continue beyond a fifty-year period. The decisive
turning away from illustrating histories in the seventeenth century, on the other hand, has not received the nuanced treatment it deserves. When it is evaluated within its particular historical and social context, this shift clearly correlates with specific aesthetic and social changes. The artistic products of the seventeenth century constitute the responses of particular patrons, artists, and authors to specific historical and cultural conditions, quite similar to the illustrated histories of the previous century that were anchored in the social and political contexts of their makers and audiences.

The move away from grand illustrated court histories was essentially a move toward the production of albums whose popularity would continue well into the nineteenth century. The making of Ottoman albums began in the late fifteenth century with additions to Timurid-Turkman albums, and most sixteenth-century Ottoman albums were Persianate in content and overall character. Increased interest in albums during the seventeenth century is not unique to the Ottoman court, for it is part of a larger phenomenon that is also visible in Safavid Iran and Mughal India. Thus both in its beginnings and during later periods of popularity, Ottoman album making mirrored similar trends in the rest of the Islamic world.

This article, though far from comprehensive, aims to probe the reasons behind the increased production of albums in the seventeenth century by focusing on manuscript production at the court of Ahmed I (reigned 1603–17). As I hope to demonstrate in what follows, the growing preference for albums in the Ottoman context was correlated with the emergence of new types of illustrated books that feature highly creative and sophisticated image-text relationships. The paintings in these new books have as much, if not more, narrative drive than the text, and they are no longer closely anchored in verbal accounts. In this new formulation of the book, image and text have independent and equally indispensable roles for the transmission of meaning.

The new books functioned best as the center of an interactive experience with viewers bringing the implied stories to life by recalling other texts, reading aloud from different sections of the book, and commenting on the images. Intellectual gatherings of this sort are certainly not new to the Ottoman or the Islamic context, and they conditioned the appreciation of illustrated histories as well. They also are particularly appropriate for the enjoyment of these new types of books in which narratives are not always linear, and the stories only make sense in the context of a larger corpus of literary and visual works.

While intimate viewing contexts with sophisticated readers existed before this time, they incorporated new groups of people in the seventeenth century. Artists and those who compiled the albums now participated in patronage circles. This social change might well be correlated with the changing image-text relationships
of Ottoman manuscripts. At the very least it demonstrates the continuing importance of the arts of the book, and it suggests the changes were not due to a decline in artistic prowess. This is well exemplified by the careers of Nakkaş Hasan and Kalender Efendi, two artist-bureaucrats who served in the imperial council as viziers and were part of the Ottoman elite. I will therefore begin my exploration of the move from book to album with these two artists, then address the new types of books, and conclude with an examination of two albums prepared for Ahmed I.

The Primacy of the Arts of the Book
Ahmed I came to power determined to exert control over the court and the state. Historians often cite two of the sultan’s actions to demonstrate this desire: he enthroned himself, without waiting for the ceremony that usually accompanied the event; and he sent Safiye Sultan, his influential grandmother, to the Old Palace in an effort to remove her from the center of power. The construction of the Sultan Ahmed Mosque was, in my opinion, a third gesture of self-assertion. The sultan built this expensive edifice despite the lack of a military victory to fund it and despite the opposition of the ulama. Interpreting the mosque as a celebration of a momentary suppression of the Celali rebels also attests to its being a symbol of Ahmed’s authority. The financial and intellectual resources of Ahmed I’s court were largely absorbed by the construction of his mosque. The sultan, too, was consumed with the project, shoveling dirt at its foundations and watching the daily progress of the workers.

Those individuals who were involved in building the Sultan Ahmed Mosque also demonstrate the continuing importance of the arts of the book. Of particular interest here is Kalender Paşa, who had been a finance director of the second rank. He was responsible for imperial properties in and around Istanbul before he was appointed as the building supervisor of the Sultan Ahmed Mosque. His involvement in the mosque project propelled his career forward, and he was appointed to the Imperial Council with the title of vizier on 5 November 1614. He died in 1616 before the mosque was completed.

In his appointment as building supervisor, Kalender benefited from his trustworthy reputation as a second treasurer and, perhaps more significantly, from his connection to one of the most powerful figures of Ahmed I’s court, the chief eunuch Mustafa Ağa, “to whose judgment all affairs of state had been entrusted.” The preface of an album Kalender prepared and presented to Sultan Ahmed I, here referred to as the Calligraphy Album (Topkapı Palace Museum Library, hereafter TPML, ms. H. 2171), recounts that when the sultan asked Mustafa Ağa whether Kalender would be appropriate for the position, the eunuch praised Kalender’s skills in setting margins and compiling albums, in addition to his knowledge of geometry.
and his ability to invent various designs and images. Kalender in turn decided to compile the album in question to demonstrate his knowledge of geometry and construction and then present it to the sultan. This explanation of how and why the Calligraphy Album was put together suggests it served as a demonstration of Kalender’s mathematical skills, and it helped in his appointment as building supervisor to the Sultan Ahmed Mosque. That such an album, and competence in making it, should attest to Kalender’s suitability for the position indicates the continuing importance of the arts of the book. His previous reputation as a treasurer and his personal connections put him in good stead, but the album itself showcased his visual skills and set him apart from other bureaucrats.

Similarly, the album generally known as the Ahmed I Album (TPML, ms. B. 408) was also prepared by Kalender Paşa. In the preface, Kalender explains he had been charged with the task of gathering and arranging the calligraphy and paintings (hat, tasvir) that had been given to the sultan either as presents or as pleas for his generosity. In addition to the two albums, Kalender is also responsible for the Falname (Book of Omens; TPML, ms. H. 1703) made for Ahmed I. In the preface of the Falname, Kalender names himself as a member of the vizierial class, which dates the manuscript to the period starting with his appointment to the Imperial Council in 1614 and ending with his death in 1616. He tells how the text pages and painted leaves were gilded and written and gathered together, and then he arranged and illuminated them and presented the manuscript to the sultan as a gift. The vizier was closely involved with the production of the manuscript, arranging and illuminating the pages himself. Thus he continued to engage in artistic production even after his appointment to very high office.

These three prefaces go a long way towards clarifying the relationship between Kalender’s artistic and bureaucratic careers, yet he was not the first to combine them. Kalender Paşa was preceded by Nakkaş Hasan Paşa, the painter and artistic director whose career flourished in the court of Mehmed III (reigned 1595–1603). Nakkaş Hasan had also served in the privy chamber of Murad III (reigned 1574–95) and was involved as artist or supervisor in a large number of illustrated books. He left his service in the imperial palace with the title of kapıcıbaşı (chief gate keeper) in 1602 or 1603, was appointed as overseer of the foundry in 1605 with the title of vizier, and was involved in fighting against the Celali rebellions two years later. His military and administrative careers developed during the reign of Ahmed I, with his appointment to the Janissary corps in 1605. As he rose through the ranks, Nakkaş Hasan still produced designs on occasion, such as renovating a palace in Bursa and designing a lantern. He continued to be an important member of the ruling elite, was married to one of the daughters of Murad III, and still served as vizier under Osman II.
Nakkaş Hasan Paşa was responsible for developing a new visual style used in courtly Ottoman manuscripts at the end of the sixteenth century. He worked together with the historian Talikizade on imperial commissions detailing the reign of Mehmed III and his viziers. His paintings feature backgrounds that are more sparse than earlier Ottoman paintings, with fewer figures per page, and they are free of extraneous details. They also make use of large areas of flat, bold colors, such as orange and pink. In addition to his work with Talikizade, Hasan was the supervisor of the *Şiye-i Nebi*, the six-volume biography of the Prophet Muhammad, and he was responsible for many of its paintings. Two of the works discussed in this study bear traces of Hasan's involvement: one of the paintings from the *Fahname* has been attributed to him; and the *Vekayi-i Ali Paşa* (Adventures of Ali Paşa; Süleymaniye Mosque Library, hereafter SML, ms. Halet Efendi 612), which is entirely in his signature style.

The lives of Kalender Paşa and Nakkaş Hasan Paşa suggest that the hitherto separated spheres of the creators and enjoyers of artworks merged in the early seventeenth century. Artists began to benefit from the patronage of other palace grandees, as in the case of Kalender Paşa and Mustafa Ağğa, just as poets always had, and they received appointments and salaries through favors just as their literary colleagues had done for generations. In other words, the rules that seem to have governed patronage and camaraderie in the poetic realm began to apply to the visual arts. While Selim II and Murad III had kept poets, such as Şemsi Ahmed Paşa, as their boon companions and advisors, Mehmed III and Ahmed I enjoyed the presence of artists in their privy chambers. By the early seventeenth century, visual artists had acquired a certain status or prestige previously accorded only to literary talents. In the Imperial Council of the time, alongside viziers who rose through the ranks of the military were now Kalender Paşa, Nakkaş Hasan Paşa, and other figures who were presented in contemporary histories as having attained their posts due to their artistic or cultural accomplishments.

Far from declining or being abandoned, the arts of the book, in other words, were still a primary component of the cultural life of the Ottoman court. The change was in the types of books being created: the court of Ahmed I did not produce nearly as many illustrated histories as the previous generation. The reason for this is clearly not a lack of resources or a decline in the artistic and intellectual powers of the court, but rather a conceptual shift that pertains to the nature of illustrated books, which I will endeavor to demonstrate in the following section.

**From Books to Albums**

Two manuscripts, the *Divan* (Collected Poems) of Nadiri (TPML, ms. H 889) and the *Vekayi-i Ali Paşa* (Adventures of Ali Paşa), serve as transitional works between
the artistic practices of the late sixteenth century and those of the seventeenth. Their true nature only reveals itself when the books are examined in their entirety, with respect to their structure and their complete verbal and visual contents. Studied in this way, the two works point to a changing understanding of the illustrated history, and at the same time they evince a different conceptualization of the illustrated book as an object. The transitions observed in them come to fruition in the Fülname prepared for Ahmed I and are examined at the end of this section.

The Vekayi-i Ali Paşa is a project instigated by Malkoç (Yavuz) Ali Paşa, the first grand vizier of Ahmed I. Mehmed III had appointed him to the post of grand vizier while Ali Paşa served as governor of Egypt. By the time Ali Paşa reached Istanbul from Cairo, however, the sultan had died and had been replaced by his son Ahmed I, who confirmed his father's choice. Despite Ali Paşa's reluctance, Sultan Ahmed sent him on a campaign to Hungary, and the grand vizier died there in July 1604. His tenure in office covers a period of eighteen months, beginning with Ahmed I's accession in January 1603. The undated manuscript must have been illustrated sometime between Ali Paşa's appointment as governor general of Egypt in July 1601 and his death three years later. The account begins with Ali Paşa's appointment to the governorship of Egypt and includes various anecdotes from his tenure there. The author is a chancery scribe named Kelami, who was, according to his own words and the copy of the imperial decree he inserts into the account, instructed by Mehmed III to write Ali Paşa's hal tercimesi (biography). Even though it was illustrated during the reign of Ahmed I, this manuscript has its roots in an earlier period.

The manuscript reflects two previous developments in Ottoman historical writing, namely, a vizier rather than the sultan as the main protagonist, and a move away from the traditional military-heroic mode of eulogy to one that emphasizes qualities such as justice, fair rule, and pomp and circumstance. By relating the activities of a single non-imperial protagonist, it mimics earlier works, such as the Nusretname (Book of Victory, 1584; TPML, ms. H. 1365) and the Tarih-i Feth-i Yemen (History of the Conquest of Yemen, 1594; Istanbul University Library, ms. T. 6045). In contrast to these works, however, the Vekayi-i Ali Paşa does not focus on military endeavors. This might be interpreted as a reflection of developments in imperial iconography in sixteenth-century manuscripts, such as the Surname (Festival Book, circa 1588; TPML, ms. H. 1344) or the Zübdetü't-tevarih (Quintessence of Histories, 1583; Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, ms. 1973), which had also moved away from depicting the Ottoman sultan as a military hero and instead emphasized his generosity, piety, and justice. The glorified qualities of Ali Paşa demonstrate that by the early seventeenth century the new image of the sultan must have been established enough for his deputies to be commended in parallel terms.
Instead of conquering new territories as his predecessors had done, the governor is now depicted in procession from the Topkapi, administering justice or engaged in prayer.  

Of the seven illustrations in Vekayi-i Ali Paşa, the first three depict the formal ceremonial events surrounding his appointment by Mehmed III. To illustrate the various anecdotes and stories in the following text, which demonstrate that “the Nile flows with plenty of water when there is justice in Egypt,” Ali Paşa is next shown sailing on the Nile. The final three illustrations attest to Ali Paşa’s qualities as a governor. He is depicted supervising the execution of a rebel, praying with the community at the Muqattam hills, and wandering the Bulaq area at night in disguise (fol. 24b, 25a, and 56b; figs. 1–3). He clearly represents the sultan’s authority in the Egyptian province as he projects the power of the state in his administrative roles.

The description of Ali Paşa’s grand vizierate provided by the seventeenth-century chronicler Topçular Katibi Abdülkadir indicates this imagery extended beyond the realm of illustrated manuscripts. Abdülkadir praises Ali Paşa for controlling prices and bringing about abundance. He commends the way Ali Paşa roams the streets of the capital day and night so that the rule of law is guaranteed and security reigns. He writes that the grand vizier ensures festivities throughout the month of Ramadan by punishing those who close their shops or coffeehouses, and he personally guarantees remuneration for stores that remain open. In an echo of Kelami’s work, Abdülkadir also describes Ali Paşa walking through the city in disguise every evening through the month of Ramadan, checking on stores and coffeehouses. He presents Ali Paşa as attending closely to the application of sharia, earning the respect of his soldiers, and filling the coffers of the treasury. The populace would take refuge in the palace of the grand vizier who righted wrongs. He was both merciful to the poor and generous to his people, and he made sure the Janissaries were paid promptly and well. In short, Abdülkadir casts Ali Paşa as the ideal grand vizier, and he presents an image of him that is in accord with Kelami’s description in being lawful, just, magnanimous, and pious. In terms of the final image it creates for its patron, Vekayi-i Ali Paşa agrees with other accounts of his career.

The general character of the text, however, is a departure. It is not a straightforward, chronological account of events but instead is arranged thematically and includes divergent poetic elements. The first half of the manuscript is a prose account, interspersed with Kelami’s own poems on relevant subjects. The prose alternates between a description of Egypt’s features and anecdotes from Ali Paşa’s activities. The second half is a collection of poems written during Ali Paşa’s tenure, gathered by the author upon his patron’s request. Not all of the poems relate to Ali Paşa; some are eulogies to the sultan, a few are addressed to a certain Silahdar
Mehmed Ağa, and one is for a Davud Paşa. Others are verse tales about great rulers who were loosely related to Egypt. Two other works emphasize the book's (and by extension, the patron's) connections to Egypt: a mathnawi by the Shafi'i scholar Şeyh Bekrizade Mehmed Zeyne'l-Abidin; and a qasida by Derviş Mehmed, the orator of the al Azhar mosque. The inclusion of these poems, as well as a collection of Arabic qasida, suggests Ali Paşa was engaged in the local literary scene during his tenure in Egypt and was a patron of local scholars and poets.

Vekayi-i Ali Paşa serves to demonstrate Ali Paşa's good governorship in a variety of ways. The anecdotes in the prose section and the paintings attest to his justice, kindness, and diligence. The collection of poetry appended to the manuscript proves his literary and scholarly patronage. The book gives a multilayered presentation of his rule, and with the juxtaposition of prose, poetry, and visual imagery, it creates a vivid portrait of the governor as a good administrator, a pious man, and a generous patron. In this way, Ali Paşa partakes in the dynamics of self-fashioning set up in the sixteenth-century Ottoman court, where being a courtier had come to equal being a patron of poets and artists. The book that helps him do this, however, departs in its structure and contents, if not in its message, from the eulogistic works of the sixteenth century.

Neither the story line nor the illustrations provide a linear account of Ali Paşa's tenure in Egypt. While the first three illustrations relate to specific moments in Ali Paşa's appointment (that is, receiving the decree from Mehmed III, the announcement of his appointment in Kara Meydan, and setting out from the imperial palace), the other four relate to the themes of the text. Not anchored with specifics, they are rather generic images. The audience scene where the rebel Perviz is beheaded, for example, is filled with unidentified officials surrounding Ali Paşa and is set against a background of portable tents that could have been located anywhere (fig. 1). The only connection to the actual context of Egypt is suggested by the two date palms in the distance. The same thing is true of Ali Paşa praying in the Muqattam hills or visiting Bulaq (fig. 3). The date palms are not even there.


for the bland landscape that forms the backdrop for his boat trip on the Nile (fig. 2). Only the most basic information is provided in the paintings, which extend the stylistic developments of the late sixteenth century, following the style of Nakkaş Hasan Paşa.

The images are loosely connected to the text, another departure from sixteenth-century precedents. For example, poems inserted just before the images of Ali Paşa on his boat on the Nile and as he prays in the Muqattam hills break the link between the verbal and visual description of events that is so tight in sixteenth-century histories. The poem in the first instance is thematically relevant but is not a direct account of the festivities. In the second case, the poem praises Sultan Mehmed III and has little to do with the illustrated scene. These disjunctures could perhaps be linked with the production of the book. All the paintings are on thicker sheets of paper than the other pages of the manuscript, which indicates they were created on separate sheets and glued into the book later. This would also explain the misplacement of the painting depicting the punishment of the rebel Perviz, which appears twelve folios after the written mention of the event. Blank pages on the reverse of the paintings would result from such a process. Additionally, on those folios that do have illustrations on one side and text on the other, the text appears more faint than the rest of the manuscript, either because the reverse of the paintings were prepared differently and did not take the ink as well as the other pages, or because the text was simply written separately from the rest of the manuscript, possibly with different ink.

One earlier Ottoman manuscript whose paintings were produced separately from its text is known, namely, Talikizade’s account of Mehmed III’s campaign to the Hungarian stronghold of Eger, which was illustrated by none other than Hasan Paşa. The fact that the paintings in that manuscript have gilded decoration on the
reverse has been interpreted as a measure to speed up production. If the pages were illustrated at the same time as the scribe was working on the text, they had to be created on individual folios.\textsuperscript{36} The same could be true of Ali Paşa’s book.

The separate production of the painted pages and their eventual collation with the book hints at the conceptualization of a manuscript not as a single unit but rather as an aggregate of individual pages.\textsuperscript{37} All manuscripts certainly consisted of individual folios that were collated after they were written and decorated. These paintings differ in that they apparently were done on folios that did not originally contain any text. This is a significant change from earlier Ottoman manuscripts with linear narratives, where the text was written out with spaces left for illustrations that, when later painted, closely echoed the adjacent words. This more traditional method produced seamless books in which, at least on the surface, the text and the images were integrated into the same rhythm and contributed to one dominant narrative. The close attention to proximity, or juxtaposition, of word and image that enables the tight weaving of such a single dominant narrative was abandoned here. Instead, a different kind of relationship is evident among the various components of the book. \textit{Vekayi-i Ali Paşa} embodies an enriched narrative, with a collage of paintings, poems, and anecdotes that comes together in a looser fashion than a tightly linear account. It becomes possible to weave multiple stories through this structure, and the strict control of interpretation found in sixteenth-century illustrated histories is abandoned here in favor of various potential readings.

Similarly enhanced narratives emerge in the creative combination of words and images in another quasi-historical book dating to the reign of Ahmed I: the \textit{Divan} of Nadiri (TPML, ms. H. 889).\textsuperscript{38} Here, narrative images are interspersed with poems that praise the main protagonists of the works but do not actually describe the specific events that are presented visually. The eight paintings depict scenes from the lives of the sultans Murad III, Mehmed III, and Ahmed I, as well as the important figures of their courts, that is, Koca Sinan Paşa, Şeyhülislam Mustafa Efendi, Gazanfer Ağa, and Mirahur Ali Ağa.

Many of these figures were patrons of the poet Nadiri.\textsuperscript{39} Indeed, in the introduction to the manuscript Gazanfer Ağa and Mirahur Ali Ağa are mentioned as being the poet’s protectors and intercessors on his behalf at the imperial court. He had also been employed as a professor at Gazanfer Ağa’s madrasa and had been trained by Hoca Sadeddin, one of the most powerful figures at the court of Murad III and Mehmed III, where he had served as a tutor and close advisor to both rulers.\textsuperscript{40} Nadiri also had associations with the Naqshbandiya, a Sufi group that had support at the Ottoman court. His father had been a Naqshbandi, and Nadiri himself is buried near the small mosque of the Naqshbandi master Hoca Abdı Çelebi.\textsuperscript{41} The
illustrations in his Divan are attributed to the painter Ahmed Nakçi, whose name hints at a similar religious context. Obviously Nadiri was part of a strong spiritual and political network at court.

The paintings in Nadiri’s Divan are significantly more detailed than those in the Vekayi-i Ahı Paşa and are anchored with specifics of architecture, dress, and landscape. The excursion of Ahmed I to Edirne, for example, contains an image of the Selimiye Mosque so no mistake can be made about where the young sultan is headed (fol. 10a; fig. 4). The depiction of Gazanfer Ağa en route to his madrasa not only details the multiple domes of the building and its location at the foot of the Aqueduct of Valens, but it even includes an inscription over the door that identifies it as such (fol. 22a; fig. 5).

Due to its chronological arrangement and the information it provides about Nadiri’s main patrons and the significant events in their lives, the Divan of Nadiri might be understood as an illustrated history, but it relies much more heavily on the images than on the text to propel the narrative. It is an illustrated history in that it provides paintings of events from history, but it is not an illustrated text, because the paintings do not depict events described by the poetry. Paintings in this Divan work independently of the text and are complete in themselves. Illustration per se is
not their main purpose, and they are no longer subordinate to the verbal accounts contained in the book. Text and image instead act as equal partners in conveying the meaning; they complete one another. The poem surrounding Gazanfer’s image, for example, relates to him, but it is not about a specific trip he took to the madrasa. The verbal and the visual thus provide a richer portrait of the person and the building being praised. The depiction of Ahmed I is also among poems that eulogize him, but they do not mention a trip to Edirne. This is gathered purely from the image and from what is known in other accounts.

Viewers, then, are asked to draw upon previous knowledge of the events being depicted, either from personal experiences or from other accounts they might have read. The paintings serve to trigger memories from elsewhere, and they encourage viewers to bring them to bear on the specific book before their eyes. The Nadiri Divan takes the development observed in the Ali Paşa narrative even further. As the images become more prominent, they serve as the main drivers of the story. Thematic links between the poems and the images allow for the multiple readings suggested by the Adventures of Ali Paşa, and once again image and verse come together to provide a fuller version of a story than either one could do on its own.

The Nadiri Divan is unusual when compared against both illustrated histories from the Ottoman court and illustrated poetic compilations that were made in smaller numbers earlier in the sixteenth century. The poetic compilations were illustrated with paintings that loosely echo themes evoked in the poetry, but they were rarely, if ever, connected with a specific moment in recent history. What is unusual about the Divan of Nadiri is the choice of historical subjects for the paintings. Perhaps the looser links between text and image have cognates within anthologies and albums, but the subject matter of the paintings calls for a comparison with illustrated histories, and in their company the Divan of Nadiri points to new developments.
The illustrated manuscript of the *Falname* that Kalender Paşa presented to Ahmed I builds on the new image-word relationship identified above in the Nadiri *Divan* and the *Vekayi-i Ali Paşa* (fols. 37b–38a, 20b; figs. 6 and 7). Here, too, painting and text have different subject matter, but they build upon each other. In another parallel to the *Divan* of Nadiri, a text that is not historical in nature comes to serve as a history because of the paintings in it. In the preface, Kalender Paşa explains that he compiled stories and images of prophets, saintly men, and past kings so they would guide the sultan by example. He claims it is especially necessary for sultans and other great rulers to learn from the actions of exceptional men of the past. This is the same kind of justification found in many biographical or historical works from the medieval and early modern Islamic world, which suggest the purpose of history is to teach by analogy. The *Falname*, too, by drawing its subject matter from Islamic and Abrahamic traditions, eschatology, and the lives of sages, heroes, and villains known in the Islamic world through literary, religious, and historical contexts, works by analogy. It points to parallels between the lives of the protagonists of its paintings and the lives of the readers of the book. Given the illustrations of prophets and past kings that decorate its pages and embody its auguries, the *Falname* can fruitfully be considered a work of religious history, in a similar vein to the *Qisas al-anbiya* (Stories of the Prophets) manuscripts. What is extraordinary here (and echoes the *Divan* of Nadiri) is that the paintings—rather than the text—are the bearers of history.

The manuscript is arranged in such a way that every opening contains an image on the right-hand page, with text on the left (fig. 6). The reader who posed a question opened the book at random and deduced an answer from the corresponding augury. Each left-hand page begins by declaring whose story appears there, but it does not go into the details of the story, and it only serves to identify the protagonist. The rest of the text is a series of pronouncements about whether this omen is auspicious for going to war, getting married, buying a new house, embarking on a business venture, and so on. One image (fig. 6), for example, depicts Alexander
of Macedonia and his companion as they encounter the Waqwaq tree during the hero’s search for eternal life. The image shows the two men and the magical tree; the text, however, only refers to the tree and does not mention Alexander. To the reader familiar with Persian literature, however, the encounter of Alexander (Iskandar) with the talking tree is so well known that it does not need a caption to be understood. On the other hand, the implications of the Waqwaq tree on major life decisions, such as marriage, buying a house, or making the pilgrimage to Mecca, are given in detail in the written augury on the left-hand page.

In the Falname, the full story of the historical or mythical figure to whose life the omen draws parallels is provided in the details of the painting. The history, therefore, is contained in the images and not the text, and it depends on the viewer’s knowledge of other texts and images to be understood properly. In fact, more than accompanying the text, the images give it living form and illuminate the details of the story at which the words only hint. The book needs both the image and the word to function effectively: the painting contains the story that is supposed to expound on the text so the reader may properly interpret the augury. The emphasis Kalender places on the illustrations—not only by assigning them the duty of carrying the story but also by highlighting the paintings by devoting each right-hand page to them, the first page when reading from right to left—is of particular importance for the transition from manuscripts to albums that I have been outlining.

Images in the Falname are much greater in size than any others created for a manuscript in the Ottoman court. The figures in bright colors, rather large in proportion to the picture plane, render the action easy to read from a distance. The scale and the bold compositions relate to a group of oversized images of Ottoman sultans or prophets, such as Moses, Aaron, or Hamza, found in other albums in the Topkapı. These paintings (most are in the range of 40 by 25 centimeters) illustrate the stories of prophets, much like the way images in the Falname were used for picture recitations. Similar paintings sometimes accompanied the performance of the Shahname in coffeehouses where storytellers entertained the public with selections from the famous epic. A related practice was observed in the sultan’s court. During the 1597 circumcision feast of the sons of the grand vizier Cerrah Mehmed Paşa, for example, guests were entertained with music and storytelling accompanied by images that illustrated the stories. It is very likely, therefore, that the Falname itself was used in a group setting with an oral component, perhaps for entertainment as much as for edification or prognostication.

Such an interpretation of the Falname also finds support in its potential sources. In addition to the thematic parallels mentioned above, the manuscript also has stylistic similarities to the illustrated copies of the Qisas al-anbiya (Stories of the
Prophets). These, too, were books with the multiple functions of education and entertainment, thus merging the genres of historical and devotional writing. Many of the paintings in Ahmed I’s *Falname* most recently have been attributed to a Safavid context, circa 1580, and were incorporated into the book by Kalender. Even the illustrations ascribed to the Ottoman context are based on a mixture of sources, suggesting Kalender Paşa had significant access to the Topkapı treasury collection. Filiz Çağman has already demonstrated that Kalender, or the artists working with him, were inspired by the Timurid-Turkman albums in the Topkapı’s collections. It is also known that Ahmed I perused the albums containing Ilkhanid, Timurid, and Safavid material in the Topkapı collections and made annotations in the margins.

Perhaps the relationship between the text and the images of the *Falname* was also derived from the albums in the Topkapı. They, too, included works that did not follow texts but instead stood on their own, creating meaning through relationships with other images. The conceptualization of the *Falname* very well could have been inspired by independent images in albums that construct narratives for practice and learning. The large sizes of the *Falname* images are also more in keeping with album folios than with book pages. Ahmed’s fondness for the albums may have easily dissuaded Kalender from presenting an illustrated book to the sultan and instead encouraged him to create the *Falname* as a hybrid “book-album.”

The most important explanation for the image-text relationship in the *Falname* is the prognosticative genre to which it belongs. Ahmed I’s book of auguries is one of a handful of *Falname* codices from the Islamic world of the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, all of which have a similar format of image on one page accompanied by text on the facing page. The texts, however, differ in the extent to which they discuss the illustrated story. In general the genre has affinities with albums, and this may be due to the contexts in which *Falname* manuscripts flourished. Of the three extant *Falname* manuscripts from the Safavid context, one of them most likely belonged to Shah Tahmasb. The Safavid court of the late sixteenth and seventeenth century was a place where the art of making albums was highly prized. Thus across the Islamic world, the popularity of albums and the *Falname* seems to have risen in tandem.

All three manuscripts examined here—*Vekayi-i Ali Paşa*, the *Divan* of Nadiri, and the *Falname*—explicitly demonstrate that relationships between the visual and written elements of a manuscript build upon the viewing context and the audience, that is, a combination of visual and verbal analysis, knowledge of forms and texts outside the physical confines of the manuscript in question, and an audience that collectively—probably through oral communication—deciphered the meanings embedded in the works of art. While many Ottoman manuscripts drew upon the
sophistication of such an audience, the album-like books examined here make such knowledge indispensable. Earlier books also revealed greater nuances for the initiated reader, but the uninformed could still read the text and follow at least the main story through word and image. The reader of Nadiri’s Divan would have to know the stories of the paintings in order to understand them in their entirety, and those stories are not provided between the covers of the book. Those consulting the Falname would have to be equally knowledgeable of the stories of the Old Testament prophets and figures from Islamic mythology to understand the auguries found in the book. In other words, these early seventeenth-century books exclusively address a reading/viewing public that could use them in an inter-textual manner, recalling other books or images to make sense of what is in front of them. This exclusivity suggests a smaller, more intimate audience than the groups that gathered to view sixteenth-century histories.

These shifts in the conception of the role of images link the manuscripts examined thus far with the more popular art form of the seventeenth century: the album. Images and texts come together in thematically related ways, with each component of the album serving as an independent work of art that also contributes to the overall meaning of the final object. That the Vekayi-i Ali Paşa and the Divan of Nadiri are as much collections of poetry as they are narrative works also helps to situate them between books and albums. The enriched narrative found in all three works, based on the independent functioning of painting, poetry, and prose, brings them in line with the later products of the seventeenth century. The examination of these three intermediary works suggests the move to albums corresponded with changing notions of the book and illustrated histories. It might even be asserted that the new books were predicated on a more sophisticated relationship between word and image than the linear narratives of the sixteenth-century histories.

**Albums and Stylistic Multiplicity**

Of the two albums Kalender Efendi prepared for Ahmed I, the first one, called the Calligraphy Album, consists of examples of calligraphy and illumination (TPML, ms. H. 2171, fol. 33a; fig. 8). The better-known Ahmed I Album includes paintings and drawings in addition to calligraphy (TPML, ms. B. 408, fol. 24b; fig. 9). The two albums are of the same size and are embellished with similar illuminations and borders. These albums still deserve further study to extract the various narratives embodied in their kaleidoscopic contents. Being collections of calligraphies, paintings, and drawings, they do not tell simple narrative stories. As has been demonstrated for albums of the Timurid and Safavid contexts, these collections instead are embedded with narratives of art history or messages about collection and connoisseurship, or art and dominion. Much-needed analytical research into
Ottoman albums, beyond the limits of this paper, doubtlessly will tease out such stories. Their specific messages aside, however, the albums of Ahmed I are highly informative about other aspects of the arts of the book in the Ottoman court of the early seventeenth century.

According to its preface, the Calligraphy Album was prepared to demonstrate Kalender's knowledge of "geometry and construction." These skills, implicit in the physical appearance of the album, are the result of Kalender's handiwork. In addition to his skills in margin setting, however, the contents of the album also attest to his cultural prowess and capacity for aesthetic discernment, since he is the one who selected what was to be included here. These abilities were equally significant for securing him the position of overseer for the construction of the sultan's mosque. Kalender's knowledge of calligraphy identified him as a man of learning allied with the Ottoman elite and worthy of a position at the royal court. The contents of the album, in turn, reveal the preferences of Ottoman courtiers: the calligraphies are predominantly by Herati or Khurasani artists of the late sixteenth century. Enthusiasts of Ottoman calligraphy in the early seventeenth century clearly still preferred a Persian-dominated aesthetic in albums, although one tempered by the contributions of local artists, such as a certain Fahri of Bursa, who is identified in the handwritten curatorial notes of Fehmi Edhem Karatay about the album in the registrar's book in the Topkapi Library. The notes probably date to the mid-twentieth century.

The calligraphy album, with its selections by Herati and Khurasani calligraphers alongside those of local artists, presents an open appreciation for a multiplicity of
styles. This plurality is contrary to the self-conscious and identifiable Ottoman visual idiom in the illustrated histories of the late sixteenth century. The books produced by the office of the şehnâmeçî codified an official portrait of the Ottoman court that was stylistically unified with, and self-consciously different from, Timurid or Safavid manuscripts. The albums, however, attest to the wide-ranging aesthetic and intellectual interests of Ottoman courtiers.66 A taste for Persianate aesthetics could be contained within the album tradition, while the illustrated histories deliberately moved towards an “Ottoman” style.67

The Ahmed I Album includes works in an even broader array of styles than the Calligraphy Album. In addition to calligraphic specimens, it also contains figure studies and pages from dispersed manuscripts (fig. 9). While the calligraphic examples in both albums privilege the Persian aesthetic and include more nastalıq works than those of naskh, which was used most often in Ottoman books, the paintings in the Ahmed I Album vary significantly in style as well as origin. Included among the diverse groupings are single figure or costume studies, portraits of various sultans, narrative paintings that appear to have been extracted from Safavid, Uzbek, or Ottoman copies of Persian paintings.

The Ahmed I Album has been interpreted as an early example of the interest in costume albums that prevailed among Ottomans and Europeans during the later
seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Until the seventeenth century, costume albums had been prepared mostly for a European audience. Such interest in costume types attests to continued Ottoman participation in a cultural dialogue with neighbors to the west, and perhaps it indicates the court's interest in what local artists were creating for a foreign market. The paintings of Ottoman sultans in the Ahmed I Album draw upon previous courtly productions, but the figure studies of "types" suggest an interest in the more popular forms of painting that apparently were circulating in Istanbul at the time. Thus from Persianate calligraphic specimens to figure studies inspired by European costume books, the albums of Ahmed I display the broad range of styles and subject matter that fed the visual universe of Ottoman manuscripts. That the multiple aesthetic sources were allowed to come through in the albums but not in dynastic histories indicates they were perceived to have different functions, perhaps even different audiences. The contrasting aesthetic rules governing the production of albums and historical manuscripts therefore suggest yet another reason for the move away from the illustration of histories. That one type of artistic product flourished in the seventeenth century and the other did not might be connected to their diverging roles.

The visibility of broad influences on the Ottoman court's artistic productions also resonates with similar developments in the rest of the seventeenth-century Islamic world. In the Safavid Empire, and especially in the city of Isfahan, making albums was widely practiced among the merchant and courtly classes of the time. These albums also incorporated studies of single figures juxtaposed with examples of calligraphy and narrative scenes. The Ahmed I Album points to Ottoman awareness of this phenomenon and to the Ottoman court's participation in cultural trends of the wider Islamic world. Such parallel developments might be related to renewed contacts between the Ottomans and the Safavids during the wars of the early seventeenth century. Although album making in the Ottoman court as well as in the Perso-Islamic cultural sphere had been practiced in earlier years, the art form emerged as a preferred genre, in both Ottoman and Persian contexts, in the seventeenth century. Further research on this period should consider a broader range of cultural production to identify what was being created at the imperial court. Given the traditionally close connection between literature and painting in the Islamic world, any study of this period must take into account the concurrent changes in literary style, which is referred to as ściw-e-taze (fresh idiom) in contemporary texts.

Conclusion

It is telling that during the reign of Ahmed I, a sultan so intent on shaping his image after that of his grand ancestor Suleyman I, not a single illustrated account of his years on the throne was produced. After all, it was illustrated histories, such as the
Süleymanname or the Hünername, that had shaped the perception of Süleyman for future generations. Ahmed chose to limit his emulation of Süleyman to constructing a mosque that mimics the Süleymaniye, renovating the Ka’ba, and engaging in other pious acts reminiscent of his great-great-grandfather. Clearly illustrated histories were not considered appropriate for some reason—and I doubt it was due to the lack of heroic deeds on Ahmed’s part. That fact had not stopped Murad III, who never even left his palace after acceding to the throne, from being the most enthusiastic patron of illustrated histories among the Ottomans. Something else had changed, and it might well be related to the artistic climate and changes in the way books were used, or it could be associated with the lack of interest in certain types of narratives. It is important to note, however, that the illustrated book was not abandoned altogether. There were clearly moments, such as during the reign of Osman II, when an old-fashioned heroic account seems to have been preferred over the more flexible juxtaposition of word and image.\(^{72}\)

Whatever their ultimate source or purpose, however, the albums and books of the early seventeenth century present a rather different place for illustrations than had the previous period. The growing independence of image from the written word, exemplified structurally by the Vekayi-i Ali Paşa and functionally by the Divan of Nadiri, heralded the perception of a new role for paintings. The albums of Ahmed I and the Fethname point to the gradual abandonment of the text-based painting tradition of the sixteenth century, where images “illustrate” history, and the move to an artistic atmosphere in which images take an equal part in conveying messages. This rather sophisticated treatment of the image likely correlates to the presence of visual artists in the gatherings at which the albums were perused. The centrality of artists, as represented by the careers of Kalender Paşa and Nakkaş Hasan Paşa, may not have continued into the later part of the century, but the enhanced regard for the expressive qualities of images certainly remained, as attested by the rising popularity of albums among the Ottoman elite in the ensuing two centuries.

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NOTES

1. Recently scholars have begun to focus on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as periods worthy of evaluation on their own terms. See, for example, Tülin Değirmenci, "Resmedilen Siyaset: II. Osman Devri (1618–1622) Resimli Elyazmalarında Değişen İktidar Sembollerî" (PhD diss., Hacettepe University, Ankara, 2007); and Tülay Artan, "Arts and Architecture," in Sureyia N. Faraqhi, ed., The Cambridge History of Turkey: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 408–81.

2. For an overview of Ottoman album production, see Banu Mahir, "XVI. Yüzyıl Osman Nâkıdasınesinde Murâkka Yapımculuğu," Uluslararası Sanat Tarihi Sempozyumu. Prof. Dr. Günül Öney'e Armağan (İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Sanat Tarihi Bölümü, 2002), 401–17; and Serpil Bağcı, Filiz Çağman, Günsel Renda, and Zeren Tanıdö, Osmanlı Resim Sanatı (Istanbul: T. C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2006), 225–41. David B. Roxburgh, The Persian Album 1400–1600: From Dispersal to Collection (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 317–20, analyzes relations among the Ottoman and the Timurid–Turkman and Safavid album traditions. The albums popularly known as the Fatih Albums were Turkman in origin, with Ottoman additions; see Julian Raby, "Mehmed II Fatih and the Fatih Album," Islamic Art 1 (1981): 42–49. Master's theses by Zeynep Çelik Ataş and Ali Nihat Kundakç on Ottoman albums at Istanbul Mimar Sinan University would also have been of use, but they were unavailable to the author.


8. Artan, "Arts and Architecture," 416. Artan suggests Kalender Paşamight have been associated with antinomian mystics because of the similarity of his name to the term for these groups, or he had made his way to the capital from areas under Safavid influence.


10. TPML, ms. H. 2171, fol. 20b: "ihv-i hendese mîhîr ve icâd-i çevâ-i tarih ve
sazide Serpil Topçular ü Peçevî, Nakkaş Zeren İbid., Kelâml, TPML, TPML, Bagci TPML, Ibid., 1612, 1176–83.


12. Ibid., 411–12.


15. Ibid., 1703, fol. 5b: zîkru’l-‘ulûm evâkû ‘elvâh-i nunşavere müzelêdeh ve mühalere cen’ ü tevînî ü tertiîb ü tezîyin idîb ma’râq-ü hümâyûnînara’r-‘ezîdîdû.


19. Ibid., 411–12.


23. This concept is explored by Roxburgh, *Persian Album*, 181–243, for the Safavid sphere.

24. It is important to note, however, that one of Selim II’s boon companions during his days as a prince was the artist and poet Nigar. His literary skills may have gained him entrance to Selim II’s intimate circle. See Bağcı et al., *Osmana Resim Sanat›*, 83–89, for Nigar’s paintings and career.

25. Zeren Tanrıpour, “*Transformation of Words to Images: Portraits of Ottoman Courtiers in the Diwans of Baki and Nadir*,” Res 43 (Spring 2003): 131–45, identifies the contents of the paintings in Nadir’s Divan and discusses how the artist must have added information he knew firsthand or from other chronicles since the poems in the Divan do not relate to the events being depicted. The *Adventures of Ali Paşa* was first published in F. Çağman and N. Atasoy, *Turkish Miniature Painting* (Istanbul: R.C.D. Cultural Institute, 1974), 64, fig. 40. See also Bağcı et al., *Osmana Resim Sanat›*, 209, fig. 172.


30. Fetcîvi, “*Viziers to Eunuchs*,” 210–50; Bağcı et al., *Osmana Resim Sanat›*, 131–41, 143–47. *Sarnâmé-i Hümâyûn* (Imperial Festival Book; TPML, ms. H. 1344) is the account of the festival accompanying the future Mehmed III’s circumcision. *Zübdeî’t-tevârîh* (Quintessence of Histories; Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, ms. 1973, TPML, ms. H. 1321, and Chester Beatty Library, ms. T. 441) is a universal history.

31. SML, Hafet Efendi 612, fols.9b–10a, 24b–25a, 32b.

32. SML, Hafet Efendi 612, fol. 61a.

33. See, for example, Emine Fetcîvi, “*Production of the Şehnâme-i Selim Han*, *Muqarnas* 26 (2009): 263–315, for an analysis of these relationships in Selim II.

34. The incorrect binding of the current folios 25 and 26 also add to this disjuncture. The depiction of Perviz’s punishment on folio 25a probably belongs earlier in the book, where the story is actually recounted. Its insertion here creates a break in the text, and the blank side on the reverse of folio 26a must be explained by the incorrect binding.

35. TSK H. 1609, Bağcı et al., *Osmana Resim Sanat›*, 179–83.

36. Ibid., 180.
In Nadiri Fetvaci, Fetvaci, See Nurhan Ibid., Numan (1982): from ENRICHED TPML, Filiz The Tamndi, 40 Adventures suggested nonlinear ian been sixteenth ton, Studies of the Making of Kitab-khana at Mughal court in the late sixteenth century is another interesting comparative case. While the fact that the back sides of a few paintings from that manuscript have blank backgrounds has been convincingly shown to be the result of later manipulations, the Hamzanâma also has an important and relevant place in book history. Its folios were never bound together in codex format but simply kept together in boxes. See John Seyller, ed., The Adventures of Hamza: Painting and Story Telling in Mughal India (Washington, D.C., and London: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, in association with Azimuth Editions, 2002), 37. Thus, the nonlinear way of enjoying a book suggested by the structure of the Vekay-i Ali Paşa was also a feature of the Hamzanâma. It must be noted, however, that the text of the Hamzanâna is a much more straightforward, action-packed narrative than the Vekay-i Ali Paşa.

38 Tamandi, "Transformation of Words to Images," discusses some of the manuscripts.


40 Fetvaci, "Viziers to Eunuchs," 286.

41 Numan Külekçi, "Ganizade Nadiri" (PhD diss., Erzurum Atatürk University, 1985), 15.

42 Nadiri and Nakşî’s Naqshbandi connections are mentioned by Tamandi, "Transformation of Words to Images," 131–45.

43 TPML, ms. H. 889, fols. 4a, 6b–7a, 8b, 10a, 14a, 18b, 22a, 26a.

44 Bağci, Osmanlı Resim Sanatı, 40–66, discusses illustrated poetic works.

45 Farhad and Bağci, "The Falnama in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in Farhad with Bağci, Falnama, 30–31, also discuss the image-text relationship in Falnama manuscripts and liken them to albums.

46 Ibid., 30, quotes from the Falnama text: "The history of past nations is a manual for people and that it is appropriate to learn a lesson . . . from those who have preceded us."

47 Ibid., 34–37

48 For the illustrated Qisas al-anbiya see Rachel Milstein, Karin Rührdanz, and Barbara Schmitz, Stories of the Prophets: Illustrated Manuscripts of Qisas al-anbiya (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1999). The Qisas al-anbiya are also mentioned as comparanda in Farhad with Bağci, Falnama, 35, 38.

49 The Falnama measures 683 by 475 mm, while the closest comparison, Zübleti-i tevârîşî copy illustrated for Murad III, measures 650 by 420 mm.


53 These paintings appear to be precursors of single-page pictures of heroes that were used by the fortuneteller/painters mentioned by Evliya Çelebi. They present yet another connection to popular entertainment.

54 See Milstein, Rührdanz, and Schmitz, Stories of the Prophets.

55 Farhad with Bağci, Falnama, 43–75.

56 Filiz Çağman, "On the Contents of the Four Istanbul Albums H. 2152, 2153, 2154, and 2160," Islamic Art 1 (1982): 31–36. Çağman juxtaposes fols. 6b from the Falnama depicting "Şeyh Sâdi" with a Chinese painting from one of the earlier albums, H. 2154, fols. 150a and 123b. For the albums see Roxburgh, Persian Album, for Sâdi’s image in the Falnama see also Bağci et al., Osmanlı Resim Sanatı, 192–93.


58 See Roxburgh, Persian Album. Also see David Roxburgh, Prefacing the Image: The Writing of Art History in Sixteenth Century Iran (Brill: Leiden and Boston, 2001) for an explanation of how Timurid and Safavid albums function to tell histories of art and echo chains of transmission of knowledge.

59 Farhad with Bağci, Falnama, 41–76, esp. 46–50.

60 Roxburgh, Persian Album, 310, suggests that the relationship between the visual and verbal aspects of the albums were "predicated on visual analysis, introspection, and speech." The same idea is here expanded to apply to a larger corpus of material.
They are also similar to the size of the Fâhname, in fact, measuring 68 by 47 cm.

See their most recent treatment in Bağcı et al., Osmanlı Resim Sanatı, 225–38.

See Roxburgh, Persian Albums, 317–20, for possible explanations. Since Ottoman albums have not been examined with attention to their meaning and function, it is difficult to assert this with more specificity.

Zeynep Çelik Ataş and Gülendam Nakipoğlu of the Topkapı Palace Library were kind enough to show me the in-house notes of Fehmi Edhem Karatay on the album. He identified the calligraphers based on signatures.

A similar argument may be made for earlier albums, such as those of Murad III and Mehmed III. The Murad III album is described in detail by Aimee Froom, “A Muraqqā’ for the Ottoman Sultan Murad III (r. 1574–1595), Österreichisches Nationalbibliothek Codex Mixtus 313” (PhD diss., New York University, 2001). Mahir, “XVI. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Nakkaşhanesinde Murakka Yapımçılığı,” examines both the Murad III and Mehmed III (TPML, ms. H. 2165) Albums.

TWO PAGES FROM
THE LATE SHAHJAHAN ALBUM

Abstract
The two pages from the Late Shahjahan Album (Mughal India, circa 1650–58) discussed in this essay contain allegorical portraits of the first two Mughal rulers, Babur and Humayun, surrounded by elaborate figural borders. This detailed iconographic analysis raises issues of broad relevance for understanding the processes involved in creating Mughal albums as well as their informing principles and their place in relation to the Persianate album tradition. It addresses atelier practice, authorship, the way allegory was conceptualized in the Mughal context, the roles of landscapes and jewels in allegorical Mughal portraits, the relative chronology of Late Shahjahan Album pages, the function of Mughal albums, and the relevance of studying literature to recognizing the processes involved in creating and appreciating such works of art.

More specifically, it argues that existing scholarship, concerned for the most part with a preliminary categorization of the styles associated with individual periods, patrons, or painters, has necessarily focused on the recurrent iconographic themes of Shahjahani painting, and the ensuing narrative has possibly induced the misleading impression of overwhelming repetition, as opposed to the endless variations that probably dominated contemporary perception, in a complete parallel with literature. Some further directions are suggested for research that could provide additional insight into the connections between literature and painting.

But internal difference
Where the meanings are
— Emily Dickinson

THE RECENT EXHIBITION Muraqqa: Imperial Mughal Albums from the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (presented at various locations in the United States in 2008 and in Dublin in 2010) has provided scholars and the general public with an unprecedented opportunity to study and appreciate one of the world’s richest collections of seventeenth-century Mughal album pages. In the related catalogue, Elaine Wright and others not only contribute the most comprehensive discussion to date of a few particular albums, but for the first time they also address questions relevant for understanding Mughal albums as a broader phenomenon.

Over the past years I have been developing ideas on the subject myself, most notably on the so-called Late Shahjahan Album (hence, LSJA) as well as on the origins of the Mughal muraqqa. Wright’s pioneering effort now allows some of these ideas to be put in context. In this paper, I shall discuss two of the most complex LSJA pages and provide remarks of a more general scope in the process.
In her 1992 book on Mughal painters, Amina Okada discusses two album pages with posthumous portraits of the early Mughal rulers Babur and Humayun (figs. 1 and 2). (The portrait of Babur is in the Musée Guimet, Paris, while that of Humayun is in the collection of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.) The pages feature borders associated with the so-called LSJA, ascribed to the Mughal imperial atelier in the last years of Shahjahan’s reign (circa 1650–58), and possibly were once part of more than one album. While Okada’s argument in favor of an attribution of both principal images to Payag (who signed one of them) remains undisputed, her suggestion that the pages were originally paired was recently disproved. Wright’s comprehensive examination of surviving LSJA pages demonstrates that openings, in this most pictorial of albums, were designed in compliance with the principles of bilateral symmetry (qarina) that are characteristic of Shahjahani art and architecture. In this case, she convincingly argues that the figures in the outer borders differ significantly in size, posture, and placement, and therefore the pages could not have constituted a pair.
Page from the LSIA (ca. 1650–58) with a posthumous portrait of Humayun (ca. 1640?) in an idealized landscape. Opaque watercolor, ink, and gold on paper. Purchase—Smithsonian Unrestricted Trust Funds, Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program, and Dr. Arthur M. Sackler, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, S1986.400.

While endorsing this view, which disproves my original assumption, I still consider it fruitful to examine the two pages together. Their main images not only are by the same hand but also represent variations on a single theme, that of a ruler sitting in an idealized landscape and holding a jewel in his hand. As scholarly insight into albums progresses, it is increasingly clear that such variations were the norm rather than the exception, and they were one of the means by which the specific narrative of albums unfolded. These two paintings may well be chance survivors from a larger group of “dynastic pictures,” conceived together and subsequently “reconfigured” for inclusion in one or more albums, whose initial connection would not have been lost on the viewer. In their turn the borders allow comparison of the way different artists responded to similar images, and thus they provide glimpses into atelier practices that are potentially applicable to other LSIA pages, if not to Mughal albums at large.

The Main Images
My attention was first drawn to the page now in the collection of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery due to a rather unusual feature: Humayun is sitting close to a young.
plane tree that appears to have regrown after being cut back (fig. 2). A large plane
tree (occasionally a poplar) is frequently included in Timurid paintings from the
late school of Herat, where it might depict actual settings. In paintings produced
by later schools, the inclusion of a plane tree is usually interpreted as a manner-
ism—a relic of, or a quotation from, the Timurid style—but in this case, because
of its curious appearance, I would suggest it designates something more specific,
namely, the Timurid lineage itself. In Persian as in other languages a genealogical
“tree” (Pers. derakht) stands for a family, clan, or dynasty. The plane may have
been chosen for its perceived connection with the Timurid homeland as well as for
its longevity and potentially majestic proportions—qualities of which the Mughals
were well aware. The continuing importance of trees for Turkic peoples even after
Islamization should not be overlooked. In the dream foretelling the fortune of his
descendants, Osman visualizes his lineage as a large tree—possibly a plane—whose
shade “compassed the world.”

My reasons for making this connection have to do with another detail in the
painting: the sarpich, a headgear ornament held by Humayun, appears in a form
common in the mid-to-late seventeenth century rather than the sixteenth. The
artist’s main aim here is not historical accuracy, and for its part, the emperor’s like-
ness, closely modeled on a portrait painted during his lifetime, is endowed with
a sensible black egret sarpich. The jewel in Humayun’s hand is a different matter,
as is shown by comparing it with other seventeenth-century “allegorical portraits”
of deceased or living Mughal rulers. Alternating with other royal attributes, such
as the crown, the sarpich would seem to symbolize the transmission of power from
one member of the Timurid lineage to another. Examples are plentiful, and the
equally numerous objects used may well convey subtly different meanings—an
issue worthy of further consideration. Indeed, once this principle is acknowledged,
all images of rulers or princes “inspecting,” “presenting,” or “receiving” jewels (to or
from their offspring or officers) acquire additional interest.

On the basis of this combined information, we may plausibly hypothesize that
the young tree beside Humayun represents the Timurid lineage, whose florescence
in the Subcontinent—to pursue the vegetal metaphor—was severed by the Sur
takeover in 1540 (symbolized by the cut-off trunk) and restored several years later,
with Humayun’s return to Delhi in 1555 (represented by the tree’s new growth).
More specifically, the image may be interpreted as a celebration of the Timurids’
final triumph after their temporary setback, whereby royalty (nuulk, here signified
by the sarpich) was “restored” to their lineage (derakht, the tree). The idealized set-
ing consequently may be inferred to represent Hindustan.

The connection with Humayun’s temporary loss of the throne of Hindustan from
1540 to 1555 is reinforced by another curious detail: at variance with customary
practice that was duly adhered to in Babur's case, Humayun is shown seated on bare ground rather than on a folded felt rug. This apparent lapse in etiquette can be linked with at least two instances recorded in the chronicle written by Jawhar Aftabchi when Humayun actually found himself with nothing to sit on.

A possible visual parallel may be found in a contemporary painting ascribed to Dust Muhammad (also known as Dust-i Diwana), datable to circa 1546, and later mounted in Jahangir's Gulshan Album (fig. 3), where the customary paraphernalia of royal receptions—a carpet, cushions, and possibly a raised seat for the ruler—are rendered in solid rock. The painting records a historical event but is replete with allegorical and literary references. Although the "rock paraphernalia" in that instance might possibly allude to the hardship experienced by Humayun, the impression prevails of his figure being cast as Gayumarth, the mythical ruler of Iran, probably with an allegorical intent. In seventeenth-century Mughal art, we should expect similar processes to be at work, as it increasingly becomes clear patrons demanded paintings be more than mere descriptions, whether of historical events or of individuals. For this reason, the absence of a carpet in this painting should not be overlooked.

The two portraits otherwise mirror each other closely. They are consistent in size and were similarly enlarged to fit within the standard borders of the LSJA. In a process known from other seventeenth-century paintings, some archaizing
features are introduced to infuse them with Timurid flavor: a (now-tarnished) silver stream bordered by boulders and plants, a conventional mountain backdrop crowned by stylized trees, and a gold sky with clouds reminiscent of Chinese qi. Both Babur and Humayun appear with haloes, indicating their dignity as divinely ordained rulers. Each holds a jewel in his hand, and in both cases a tree figures prominently beside them.

While these paintings are in many ways unique within the surviving LSJA corpus, parallels may be suggested with other seventeenth-century Mughal works that help us trace some of the artists’ potential sources of inspiration. Among these is the closely similar composition (minus the mountain backdrop) that characterizes another imaginary portrait of a ruler in an earlier seventeenth-century Mughal album. This painting, executed under Jahangir, is now in the Wantage Album in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. It is inscribed as shabīl-i Shāh Tahmāsp, raqm-i Sahīfā Bānū (fig. 4). Only the clothes are after a sixteenth-century Safavid model; the remaining features are seventeenth-century Mughal. Payag’s pictures are doubtlessly more ambitious, but their close resemblance to Sahīfā Bānū’s work suggests a common source of inspiration, if not direct filiation. A certain similarity is also apparent with a figural šamsa inscribed as the work of Bihzad, preserved in an anthology copied in Herat in 1524 (fig. 5). The manuscript, now in the Freer Gallery of Art, was at one time in the imperial Mughal library and therefore potentially
was accessible to painters in Shahjahan’s atelier. Although the shape of the hillock is not the same, the trees and stream are very similar—indeed, they are more suited to the roundel than to the portrait format. Similar hillocks recur in various seventeenth-century “allegorical group portraits” of Timurid rulers, and it may be no coincidence that they serve as a backdrop for images unfolding dynastic discourse. Whether through an allusion to a physical landscape (the Timurid homeland, which lay beyond mountain ranges), or by reproducing conventions typical of Timurid painting, or both, they convey an atmosphere that is as Timurid as could possibly be achieved at that time. Only the lush vegetation bears the imprint of Payag and the hallmark of its time, but it is there for a purpose.

On closer look, the meadow is in its turn revealed as more than a landscape notation: fertility, abundance, and wealth must be implied, in a close parallel with the setting of Shahjahan’s early audience halls and their cypress-like columns and lavish floral carpets. Significantly, the boundaries of the lush green area, which contrast sharply with the barren mountain backdrop, are not outlined on the basis of illusionary principles, but instead rise up to encompass the emperors’ hands and the jewels they hold, in a remarkably effective visualization of the idea that prosperity emanates from the royal person. The fact that the stream in both cases circles around the rulers’ bodies—creating an “island” around them—is also rather unusual. (In the Bihzad roundel, the stream bends but does not form a circle.) This
deviation from standard iconography on the part of the painter may have been intended to convey some specific meaning, but I am unable to make a precise suggestion at this stage.

In addition, the jewel in Babur’s hand is a bâzûband, an ornament worn on the upper part of the arm and is believed to grant victory in battle. If we accept the idea that it also conveys some meaning, it may refer to the conquest of Hindustan and Babur’s related assumption of the title ghâzi. Again the shape of this bâzûband is Shahjahanī; and again, perhaps, this is not historical inaccuracy as much as a deliberate attempt to signal continuity from past to present. After all, like those of Humayun, Babur’s clothes are a plausible attempt at depicting dress from the later years of Timurid rule.

Babur’s left hand rests on a book, which must be the Bâburnāma. Its provision is consistent with other allegorical portraits of Babur datable to Shahjahanī’s reign. This may well be interpreted as an “attribute” embodying literary achievements and relating to the bâzûband paratactically, so as to characterize Babur as a warrior and writer, respectively. Let us consider for a moment, however, the possibility of it being a visual prompt for the narrative contained in it, one that connects the other visual components of the painting in a coherent syntax.

As with Humayun’s portrait, only an underlying narrative would account for some visual oddity in this painting, where the flowering tree is set so close to Babur that it seems to share the carpet with him, if not to spring directly from his body. For this reason I initially regarded it as an afterthought, but close examination disproved this possibility. Were this the work of a mediocre painter, it could be dismissed as an unsuccessful compositional device, but the artistic accomplishments of Payag force the consideration of other possibilities. Given that the tree seems to share the rug with Babur, it would be tempting to see it as yet another visualization of lineage, with its blossoms suggesting fruits to come. This conjecture is based on a “Western” type of allegorical reasoning, however, and for its part the visual grammar implies alternatives more in keeping with the Persianate tradition. From a formal point of view, the tree is rendered as a visual extension of Babur’s halo, and it similarly appears to emanate from his body—not unlike the flowery meadow, only more explicitly. A viewer familiar with Persianate pictorial language would have been challenged to read it, in the manner of a halo, as the visualization of an inner quality. If conversant with the Bâburnāma, the same viewer probably would have made a connection with Babur’s claim to have turned the dusty, orderless plains of Hindustan into a garden—the garden later celebrated by Shahjahan’s panegyrist as a mirror of the cosmic order. Thus the painting possibly provides a visual synthesis of Babur’s conquest of Hindustan and its transformation into an ordered realm, as related in the Bâburnāma.
A potentially complex narrative emerges from this brief analysis of Payag’s portraits of Babur and Humayun, one pertaining to the dynastic discourse cherished by Shahjahan and visualized by means of a combination of attributes and landscape elements. No detail seems superfluous: the whole picture resonates with coherent imagery. The response elicited from the viewer is remarkably similar to the challenge posed by certain kinds of riddles: three clues must be identified before an answer is safe to pronounce. One clue is straightforward—this must have been the case with the jewels. Another clue is provided by a deliberate lapse—the missing rug and the misplaced flowering tree. A third and final clue—the cut plane tree and the book—triggers a narrative that binds everything together. This impression is further confirmed by an analysis of the borders, and it is to these that I now turn my attention.

The Borders
Evidence that the two paintings were entrusted to different artists (or teams of artists) for inclusion in the LSJA, substantiating the claim that they formed part of distinct openings, is found in the areas that were added in order to bring them to a size suitable for their double set of borders. In the Guimet page, atmospheric clouds derived from European art were added at the top and the stream and meadow were plausibly continued at the bottom, whereas in the Sackler page the artist seems to have proceeded more rapidly, using plain gold above and a brown wash, suggestive of arid ground, below. Payag’s paintings already show diverging features: the hillock is painted gray in one case, yellow in another. Given that color consistency seems to be a major concern in the pairing of images within the LSJA, it is possible that the portraits were not conceived to be viewed together from the outset but instead formed part of a more elaborate sequence, as suggested by Wright. A possible objection to her hypothesis that Babur once faced Timur is that the latter’s positioning on the left-hand side seems to have been contrary to practice. As far as I am aware, where Timur is concerned, Mughal painting seems to comply with the logic of writing, signalling the ancestor’s “precedence” by invariably placing him to the right (and/or having him look to the viewer’s left). It must be noted, however, that Wright presents some evidence of other possibly paired paintings where the recipient of imperial authority is indeed placed on the right. Both arrangements may well have been acceptable.

After enlargement, each portrait was framed within two borders, with an inner one bearing tiny gold floral designs on a peach ground and an outer one comprising the figural designs characteristic of the LSJA group. Imperial portraits such as these are typically framed by figures arranged in a hierarchy of levels, with human beings occupying an intermediate space between angels above, holding royal
attributes, and animals (or occasionally servants) below in various attitudes. By contrast, non-royal subjects are as a rule surrounded by human figures exclusively, and in no instance are they accompanied by angels.\textsuperscript{35}

It is commonly assumed that these borders postdate Payag's paintings by several years;\textsuperscript{36} they unquestionably differ in authorship between themselves as well as from the main images. Disclosing the identity of the hands that painted them is no easy task. To my knowledge, the issue has never seriously been raised in relation to the LSJA. This is surprising, considering the borders from this group are occasionally of such high quality that they could well have been painted by the same great artists who signed some of the main images. After all, precedents for this practice are already documented in Jahangir's reign. Although figural borders were introduced several decades earlier,\textsuperscript{37} the increasingly standardized approach of Shahjahan's artists, who followed recognizable patterns,\textsuperscript{38} not only contrasts with the variety encouraged by Jahangir but also recalls similar trends witnessed in other arts from the same period. This does not mean Shahjahan's artists were not allowed to innovate, as is testified by an analysis of these two borders, but it does mean they acted within more prescriptive rules.

For some time LSJA borders have been acknowledged to "frequently provide thematic extensions of the subject of the central illustration,"\textsuperscript{39} and these pages are no exception. In the case of the Guimet border (fig. 1), the book in Babur's lap provided the artist with an opportunity to create a unique variation on the motif of angels carrying royal paraphernalia. While angels in comparable LSJA pages normally bear royal attributes, such as crowns, parasols, or arms,\textsuperscript{40} here they carry a scroll and a book, complementing the characterization of Babur as a writer. The scroll most likely refers to the now-lost \textit{khatt-i babur}, a script he devised around 1504.\textsuperscript{41}

Books are also a \textit{leitmotif} with the figures in the outer border. At first sight the three men appear not dissimilar from the "mystics" in several other LSJA pages who were formerly interpreted as men of religion;\textsuperscript{42} years ago they struck me as possible "companions" of Babur in his literary achievements. At the same time, a certain religious aura is unquestionably there. Note in particular the rosary one of them holds. These suggestions may be further refined when considering the fact that the figures in the LSJA borders are always carefully individualized, and some of them have been acknowledged as portraits of Shahjahan's contemporaries. In this case, it is possible that equally plausible "portraits" of renowned individuals were intended and would have been recognizable to viewers by means of appropriate clues. That these men are not Shahjahan's contemporaries, however, is underscored by the pronounced differences in their headgear and clothing, which suggest different moments in Islamic history as well as different regions of the world.
Much like a visual riddle, the books bear no inscriptions, only tiny and delicate gold vegetal designs—yet they establish the right trail, not so much by qualifying these men as writers, as I had initially assumed, as by referring to specific texts. The clothes worn by the bottom figure point to a Timurid milieu: the striped coat is traditionally worn by Uzbek and Tajik men to this day, and the headgear closely resembles that of Babur. The rosary in the man’s hand, an attribute of the Naqshbandi, is a decisive clue in favor of an identification with ʿAbd al-Rahman Jami (1414–1492), who was closely associated with the court of Sultan-Husayn Mirza of Herat (reigned 1470–1506). It is an especially appropriate attribute, referring at once to Jami’s capacity as the head of the Naqshbandi order and to the title of a well-known section of his Haft awrang, the Subhāt al-ʿAbrī (Rosary of the pious). Once more a further clue may be found in the trees, if they are taken to be more than ornamental. Although palms are frequently depicted in Mughal painting, these are prominently characterized as date palms (Phoenix dactylifera), a species closely associated with Arabia. Shahjahan’s contemporaries would have been aware that Jami had performed the Hajj, and even the most skeptical reader would have to admit that this is a more economical explanation than a mere coincidence. The emergence of principles similar to those governing the main images adds credential to the suggestion that these figures deliberately addressed an audience that was acquainted with riddles—in particular, with mu‘āmmas, which held clues to names—and expected intellectual as well as visual delight when looking at these albums.

The middle figure, a cheerful old man with a large turban and three conspicuous books, may be identified on the basis of similar principles. His large turban and white beard provide the first clue. Although similar to many “old mystics,” ranging from mythological figures such as Khwaja Khizr to actual contemporaries of the Mughals, the man bears a certain resemblance to seventeenth-century Mughal images of Sa‘dī (circa 1213–1292). Accordingly, the three books may represent the Būstān, the Gulistān, and another of his works, possibly the Risāla. The third clue is his cheerful attitude, if it is taken to be a visual-verbal pun on Sa‘dī (sa‘ādat = happiness). This only makes sense with the adoption of the logic of riddles and their continuous bouncing back and forth between concepts. The ensuing narrative echoes the main image at multiple levels. There certainly is an adāb dimension to the Bāburnāma (Sa‘dī is, accordingly, the author most often quoted by Babur), and the garden metaphor identified as a prominent theme in the principal image resonates with the same imagery as works by Sa‘dī.

Further intertextual connections may be drawn between Sa‘dī’s Gulistān and Jami’s Bahārīstān, texts that held special importance for Shahjahan. The combined figures of Sa‘dī and Jami are the protagonists of at least one more LSJA opening.
While the whereabouts of its left half (where Jami figured in the main composition) are unknown, and its border has never been published, the border surrounding the image of Sa‘di with companions (fig. 6) contains a close parallel for the purported Jami. It is possible that the artist had this very opening in mind when painting the Guimet border.

The complex intertextual references that emerge suggest intellectual delection remained a major concern even at a time and place so far removed from our idea of proper “Persian” albums—and the choice of authors was at once distinctively Mughal and fully within the fold of the Persian canon. The topmost figure is the most problematic. He is a middle-aged man, with a beard but no moustache, whose complexion is slightly darker than the other two. His small turban closely resembles those seen in paintings ascribed to the Delhi sultanate, but attempts to identify him with Amir Khusraw Dihlavi (1253–1325) meet with relevant objections. Amir Khusraw died in old age and could not have been deemed superior to Sa‘di, nor did he precede Sa‘di in time—therefore he could hardly have been assigned a higher place. As is further testified by the Sackler page (see below), the vertical hierarchy would not seem limited to the three broad sections of a border, but it is most likely in place at every level within the page—a relevant point for future research on LSJA borders. Possibly artists followed the same criteria in structuring borders as they did with traditional texts, such as consulting biographical dictionaries to flesh
out their depictions of historical figures (see below). If this were the case, we should expect “descent” to be defined by a chronological succession as well as by hierarchical principles, in the manner of isnāds for texts (or sīlaṣa for individuals). Then, of course, the overall conception for these borders—with a hierarchy of beings culminating in heavenly creatures surrounding an icon—follows well-known principles in Indian religious iconography, and its introduction is most plausibly ascribed to the artists in Shahjahan’s service, the majority of whom were non-Muslims.

With this in mind, various details suggest this is none other than the Prophet. Although the choice of clothes may be questioned, the figure’s attitude in particular hints at a dimension beyond the page, one towards which an angel also looks. Note the connection that the man’s gesture establishes between Babur and the text contained in the book he holds open. This suggests—in accordance with this interpretation—not only an acknowledgment of Babur as a legitimate Muslim ruler but also a reference to some more specific “prediction” associated with a verse in the Koran. For the creation of this daring and possibly unprecedented image, the artist may have adapted a European model. The profile view was probably chosen as the one most suited to an idealized, dignified image. At a time when one of Shahjahan’s artists went as far as depicting God himself, this hypothesis should not be discounted—although alternative suggestions are welcome. The combination of heterogeneous models may possibly account for the slightly ineffective juxtaposition of seated and standing figures in this section of the border. Nonetheless, both visually and conceptually, these are elaborate, impressive figures.

A relative disappointment occurs when turning to the lower portion of the border. The two animals, stiff and naïve, are not among the best of their kind in the LSJA, yet they also bespeak conceptual refinement. In principle, they are but one more variation of the “golden age” theme that was first introduced at the Mughal court in the sixteenth century and was especially popular under Shahjahan. The herbivore, however, is unusual. This is especially remarkable when considering that, judging from its wooden stance and the lion’s anthropomorphic expression, the painter was neither particularly interested in fauna nor working from direct observation. Why, then, did he resort to an exotic-looking animal (the amount of fur alone indicates this was not a familiar sight on the plains of Hindustan) instead of using one of the countless species with which he was doubtlessly more acquainted? It is indeed likely that this is a yak, as Amina Okada first suggested to me, and its inclusion here may reflect an intention to visualize Babur’s rule over two lands. The idea that this “notherly” quadruped embodies Transoxiana (the Timurids’ homeland, which was historically coveted by Shahjahan) will become more plausible when viewed in light of established Mughal pictorial conventions. Consider such precedents as Jahangir’s Dream in the Freer Gallery of Art, where a
lion and a ram (more like a lamb, actually, and not without purpose) are associated respectively with the lands of Hindustan and Iran. This reading receives further support from the main image. If the latter represents the narrative of the conquest contained in the Bābūrnāma, the animals echo its structure and chronology, where Hindustan is clearly set apart from the Timurid homeland.

The Sackler page (fig. 2) has a similar structure, but its outer border comprises only standing figures that are somewhat larger and less successfully distributed. Two of the objects carried by the angels are familiar royal paraphernalia: a globe and a rather large crown. The third is less usual: it is a cūḍāyantra (ring dial), an astronomical instrument traditionally used in India to determine time precisely, especially at birth, and therefore it is essential to the calculation of horoscopes, an art practiced by Humayun. In this respect, the cūḍāyantra constitutes an alternative to the compasses that are more commonly seen as Humayun’s attribute in Shahjahan painting, here replaced in his hand by a sarpich. By considering the cūḍāyantra’s association with an “auspicious hour,” an organic interpretation of the attributes may be achieved, with the insignia—a globe, an astronomical instrument, and a crown—at once hailing the reconstitution of Timurid power at a divinely sanctioned time and containing a multiple visual-verbal pun on Humayun’s name: “august, auspicious, royal.”

As Okada has already acknowledged, the figures in the outer border allude to Humayun’s sojourn at the Safavid court (1543–44). They all wear Safavid (or pseudo-Safavid) clothes, although several features in their costume are anachronistic—more suited to Shahjahan’s contemporaries than to the age of Humayun and Tahmasb. We are now fully equipped to address them as responses to the narrative unfolded in the main image.

The topmost figure is the most visually rewarding. The fur-lined brocaded coat and richly embroidered Tāj-i Ḥaydarī complete with an assortment of feathers signal high rank. Note in particular the sarpich made of egret plumes, a hallmark of royalty virtually identical to that on Humayun’s Tāj-i ‘Izzat. An identification with Shah Tahmasb is likely. Although the latter’s facial features in his mature years have not been recorded in Safavid painting, Sahifa Banu’s earlier work (fig. 4) testifies that Mughal artists felt free (or were possibly urged by their patrons) to create portraits of the shah based on their imagination. In the Sackler page the resemblance with Shahjahan’s near-contemporary Shah ’Abbas (reigned 1588–1629) is remarkable—and indeed suspicious. His features, including a characteristically large moustache, were well known to Mughal artists from a series of portraits based on life sketches commissioned by Jahangir. The man’s deferent attitude and the gold tray in his hands suggest an offering. If Tahmasb indeed was “reconstructed” by casting ’Abbas in early Safavid garb, the tray most likely signals his support of
Humayun—with temporary hospitality, troops, and doubtlessly a fair amount of cash—in perfect consonance with the theme of the main composition. The significance of the lilies, if not merely a formal device linking different borders (compare this with the other page examined), remains to be assessed.

The other two figures, dressed in simpler clothes and holding a parasol and a sword in its casing, respectively, may be identified as attendants. Although their primary visual relationship is with the main image, the clothes are sixteenth- or seventeenth-century Safavid, and the willow behind the young attendant—a motif common in Safavid painting—further strengthens the connection with Iran. Are they attendants of Humayun or of Tahmasb? A more specific identification of these figures may prove impossible to achieve in the absence of detailed biographical information, but a closer examination of the plants associated with them may possibly prove rewarding in the future.

For their part, the palms flanking the other figure belong to the Mughal decorative repertoire and likely tell a more complex story. At least one of them seems to serve the primary function of separating the visual space of the outer border from that inhabited by the animals: compare it with the line of shrubs in the Guimet page. The association of a tree with a clinging creeper, however, also evokes loyalty. Could this be someone Humayun first met in Iran and who subsequently became one of his retainers?

The animals are the most remarkable feature of this border, and for once they are not a variation on the "golden age" theme, although they are similarly based on ancient, pre-Islamic iconography. A boldly drawn male lion is shown receding in the face of a charging buffalo. For all its resonance with the eternal cycle of light and darkness, the bovine creature is neither of the appropriate species nor—judging from appearances at least—of the prescribed gender. Equally unusual is the attitude of the two animals. The buffalo charges and the lion recedes, although with unsheathed claws that testy to a willingness to fight back. Both animals are masterfully rendered, and they are doubtlessly based on the artist's direct observation. The buffalo appears to snort as its foreleg strikes the ground, its eye upturned in fury, while the minute wrinkles on the lion's nose and forehead precisely convey the attitude of a frightened cat. These are arguably the most sensitively rendered animals in the whole LSJA. The lion's attitude in itself is not unique, but it is part of a stock repertoire that Mughal artists used when depicting large cats. There are parallels even within the LSJA album, yet in the hands of different artists, this familiar cliché could produce widely different results, from blind repetition to a masterpiece such as this one.

Here, too, it is legitimate to wonder why a buffalo was chosen in place of a more familiar herbivore. Unlike yaks, buffalos (wild or domesticated) are a common
sight in India, but they are not frequently encountered in Mughal art. Perhaps this is due to its traditionally negative connotations on the Subcontinent, where buffalo is in turn the vehicle (vāhana) of Yama—the guardian of the South, a direction associated with death—and a form of the demon Mahisha that symbolizes the chain of death and rebirth from which human beings seek deliverance. In view of the general theme of this page and of its apparent dominance over the lion, this buffalo might stand for Humayun’s arch-rivals, the Surs who ousted the Mughals from Hindustan. If a variation on the theme of the competing forces of light and darkness was intended with some derogatory meaning, a she-buffalo was probably the artist’s best bet at achieving this.

**Authorship**

Given the high quality of the LSJA borders, it is surprising scholars have not made hypotheses on the identity of the artists involved. Different hands undoubtedly created the two borders under discussion; the animals alone provide ample evidence for this. While I agree with Okada that neither border can be attributed to Payag, his hand is possibly recognized in another LSJA border, the main image of which is by a different painter. By looking at other LSJA pages, the consistent impression emerges that painters provided borders for their colleagues’ work but not their own. Further research may substantiate or disprove this paradigm and provide a glimpse into the way work was distributed in the atelier for the shaping of a Mughal album.

In attempting to identify specific hands, we are confronted in the first place with the nature of border illustrations, which—even when successful—do not necessarily show a degree of finish comparable to that of the paintings they frame. This may be the outcome of masters working at different speeds, but it may equally well point to the work of more junior artists. The possibility remains that a team produced them rather than an individual hand.

The varying degree of finish in different areas of the same border may similarly reflect adherence to specific conventions or indicate specialists were called in to create certain sections. Last but not least, as even this limited sample shows, borders probably rely on existing models more frequently and possibly more literally than individual paintings, which further confuses the picture. The angels in these two pages are one example. Unlike the remaining figures, they are only lightly tinted, but why this is the case—could it be different authorship, aesthetic conventions, or reliance on diverse models?—is a matter of debate.

The appearance of the Guimet page (fig. 1) suggests it was created by an artist fully at home with some of the Europeanizing conventions typical of Mughal art in the seventeenth century. The artist displays a consistent preference for soft
modeling, with an extensive use of shading as well as white highlights to create supple forms that are best exemplified by one of the angels. The contrast between the human figures and the animals is remarkable. This might point to two different hands, possibly in the roles of master and assistant, or to a single skilled portraitist who was especially uncomfortable with depicting animals. The hypothesis of two concurrent hands would at first seem supported by the appearance of the angels, whose treatment is remarkably different, but the significant iconographic differences between them (especially their wings) speak in favor of reliance on distinct sources.\textsuperscript{70}

The painter active under Shahjahan who makes the most consistent use of white to highlight figures is arguably Govardhan, who would have been especially at home with the mystics-literati, but I find no conclusive evidence to associate this page with his hand. Furthermore, as testified by one of his signed works as well as by other paintings ascribed to him, Govardhan is one of Shahjahan's great animal portraitists.\textsuperscript{71} While this may lead back to the issue of joint (if not team) authorship for this page, the consistent use of white highlights does support the idea that one particular master supervised and finished its design.

Despite a less-successful distribution of the figures, the Sackler border (fig. 2) conveys an impression of greater homogeneity. The face of the angel to the right is particularly impressive, and so is the "portrait" of the purported Safavid shah, although a slight stiffness in posture characterizes these figures when compared to those in the Guimet page. This painter makes a far more restricted use of shading. His figures somewhat lack corporeity, but he makes up for this with a vibrant line. Alternatively, again, this may be the outcome of joint work by a master and an assistant. The angels are closely modeled on those depicted under the ruler's jharoka in a page from the Windsor Pādshāhnāma, thus providing further insight into atelier practice (fig. 7).\textsuperscript{72} More of these connections are likely to emerge as research on LSJA borders progresses.

I do not lay claim to any revolutionary hypotheses as to the artists who painted these borders, but a preliminary examination of the Sackler page, in particular of its boldly rendered figures, both human and animal, suggests a possible connection with Bichitr. Unfortunately, animals are more rarely depicted in Shahjahan painting than in his predecessor's reign. To make matters even more difficult, they often appear as sketches or as minute architectural ornaments. This creates a limited scope for comparisons. This painter used an especially fine line to outline the contours of his figures. The result is a vibrancy not seen in any of the other LSJA animals, even the most successfully rendered ones.\textsuperscript{73} Among the great masters, Bichitr
and Govardhan share this trait. Both of them were skilled animal painters, yet Bichitr alone displays a predilection for relatively flat surfaces, with subdued shading and, where applicable, an emphasis on pattern. The human figures in the Sackler border point in the same direction, and a strong similarity exists between the young Safavid attendant and the chauri-bearer in a page from the Windsor Pādshāhnāma signed by Bichitr. Despite their tiny size, the animal figures under the jharoka on the same page provide a close parallel for those in the Sackler border. A further example of Bichitr’s ability to create impressive animal portraits is provided by a detail in one of his signed works from the Minto Album (fig. 8). Note especially the similar approach to some of the anatomical details. Although further research is needed, attempts to connect individual artists with the best from among the LSJA borders may ultimately prove rewarding.

Conclusion
Since my research on these two pages first began, at least one more essay on the LSJA album has been published, besides the one included in the Muraqqā’ catalogue. Written by Amina Okada and focusing on a single page, that article demonstrates the potential of an approach sensitive to iconographic details combined with accurate historical research. I have meanwhile identified yet one more LSJA page with promising biographical connections to explore. It would seem that research on Mughal albums is entering a new phase.

The two pages examined in this essay raise numerous questions concerning the processes involved in creating Mughal albums, in shaping their informing principles, and in determining their place in relation to the Persianate album tradition. In regards to making albums, the pages provide evidence of collaborative patterns within the imperial atelier. Along with other LSJA folios, they suggest painters did not provide the borders for their own works. While this may not be the only paradigm, it is certainly worthy of attention, as is the question of whether a single master created or supervised the overall design of borders associated with surviving openings. Judging from these two pages, the coordinated effort would not seem limited to individual works. Even though produced by different hands and not originally meant to face each other, these borders appear to have been conceived...
as variations on a predetermined scheme. This is underscored by the uniquely rich array of atmospheric elements associated with the angels, by the matching inner borders, and especially by the plants flanking the figures in the outer borders. Upon close observation, the plants reveal subtle variations on a unified scheme. Such underlying structural elements must have subliminally contributed a great deal to former perceptions of these pages as a pair. Although it now seems this was never the case, their high degree of visual coherence indicates they must have been part of a carefully planned sequence of openings. Perhaps comparable sequences will be identified on a similar basis in the future.

Equally relevant to an understanding of the album-making process is the identity of the professionals involved. These pages point to the artists' confident handling of the biographical information required for an accurate representation of the subjects. Was this knowledge their own or were they assisted by scholars? On the one hand, it is increasingly clear that the distinction between "Hindus" and "Muslims" is hardly applicable to the Mughal environment, where education followed similar patterns. Seventeenth-century painters, though mostly non-Muslim, must have had greater familiarity with Persianate culture than has long been assumed, especially if they were born at court (khânazâds). At the same time, the possibility should not be discounted of other professionals being involved. Wright hints at this in her discussion of the Salim Album (circa 1600–1605) when she remarks on "the literary facility of the individual who was able to call to mind a verse that would respond to the painting (and sometimes in a slightly humorous way)." Even in the LSJA, where the paintings are complemented by images rather than by texts, pages such as these suggest textual references continued to provide a background. It would be challenging to identify some of the biographical dictionaries and other textual supports that are implied. A wider corpus of manuscripts than the richly illustrated ones could fruitfully complement the art historian's work.

A final question relevant to album-making concerns the accessibility of models and the use of motifs from stock repertoires. The angels in the Sackler border are a case in point. They suggest motifs adaptable to different contexts—such as album borders and sketches mimicking architectural decoration—were available for reference and use.

The issue of paintings echoing other paintings leads to a second group of questions that are relevant to understanding the principles informing Mughal albums. While paintings within paintings have a long history in Mughal art, the two pages under scrutiny prompt us to wonder whether the introduction of figural commentaries around paintings in the seventeenth century followed similar principles, and whether the practice was similarly aimed at evoking complex visual as well as textual connections. At variance with the prevalent narrative of Mughal albums
embracing the culmination of a process of increased formalization and an emphasis on figural painting—first challenged by David Roxburgh—\(^83\) they force us to consider the resilience of the trope as a structuring factor in Mughal albums.\(^84\) Evidence from these two pages makes a strong case for bringing Mughal albums back into the fold of the Persianate tradition.

It is possible that the sophisticated visual language emerging from the present analysis is specific to albums and was inspired by established literary conventions. What literature should be considered in this connection is an interesting question. Ebba Koch warns, “Court historians and poets were clearly more restricted than the artists in the selection of topics by the stylistic and thematic conventions of their genre, which they seem to have been incapable of or prohibited from breaking.”\(^85\) Perhaps the issue is whether literary parallels should be confined to the best-known works from among the genres practiced at court—and whether it is satisfactory to look at Mughal albums primarily, if not exclusively, from the perspective of court art.\(^86\) For all their emphasis on royalty, these two pages seem to point to a broader literary spectrum than that of contemporary eulogistic poetry and historical court writing. While their primary theme might well be royalty—or the oft-quoted “legitimization”—their context (the album) is defined by a longer history and a wider tradition, and their primary aim may well have been intellectual delectation, if not moral instruction or the reinforcement of a shared ethos through shared experience.\(^87\)

Thus far scholarship, concerned for the most part with a preliminary categorization of the styles associated with individual periods, patrons, or painters, has necessarily focused on the recurrent iconographic themes of Shahjahani painting. The ensuing narrative has possibly induced the misleading impression of overwhelming repetition, as opposed to the endless variations that probably dominated contemporary perception. Achieving a finer appreciation of the literary texts that were popular at court and those that made up the building blocks in the education of youths would in this sense be especially important. Again this would require a broader range of manuscripts than the lavishly illustrated ones usually considered by art historians. An approach more sensitive to the way modes and codes inherited from a prior tradition were interpreted in Shahjahani album painting would possibly open up new perspectives on this period, which is often referred to as maturity foreshadowing incipient decadence.

After all, it is precisely this constant reworking of a coherent visual-textual corpus that constitutes most of the appeal of Timurid painting. The outward differences in the pictorial modes adopted by the Timurids’ Indian descendants and the visual innovations of the late sixteenth to early seventeenth century should not detract from an awareness of their shared background. For the Mughals, painting was in essence about the revelation of inner truths.\(^88\) Increased visual effectiveness
and a more inclusive style, one capable of drawing in a broader audience—in a manner not dissimilar from the translations of the Sanskrit classics promoted by Akbar or Dara Shikoh’s visionary synthesis—were only improved means to a familiar end.

A related issue is the necessity to refine the current idea that allegorical discourse in Mughal court painting was to a large extent prompted by contact with European art. Although European influences are undeniable, prior research has shown the Mughals selectively adapted themes and motifs and grafted them onto a familiar discourse. Mughal art is so imbued with a sense of the celebration of power that to date research has focused mostly on related imagery, but by devoting greater attention to literary themes, we may well be able to enrich this view.

Accomplishing this has a direct bearing on the way we usually understand the term “allegory” to apply to Mughal painting. A finer appreciation of the origins of Mughal albums would make all the difference here. So far, Mughal allegorical paintings have arguably been approached in a manner similar to European examples—as a kind of allegory with which Western scholars are more familiar. Connections with allegory as conceived in Persian literature have not received sufficient attention. Research in this domain necessarily entails work on the early phases of Mughal painting and the first steps of the Mughal album tradition, particularly at a time when European influence could hardly have played a significant role. As my current research shows, the widespread idea that Mughal painting originated with Humayun’s contact with Tahmasb’s atelier during his sojourn at the Safavid court between 1543 and 1544 requires refinement. Muraqqa’s are explicitly mentioned at Humayun’s court alongside illustrated manuscripts as early as 1534 CE, a full decade before his sojourn in Iran. It is premature to say whether the passage refers to albums and illustrated books produced in his kitābkhānu or to Timurid heirlooms, but most likely it is to both. While some inferential evidence supports the former, even the latter would imply continuity with—and access to—the Timurid tradition. This should come as no surprise: Humayun was himself a Timurid, and in the dispersal of artists and artworks that followed the decline and fall of the dynasty he inherited his share. (See Parodi and Wannell, “Earliest Mughal Painting,” for a discussion of currently available evidence.) While the issue cannot be dealt with at length here, this suggestion is reinforced by the dating of the earliest known Safavid album, one produced for Bahram Mirza, the shah’s brother, shortly after Humayun’s passage in Iran. Far from being a coincidence, this connection opens up fascinating new perspectives on how these two refined patrons of the arts may have interacted. According to Jawhar, Humayun developed an especially profound friendship with Bahram Mirza. It is therefore possible that the concept for the latter’s album, if not some of the materials therein, originated from conversations and majilises entertained at the time of Humayun’s visit. Although limited pictorial
evidence survives from Humayun's reign, and none can be securely ascribed to the period prior to his sojourn at the Safavid court, a reassessment of painting during his reign is urgently needed. Its implications for the study of Mughal painting, and the Mughal album tradition in particular, cannot be overestimated.

The two pages under scrutiny also point towards a more refined dating for various LSJA pages. The figures of Sa'di and Jami in the Guimet border (fig. 1) suggest the artist must have had another LSJA opening in mind: this implies a relative chronology. Since the general appearance of these two pages betrays greater maturity and complexity than most surviving LSJA materials, they may be the product of a somewhat later phase, if not part of a different album. This in turn depends on our understanding of Mughal albums, and of the LSJA in particular, as either closed or open entities. While it is premature to venture any conclusions, the question will have to be addressed from a wider range of perspectives in the future.

As a tree first prompted this research, it is perhaps fitting to conclude this discussion with a vegetal metaphor. Mughal painting has in the LSJA one of its most delicious fruits. The Timurid legacy, however, is much like a tree, whose branches become thinner the farther away they grow from the trunk that sustains them and the roots that nourish them. The underlying Timurid pictorial imagery has here thinned almost beyond recognition. By comparison, the structure of Humayun (and early Akbari) painting appears more solid and coherent, and their more complex syntax poses even greater interpretive challenges. Indeed, the more we look at these pages, the more we are reminded of the respective places of the Taj Mahal and the tomb of Humayun in the history of Mughal architecture.

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NOTES

1 I am indebted to Elaine Wright, Amina Okada, Massumeh Farhad, Rocky Korr, Sue Stronge, Raffaellobisso, Alessandra Cereda, and Zeynep Yürekli-Görkay for discussing the issue with me and/or contributing relevant information. I am also grateful to those friends who helped me refine this article before submission and to the anonymous reviewers for their valuable observations. None of them should be held responsible for the views expressed here, unless otherwise stated.


4 His signature is visible on the trunk of the tree on the Sackler folio.

5 Ibid., no. 333; Okada, Le Grand Moghol, 210.


7 Wright, Muraqqâ, 123–24.


10 Plane trees (chenârs), not suited to the climate of the plains, were widely employed by Babur in his Kabul gardens and also by Jahangir and Shahjahan in Kashmir.


This is suggested by Stronge, “Jewels for the Mughal Court,” 313. The painting is illustrated in color and discussed in B. N. Goswamy and Eberhard Fischer, *Wonders of a Golden Age: Painting at the Court of the Great Mughals. Indian Art of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from collections in Switzerland* (Zürich: Museum Rietberg, 1987), no. 40. Note the prominent association of Timur with a plane tree. Another instance (ex-VEver collection, whereabouts unknown) is illustrated in Stronge, “Jewels for the Mughal Court,” fig. 7. Two well-known examples featuring a crown, from the Minto Album (ca. 1630), are today in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, respectively; illustrated in Wright, *Murqqa*, fig. 38 and no. 54. A similar page is illustrated in Barbara Schmitz and Ziyaud-Din A. Desai, *Mughal and Persian Paintings and Illustrated Manuscripts in the Raza Library, Rampur* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 2006), pl. 62.

One example in point is the painting showing Shah Shuja’ and Maharaja Gaj Singh of Marwar (Okada, *Le Grand Moghol*, 166 and fig. 202), where the prince holds up what I would suggest is a jade thumb-ring in his right hand while he converses with the maharaja. Milo Cleveland Beach, *The Grand Mogul: Imperial Painting in India 1600–1660* (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1978), 102, suggests a dating to 1638, when the experienced Gaj Singh was assigned to support the prince in his Qandahar campaign. The thumb-ring, symbolizing prowess in battle, possibly refers to this relationship. A series of portraits of royal offspring standing and prominently holding *sarpich* is equally worthy of attention: see for example Okada, *Le Grand Moghol*, figs. 201, 215; Wright, *Murqqa*, no. 81.


For a genuine sixteenth-century Mughal work featuring this type of felt, see Pratapaditya Pal, *Indian Painting: A Catalogue of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art Collection*, vol. 1, 1000–1700 (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1993), cat. no. 45.

Once the Safavid shah Tahmasb allegedly denied him one, and a Mongol (Mughal) soldier in Humayun’s retinue had to provide the lining of his quiver as a surrogate. Another time, dispossessed and severely wounded by his brother Kamran, Humayun performed his prayers on a spread-out seat cover procured in extremis by Jawhar himself. See *Tadbikra*, fols. 79b and 108a, b, respectively, in *Three Memoirs of Humayun: Gulbadan Begmin’s Humâyûn-nâma; Jawhar Afiabachi’s Tadrîkûratu’l-Waqi’â; Boyazid Bayati’s Târikh-i Humâyûn*, trans. and ed. Wheeler M. Thackston, Jr., 2 vols. (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2009), Persian text, 1: 150 and 179; English translation, 1: 128 and 148, respectively.

Among these are the rock in the shape of an elephant already noted by scholarship (see especially James L. Wescoat, Jr., "Gardens of invention and exile: The precarious context of Mughal garden design during the reign of Humayun [1530–1556]," *Journal of Garden Design* 10, no. 2 [April–June 1990], 106–16) and two more rocks in the shape of a woman and child (hitherto unnoticed). A detailed discussion of the painting and a new interpretation of its content may be found in Laura E. Parodi and Bruce Wannell, "The Earliest Datable Mughal Painting: An Allegory of the Celebrations for Akbar’s Circumcision at the Sacred Spring of Khwaja Seb Yaran near Kabul (1546 AD)" [*Staatbibliothek zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Libr. Pict. A117, fol. 15a*], www.asianart.com.

For a similar instance see Wright, *Murqqa*, no. 40.

Illustrated and discussed in Stanley C. Clarke, *Indian Drawings: Thirty Mogul Paintings of the School of Jahangir* (London, 1922), no. 27 and pl. 18. A color illustration may be found in Susan Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal*.
Emperor: The Art of the Book 1560–1660

22 Of the type exemplified by a drawing by
Mir Sayyid ‘Ali in the Arthur M. Sackler
Gallery (S1986.291), illustrated and
discussed in A. S. Melikian-Chavarian,
“Mir Sayyid ‘Ali: Painter of the Past and
Pioneer of the Future,” in Mughal
Masters: Further Studies, ed. A. K. Das
(Mumbai: Marg Publications, 1998),
34–36.

23 See Roxburgh, Persian Album, 179.

24 The flyleaf bears inscriptions in the hands
of both Jahangir and Shah Jahan. See
Ebadollah Bahari, Bihzad: Master of
Persian Painting (London: I. B. Tauris,
1996), 199. As one of the reviewers noted,
pictures such as these were common in
Persian painting, and therefore this was
likely just one of many such examples
available to Mughal artists.

25 For an assessment of Payag’s style, see
Beach and Koch, King of the World, 217;

26 See Ebba Koch, “Dīwan-i ‘Amm and
Chihil Sutun: The Audience Halls of Shah
Jahan,” Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology:
Collected Essays (New Delhi: Oxford

27 Amina Okada, personal communication,

28 Payag is known to have made an
especially sophisticated use of apparently
incongruous features. See for example
the rabbits in a famous battle scene,
illustrated in Beach and Koch, King of the
World, no. 18, or the fruits (apples?) at the
feet of Raja Udai Singh in Wright,
Muraqqâ’, no. 60. Examples of actual
“painting[s] within the painting” hidden
in the Windsor Pādshāhnāma’s
architectural decoration and landscapes were
pointed out by Ebba Koch: see especially
King of the World, 166–67 and, with
specific reference to Payag, 203 and n. 17.

29 See, respectively, the oft-quoted passage
in the Bāburrāmā, 359–60 (fols. 299b–300) and Ebba Koch, The Complete
Taj Mahal and the Riverfront Gardens of
Agra (London: Thames and Hudson,
2006), 222–24.

30 Similarly complex narratives are seen
already in the spectacular group of
allegorical portraits painted a few
decades earlier for Jahangir, Shah Jahan’s
father. A seminal discussion is found in
Richard Ettinghausen, “The Emperor’s
Choice,” in Essays in Honour of Erwin
Panofsky, ed. M. Meiss, De Artibus
Opuscula 40 (New York, 1961), 98–120.
Mughal imperial iconography has been
further explored by various scholars,
most notably by Milo Cleveland Beach in
The Imperial Image: Paintings for the
Mughal Court (Washington, D.C.: Freer
Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution,
1981; rev. ed., 2011). See also Beach,
Grand Mogul, and Beach and Koch, King
of the World. Scholarly appreciation of
the significance of genealogy and
portraiture to the Mughals may be traced
back to Ivan Schoukine’s series of essays
“Portraits Moghols I–IV,” Revue des Arts
Asiatiques 6–9 (1929–35), the first three
of which are focused on examples
produced in Jahangir’s seminal reign.

31 Possibly a “language of jewels” existed at
the Mughal court, comparable to the
language of flowers once so well
understood in Europe.

32 Wright, Muraqqâ’, 174–175.

33 Ibid., 124.

34 Ibid., 137, n. 57.


36 Okada, Le Grand Moghol, 210, dates the
principal images to ca. 1640 on stylistic
grounds.

37 Wright, Muraqqâ’, 51.

38 Ibid., 107–34.

39 Abolala Soudavar, Art of the Persian
Courts: Selections from the Art and
History Trust Collection (New York:
Rizzoli, 1992), 311.

40 See Wright, Muraqqâ’, 122–23: “Seventeen
folios [from the LSJA] depict
Mughal emperors: one a Mughal prince
... and one Shah Abbas I, ruler of Iran....
One page has not retained its outer
borders, but on each of the others the
upper border is filled with pairs of flying
angels, though with the exception of
three pages on which there are instead
flying birds.... The European-style angels
of the upper borders carry crowns,
gloves, swords, and parasols, all symbols
of Mughal imperial authority and might,
which, as the presence of the angels
themselves proclaims, is divinely
bestowed upon the figures above whose
heads they hover.”

41 Bāburrāmā, 186 (fol. 144b); see also 223,
422 (fols. 179a, 357b).

42 “Ulūmas,” according to Okada, Le Grand
Moghol, 210. Borders featuring religious
figures are illustrated in ibid., fig. 207;
Wright, Muraqqâ’, no. 68a; Soudavar,
Persian Courts, no. 129c.

43 The Bāburrāmā, 221 (fols. 177b) includes
a biographical entry for Jami among the
distinguished intellectuals of his time.

44 Credit goes to Amina Okada for first
prompting me not to overlook these
palms, long before I had even begun to
approach these borders as visual riddles.

45 David Roxburgh’s seminal work on
albums is especially relevant to an
appreciation of this aspect: see especially
Prefacing the Image: The Writing of Art
History in Sixteenth-Century Iran, Studies
and Sources in Islamic Art and Architec-
ture, Supplements to Masqarūs (Leiden
The Mughals continued to cherish Jami’s
works. The Muraqqâ’ catalogue provides
everal examples (see nos. 3, 5, 7); among
these is his treatise on riddles, the
Hilâ-yi Hîdal (Embroideries of robes):

46 See for example Wright, *Muraqqa*, no. 63, discussed below; Richard Ettinghausen, *Paintings of the Sultans and Emperors of India in American Collections* (New Delhi: Lalit Kala Akademi, 1961), pl. 11; or Toby Falk and Mildred Archer, *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library* (London: Sotheby Park Bernet, 1981), no. 83. The latter is an interesting case, where Sādī is part of an "allegorical group painting" (by Hashim, ca. 1650) depicting Timur and his descendants up to Jahangir. Timur, Babur, and Humayun, which are also by Hashim, are virtually identical with those in Goswamy and Fischer, *Wonders of a Golden Age*, no. 40 (see n. 14 above), but only Babur preserves his attribute, while Sādī's attitude suggests he is "awarding" Timur with a book (possibly the *Guilistān*). Could this mean Timur is thereby acknowledged as a model ruler? In light of these findings, it would be worth considering some of Ettinghausen's suggestions regarding the artists' differing interpretations of the ruler-derivative relationship under Jahangir and Shahjahan (see "Emperor's Choice," esp. 110–19). This, however, falls beyond the scope of the present essay.

47 For a discussion see Wright, *Muraqqa*, no. 63.


49 Compare this with Roxburgh's discussion of the chains of practice contained in Safavid album prefaces: see *Prefacing the Image*, 136–42.


51 See Lowry with Nemazeef, *Jeweler's Eye*, no. 55.


55 The Zībārūnāma is actually divided into three sections corresponding to the regions successively ruled by Babur—Transoxiana, Kabul, and Hindustan—in a "descent" that is, I believe, not merely geographical or chronological. For all his acknowledgment of Hindustan's riches, Babur remained firmly rooted in his sense of Timurid superiority. That two, rather than three, animals are depicted here should not discount this reading, given the strict criteria that governed the LSJA and the need to harmonize this page with the one facing it, which is now lost.


57 According to the *Humāyūnīnāma*, fol. 43b (see Thackston, *Three Memoirs*, Persian text, 1: 37, and English translation, 1: 37), Humayun himself calculated the most auspicious hour for his marriage with Hamida Banu. The *ciḍāyaṇtra* is often seen in the hands of astrologers in paintings recording the birth of Mughal princes. The instrument is described by S. R. Sarma, "Astronomical Instruments in Mughal Miniatures," *Studia in Indologie und Iranistik* 16/17 (1992), 249–52. I am indebted to Amina Okada for pointing this detail out to me and for providing me with the relevant bibliography.

58 Each of the three objects in turn may be associated with one of the meanings of the name *humāyūn*. I have previously pointed out a comparable pun on the expression *saḥīh humāyūn* (imperial throne/throne of Humayun) contained in the *Akbarnāma*: see Parodi, "Humayun's Sojourn," 153.


60 On the *Taj-i Haydari* and the *Taj-i Izzat*, see Parodi, "Humayun's Sojourn."


62 Even though the tray appears empty under magnification, minute engravings of objects, such as coins or stars, are sometimes visible on such trays only through macrophotography. Amina Okada, personal communication, May 2007.

63 Compare the figure with the corresponding attendant in "Princes of the House of Timur," illustrated in Canby, *Humayun's Garden Party*, 60.

64 Palms of this type are discussed in Laura E. Parodi, "Alcune osservazioni sulle decorazioni della "Casa della Sultana Turca" a Fatehpur-Sikri," *Haft Qalam: Studi in onore di Bianca Maria Alferi* (Naples: Arte Tipografica, 2000), 51–68.

65 See for example Soudavar, *Persian Courts*, no. 129d. Parallels may similarly be found for the posture of the lion in the Guimet page. See for example Wright, *Muraqqa*, no. 69.


67 It occurred to me that there might be a more specific reference to wild buffalos.
or possibly a domestic breed from the Sur's stronghold of Bihar. South Asian water buffalos, whether wild (Bubalus arnee) or domestic (Bubalus bubalis arnee), display a wide variety of horn shapes (see www.arkive.org/asian-buffalo/bubalis-bubalis/). Subject to further confirmation, horns similar to these would indeed seem to be associated with the buffalos of northeast India. See for example www.payer.de/amarakosa2/amara209b.htm. I personally have not come across comparable examples in other parts of the subcontinent.

69 Wright, Muraqqā, no. 61. Okada, Le Grand Moghol, 214–15, suggests his authorship of some other LSJA borders.

70 This is not without precedent in Mughal art. Compare the various angels and winged creatures illustrated and discussed in Koch, "Jahangir and the Angels: Recently Discovered Wall Paintings under European Influence in the Fort of Lahore," in Koch, Mughal Art, 12–37.

71 See for example Okada, Le Grand Moghol, figs. 44, 237.

72 Illustrated in Beach and Koch, King of the World, no. 37, attributed to Abid who, on stylistic grounds, cannot be the author of the Sackler border. Interestingly, this is not a case of passive reception. The face of the angel to the right is significantly improved, and the globe is transferred from Khwaja Khizr's hand to the other angel. Then, of course, both surviving instances may have been based on an earlier but now-lost model.

73 See for example the animals in two more Sackler borders, illustrated in Lowry and Beach, Annotated and Illustrated Checklist, nos. 332 and 338, and one in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, illustrated in Wright, Muraqqā, no. 69.

74 Illustrated in Beach and Koch, King of the World, nos. 12–13.
75 For a complete illustration see Wright, Muraqqā, no. 51.

77 I believe I can recognize all four sons of Shahjahan in the border surrounding a portrait of Sayyid Hidayatullah Sadr (illustrated and discussed in Soudavar, Persian Courts, no. 129c, where only Dara Shikoh is mentioned). Counterclockwise from the top and not counting the figure in the top left corner (who may be the son or a disciple of the Sayyid) are Dara Shikoh, Aurangzeb, Murad Bakhsh, and Shah Shuja. The arrangement suggests Aurangzeb was the one most directly associated with the Sayyid (who was to serve as sadr during his reign; see ibid.), while Dara and Shuja are shown conversing with spiritual mentors. Further historical research may help flesh out this suggestion and identify the remaining figures.

78 The top figures are accompanied by white lilies, the middle figures by willows, and the bottom figures by ṭar̄ palms (see Parodi, "Decorazioni"); the other plant varies in each case, but it is generally consistent in color and type, with the remarkable exception of the poppy, which is associated with the purported figure of the Prophet. It may be further noted that the pink tulip in the inner border of the Sackler page is the result of a patch most probably obtained from a LSJA calligraphy page at the time when the album was disassembled and its folios auctioned off. Interestingly, patches of paper with pink tulips were used to repair the inner border of a page of the Nasir al-Din Shah album (Wright, Muraqqā, no. 77). Possibly this is more than a coincidence; perhaps they shared part of their history after dispersal from the Mughal library.

79 This was highlighted in various papers presented at the international workshop Munshis, Pandits and Record-Keepers: Scribal Communities in India, held at the University of Oxford (13–14 June 2008). I raised the issue of painters increasingly entering the "frame of the imperial image" in the age of Jahangir and Shahjahan, a fact that may not only testify to their increased status but also indicate they participated in the more refined circles of Mughal society.

80 Wright, Muraqqā, 61–66. An equally interesting suggestion follows: "In a culture where the talents of the poet were traditionally held in far higher esteem than those of the painter, the paintings perhaps functioned as visual prompts: one quick look at the painting called to mind not only the verses actually on the page, but also those that might originally have preceded or followed it, or other verses by other poets that expressed a similar sentiment" (ibid., 66).

81 While existing scholarship, such as Okada, Ambassadeur, demonstrates the relevance of Shahjahi chronicles for an appreciation of the portraits of his contemporaries, only a broader range of sources, such as tadhkiras, could support an interpretation of other subjects.


83 Roxburgh, Persian Album, 323.

84 For a discussion of the relevance of the trope in album prefacing from the Timurid and Safavid period see...
Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, 14–17. See especially ibid., 16, which stresses the dominance of poetry in the Persianate literary complex, "with its established rules of meter, rhyme, and structure as well as its constellation of images," and the ensuing "strong intertextuality and referencing of precedent [whereby] each work of prose or poetry occupied its place in a sequence of texts that ran backward and forward in time. Parallel creative processes obtained in the arts of calligraphy and depiction [where] newly made works responded and alluded to the art of the past." Roxburgh further suggests that by considering "this aesthetic of familiarity, of repetition and perpetual return, of always already knowing ... we might be in a better position to assess and define the nature of a viewer's visual and verbal engagement with a work in the context of reception and parameters of judgment."


I find here an intriguing parallel with what Losensky points out in *Welcoming Fighans*, 142–43: "Although the increasing predominance of the ghazal has often been noted, it has had little impact on the modern critical assessment of Timurid-Turkmen literature. While most scholars recognize that the ghazal was 'by far the most popular poetic genre' of the period, we seldom find examples of this genre quoted or analyzed, and discussions of later Timurid poetries focus largely on rhetorically complex instances of the qasida and masnawi."

The latter two aspects may prove difficult to postulate as a result of the current fragmentary state of material remains for the LSJA, as well as the absence of evidence (which does not constitute evidence of absence) for the existence of a preface, such as those described by Roxburgh, *Persian Album*, 13. He further warns that "general statements about the purpose of albums [found in their prefaces]—to instruct or to provide visual pleasure and amusement by way of recreation—fall short of the mark [as albums were] inherently discursive space[s] experienced in social contexts of] which the viewer is reminded over and over again through the many representations of courtly figures and practitioners engaged in the cultural practices of reading poetry, writing, and discussing" (ibid., 306–307). Whether this can be applied to the albums created for Shah Jahan is, of course, open to question.

As testified by the A'in-i Akbari, translated by H. Blochmann (repr. New Delhi, 1977), 1: 114.

See for example "Shah Jahan and Orpheus" and other essays contained in Koch, *Mughal Art*.

See n. 19 above.

Humâyûnânâ, fol. 27a (Thackston, *Three Memoirs*, Persian text, 1: 22, and English translation, 1: 23). While a few scholars have mentioned this reference in passing, no one—at least to my knowledge—seems to have commented on its implications. In my 2006 essay (Parodi, "Humayun's Sojourn"), before I in my turn realized the importance of this passage, I attempted a more balanced assessment of early Mughal-Safavid cultural relations based on other textual references.

It is interesting to note that the word kitâbkhâna has virtually escaped art historians for the reign of Humayun, perhaps because early translators invariably rendered it as "library." Compare the passage in Akbarnâma II, 67, where the child Akbar is said to have drawn figures in Humayun's kitâbkhâna, leaving no doubt that an atelier is intended. The kitâbkhâna in Dinpanah, the city he founded in Delhi in 1533, is also the place where Humayun met his death shortly after observing the planet Venus. This suggests astronomical treatises may also have been copied there for him.

93 *Tadbîkâr*, fol. 81a, b (Thackston, *Three Memoirs*, Persian text, 1: 52, and English translation, 1: 129). Humayun apparently had both his library and his painters with him even in the years 1540 to 1545, when he was not in possession of a throne or a stable seat for his court. A few instances are discussed in Parodi, "Humayun's Sojourn."

94 Some of the paintings currently ascribed to other schools (primarily Bukhara and possibly Herat) may in fact be mislabeled.

95 I am thinking of its greatest achievements, such as *Celebrations for Akbar's Circumcision in Khwaja Seyyaran* (fig. 3) (see n. 19 above). The connection is supported by the fact that surviving materials from Humayun's reign are for the most part individual paintings of the type associated with albums.