

中国文化八讲

EIGHT LECTURES ON CHINESE CULTURE

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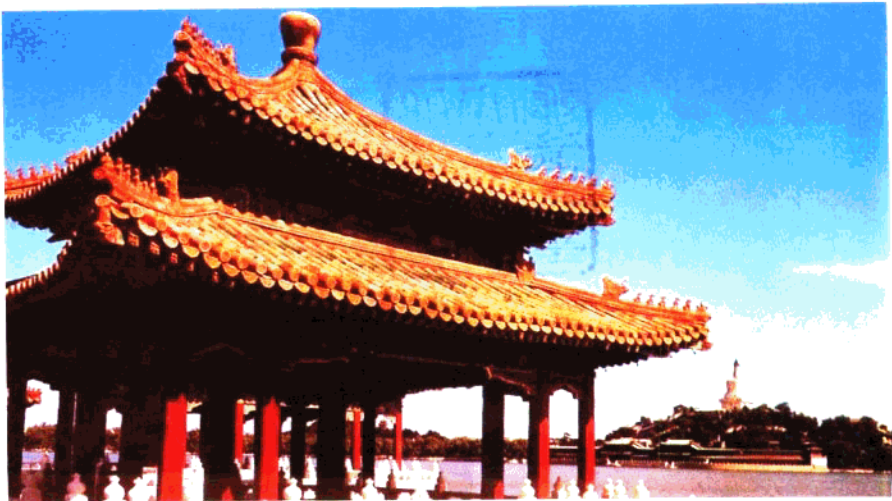
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先聖像





▲ The lake at Chengde in the Summer Retreat created by the Qing emperors in the 18th century



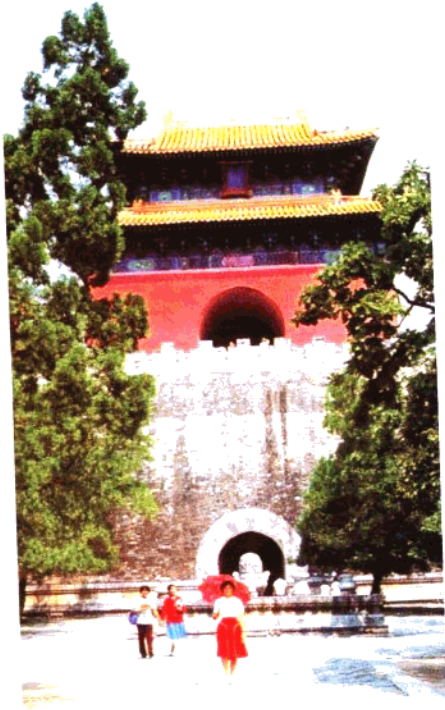
▲ Beihai Park, Beijing



▲ Qu Garden in West Lake, Hangzhou



▲ Jichang Yuan, a 17th-century garden at Wuxi, Jiangsu Province



▲ The Ming Tombs, Beijing

▼ *Spring Festival*, a painting of the Qing Dynasty



INTRODUCTION

This book derives largely from my own experience of teaching Chinese Culture to the students of Ohio State University in undergraduate and graduate courses. The objective of this course has been to provide a clear, conceptual framework of Chinese Culture. In this course, I have tried to combine my own work with what I determined were appropriate contributions of various scholars so that students who wish to go into depth independently may be assured of high-level scholarship.

I was awarded Excellent Teaching Award by the university for this course in 1994 and 1995. And this further ensured me that this series of lectures published in the book form can be a foundation from which an instructor can design a course of study in Chinese Culture in Chinese universities and colleges. As well as that this book can be of best use for foreign students desirous of the best of Chinese culture. It is my hope that armed with this volume the reader may begin to taste of the food of Chinese Culture.

A number of people helped me in this book in various ways. Dr. O. Hansen helped me to shape this course at a very early stage, giving excellent and detailed suggestions. Several colleagues and friends at the State University of Ohio lent books to me, read the material, made suggestions, and endlessly discussed my lectures with me: they included professor Li Weiming, Dr. L. H. Newcomb, Dr. Bobby D. Moser, Dr. Davil O. Hansen. I am profoundly grateful to all of these friends for their generous help. Last but not the least I am also indebted to my students at the Ohio State University, who gave me encouragement by showing smiles at my lectures, and clapping when each lecture was finished.

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CHINESE PAINTING

General Characteristics of Chinese Painting

The characteristics of Chinese painting are closely bound up with the nature of the medium. The basic material is ink, but Chinese ink is a wonderful substance, capable of an immense range and an extraordinary beauty of tone. The painter uses a pointed-tipped brush made of hair of goat, deer, or wolf set in a shaft of bamboo. He paints on a length of silk or a sheet of paper, the surface of which is absorbent, allowing no erasure or correction. Colour is sometimes added to make the effect more true to life, but the ink-drawing remains almost always the foundation of the design. Colour is not a formal element in the design as in Western art.

Chinese paintings are usually in the form of hanging pictures or of horizontal scrolls, in both cases normally kept rolled up. The latter paintings, often of great length, are unrolled bit by bit and enjoyed as a reader enjoys reading a manuscript. A succession of pictures is presented, though the composition is continuous. Thus, in the case of landscape, for which this form has been used with most felicity, one seems to be actually passing through the country depicted.

Chinese technique admits no correction, and the artist must therefore know beforehand what he intends to do. He closely observes and stores his observations in his memory. He conceives his design, and having completed the mental image

of what he intends to paint, he transfers it swiftly and with sure strokes to the silk. It is said that in a master's work the idea is present even where the brush has not passed. This, however, demands confidence, speed, and a mastery of technique acquired only by long practice.

In early times, such as the Shang and Zhou dynasties, Chinese paintings were made chiefly for sacrifices to Heaven and to the spirits of clan ancestors, who were believed to influence the living for good. Chinese society has always laid great stress on the need for man to understand the pattern of nature and to live in accordance with it. The world of nature was seen as the visible manifestation of the workings of the Great Ultimate through the generative interaction of the *yin-yang*^① dualism. As it developed, the purpose of Chinese painting turned from propitiation and sacrifice to the expression of man's understanding of these forces through the painting of landscape, bamboo, birds and flowers. This might be called the metaphysical, Taoist aspect of Chinese painting.

Chinese painting also had social and moral functions. The earliest paintings referred to in ancient texts depicted on the walls of palaces and ancestral halls benevolent emperors, sages, virtuous ministers, loyal generals, and their evil opposites as examples and warnings to the living. Portrait painting also had this moral function, depicting not the features of the subject so much as his character and his role in society. Therefore, it is said that it had the same merits as each of *The Six Classics*^②. This was typical Confucian function of painting.

When we turn to the subject-matter of Chinese painting, we see the early appearance of landscape art and its actual predominance. Landscape is accounted the most important of subjects because it includes man and all living things; the whole is greater than the part. Flowers are quite as important as figures. Where in Europe they have Christian themes, in China we have Buddhist themes and the stories of Taoist legend and the fairy tales. Genre-painting is as common as in

① 阴阳

② 《六经》

the West, though portraiture is perhaps less common. Among the typical themes of Chinese art there is no place for war, violence, the nude, death, or martyrdom. Nor is inanimate matter ever painted for its own sake; the very rocks and streams are felt to be alive, visible manifestations of the invisible forces of the universe. No theme would be accepted in Chinese painting that was not inspiring, noble, refreshing to the Chinese artistic tradition for an art of pure form divorced from content, and the Chinese cannot conceive of a work of art of which the form is beautiful while the subject matter is unedifying.

Hence we can justly conclude that Chinese painting is symbolic, for everything that is painted reflects some aspect of a totality of symbols of a more specific kind. Bamboo suggests the spirit of the scholar, which can be broken by circumstance but never bent, and jade symbolizes purity and indestructibility. The dragon is the wholly benevolent symbol of the emperor; the crane, of long life; the lily to Christianity, a symbol of purity; the plum, which blossoms even in the snow and stands for constancy; and the pine tree, which represents the unconquerable spirit of old age.

Last but not least, Chinese painting is unseparably associated with literature and other arts, such as poetry and calligraphy. The painter's carefully placed signature, inscription (often a poem) and seals are an integral part of the composition. Many of the painters were poets; some, like Wang Wei^① (699—759), equally distinguished in both arts. Consequently a painter means more to the Chinese than to the Westerners.

History of Chinese Painting

The earliest examples of Chinese painting date from the Han Dynasty (202 B.C. —220 A.D.) when the walls of temples and official halls were often painted with murals. Almost none of the early mural paintings survive, however, except for some within the cave temples and on the walls of tomb chambers. Their

① 王维

style is closely related to the sculptured tomb reliefs of the period.

Through the Tang Dynasty (618—906), murals and large screens were probably the painter's main formats. Another format, that of the scroll evolved concurrently of Chinese painting. The earliest type of scroll painting was the horizontal handscroll. This was also the earliest form of the book in use before a folding format — stitched down on side in a manner similar to the western book — was developed in the Song (960—1279).

To view it, the handscroll is placed on a table and the viewer unrolls it, length by length. Some handscrolls extend many feet in length. During the Song vertical scrolls intended for hanging on a wall also became common.

Scroll painting was traditionally produced for the exclusive intellectual elite. Many of the early painters are known by name since they signed their works long before this practice became customary in the west. Names of many other artists are known from their mention in essays on art theory. Because the faithful copying of works of revered masters was commonly practiced in China, it is often possible to gain an impression of an artist's style even when no original paintings survive.

Han through Five Dynasties period

From the Han period through the 8th century, the principal subject matter of painting was the depiction of human figures as edifying exemplars of good characters. Among the earliest recorded figure painters, much prominence was accorded Gu Kaizhi^① (345—406), to whom the earliest surviving scroll painting has been attributed in his handscroll, entitled *Admonitions of the Instructress of the Ladies of the Palace*^②. The artist's brush point as fine as a needle has delineated his subjects with an acute psychological sense. The people are embodied by their clothes, rather than by their flesh, and the floating draperies are similar in

① 顾恺之

② 《女史箴图》

style to those of 6th-century Buddhist sculpture.

After the 8th century in addition to paintings of human figures, birds and flowers became popular subjects. Bamboo and plum blossoms became another special categories of painting, sanctioned by the strong symbolic value that these plant forms held for the literate class. Su Dongpo^①(1037—1101) and his teacher Wen Tong^②(1018—1079) were famous early masters of bamboo art. Various other themes appeared in painting, but from the 10th to the 20th centuries the subject honoured above all was landscape. The tradition of landscape painting in China is inextricably bound with broad cultural values. Unlike the Mediterranean World China had no mythology of anthropomorphic gods. The beliefs in a self-creating universe led rather to a mythology of landscape itself. Mountains and waters were the grandest of all the cosmic images, supporting each in a dynamic polarity.

Song and Yuan periods

The concept that the microcosm of man participates in the macrocosm of the landscape is reflected in the tradition of monumental landscape painting that flourished during the Northern Song (960—1127). In the enormous hanging scroll *Buddhist Temple in Autumn Mountains*^③, attributed to the influential master Li Cheng^④(919—967), man is portrayed as but one small element in the enormity of nature. This theme underlies the styles of Fan Kuan^⑤, Guo Xi^⑥, and other great landscape painters of Northern Song.

The monumentality of Northern Song landscape was later transformed by the artists of Southern Song court into poetic views of nature of marvelous subtle-

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- ① 苏东坡
 - ② 文同
 - ③ 《晴峦萧寺图》
 - ④ 李成
 - ⑤ 范宽
 - ⑥ 郭熙

ty. This change resulted in part from the move of the Song capital from Kaifeng in the Henan Province of North China, to Hangzhou, in Zhejiang, in the early 12th century. The Northern painters had worked in a harder, clearer light. But among the marshes of the Yangtse delta Southern Song Academy painters such as Xia Gui^① and Ma Yuan^② painted scenes depicting a moist climate, where mountains floated elusively over mists, as in Ma Yuan's evocative *Bare Willow and Mountain in the Mist*. Another school of the Song painting was that of the Chan (Zen) Buddhist masters who produced boldly outlined works of great simplicity and spontaneity. A notable example is the *Six Persimmons* scroll, by the versatile monk-painter Mu Xi^③.

A concern with self-expression that had surfaced in other arts during the Song, notably in poetry and calligraphy, began to be explored in the Yuan (1279—1368) through the medium of landscape painting. The pioneer in this development was the calligrapher-painter Zhao Mengfu^④ (1254—1322), active in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. From this date the relationship between calligraphy and painting became closer. Painters began to talk of writing a picture. An already existing preference for painting without colour, in ink alone, became stronger. In order to exploit a full range of ink tonalities, artists came to prefer executing paintings on paper instead of on silk, which absorbs ink more uniformly. In the Yuan Dynasty the results were mainly an increasing emphasis upon the actual process of painting and a readiness to recognize styles of individual artists as a form of handwriting. Outstanding exponents of this new approach to painting were the landscape painters Huang Gongwang (1269—1354), Ni Zan (1301—1374), Wang Meng (1308—1385), and Wu Zhen (1280—1354)^⑤,

① 夏圭

② 马远

③ 牧溪

④ 赵孟頫

⑤ 黄公望,倪瓒,王蒙,吴镇

collectively known as the Four Great Yuan Masters. The practice of combining painting with calligraphy in a single composition also became more common.

The Ming period

In the Ming Dynasty (1368—1644) the entire process of image-making became more calligraphic. Since painters had always used a brush and ink similar to the calligrapher's, they had always tended to build their forms out of the basic brush strokes used in forming Chinese Characters. Now these tendencies were systematized, and the more representational values in pictorial art were often rejected in favour of a greater abstraction of form. Some Ming painters such as the influential master and art theorist Dong Qichang^① (1555—1636), declared that ultimately calligraphy and painting were done in the same "Dao" (way).

Ming artists believed that exemplars from the past could provide aesthetic standards for the present; as a result the styles of many past masters were kept active as options within the painter's vocabulary. Innumerable works are signed as in the manner of some earlier artists. The Wu School, an important school of Ming landscape painting founded by Shen Zhou^② (1427—1509), was based on these values.

Dong Qichang's handscroll *Autumn Mountains*^③ is a transformation of two earlier masterpieces, one by the 10th century artist Dong Yuan^④, and one by the Yuan artist Huang Gongwang. Dong Qichang turned principally to these two exemplars in establishing an amateur tradition of painting called the Southern School that greatly influenced the development of later Chinese painting and orthodox art criticism. This school reflected the values of the scholar-gentry elite, who practiced art as a pastime rather than as a profession. Although they recog-

① 董其昌

② 沈周

③ 《秋山图》

④ 董源

nized the role of technique in calligraphy, Dong and other literati artists slighted the professional painter's technical skill, and the frequently decorative quality of his work. They associated these so-called professional values mainly with two groups of artists: the court Academy painters of the Southern Song period, such as Ma Yuan, and the early Ming painters of the imperial court and of Zhejiang Province (collectively known as Zhe School painters), such as Dai Jin^① (1388—1462) and his followers. From a broader viewpoint, however, these professional painters represented the same world, using the same techniques of brush and ink that the scholars did. Not only are their paintings often of highest quality, but they also contributed much to the styles of the scholars whether acknowledged or not.

Qing period to the present

The first century of Qing rule (1644—1911) was the last period of great creativity in traditional Chinese painting. The orthodox Southern School tradition of Dong Qichang culminated in the styles of the so-called four Wangs (Wang Shimin (1592—1680), Wang Jian (1598—1677), Wang Hui (1632—1720) and Wang Yuanqi (1642—1715))^②. The most gifted of these four artists was Wang Yuanqi, whose powerful architectonic forms have often been compared to those of the French modernist painter Paul Cezanne. Another large and varied group of artists, who are often grouped by the cities they most frequented, were less concerned with broad historical developments, and pursued more individualistic aims. The best known of these artists were Zhu Da (1612—1705), Kun Can (Shi Xi, 1612—1693) and Shi Tao (Yuan Ji, 1642—1718)^③ who was a scion of the Ming Royal house, who lived his art partly as a protest against the Manchu conquest in 1644. Scholar artists of the Qing period often tried to maintain a fic-

① 戴进

② 王时敏, 王鉴, 王翬, 王原祁

③ 朱耷, 髡残, 石涛

tion that they never earned money from their paintings. But in the 18th century, with painters such as Jin Nong^①(1687—1764) and Luo Pin^②(1733—1799) both classed among the “Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou^③,” this pretence was abandoned as a merchant society of vastly increasing wealth became an important patron.

The Jesuit painters introduced a new synthetic Sino-European style which was very popular at court. Under their influence Leng Mei^④ and other court painters flirted with perspective and other western technical devices, though these left no more beyond the restricted circle. Indeed Wu Li^⑤(1632—1718), the only important Chinese painter who became a Christian convert showed not a hint of western influence in his landscape painting, which is in the tradition of pure Wenren Hua (Literati painting). He, with the flower-painter Yun Shou-ping^⑥(1633—1690) and the four Wangs all active under Emperor Kangxi (1662—1722), comprised the “Six Great Masters of the Qing”. The four Wangs embodied in their works the aesthetic ideals of Do Qichang, whose pupil Wang Shimin had been eclectic, scholarly, avoiding colour and the picturesque. The landscapes recall the clarity of Ni Zan and Shen Zhou. Other groups of painters, such as the “Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou” and the “Eight Masters of Nanjing”, also upheld, with varying degree of individualism, the literary tradition which found its most notable expression in almost forbidding panoramas of Gong Xian^⑦(1618—1689) and the dry, fastidious landscapes of Hong Ren^⑧(1610—1663). Most Qing painters, however, fell victims to a cautious refine-

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- ① 金农
 - ② 罗聘
 - ③ 扬州八怪
 - ④ 冷枚
 - ⑤ 吴历
 - ⑥ 恽寿平
 - ⑦ 龚贤
 - ⑧ 弘仁

ment characteristic of an ancient culture at a standstill. The only notable exception to this trend were the three great individualists, Zhu Da, Kun Can and Shi Tao. These men lived a life of semi-retirement; wholly or partly under Buddhist inspiration and painting only to please themselves and their intimate friends, they deliberately flouted at conventions. "The best method" wrote Shi Tao, "is that which has never been a method". While Kun Can painted rich-textured landscapes in the Yuan spirit, Zhu Da and Shi Tao depicted more intimate aspects of nature with astonishing spontaneity and freedom, generally on a small scale. The individualists founded no school and represent the last significant development in Chinese painting before the 20th century.

The tradition of scholarly painting which flourished in the 17th and 18th centuries lost its impulse as the Qing Dynasty declined. But in the 20th century, it has undergone a revival, partly as a response to the Western challenge. Leading figures in this revival were Wu Changshuo^① (1844—1927), Qi Baishi^② (1863—1957), and Huang Binhong^③ (1865—1955). With the founding of art schools, traditional techniques were taught along with the Western. Now painting in the Chinese medium has ceased to be a pastime only for the gentle man and has begun to be a truly popular art.

The teaching of Western painting began shortly before the 1911—1912 revolution. After the end of World War I many young men went to Europe to study art, notably Liu Haisu^④ who founded the school which later became the Shanghai Academy of Art, and Xu Beihong^⑤ (1895—1953), who taught in National Central University in Nanjing and later became head of the Academy of Art in Beijing in which he was succeeded on his death by his pupil Wu Zuoren^⑥. These painters

① 吴昌硕

② 齐白石

③ 黄宾虹

④ 刘海粟

⑤ 徐悲鸿

⑥ 吴作人