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Foreword

Chinese painting has a long history. For thousands of years, it undergoes continuous enrichment, innovation and development. Artists, mainly Han people but also including some minorities, create distinctive painting styles and a variety of techniques. The unique painting system grants China an important position and influence in oriental and even world art.

The earliest history of Chinese painting can be traced back to patterns in painted wares and rock paintings in the New Stone Age. Despite primitive, these paintings show that people in ancient times already can make primary modeling and feature animals and plants to express their beliefs and wishes or decorate their surroundings.

Shang and Zhou dynasties period(c. 1600 BC–221 BC) is an early stage for the development of traditional Chinese painting. Paintings were used as decorative patterns in murals, costumes, bronze wares, jadewares, ivory and bone sculptures and lacquered wooden furniture. In the Eastern Zhou Dynasty(770 BC–256 BC), drawings which record and describe social activities began to appear. Qin and Han dynasties(221 BC–220 AD) saw the first climax of traditional Chinese painting development. Court and professional painters appeared at that time, as well as series of artistic works including palace frescoes, grave murals, painted rocks and bricks, and silk paintings. Meanwhile, painting art became more mature, while its subject matters more diversified. From Three Kingdoms (220–280) to Northern and Southern Dynasties(420–589), traditional Chinese painting received full-scale development, laying a solid foundation for its further improvement in later ages. It saw another peak season in the Sui and the Tang dynasties(581–907) and its development reached height in the Five Dynasties(907–960) and Song Dynasty(960–1279). Paintings in the Yuan Dynasty(1206–1368)

followed the development momentum of Song Dynasty, while in the Ming and Qing dynasties(1368–1911), it became fully mature and formed a golden age.

The theme of Chinese painting ranges from characters to landscapes, flowers, birds, grass, insects, animals, bridges and pavilions. As for artistic form, there are line drawing and coloring, meticulous and freehand brushwork, concrete and abstract, realistic and romantic style. In the past thousands of years emerged lots of great artists, including Gu Kaizhi in Eastern Jin Dynasty(317–420), Zhan Ziqian in the Sui Dynasty(581-618), Yan Liben, Wu Daozi, Zhou Fang, Li Sixun and Li Zhaodao in the Tang Dynasty(618–907), Gu Hongzhong, Dong Yuan and Ju Ran in the Five Dynasties period(907–960), Cui Bai, Li Di, Li Cheng, Fan Kuan, Emperor Huizong, Guo Xi, Ma Yuan and Xia Gui in the Song Dynasty(960–1279), Zhao Mengfu, Wu Zhen, Ni Zan, Wang Meng, Wang Mian and Wang Zhenpeng in the Yuan Dynasty(1206–1368), Shen Zhou, Tang Yin, Chen Hongshou, Wen Zhengming, Qiu Ying, Dong Qichang, Zhou Chen, Lü Ji, Ding Yunpeng and Lan Ying in the Ming Dynasty(1368–1644), Wang Jian, Wang Yuanqi, Wang Hui, Wang Shimin, Yun Shouping, Jiang Tingxi and Giuseppe Castiglione(Lang Shining) in the Qing Dynasty(1616–1911). Many art schools, which have orderly inheritance and claim their respective excellence, were founded, such as Huang Quan school of painting, Xu Xi school of painting, northern school of landscape painting, southern school of landscape painting, Mi Fu and Mi Youren school of painting, Huzhou school of painting, Changzhou school of painting, Wumen school of painting, Songjiang school of painting, Zhejiang school of painting, Xin'an school of painting, Huangshan school of painting, Yushan school of painting, Loudong school of painting and Jiangxi school of painting. There were also many renowned painting pairs or groups, like “Ma Yuan and Xia Gui,” “Dong Yuan and Ju Ran,” “Mi Fu and Mi Youren,” “Four Great Painters in the

Yuan Dynasty,” “Four Great Painters in the Ming Dynasty,” “Eight Great Painters in Jinling,” “Four Great Wang-surnamed Painters,” “Six Great Painters in the Early Qing Dynasty,” and “Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou.”

These artists have produced numerous great works. All of them now become unique treasures and are preserved in major museums all over the world or at the hand of private collectors. At auction sales, museums and individuals from both home and abroad scramble to buy traditional Chinese paintings, while prices are rising constantly, both of which reflect the artistic value and charm of traditional Chinese paintings.

This book selects top-notch Chinese paintings since the Jin Dynasty(265–420). These paintings and their authors have produced direct and drastic impacts on the development of traditional Chinese painting of later ages.

Mainly drawn on silk and paper, these works have different forms, such as hand scroll, hanging scroll, album and fan painting.

Majority of these paintings are representatives of existing ancient paintings, some are state treasures and some are valuable cultural heritages of mankind. They are now kept in the Palace Museum in Beijing, provincial museums in Chinese mainland, the Palace Museum in Taipei and major museums in the world.

Through these works, we can not only appreciate great Oriental painting art imbued with artistic taste, but also have a glimpse of profound Chinese culture.

Traditional Chinese painting has some obviously different characteristics from Western painting. For instance, it doesn't emphasize perspective, changes of light and color of objects, and their

conformances. Instead, it lays more stresses on expressing author's feelings. Traditional Chinese painting likes to "present verve through form," but Western painting prefers to "portray real objects" over their verve. In addition, Western painting highlights integrity and distribution.

Characteristics of traditional Chinese painting can also be seen in such aspects like artistic technique, category, composition, drawing pen, ink and pigment. Chinese painting is usually drawn in three artistic styles: fine and delicate brushwork, freehand brushwork and a combination of both. Categorized according to subject matter, it can be divided into figure, landscape, flower-and-bird paintings.

Brush pen and Chinese ink are two important tools of traditional Chinese painting. Painters can make different brush strokes: thin or thick, quick and slow, curve and circle, and strokes with syncopated cadence, all of which are used to show lifelike portrayal of objects. Ink, however, is a tool to make a shape or set off atmosphere. The use of such techniques like light ink strokes, shading and washing, usually alternate. Upon requirements, ink is prepared in dry, wet, thick or light form. In tinting process, majority of pigments are minerals or powder made of animal's shell, both of which are enduring in spite of erosion of wind and sunlight.

As time elapses, Chinese painting has undergone continuous changes either in subject matter and form. Especially, as Western painting poured into China after the May 4th Movement in 1919, it absorbed many Western techniques for its enrichment. Nevertheless, basics of traditional Chinese paintings shouldn't be thrown away. It is a result of wisdom, talent and hard work of our nation and is a national treasure indeed.

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Paintings from Jin to Tang Dynasties

Jin Dynasty(265—420) is a period that traditional Chinese painting receives comprehensive development. At that time, figure painting increased, portraiture became popular, Buddhism themes were widely adopted, landscape and flower-and-bird paintings originated. Some famous painters emerged during the period, like figure painter Gu Kaizhi, landscapist Wang Wei and Zong Bing. Painting theories also appeared. Famous works during the period include *Ode to Goddess of the Luo River* by Gu Kaizhi.

Sui and Tang dynasties period(581—907) saw a peak season in the development of traditional Chinese painting. Unique artistic approaches, which were gradually created during the period, set good models for artists of later generations. If people want to talk about traditional Chinese paintings, these artistic works from Jin to Tang dynasties can't be ignored.

Figure painting took a primary place in the Sui and Tang dynasties, with famous painters like Yan Liben, Wu Daozi, Zhou Fang, Li Sixun and Li Zhaodao. Famous paintings included *Portraits of the Past Thirteen Emperors*, *Court Ladies Wearing*

Flowered Hairdresses, *Court Ladies*, *The Imperial Sedan Chair*, *Emperor Xuanzong's Journey to Shu*, *Twenty-four Meritorious Officials of the Lingyan Palace*, *The Western Regions*, *Illustrations of the Tributaries*, *Emperor Xuanzong Rides Horse*, *Lady Guoguo's Spring Outing* and *Drunken Scholar*. The landscape paintings of Zhan Ziqian in the Sui Dynasty(581—618) indicate that ancient Chinese landscape painting would soon enter a maturity period. Figure painting in the meantime possesses bright coloring and looks sumptuous. Characters depicted, ladies in particular, are comparatively plump, which is a typical style of the Tang Dynasty(618—907).

Flower-and-bird painting also originated, with such subjects like eagle, red-crowned crane, peacock, pheasant, bee and butterfly. They usually adopted neat and gorgeous painting techniques. Religious themes, particularly frescoes in temples, flourished and possessed a high artistic achievement. Murals in the Dunhuang Grottoes are representative.

Painting arts during the period also had some impacts on Korea and Japan.

Ode to Goddess of the Luo River, a Eastern Jin Dynasty(317–420) hand scroll by Gu Kaizhi, ink and color on silk, 27.1cm × 572.8cm, in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing.

Gu Kaizhi(345–ca. 406), born in Eastern Jin Dynasty, was one of China's four great artists in pre-Tang Dynasty period. Knowledgeable and talented, he was particularly proficient at painting and was acclaimed as great master of painting art by people of later ages. He generated drastic and far-reaching impacts on traditional Chinese painting at that time and of later generations.

Despite a reproduction in the Song Dynasty(960–1279), it well preserves painting styles in the six dynasties and accordingly becomes a valuable document to study Gu Kaizhi's painting art.

This painting drew materials from *Ode to Goddess of the Luo River*, a literature masterpiece of Cao Zhi, a great littérateur in the Three Kingdoms period(220–280). It depicts the scene that Cao Zhi meets with the Goddess of the Luo River at riverside. It's ingeniously conceived and drawn in vivid approaches. The goddess is graceful, beautiful, and appears in all her splendor. The painting shows author's boundless joy when meeting with the goddess and enormous sadness at farewell.

It was previously preserved in the palace of the Qing Dynasty(1616–1911). As one of a few existing ancient Chinese paintings, it is a national cultural relic indeed.

