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PAINTER  
OF FORTITUDE  
Festschrift of Qian Shoutie

薛峰 钱晟 编



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刘小晴书

## A Brief Biography of Qian Shoutie<sup>①</sup>

Qian Sheng

**Qian Shoutie (1897—1967), birth name Ya, courtesy name Shuya, literary name Shoutie, pseudonyms Master of Shu Qingfeng, was born in Hongshengli, Wuxi, Jiangsu Province. Qian Shoutie was respected as a Shanghai-school painter, calligrapher and seal carver. He taught at Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts as professor and held the chair of Traditional Chinese Painting Department. He was also a member of the Shanghai Painting Academy. He was the chief editor of *Arts & Life Pictorial* published during the 1930s. During his residence in Japan, he was consultant to the Institute of Calligraphy and worked on several Fine Art journals. He was one of the founders of the Chinese Painters' Society.**

In 1897, Qian Shoutie came from a rural family with little financial means. His father's name was Qian Zengrong.

In 1910, Qian Shoutie's father could not afford his son's education, so sent him to be apprentice in "Hanzhen Pavilion" on Hulong Street, Suzhou. Qian Shoutie acknowledged the shop owner Tang Boqian as his master to learn stele carving. Tang Boqian, the boss of Hanzhen Pavilion, was a well-known master in stele carving as well as seal carving in

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① This article based on Liao Lu, Qian Mingzhi: *Chronicles of Qian Shoutie*, Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 2007.

Suzhou City. He also ran mounting and rubbing businesses, and was associated with some painters and calligraphers. Tang Boqian appreciated Qian Shoutie's diligence and resilience in his pursuit of art and believed that he was a promising talent, so he gave him the famous epigraphs and seal carvings of all dynasties housed in the shop for him to view and copy. Qian Shoutie could not afford to buy paper and seals, so he practised calligraphy and carving on a stone slate. It was primitive, simple, and crude, but it had unwittingly laid a solid foundation for his later days' masterpieces of calligraphy and seal carving, and trained his wrist strength and courage at the same time. Xu Shuming, owner of an antique shop next to the Hanzhen Pavilion, discovered that Qian Shoutie was hard working and talented so he recommended him to Zheng Wenzhuo<sup>①</sup> and Yu Yushuang. Zheng Wenzhuo and Yu Yushuang were both great masters of the time. Becoming a disciple of the two, was believed to be a great turning point for Qian Shoutie's life.

Qian Shoutie formally took Zheng Wenzhuo as his mentor. Zheng gave Qian Shoutie the studio name of Shoutieyi, literary name Shoutie, and therefore Qian Shoutie became known to the world as Shoutie. Zheng Wenzhuo was excelled in painting and calligraphy and had a sharp insight to the inscriptions on ancient bronzes and stone tablets and artefacts. He personally tutored Qian Shoutie to write and paint.

Yu Yushuang<sup>②</sup> once set up Tijinguan Seal Carving Painting and Calligraphy Society with Wu Changshuo and others. Qian Shoutie not only learned ink painting from him, but also consulted him the seal carving skills and benefited a lot from him. Yu Yushuang also specialised in epigraphy. His paintings followed the styles of Zhu Da and Shi Tao. He also

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① Zheng Wenzhuo (1856—1918), courtesy name Junchen, literary name Xiaopo, Shuwen, later literary name Hegong, Hedaoren, other name Lenghong Cike. He was born in Tieling, Fengtian (today's Liaoning) and became juren in the Guangxu Period. He once served as an official of the Cabinet. His father Zheng Yingqi served as Governor of Shaanxi Province in the early years of the reign of Tongzhi Emperor. Zheng loved the apricot blossoms and spring rain and small bridges over flowing water in the region south of the Yangtze River. Zheng Wenzhuo was a great master of poetry and ci in the late Qing Dynasty. He was also knowledgeable in medicine, and skilled in calligraphy and painting and seal carving. He was a bosom friend to Wu Changshuo who also stayed in Suzhou as a guest. Zheng Wenzhuo found Qian Shoutie was gifted in way of cutting and had obtained the skills from the ancient great masters. He told Qian to pay attention to calligraphy and painting other than seal carving, which was crucial to improve his seal carving skills. He also advised Qian to read more poems and ancient books as way of self-cultivation.

② Yu Yushuang (1874—1923), birth name Zongyuan, courtesy name Yichang, other name Nvchuang Shanmin, was born in Wuxing (Huzhou), Zhejiang Province. He was good at landscape and flowers and birds paintings and was skilled in seal carving.



exerted far-reaching influence on Qian Shoutie.

In 1916, Qian Shoutie moved to Shanghai at the age of 20 and made a living by selling painting, calligraphy, and seal carving works, which had milestone significance for him. He thus embarked on the lifelong journey as professional artist in painting and calligraphy. Zheng Wenzhuo offered continuous help to Qian Shoutie when he first arrived in Shanghai and personally wrote the foreword for his royalty standards: “Qian Shoutie pursues the charm of the rubbing of Western Han and Eastern Han dynasties with a small cutter which he does with skill and ease. Moreover, he is diligent in learning from the present and past and will be equally famous with Kutie (Wu Changshuo) and Bingtie (Wang Daxin) in the days to come to form a tripartite balance, which can be a much told story in the art circle in Shanghai.” Shanghai at that time was already a home to many great masters, such as Chen Baochen, Chen Sanli, Shen Zengzhi, Li Ruiqing, Zeng Xi, Kang Youwei, Zhu Zumou, and Zhao Shuru. Despite that Qian Shoutie was young and new to Shanghai, Zheng Wenzhuo compared Qian Shoutie with the 72-year-old Kutie (Wu Changshuo) and the 45-year-old Wang Bingtie (Wang Daxin). On one hand, he aimed at marketing and promoting Qian Shoutie, on the other hand, he also pointed out the connections of Qian Shoutie with the two senior artists. And that is the origin of the “Three Tie of Jiangnan”.

After he arrived in Shanghai, Qian Shoutie joined the Tijinguan Seal Carving Painting and Calligraphy Society chaired by Wu Changshuo and continued to learn painting and seal carving from him. Wu Changshuo<sup>①</sup> was in his prime years of art at this time, with his fame reaching the world. “Tijinguan” he presided over was one of the most influential art communities in Shanghai at the time. Its members included Wu Changshuo, Wang Yiting, Lu Lianfu, Huang Binhong, Zhao Shuru, Zhao Yunhe, Wu Daiqiu, Gao Yehou, Ding Fuzhi, He Tianjian, Ren Jinshu, Zeng Nongran and Yu Yushuang, etc.

Other than the Tijinguan Seal Carving Painting and Calligraphy Society, Qian Shoutie also became member of other art organisations, such as “Three Hardy Companions of

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① Wu Changshuo (1844—1927), birth name Jun, Junqing, courtesy name Changshi, Changshuo, pseudonyms Foulou, Laofou, Foudaoren, Kutie, Pohe, Dalong, Hansuanwei, Pohe Tingzhang, was a famous modern art master. He was born in Zhangwu Village, Anji, Zhejiang Province in 1844. His grandfather Yuan, father Xinjia, both were juren. His father was a specialist in seal carving. Wu Changshuo grew up in a poor family. His father taught him when he was a boy. He lived in Suzhou for more than twenty years in his life. Suzhou can be said to be Wu’s second hometown. After the 22nd year of the reign of the Emperor Guangxu (1896), Wu Changshuo settled in Suzhou and stayed there for 15 years. It was not until the Revolution of 1911 did Wu move to Shanghai again. He died old in Shenjiang.

Cold Weather”, “Bee Painting”, “Chinese Painting Society”, “Shanghai Fine Art Society” and presided over “Maple Leaf Painting Society” and so on. These activities led him to know Tang Yun, He Tianjian, Zheng Wuchang and other artists.<sup>①</sup> These painting and calligraphy associations became crucial for Qian Shoutie to make friends and learn through communications. These organisations with the aim of “academic research, preservation of the quintessence of Chinese culture” not only offered guidance from senior painters but also places for the artists to appreciate the famous works and exchange ideas. Evidently, Qian Shoutie’s artistic level was enhanced as a result. More importantly, these associations had provided a major channel to market for Qian Shoutie who made a living with calligraphy, painting and seal carving.

In 1922, Qian Shoutie was appointed professor of Seal Carving School of Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts. In 1924, he became Chair of the Chinese Traditional Painting Department.

During the 1920s to 1930s, the art market was dominated by impressionistic style of seal represented by Wu Changshuo. Integrating seal into painting meant a lot to the Shanghai-school painters who gathered in Shanghai. Qian Shoutie, as a seal artist who had solid foundation in calligraphy and seal carving had advantageous conditions in brushwork artistic conception and art of composition. As he himself stated, “calligraphy first, followed by seal

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① Zheng Chang (1894—1952), courtesy name Wuchang, was born in Shengzhou, Zhejiang Province. In 1910, he was admitted in Hangzhou Prefectural Middle School. His classmates included Yu Dafu, Xu Zhimo and Jiang Lifu.

He Tianjian (1891—1977) was born in Wuxi, birth name He Jun, also known as He Bingnan, courtesy name Jiansou, literary name Jianfu, A`nan, etc. He was fond of painting as a child. In his early years, he learned painting laws from field sketching. He was good at ink painting and paid attention to gradation of colours, often compound colours. He was especially excelled at green landscape, and evolved into a unique style of his own, with bold and unrestrained style and rich flavour of the times.

Tang Yun (1910—1993), courtesy name Xiachen, literary name Yaocheng, Dashi, Dashiweng, etc. His studio got the name of “Dashi Studio”, “Shanlei Pavilion”. He was born in Hangzhou, Zhejiang. He was exposed to family education as a child, was diligent and eager to learn, and was a self-taught talent. Before the age of 17, Tang Yun mainly copied ancient paintings and picture albums. He moved to Shanghai in 1938 and began to make a living by teaching. Later he quitted the job and became a professional artist. In his early years, he focused on painting figure of Buddha and landscape, fresh and elegant, smart natural and unrestrained; in his late years, he was good at painting eagles, cranes, lotus flowers and kingfishers, skilled and scattered, forceful and unique. He loved collection and was best-known for his collection of handmade pots designed by Chen Hongshou. He was also well-versed in calligraphy—official script and running script, poetry, and appreciation.

carving, and painting comes the third.” Qian Shoutie was respected as an all-rounder master for any of those three disciplines.

In 1923, Qian Shoutie went to Japan upon the invitation of Hashimoto Kansetsu<sup>①</sup> and resided for a year in the home of the Japanese artist in Kyoto. “With the help of Hashimoto, Qian Shoutie successfully held solo calligraphy, painting and seal carving exhibitions in Kyoto and Akashi, and were well-received by the locals. For a time, people in Kyoto took great pride in vying for a seal carved by Qian Shoutie ...he rose to fame overnight and people streamed in to ask for his paintings and seals.”

In 1931, Qian Shoutie went to Japan again as a member of the Chinese Painters and Calligraphers Delegation headed by Wang Yiting. On April 28 of the same year, the “Sino-Japanese Painting Exhibition” was held in Ueno, Tokyo, with an unprecedented grand occasion. Later, the Japanese Emperor Hirohito received the Chinese delegation. In April after his return from Japan, Qian Shoutie and Wang Yiting, He Tianjian, Wu Hufan, Zhang Daqian and Xu Beihong took part in the second national Art Exhibition as invited artists, which also marked Qian’s entry into the mainstream of painters.

In 1934, he was the chief editor of *Arts & Life Pictorial* published by Trinity Printing Company Press.

In 1937, Qian Shoutie was imprisoned in Japan for rescuing Guo Moruo. In prison, he put his life behind and fought against the Japanese army at all risks. During the trial, he refused to kneel down. Despite forces used by the court and all kinds of tortures, he was fearless of death and fought for justice. As a scholar, the unyielding spirit he upheld was the source of the firm and fortitude temperament reflected in his works. During his four years of imprisonment, he made a systematic study of the classical ancient works and paintings, reflected, and combed his art. He wrote in his family letter, “I seemed to have grasped the secrets of the ancients in my recent landscape brushwork. I would appreciate each of the paintings I created behind the

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① Hashimoto Kansetsu (1883—1945) was a famous Japanese painter. He was the giant in Kansai painting circle in Taisho and Showa periods. Since 1914, he had visited China for more than 30 times and was proficient in Chinese ancient culture. He was a close friend to Wu Changshuo, Wang Yiting, Qian Shoutie and others. Under the recommendation of Hashimoto Kansetsu, Qian Shoutie became well-known in Japan. Their friendship and artistic attainments were known as “Two Marvels of East Asia” by the Japanese. In 1937, Hashimoto Kansetsu rushed to rescue Qian outside the prison along with others, which not only helped him get a loose environment in prison in which Qian could paint, but also fought for his early release from prison. This act was commendable in an atmosphere when Japan had gone to war with China.

bars, as if travelling in dreamland to enjoy in adversity. I have carved six seals last month and my skills have improved too. Since the day I was put in jail, I have read many books to gain knowledge and cultivate myself. Nothing to complain.” “I’ve studied Wang Xizhi’s Seventeen Script recently and found them very rewarding. I can apply his techniques in painting. As to say the landscape painting, I try to follow the style of Dong Yuan. I’ve understood the master-strokes of his three paintings of Festive Scene by the Riverside, Dongtian Mountain Hall, and Travelling amid Mountains and Streams.” “I felt very rewarding recently by studying Wang Xizhi’s Seventeen Script. These are all I have gained in times of mishaps. This is the so called, ‘Misfortune might be a blessing in disguise.’ I’ve benefited a lot from this self-cultivation.” These efforts to some extent, had made up Qian Shoutie’s lack of education in his childhood due to family poverty, and his artistic level had also been fully improved.

In June 1941, with the endeavour of Hashimoto Kansetsu and other Japanese friends, Qian Shoutie was released ahead of time and returned to China. His legendary deeds of self-sacrifice, fearless of power and fighting with the Japanese army were known far and wide, and were well-claimed by the Shanghai culture and art circles.

In 1945, after the victory of the War of Resistance Against Japan, with the help of Tang Yun and other friends, Qian Shoutie held a solo exhibition and achieved great success. Orders for his works came one after another. The famous doctor Lu Nanshan commissioned a landscape painting from him with 4 *liang* of gold bars, and his economic situation also changed as a result.

In 1947, as the Cultural Secretary of the Chinese Delegation of the United Nations to Japan, Qian Shoutie visited Tokyo Japan again.

In 1949, after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, Qian Shoutie left for Shanghai from Hong Kong. Soon he was engaged in Chinese painting reform movement, and became a member of the Shanghai Chinese Painting Society and Colour Printing Improvement Organisation. He devoted himself in the creation with up surged enthusiasm.

In 1950, the war to resist U.S. aggression and aid Korea was a major event of the new China. Art workers gave full play to the function of art reflecting reality and actively participated the campaigns. Qian Shoutie created a series of Chinese paintings reflecting the Korean War. *Marching to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea* and *Defending Homeland* created in 1951 were his representative works for that period of time. Qian Shoutie gave play to his advantages in landscape painting. With magnificent landscape composition, traditional brushwork language, he reflected the army life of the volunteers in the high mountains and lofty hills. The army procession was placed in the “visible” and “accessible” traditional landscape. The

blunt combination of old brushwork and new content, and the traditional landscape and new characters and concepts, was more of an exploration rather than for harmony.

In 1953, at the “Political Workshop for Shanghai Art Workers”, Ai Qing proposed the idea of “painting realist landscape”, and “sketching in the field”, emphasizing to bring back the landscape painting in expressing the natural and social reality. In order to make his own art conform to the ever-changing epoch atmosphere, the over 50-year-old Qian Shoutie positively responded to the call and went to sketch in the field.

In 1956, Shanghai Painting Academy was founded. Qian Shoutie became a member of the Shanghai Painting Academy since its inception.

In 1957, Qian Shoutie and Zhu Qizhan travelled far to Sichuan and Shaanxi, which largely reshaped his works. *Landscape* was painted by Qian Shoutie on a cruise ship at the Three Gorges during his trip to Sichuan and Shaanxi. He brought new meaning through traditional brushwork, and reflected his strong ability in picture arrangement. Such control ability to the grand view provided basis for his later creation.

Qian Shoutie did not simply cater to the call of the times to express the real life, but rather he tried to solve the practical problems from art noumenon. Through sketching and his new understanding to the language of the traditional techniques, Qian Shoutie transformed to the more reserved and lingering creation of artistic conception from the plain and direct creation, and his art therefore glowed with new vitality. This series of works filled with natural fresh air reflected the changes of his aesthetic philosophy and the advancement of his brushwork, which can be regarded as a peak of his creation and was highly praised by Shi Lu, Zhao Wangyun and others.

In 1962, Qian Shoutie visited Beijing and stayed with Xu Linglu’s Beijing gallery for almost half a year. He reached his another creative peak.

In 1966, Culture Revolution started, Qian Shoutie suffered heavily at the age of 70. At the end of 1967, Qian Shoutie passed away due to illness at his home in Shanghai.

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