



Zhang Anzhi

A HISTORY OF Chinese Painting



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS BEIJING

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

中国画发展史纲要 / 张安治著.

北京: 外文出版社, 2002.5

ISBN 7-119-03042-6

I. 中... II. 张... III. 中国画 - 绘画史 - 英文 IV. J209.2

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2002) 第 022510 号

责任编辑: 刘承忠

装帧设计: 蔡 荣

中国画发展史纲要

张安治 著

*

© 外文出版社

外文出版社出版

(中国北京百万庄大街 24 号)

邮政编码 100037

外文出版社网址: <http://www.flp.com.cn>

电子信箱: info@flp.com.cn

sales@flp.com.cn

深圳佳信达印务有限公司印刷

中国国际图书贸易总公司发行

(中国北京车公庄西路 35 号)

北京邮政信箱第 399 号 邮政编码 100044

2002 年 (大 32 开) 第 1 版

2006 年第 1 版第 2 次印刷

(英)

ISBN 7-119-03042-6 / G·39(外)

08000(平)

85-E-531P

A HISTORY OF **Chinese Painting**

Written by Zhang Anzhi

Translated by Dun J. Li

Foreign Languages Press

First Edition 2002
Second Printing 2006

Author: Zhang Anzhi
Editor: Liu Chengzhong
Design: Cai Rong

ISBN 7-119-03042-6
Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, China, 2006

Published by Foreign Languages Press
24 Baiwanzhuang Road, Beijing 100037, China
Website: <http://www.flp.com.cn>
E-mail Address: info@flp.com.cn
sales@flp.com.cn

Distributed by China International Book Trading Corporation
35 Chegongzhuang Xilu, Beijing 100044, China
P.O.Box 399, Beijing, China

Printed in the People's Republic of China

Contents

Preface

5

Chapter I

The Origin of Chinese Painting

8

Chapter II

Shang (c. 1600-1046 B.C.)

Zhou (c. 1046-771 B.C.)

Warring States (475-221 B.C.)

11

Chapter III

Qin (221-207 B.C.)

Han (206 B.C.-A.D. 220)

17

Chapter IV

Three Kingdoms (220-265)

Western Jin (265-316)

Eastern Jin and Sixteen States (317-420)

Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589)

32

Chapter V

Sui (581-618)

Tang (618-907)

46

Chapter VI

Five Dynasties (907-960)

Ten States (902-979)

78

Chapter VII

Northern Song (960-1127)

Southern Song (1127-1179)

Liao (916-1125)

Western Xia (1038-1227)

Jin (1115-1234)

91

Chapter VIII

Yuan (1271-1368)

133

Chapter IX

Ming (1368-1644)

151

Chapter X

Qing (1644-1911)

Modern Period (1840-1919)

184

Chapter XI

Contemporary Period (After 1919)

220

Index

239

Preface

CHINESE painting has a history of at least five thousand years. It possesses a national characteristic unique to China, a characteristic resulting from the presence of certain objective conditions that underlay the development of Chinese culture itself. The interactions between Chinese painting on the one hand and Chinese philosophy, literature, and other art forms (calligraphy, industrial arts, architecture, etc.) on the other have contributed to this distinct national characteristic. Though Chinese painting has much in common with Western painting from an aesthetic point of view, it has definitely made its own independent contributions.

As early as the fourth century, painter Gu Kaizhi articulated the idea that "form is only a means to express spirit." Later, in the fifth century, painter Xie He listed "vitality" as the most important in his "six principles of painting." All this indicates that Chinese painters, at a very early period, realized the importance of capturing the spirit of nature, rather than just copying it. Painting a man or woman, the artist should bring forth his or her personality rather than his or her likeness; in painting animals, trees, or flowers, he should attempt to capture their characteristics or "moving implications." Likewise, a landscape painting must place the viewer in an aesthetic environment where he could sense, among other things, seasonal changes. A good painter must not only "observe" but also "understand" his subject matter. Jing Hao, a landscapist of the tenth century, stated that only after painting a pine ten thousand times did he succeed in capturing its spirit. He may have exaggerated a little; it is nevertheless true that a painter must observe and study most diligently if he wishes to capture the spirit or reality of the painted matter. Only when the spirit or reality of a painted matter is firmly grasped can the depiction itself be free and moving.

In the latter part of the eleventh century, a great number of painters of the literati emerged and established names for themselves. By the thirteenth century, they represented the mainstream in painting. With an ever-increasing interest in individual expression, these painters maintained that "likeness is unnecessary," as they aimed to go beyond superficial resemblance. They sought "likeness in unlikeness" – namely, the expression of those characteristics of a subject matter that corresponded to the artist's feeling, emotion, or mood. Not

only did they include poetry and calligraphy in complementary fashion in the same painting, but they also blended subjective with objective matters, feelings with reality. They emphasized the importance of "artistic conception."

Wen Tong, a painter of bamboo of the eleventh century, stated that one must "have the finished picture of bamboo in mind" before proceeding to paint bamboo. Screening new talents for the Imperial Academy of Painting during the Northern Song Dynasty, the examiner selected a line from a Tang poem – the line reads: "Fragrant are the horse's hooves on my way from a flowering pasture" – and then asked the candidates to supply the visual image. To convey "fragrance," one of the candidates painted butterflies fluttering behind a horse's hooves instead of flowers. To depict the theme "At a deserted ferry point a solitary boat stays at the moor all day long," another candidate painted a boatman lying in his boat and playing a flute, suggesting that no one was using the ferry. Having "activity" within "inactivity," he obviously felt, enhanced the impact of "inactivity."

When conceiving a subject matter and planning its composition, a Chinese painter expresses his thoughts in a clear and yet subtle manner; he heightens only what he regards as the most important. Except for such necessary details or foils as related to the theme, he leaves large areas in the background of the painting blank. These blank spaces of various shapes and sizes, that form a pattern in themselves, enable the main subject matters to stand out and provide the viewer with leeway to imagine and wander. A landscapist does not, therefore, simply copy nature; nor does he view it from a particular perspective or place. Rather, he is above and beyond the limitations imposed by time and space, as he organizes his painting in accordance with his own deep understanding and feeling about nature. He visualizes that he, indeed, is standing in the mid air and that he can see things faraway as well as those nearby. This is especially true if the landscape is painted on a long, horizontal scroll. In that case, as the perspective rises or falls and as the painted matters are either magnified by closeness or blurred by distance, both the artist and the viewer acquired the feeling that they are whirling freely in the mid air.

Shen Kuo, an art critic of the eleventh century, maintained that the constant shifting of perspective in a

Chinese painting is an outgrowth of the philosophical principle of "seeing smallness in largeness"—namely, viewing the details of a scene from a cosmic angle. A case in point is a single painting that has in it flowers of all seasons. Likewise, the entire world of nature, in all its splendor, can be captured in the painting of a single flower, bird, fish, or insect. By the means of a single flower, the artist brings forth the dynamics of the whole universe. We can indeed "see largeness in smallness," reversing the principle mentioned earlier. Paintings of this kind may have violated modern, scientific principles of perspective, and they may look "irrational" or "untruthful." But the "rationality" in perspective is only true under certain conditions, and the "truthfulness" in a painting is valid only from a specific point of view. The realm of art and aesthetics has its own "rationality" in a logical sense and its own "truthfulness" and "beauty" in an emotional and conceptional sense. One may view this rationality as "irrational rationality" or this "truthfulness" as super-sensual. But they are, nevertheless, "rationality" and "truthfulness."

Skilfulness in brushwork constitutes an important element in Chinese painting. The Chinese painting brush, being pointed, elastic, and highly resilient, is used for calligraphic work as well as painting; its dual role accounts for the long-standing and close relationship between the two. In Chinese painting, forms are defined by lines, and details involving light and shadow are conveniently dismissed. The characteristic of a line, depicted to accentuate the characteristic of a painted matter, is created by varying its width, spacing, complexity, linearity, forcibleness, etc. It has a rich rhythm of its own, as it reflects the mood and feeling of its author. A painting thus created has a "personality" peculiar to itself, since the painted line, in the hand of a master artist, embodies "versality in simplicity."

Skilfulness in brushwork is important in executing not only lines but dots as well, whether dots in a free-style flower-and-bird painting or in a landscape painting where they appear in combination with lines. Brushwork is most important whatever the painter attempts to do. It should convey continuity, vigor, and completeness for the painting as a whole, and strength and vitality in each individual line. Its "thickness" or "thinness," "dryness"

or "wetness," plays an important role in the "melody" or "rhythm" of the painting itself.

The Chinese ink, made of refined soot of tung oil or pine, is thick and dark if undiluted; it can be translucent when mixed with water. It is capable of producing many shades or varying degrees of luminescence, when dark and light strokes are arranged in a proper manner. Proper arrangement creates the illusion of space and things in it, a technique especially helpful in the depiction of a foggy mountain or forest, or flower buds or tree leaves saturated with moisture. Chinese painters often say that the ink, though universally black, has actually five colors and can therefore depict any color. Pictures painted in ink monochrome are known as *Shui Mo* ("water and ink" or "ink and wash") which, like *Bai Miao* ("line sketches"), is a national style of painting in which numerous Chinese painters have distinguished themselves.

In addition, Chinese painting differs vastly from its Western counterpart in the use of color. From the Renaissance to the Impressionist period when painting richly flourished, Western painters employed different colors to depict subject matters as they perceived them and "directly and realistically" reproduced them on the canvas. A Chinese painter, on the other hand, is more interested in the effect of color on the painting as a whole. For instance, he would employ scarlet or pink to depict red flowers and umber to bring forth a hill during autumn. In this way subjective perception is neatly blended with objective reality. Besides, the "feeling" or "atmosphere" which the painter wishes to bring to his work also comes out in force. Often he employs rich, contrasting colors to achieve his purpose. A technique of this kind is known as *gongbi zhongcai* ("elaborate execution and rich coloring"), found mostly in the portraying of "blue water and green mountains."

In short, Chinese or Western painting each has its own characteristics or advantages. Western painters, by emphasizing "light and shadow," can more realistically depict a subject matter; this is especially true with the Impressionists who use colors to exploit sunlight to the maximum effect and thus succeed in creating a "light symphony" in each of their paintings. Chinese painters, on the other hand, use color sparsely or abandon it

altogether and rely on "line sketches" or "ink and wash" for solo performances. Or, when color is used, color plays only a secondary role. Or, ink and color are used together for duet performances. (For instance, modern Chinese painters like Wu Changshuo and Qi Baishi often painted flowers in color and leaves in black and sometimes blended color and black in the drawing of one line.) As for paintings in the style of "elaborate execution and rich coloring," they remind one of a Chinese orchestra composed of gongs, drums, clappers, etc. that contrast sharply from one another in the sound they make and yet produce a grandeur melodious and majestic, when played together.

Subject matters in a Chinese painting range from the majestic Yangtze River to a tiny insect or flower, with everything imaginable in between—human beings, ghosts, animals, building boats, vehicles, etc. There are also different forms or styles in painting. Throughout China's long history, they continued to evolve: one style was fashionable long enough to be upstaged by another one. Many of these styles were strongly and beneficially affected by foreign influence, as China as a nation continued to evolve. For instance, the fourth century murals in the Mogao Grottoes of Dunhuang were strongly influenced by the Gandhara art of India. The Indian elements were completely absorbed in the Chinese art form which, at a later date, influenced Indian art in return. For instance, Chinese influence from this period is faintly but unmistakably discernable in the fifth to seventh century murals of the Ajanta caves in India.

Chinese painting constitutes not only an integral part of Chinese culture but also a mainstream in the development of world art. For more than one thousand years it has exercised immeasurable influence on the art of many Asian countries. It had no contact with Western Europe, however, until the latter part of the sixteenth century when an Italian Jesuit named Matteo Ricci arrived in China as a missionary. A contact between Western and Chinese painting ensued, but it was limited in scope. In the early twentieth century, as the feudal rule in China became more corrupt and decadent, China strove to learn most enthusiastically about things from Western Europe and Japan, including painting. Meanwhile, Western scholars and artists also took an increasing interest in things

Chinese, including painting. As the contact between East and West increased and research and study advanced to a higher and higher level, the understanding of Chinese painting and the love for it among Westerners also heightened.

Beginning in the 1950s, the Chinese government has sponsored systematic archaeological excavations and found valuable objects of arts dating back to ancient times. These discoveries have not only enriched the art history of China immeasurably but also broadened our intellectual horizon. They compel us to re-evaluate conclusions that were reached through the study of written records alone. Today, as cultural exchanges among nations become more frequent, the research and study in all fields of social sciences and aesthetics also assume a new outlook. All this helps create favorable conditions for the study of Chinese painting.

The purpose of this book is to introduce the salient points, as well as the development, of Chinese painting, based principally upon newly discovered as well as traditional materials, plus written documents of importance. Only important, representative painters, their lives and works, will be presented. Trivia, such as their courtesy names, birthplaces, and governmental offices they once held, will not be mentioned. Irrelevant matters or materials foreigners have difficulties understanding will be omitted. If mention is not made on the year in which an artist was born or died, the reason is that it is not known.

Murals and scrolls are the main forms of painting discussed in this book. No original murals and few paintings on silk from antiquity to the period of Warring States have survived, and decorative designs on potteries, bronzes, and lacquerware are consequently the most valuable sources in understanding the fine arts of this period. For the Han Dynasty, however, there has been an increasing amount of unearthed tomb murals and silk paintings which, in lieu of decorative designs, we shall use to document the artistic achievement of this period. We shall also abstain from the discussion of carved or sculptured stones and bricks of the Han Dynasty, since they, after all, are carvings rather than paintings. Book illustrations and woodcuts that have been extremely popular beginning with the Song Dynasty are likewise not included.

Chapter I

The Origin of Chinese Painting

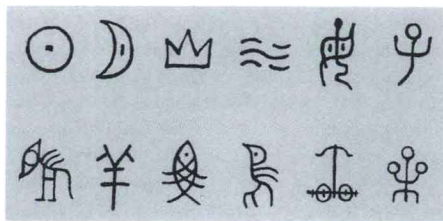
THERE are two kinds of legends about the origin of Chinese painting. According to one kind, the art of painting was invented by some wise and clever men in antiquity. Somewhere between the eleventh and eighth century B.C., according to this kind of legend, a man named Fuxi invented the "Eight Diagrams," from which the art of painting can be traced. Others maintained that it was a younger sister of Shun—one of the so-called Five Emperors—who actually invented the art of painting. According to the other kind of legend, the art of painting was introduced by none other than gods themselves. One ancient book recorded: "From the Yellow River emerged pictures; from the Luo River came writings." Some people maintained that it was dragon (or horse) that presented "pictures" as a tribute, while others were equally sure that it was a large fish that presented this tribute to the Yellow Emperor*, an alleged founder of the Chinese nation. During an inspection tour of the Yellow River, according to another legend, Emperor Yu** encountered a mermaid who, calling herself River Spirit, presented him with the "pictures."

All these tales originated from no more reliable source than an ancient people's rich imagination; they were meant to be tribute, on the part of the people, to their outstanding, heroic leaders whom they respected and admired.

According to a time-honored, popular, and influential opinion, "painting and calligraphy came from the same source," and the hieroglyphic writing of the Shang Dynasty was indeed the earliest form of painting (Illustration 1). Only in later days did painting and calligraphy go separate ways. A judgment of this kind did sound reasonable and convincing before the newly discovered archaeological evidences proved the contrary in recent years. Among the evidences were the

decorative designs, in the form of animals or plants, that appeared on the colored potteries of the Neolithic Age. It is true that these designs were meant to be decorations only, but they contained in them the elements of painting, far exceeding the normal confinement of hieroglyphic writing. Besides, these decorative designs predated hieroglyphics, and the statement that "painting and calligraphy came from the same source" is no longer so convincing.

Colored potteries of the Neolithic Age were first discovered at the village of Yangshao, located in Mianchi County of Henan Province—hence the name "Yangshao Culture." Later, colored potteries were also unearthed in such provinces as Shaanxi, Gansu, and Qinghai, though their decorative designs, forms and time of manufactur-



1

Pictographic characters (Shang period).

ing were somewhat different. By the way of carbon test, the Yangshao Culture is placed somewhere between 4000 and 3000 B.C.

Though geometric designs constitute the main decoration on these colored potteries, embossed figures of people or animals occasionally appear. The lids sometimes take the form of a human head, a bird, or an animal. From an artistic point of view, however, the most interest-

* Eight combinations of three whole or broken lines formerly used in divination.

** Legendary rulers of China primitive society at the end of the Neolithic Age.



ing and noticeable are the images of human faces, fish, frogs, sheep, birds, etc. painted on the surfaces of a variety of vessels, including basins, bottles, and vases. For instance, on the "Basin of Human Face and Fish" (Illustration 2) unearthed at Banpo (located in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province), eyes and nose have been outlined on the roundish face, but the mouth, head, and ears look more like fish scales. The hair seems to have been decorated with feathers.

A decoration of this kind tells us not only the rich imagination of these ancient, primitive people and their custom of face-painting and body-tattooing but also the way they made their living, namely hunting and fishing. It shows the close relationship between man and fish and the importance man attached to fish. In the drawing on this earthen basin can also be found a fish, located independently of any of the others; the drawing of this particular fish, aside from its eyes, is composed entirely of straight lines of the same thickness. Short, crisscross lines were employed to depict scales, mouth, and fins, a technique that made the fish lifelike.

On the "Basin of Fish and Frog," unearthed at Jiangzhai (located in Lintong County of Shaanxi Province), two fish, both completely black, are facing each other. The body and head of the frog, roundish in shape, were drawn in heavy, black lines, but its eyes and back appear in the form of dots. Its two legs are wide open, as if it were about to jump. The galloping herds of sheep, that appear on the colored potteries unearthed at Banpo, and flying gulls with fish in their mouths – recorded on the colored potteries unearthed at Beishouling – all look real and energetic, even though the drawing itself is rather simple. Decorative in nature, the drawings of these animals harmonize well with the geometric patterns that also appear on these colored potteries. They are simple, honest, and beautiful pictures; they are not hieroglyphic writing – not at all.

The *Bo*, pottery jars with large openings on the top and small bases at the bottom, that were unearthed at Miaodigou (located in Shaan County of Henan Province), Wulou (located near Xi'an, Shaanxi Province), and some other places, all have flowing irregular flowers and



3

Colored pottery: jar with flowers and leaves (Neolithic period).

leaves as decoration (Illustration 3). When it is pointed out that these free, lively, and highly rhythmic drawings were created in primitive communes of some five or six thousand years ago, one cannot but be enormously impressed with the intelligence and wisdom that our forefathers so eloquently expressed.

In 1973, another important discovery was made in Sunjiazhai (located in Datong County of Qinghai Province) in the form of a colored basin (Illustration 4). The upper part of the basin's inside is divided into three sections by vertical lines, and within each section are five human figures, dancing while holding hands. The figures all appear in black, and their hair flies rightward. Some of them, however, wear short pigtailed. The two legs of each figure spread wide, one in front of the other, indicating movement, while short skirts fly upward to the left of each leg. Though the composition of each of

4

Colored pottery: basin of dancing figures (Neolithic period).



these drawings is brief and simple, it is full of variations. There is "movement within stillness." It is a beauty that combines simplicity with innocence.

From the examples elaborated above, we have reached the following conclusions:

First, the kind of drawings on colored potteries, in the form of human figures, animals, or flowers and leaves, is closely related to the kind of life that people of the Neolithic Age pursued, whether it be fishing and hunting, nomadic, or sedentary and agricultural. Like music, dance, poetry, or any other art form, Chinese painting was a creation of the laboring masses of China. It reflects their feelings and emotions.

Second, though these drawings are nothing but decorative, they express convincingly the active and vivacious life of their creators. As a decoration, they have gone beyond the repetitious, abstract, geometric patterns, and they possess instead the elements of true painting. They are closely related to the decorative painting on lacquerware, or painting per se, that developed in later ages.

Third, some of the signs that appear on the colored potteries of the Neolithic Age and look like writing may have been the forerunner of the hieroglyphic writing that matured during the Shang and Zhou dynasties, or sixteenth to fifth century B.C. At this early age, however, the maturity in drawing, of either human figures or animals, seems to have far outdistanced that in primitive writing. The distance between them may be as long as two or three thousand years. Since the instrument used for either execution was the same brush, the technique or skill of one was bound to affect the other. They went their separate ways only because the function of one was totally different from that of the other. Not only were later paintings not related to hieroglyphic writing, but the relationship between painting and writing had long ceased to exist even before the Shang and Zhou dynasties. The theory about the same origin for both writing and painting is valid only if the so-called same origin is defined as "colored potteries."

Fourth, judged by the rich, unearthed materials, it seems that Chinese painting and Chinese industrial arts—especially pottery, porcelain, and lacquerware arts—have developed side by side like two twin sisters. Such a parallel, dual development has contributed tremendously to the national characteristics of Chinese painting. The close relationship between painting and industrial arts in China is very much like a similar relationship between sculpture and architecture in the West that began as early as the Greek and Roman times.

Chapter II

Shang (c. 1600-1046 B.C.)

Zhou (c.1046-771 B.C.)

Warring States (475-221 B.C.)

TRADITION has it that China began as a nation as early as the Xia Dynasty when the line of imperial succession was for the first time maintained within one family from generation to generation. Remains in the Yin Dynasty* ruins provide ample evidence that during the Shang Dynasty not only the manufacturing of bronzes but also sericulture, silk weaving, and wine making had reached a most mature, advanced stage. The division of labor among craftsmen and artisans had already taken place, as they pursued their respective trades in different workshops. On bones and tortoise shells appear words of prayer that, plus written inscriptions found on bronzes, prove beyond any doubt that the written language had

been widely used.

According to newly unearthed materials, the Shang people had already known how to make glazed potteries as well as lacquerware that had drawings as decorations. This culture, flourishing during the slave period, advanced further at a time when King Wu sent his army against Zhou, last ruler of the Shang Dynasty. As land was divided up among the feudal lords, cities and towns developed, and land could be freely bought and sold. China, gradually, was marching toward feudalism.

* The later period of the Shang Dynasty, with its capital in today Anyang, Henan Province, where its ruins were discovered.

Written Records

RUINS of Shang palaces have been discovered in recent years, but the buildings themselves have long disappeared. We, therefore, have no way of knowing whether there were or were not decorative drawings inside these palatial buildings. According to written records, Yi Yin, who had at one time served as a prime minister, was supposed to have presented Emperor Tang with the portraits of nine different kings with different traits to serve as either positive or negative examples. According to the *Book of History*, Wu Ding, another Shang emperor, once dreamed of a heavenly god who dispatched to him a virtuous minister. Waking up, he ordered a portrait to be drawn according to what he

could remember, and a search was then made to locate this man. Interestingly, a peasant by the name of Yue, who lived in Fuyan and looked very much like the painted image, was finally located. Emperor Wuding invited him to become his prime minister who, from then on, was known as Fuyue.

Though they tend to exaggerate or make a great deal out of very little, ancient records of this kind do indicate that portrait painting not only existed at a time when hieroglyphic writing flourished but was also truly advanced, in view of the fact that the reported paintings seemed to be able to convey the personality as well as facial characteristics of the portrayed.

In 1954, a bronze vessel known as Shigui, dating back to the early Zhou period, was unearthed in Dantu County of Jiangsu Province. Used as a grain container at one time, the vessel has more than 120 words inscribed on it. According to a study by Guo Moruo, the inscription contains the captions of two paintings entitled "Expedition Against Shang by King Wu and King Cheng" and "An Inspection Tour in the Eastern Domain," respectively. The paintings mentioned here could have been temple murals.

The book, *Sayings of Confucius' Family*, mentions the visit by Confucius of an imperial ancestral temple, that dated back to the Zhou Dynasty. On the temple murals Confucius saw the portraits of Yao, Shun, Jie, and Zhou, each of which had either a benevolent or a ferocious expression. The murals were meant to be a warning to posterity that while good rulers could cause a nation to flourish, evil ones would indeed bring about its ruin.

Written records, as well as archaeological findings, all tell us that as early as the Shang-Zhou period

paintings had gone beyond the stage as mere decorations for handicrafts. They appeared as murals and portraits that depicted individual personality or special events. They were meant to serve a specified political purpose.

Toward the end of the Zhou Dynasty, a number of important events occurred. The use of iron had become widespread; industry and commerce advanced; feudal lords fought and annexed one another's territories until only seven "Warring States" managed to survive; and the country was quickly marching toward complete feudalism. Then "a hundred schools of thought" contended. In philosophy there were such men as Mo Di, Yang Zhu, Mencius, Xun Kuang, Zhuang Zhou, and Han Fei. In literature there was the great poet Qu Yuan. In the matter of content as well as skill and style, both industrial arts and painting had made progress. Particularly worthy of our attention are silk paintings and lacquerware decorations, all dating from the period of the Warring States, that were unearthed at the Chu Tombs in Changsha, Hunan Province.

Silk Paintings from the Warring States

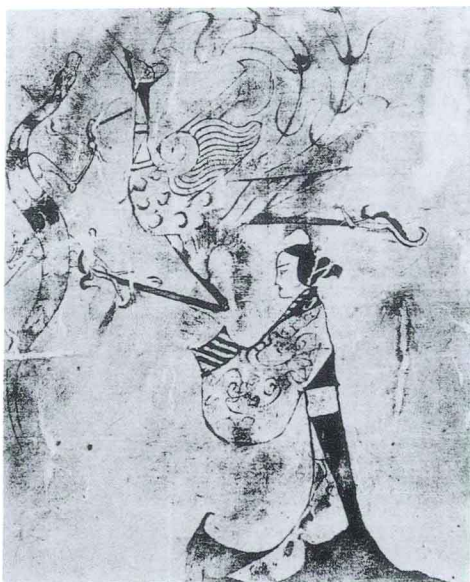
Two silk paintings have been unearthed from the Chu Tombs, and they are the oldest surviving paintings of their kind. One, referred to as "The Elegant Lady, *Dragon and Phoenix*" (Illustration 5), was unearthed in the spring of 1949. It is 30 centimeters in height, and 20 centimeters in width. In the middle of the painting is a slender woman wearing a long skirt, so long in fact that it touches the ground. Her eyes looking straight forward and one of her arms raising upward, she, it seems, is walking slowly forward. Unfortunately, this part of the painting is blurred, and we have no idea whether she has anything in her hand. Her wide sleeves and hanging belts seem to have been decorated with flowering patterns. To her right appears a phoenix that raises its head and seems to be in flight. A dragon-like animal with sharp claws appears to the left of the phoenix and is, it seems, engaged in mortal combat with the bird.

According to Guo Moruo, a one-legged dragon is called Kui which symbolizes misfortune or death. A phoenix, on the other hand, represents goodness or eternal life. That the phoenix is about to win the mortal combat against the dragon in the painting is in fact a prayer: that the soul of the deceased, namely the woman

depicted in the painting, will attain immortality and live forever. The above analysis seems to be valid when this painting is compared with other silk paintings of the same kind that were discovered from ancient tombs in recent years, tombs that date back to the period of the Warring States or the Han Dynasty.

The painting was accomplished by a brush with black ink, and the thickness of each line, elegant and powerful, varies. The hair and skirt of the portrayed woman—and the legs of the phoenix and the body of the dragon—were all painted black. The phoenix seems to be particularly lifelike, even though her body, wings, and long tail were drawn in stereotyped forms—the kind of decorative drawing that can be also found on lacquerware dating from the same period. It is possible that the drawings on both came from the same group of people.

The other silk painting from the Chu Tombs is referred to as "Man Riding a Dragon" (Illustration 6), discovered in May, 1973. In the middle of the painting is a short-haired man who dresses well but casually. Looking like a member of the nobility, he is riding a dragon (or a dragon boat) underneath a flowering umbrella. The presence of a large fish on the lower left of the painting seems to suggest that the dragon, like the



5
"The Elegant Lady, Dragon and Phoenix" silk painting (Warring States period).

fish, is underneath the water. On the tail of the dragon stands a white stork that, being back to back with the man, is serving as a guard. Like the lady in the other painting, the man is facing left, as "left" means "West" in most paintings of this kind. The tassels on the umbrella and the scarves around the man's neck are moving in the right direction, indicating that the dragon and its rider are braving wind at a rapid speed. Qu Yuan, in his *Nine Songs* and other fairy tales, speaks of immortals riding dragons to heaven, and this painting seems to have the same meaning. That a man's spirit ascends to heaven by riding a dragon, while his female counterpart does the same by riding a phoenix, seems to conform well to the thinking of China's ruling class throughout history.

According to archaeologists, the time when these two paintings were completed was about the same, namely the middle decades of the Warring States period. But their styles are somewhat different. The former, "The Elegant Lady," is more ornate, while the latter, "Man Riding a Dragon," is less so. In fact, the legs and tail of the dragon were painted in such a simplistic way that they look like decorative designs which one finds on the lacquerware of the same period. The drawing of the fish is so linear and simple that it looks like the animal drawings on the colored potteries of the

Yangshao period, to which it may have been related. Highly praiseworthy, nevertheless, is the painting of the man who is not only perfectly proportioned in his physical make-up but also full of lively expression. The brushwork on his clothes is flowing and rhythmic, reminding one of the mural paintings of the Han Dynasty and, still later, the works of such great masters as Gu Kaizhi and Wu Daozi.

The use of ink – sometimes heavy and sometimes light – in the drawing of the dragon's body, the umbrella, and the man's robe is also different from the painting of "The Elegant Lady." More interestingly, gold or silver powder was applied to parts of the painting, paving the way for the use of richer colors in later paintings.

From the study of these two silk paintings we conclude that skills and styles can be different in artistic works even though they are created in approximately the same period or region. Viewing these two paintings side by side, we may say that the principal characteristic of the paintings of the Warring States period is the combination of realistic portraying with decorative drawing, linear sketches with ink washes, free brushwork with fine, delicate portrayal. The embryo, as outlined above, eventually resulted in the creation of two schools of Chinese painting after a long

period of development. These two schools are respectively known as "School of Meticulous Painting" and "School of Freehand Painting."

6

Man Riding a Dragon, silk painting (Warring States period).



Human Figures on Bronzes and Lacquerware

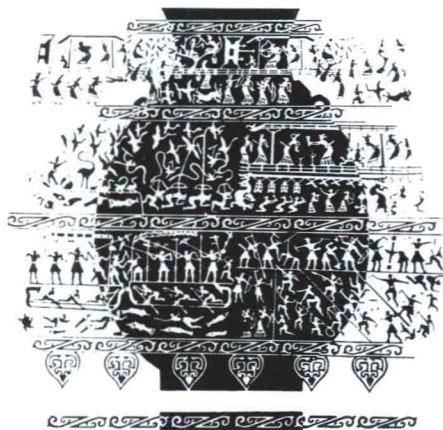
IN recent years we have discovered more and more artistic works relating of painting. Let us look at the bronzes. On the "Boar-Hunting Pot" are not only embossed designs but also gold-inlaid pictures. The pictures depict man wrestling with animals, man using bow and arrows, knives, spears, etc. to stab tigers, man capturing deer, or man shooting at buffaloes. There are also exotic fowls and strange animals—some birds and beasts have actually a human body. Men, beasts, and birds chase one another like those one reads in fairy tales.

In the inlaid picture of "Battle Scene of Land and Water" (Illustration 7), unearthed at Ji County of Henan Province, there are more than 290 soldierly figures. Some of the soldiers beat drums or shoot arrows, while others row boats, climb ladders, or wrestle with one another. Still others have already fallen and their heads separated from their bodies. The arrangement, though anything but uniform, is by and large on a single plane; it, therefore, does not create a three-dimensional effect, or the effect of space. This, one might say, characterizes the decorations on handicraft art works of this period. Nevertheless, the pictures in these decorations, like those in painting or sculpture, reflect contemporary life of people's emotions as the artists saw them. In this



8

A Chu Zither.



7

Bronze vase: *Battle Scene of Land and Water* (Warring States period).

sense, art corresponds closely to reality.

Now let us look at the "Animal Sword" inlaid with the finest gold and silver threads. Not only is the workmanship most superb but the two sides of the sword amount to two separate paintings. In the paintings are flying dragons, dancing peacocks, jumping tigers, galloping buffaloes, and wrestlings between bears and buffaloes. Here and there dogs are chasing rabbits, while wild geese are flying in the sky. In the background are floating clouds and roaring waves. The animals vary in size (the largest being the dragon); some are in motion while others are at rest. The contrasts complement each other. In short, the composition, being rich in variety, is nearly perfect. It has freed itself from the confinement imposed by conventions in decorative art.

The brushes used for the painting on lacquerware, walls, or silk were either similar or identical, and the skills and the resulting paintings were also, understandably, similar. For instance, in the paintings on the