

Lecture Notes, by James Cahill

Note: The image numbers in these lecture notes do not exactly coincide with the images onscreen but are meant to be reference points in the lectures' progression.

Lecture 3. Six Dynasties Painting and Pictorial Designs

Introduction

I must begin with a note on nomenclature. I'm using an old-fashioned name for this period, which is the almost four centuries between two great unified dynasties, the Han and the Tang. In the *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting* book, it is called the "Three Kingdoms, Two Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties." This is more accurate but ponderous. Thorp and Vinograd call it the "Age of the Dharma: The Period of Division," emphasizing the rise of Buddhism in this period, and the lack of any single ruling power in north and south. I will use the old, somewhat discredited term for convenience. As I emphasized at the beginning, you will have to get historical background elsewhere; I'm not going to lecture at length on the complexities of Six Dynasties power struggles, the rise and fall of states.

Nor will I give you more than the simplest remarks on Buddhism, which are that it enters China from India, by sea and later through Central Asia, already in the Han period and becomes a great force in Chinese civilization in the centuries that follow. I was never strong in Buddhist art, and I won't show much of it in these lectures. I will completely leave out, for instance, the wall paintings in the Buddhist caves at Dunhuang, the site in the far northwest of China. These make up a lifetime pursuit for many scholars, and although I've been there and was as much overwhelmed by the wall paintings there as anyone else, they don't fit into my present account of early painting, especially landscape painting, in China. Also from Dunhuang are many portable paintings, on silk mostly, taken away by foreigners and now kept in museums in New Delhi, in London at the British Museum, and also in Paris (drawings). I will show paintings associated with the Chan or Zen sect of Buddhism in the last lecture, and talk about Chan, but that's all.

About the political-historical situation in Six Dynasties China, I'll say only for now that there was more or less constant warfare going on in the north, and big regions occupied by borderland peoples from the north and northeast, both of which forced many Chinese families to

emigrate to the south and settle in the Yangzi delta region, especially in and around the city of Nanking/Nanjing, which became a major intellectual and artistic center in this period.

So, we go on to look at paintings and pictorial designs from the Six Dynasties period found in various sites. Also, I'll make some brief remarks on calligraphy in this period and on a few Six Dynasties texts on painting, the real beginnings of the great and rich Chinese literature on our subject.

There were two notable developments in this period: first, the appearance of important individual artists, and of one, Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之／顾愷之, to whom important early paintings are attributed, and second, the great development of painting theory, including landscape painting theory.

Images 2.1.1 and 2.5.6: two slides from the previous lecture, to remind you, and to correct two mistakes. I said the painting on the left from the tomb of the Marquess of Dai 辛追夫人 near Changsha was listed in the inventory in the tomb as a *feiyi* 飛衣／飞衣, but then translated that as “spirit robe.” It really means, of course, “flying garment.” I also stumbled in trying to think of the word for what they did to her corpse: I said “dissected” when I meant that they “did an autopsy” on her. And in the tomb tile from Sichuan seen on the right, I spoke of ducks on the water and flying off. I meant, of course, geese. Probably lots of other mistakes, but those two struck me right after I recorded the lecture. These two pictures can serve to represent high points of Han painting and pictorial art and remind us of the beginnings of landscape representation then. We'll see it much advanced in the post-Han period in the lecture that follows now.

Later addition: in showing the Han tomb ceramic granary, I spoke of “sheep”; now I see they are goats.

3.1. Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove 竹林七賢, Nanjing Tomb

Images 3.1.1 and 3.1.2: bricks making up a tomb wall, with design. Rubbing. Immortal playing with dragon, pursuing a jade *bi* 碧-disk. There must have been multiple-copy production to justify stamped or molded bricks; designs are repeated, more or less, in different tombs. Here is Thorp writing about it: “The technique employed required stamping the narrow edges of bricks into a master mold so that when they were assembled in proper order the larger composition took shape. The making of the master molds presumes drawing a full-scale cartoon that was transferred to the molds. The cartoon, in turn, must derive from an original design, whether conventional or from one of the famous painters of the period” (T&V, p. 180).

Image 3.1.3: tomb wall designs, representing four of the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove, on stamped bricks, in a tomb near Nanjing, late 4th century. Large rubbings were exhibited in Nanjing Museum, the slides are from those. This shows seven prominent figures in the cultural life of Nanjing, who withdrew to commune, drink wine, and escape from human society in a bamboo grove—well known from writings of the time and known to have been depicted in paintings by Gu Kaizhi, an artist I'll speak of later.

Image 3.1.4: another wall. An eighth figure, named Rong Qiqi 榮啓期, was added to fill out the space (3000, fig. 57, pp. 48–49; T&V 5–26, p. 17).

Image 3.1.5: one of the figures, holding a wine cup. Conventional props attribute certain characteristics to the Seven Worthies. Man-under-tree was a conventional sign for man in nature, man escaping from human society.

Image 3.1.6: two figures. They don't respond to each other; must have been based on a series of individual imaginary portraits? But the characterizations are effective, individualizing the figures and conveying attributes associated with them.

Image 3.1.7: Ruan Ji 阮籍 was known for his ability to whistle—kind of piercing sound that would reverberate through forest. Shows Daoists' deep concern with the phenomena of sound: sympathetic resonance with nature, people and things vibrating in mysterious harmony.

A close-up of the *qin* 琴 player, plucking the strings of his instrument with his right hand, fingering the strings with his left. We saw an actual *qin*, or zither, in the previous lecture, along with a group of tomb figurines playing them.

This is the time to talk a bit about Daoism—it's important to the rise of landscape and writings on landscape painting in this period.

Notes on Daoism:

Daoism had arisen in the 5th and 4th centuries B.C.E. as an alternative to the human-centered systems of Confucianism and Legalism. It denied the value of everything Confucianism preached and concerned itself with the problem of understanding the natural order, bringing one's self into accord with it. This was an individual quest, which could only be impeded by adherence to social conventions. This early form of Daoism was deflected or distorted in later centuries, the Han and after, into a quest for magical powers or eternal life. In the Six Dynasties period, another form called Neo-Daoism arose, taking several directions. One was abstruse speculation, intellectualized commentaries on early Daoist texts. Another was the practice of *qingtan* 清談/清

谈, literally, “pure conversation,” a kind of mystical dialogue full of metaphysical hyperbole and grandiose images, meant to induce a transcendental state of mind in participants. Most to the point for us was a continuation of the early Daoist belief in the simple or natural life, unspoiled by urban sophistication; the “natural man” was the ideal. This led to the ideal of the Daoist recluse, to a desire to get away from cities into the wilderness and cleanse the spirit. Human society seen as contamination. The Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, 3rd century people, epitomize this somewhat escapist movement. About Ruan Ji (210–263), the whistler in the Nanjing tomb designs, a contemporary wrote: “He would sometimes climb mountains and look down on waters, forgetting to return for days on end.” This, you understand, was some 1100 years before Petrarch in Italy, about whom Sir Kenneth Clark says in his famous series on “Civilization” that he was the first man to climb a mountain to enjoy the view.

Earlier, from the Han, we have some high-pitched descriptive writing, lush, full of rich images, in a rhyme-prose form called *fu* 賦; some of these deal with amorous encounters between humans and the gods or goddesses of mountains and rivers—these are survivals of older shamanistic beliefs and practices, turned into poetic imagery. Not much evidence of a response to real scenery of nature in Han, but this literary form underlies in some degree the Six Dynasties conceptions of emotional response to nature.

From the 3rd century C.E., a nature poetry begins to be composed, culminating in the 5th century in a contemporary of Gu Kaizhi (b. 345, d. around 406) named Xie Lingyun 謝靈運/谢灵运 (385–433), who wrote poetry about his direct experience of nature.

Although early Daoism had seen the natural world as an antithesis to human society and given it metaphysical significance, this thought had paid little attention to nature in itself. Nor did Buddhism place value in the phenomenal world. Neo-Daoists of the Six Dynasties, on the contrary, less serious philosophically than either, were more devoted to the cultivation of individuality and to the natural world.

And this was also a period when great figure painters were active in Nanjing—Dai Kui 戴逵, Gu Kaizhi. Later in this lecture we’ll look at paintings attributed to Gu Kaizhi. But first, we’ll pay some attention to other pictorial materials surviving from the period.

3.2. Lacquer Screen, 484

Image 3.2.1: designs on a lacquer screen from the tomb of Sima Jinlong 司馬金龍／司马金龙 near Datong, in the north, dated 484 (death date of deceased) (3000, fig. 42, p. 53; T&V 5–27, p. 180). This image is from a reproduction; I have slides taken from the original, although with bad light reflections from a flashgun.

Image 3.2.2: four scenes on each side. Top: story of Filial Shun 舜, who became a sage ruler in mythical antiquity. We'll see him again in stone engravings. Bottom: "Lady Ban Refusing the Seat." We'll see this again in a scroll attributed to Gu Kaizhi, and I will speak of them then.

Image 3.2.3: scene of Filial Shun. Drawn in lines of black lacquer over red base, with some colors added. More fugitive painting (in fugitive pigments, which don't last) for flesh tones, with features drawn over this. Lacquer is extremely inert, well-preserved. (The story is that two daughter of Sage King Yao 堯 whom Shun marries are the Ladies of the Xiang 湘女—when they learned of the death of their husband, they drowned themselves in the Xiang River.)

Detail of the daughters, taken from the original. This image of the female figure, with the heavy robes occupying all the volume and no sense of body beneath, and with ribbons fluttering behind them to give a sense of motion to the image, is one we'll see quite a few times later in this lecture.

Image 3.2.4: another scene, but I don't know the story (all told in the panel at left). The figures identified with cartouches. A woman appears to be dancing before a man.

3.3. Dengxian Tiles

Image 3.3.1: molded and painted bricks from a tomb at Dengxian, Henan, also in the north; 6th century C.E. About 38 x 19 cm, with 34 different designs. Relief designs with colors added by hand (Watt no. 121, pp. 214–215).

A rubbing from one of them, with a running horse and two grooms. A strong sense of movement seems to be the principal aim of designers of much Six Dynasties art.

Image 3.3.2: another, from original—painted. A Daoist immortal, or magician, at the left, shown to be outdoors by the presence of a tree, plays the *sheng* 笙, a kind of mouth organ, to call up a phoenix, which arrives trailing clouds—again, for a strong effect of movement. The female immortal at right holds a brushlike wand.

Image 3.3.4: another, painted in bright colors. Story of filial son Guo Qu, who spends all he has to bury his father, and as he is digging, he finds a pot of gold put there by his good fairy,

seen at right. We'll see this, too, in stone engravings next. The carver of the mold hasn't allowed for reversal of the design—characters are backwards.

3.4. Nelson Gallery Sarcophagus Slabs

Images 3.4.1 (above) and 3.4.2 (below): filial piety scenes engraved on a stone sarcophagus found near Loyang, early 6th century (3000, fig. 45, pp. 54–55, also figs. 46–47; T&V 5–29, p. 182; Loehr, figs. 13–14, pp. 24–25; Siren 24–28; Nelson Gallery, Kansas City). A rubbing from one of two long slabs of the sarcophagus (the end panels are less interesting), engraved with scenes of filial piety; below, right third of this.

Each long slab contains three scenes/stories, each of which pictures two episodes. Paragons of filial piety are identified in written cartouches at the top. Each slab is about 225 cm long, 64 cm high. Engraved in polished stone, they are probably based on paintings—Alexander Soper guesses that they may well have been based on paintings from the south, rather than by a local artist. They came from a tomb near Loyang, which also contained an inscription, a funeral eulogy, dated 522. Sickman dated the engravings around 525; others, a bit later. The scenes are set off by trees and rocks; each story has two scenes, forming a narrative sequence. Cloud scrolls are used for decorative borders.

These have special importance for the development of our field: Soper's two articles, published in *Art Bulletin* in 1941 and 1958, defending them as early works, against doubts expressed by his teacher George Rowley, are among the earliest art-historically high-level writings on Chinese pictorial art. There is still a controversy, still some who question the earliness and authenticity of these. But most now accept them, as I do, and I'll speak of them as works of the early 6th century.

Images 3.4.2 (alone) and 3.4.3 (detail): filial grandson Yuangu. These compositions are far more complex and sophisticated than anything we've seen up to now. Not such a strongly tipped-up ground plane as in earlier pictures: the straight-on view raises the problem of keeping different planes of depth clearly separated, which can be accomplished by seeing things between other things, or above and beyond. Tall trees on foreground plane serve as repoussoir: they push back the rest. Along with "backstop" rocks, other elements create "space cells" within which action takes place. But there is a break from the middle ground to far distance.

Trees are blown by the wind: a convention, but an effective one, to enliven scene. Similarly, we will see court ladies depicted with long ribbons from their robes blowing as if in the

wind, even though they are indoors. *Activation of scene* is one of the chief aims of the artist. There are rocks, tall and vertical with slanting tops, of a type called *que*: Sullivan writes about these at length. The rocks are named after a kind of tower, recorded in the Han; in Six Dynasties painting, they stand for the dwelling place of a deity or spirit. Then they become convention, as here.

Detail of this, showing fully articulated, individualized figures. We can imagine a lively practice of narrative, moralizing, etc., figure painting going on, either in the north, around Loyang, or (as some have hypothesized) in Nanjing in the south in designs that have been brought north, reproduced in these engravings.

Images 3.4.4 and 3.4.5: other end of this long slab: story of Filial Shun, the legendary emperor whose father (under the influence of the wicked stepmother) tried to kill him. (We saw this in the lacquer screen from 484.) Along with Shun's younger brother, Shun's father sends him down a well; Shun escapes through a passage to another well and climbs out. At right: the sage emperor of the time hears this story, summons Shun, presents him with two daughters, and makes him the next emperor. This is in an outdoor setting, like all the scenes, even though it more likely took place indoors. Convention.

Image 3.4.6. detail of two ladies (the Ladies of the Xiang). They are like the figures we will see in the scroll attributed to Gu Kaizhi, with ribbons streaming out behind them as if in fast movement. No real sense of body beneath the robes.

Images 3.4.6 and 3.4.7: the other long slab. At left end (3000, p. 56): story of filial brother Wang Lin, captured with his brother by bandits; he offers to give his life if they will free the brother. The bandit leader, impressed by this, frees them both and departs. This is an interesting entering-and-departing composition, with figures seen coming and going—another composition type mastered by now.

Images 3.4.8 and 3.4.9: center: story of a filial son who saves his mother's coffin when buildings around it are on fire by throwing himself over it; it is indeed spared from the fire. Loehr reproduces this (p. 25). Detail of people trying to put out the fire. Figures are facing in and out, repeating each other—this is seen also in early Italian Renaissance paintings. Remember...mirror images of each other. An effective device for defining space: what each sees.

Images 3.4.10 and 3.4.11: filial Dong Yong 董永. I can't remember the story, besides that he was a filial son. In the deer detail, we can imagine supple, naturalistic painting behind it. Nothing primitive anymore.

Image added later (with picture of Bachhofer): When I talked about the art-historical concept of the “space cell,” in the previous lecture and this one, I failed to note, as I should have, that it was Bachhofer who formulated the concept, through his analysis of early pictorial designs, and who first used the term. He had studied in Munich with the great pioneer art-historian Wolfflin, and he was attempting, with considerable success, to work out a style periodization of the same kind for early Chinese pictorial art. This was an entirely valid project, for which Bachhofer deserves a lot of credit. Instead, he was criticized by sinologists because he didn’t read Chinese, and later by politically driven critics, whom I referred to in the first lecture, who charge him and others with wrongly imposing art-historical patterns derived from Western art history onto the Chinese materials. This is, I think, entirely wrongheaded; Bachhofer and Loehr and Soper and others weren’t imposing, they were observing and describing, enabled by their training in the much more developed field of Western art history to recognize visual phenomena that others couldn’t recognize. In doing this, they made important contributions to the field. Loehr’s triumph in defining the earliest styles of Chinese bronze decor, before archaeology proved him right, at a time when all his book-reading opponents had it wrong, has now come to be recognized (there’s a recent book about it by Robert Bagley who teaches at Princeton and is like myself a Loehr student). Bachhofer’s contributions should be recognized as well.

3.5. Landscape on Buddhist Stelae

Images 3.5.1 and 3.5.2 (together): landscape designs in relief on the backs of two Buddhist stone stelae, early 6th century, found near Chengdu (Watt, pp. 221, 225) I used to use these, along with landscape scenes in wall paintings at Dunhuang, to talk of the gradual conquest of large-scale landscape scenes from additive kinds in which the shape of peaks is repeated, to scenes within these (see already in late Han Sichuan tile with salt mine), and finally on to scenes with more unified space. That’s very much worth doing; Bachhofer and Loehr made good tries at it (Loehr not in his book).

Ludwig Bachhofer: I didn’t speak of him last time in talking about major figures in the generation before me in Chinese painting studies; I should have. He was Loehr’s teacher who moved from Germany to teach for many years at the University of Chicago and had distinguished pupils, including Harrie (Father Harrie) Vanderstappen, who succeeded him in teaching there. Bachhofer did important work on Ming painting—the so-called Ming Academy of painting. A fine man, whom I knew well, and a much-revered teacher. But, to get back to a

systematic style history of the development of landscape in the pre-Tang period, based on materials such as these: somebody should do it, but it's outside my present purpose. Instead, I'll turn to handscroll paintings ascribed to a great master of the time, Gu Kaizhi. But first:

3.6. Six Dynasties Calligraphy (a quick look)

Images 3.6.1 and 3.6.2: Six Dynasties calligraphy. By or after Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (307–363) or Wang Xianzhi 王獻之. Includes the cursive forms *xingshu* 行書 (running script) and *caoshu* 草書 (draft script). Cf. T&V 5–23, 5–24. I'm showing these simply to point out that this is the period of the great rise of calligraphy, especially *caoshu*. There has been good scholarly writing on this by Wen Fong and Dick Barnhart, among others. It's not a subject on which I myself have ever published, and I won't do more than call your attention to it here.

3.7. Attrib. Gu Kaizhi, *Admonitions Scroll*

(Note: Texts illustrated in both the *Admonitions* and *Nymph of the Luo River* scrolls were printed and are translated by Hsio-yen Shih in *Renditions*, Special Art Issue [Spring 1976]. She also discusses the method of illustration.)

The first painting attributed to Gu Kaizhi we will look at isn't devoted to landscape, although it has a mountain in it; it's mostly a figure painting, and definitely Confucian in nature, not Daoist. It's the *Admonitions to the Court Ladies* 女史箴 scroll in the British Museum (3000, figs. 19–21, pp. 11–12; T&V 5–25, p. 178; Loehr, figs. 8–9, pp. 19–21, and plate 11; Cahill, *Chinese Painting*, p. 14; Siren 11–15. Those seriously interested should see Shane McCausland, ed., *Gu Kaizhi and the Admonitions Scroll* [London, British Museum, 2003]).

This is the first work we have seen with an artist's name attached to it. But it is only an attribution—very different from saying “by” Gu Kaizhi. Chinese collectors wanted big names and had little patience with anonymous works, unless very old and fine, and even then preferred to have names attached to them. C. C. Wang used to argue that a great work had to be by a great master. Max Loehr tries to associate early works with names of great early masters. But in fact, most of what we have from the early period is essentially anonymous. The first paintings we will see with reliable signatures are much later, 11th century. So: I'll use names but continually caution against taking them as indicators of actual authorship.

Images 3.7.1 and 3.7.2: handscroll, or horizontal scroll. Attributed to Gu Kaizhi. *Admonitions to the Court Ladies*. British Museum. The scroll was looted from the Manchu palace

during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, when British troops were in the palace and imperial garden; it was eventually brought to the British Museum and sold to the collection in 1903.

The text was composed in 292 C.E. by Zhang Hua 張華, a Confucian scholar-official, as a didactic text offering advice on deportment and conduct to palace ladies. (There are more historical implications, but they are not relevant here.)

Arthur Waley's commentary on the painting, from his 1923 book *An Introduction to the Study of Chinese Painting*, is still worth attention. I'll use his names for subjects.

Here, I show a real seal with its carved end toward us; an impression made from it is at right. At left is a covered dish with a pad of seal pigment in it, on which the seal is patted so as to coat its surface with the pigment.

The attribution to Gu Kaizhi is not very early—the earliest text ascribing this painting to him is from the early 12th century, so the attribution is not reliable. There has been much controversy about the dating, especially at a symposium in 2001. Will speak more about the controversy after we've looked at the painting.

Scene 1: Lady Feng 馮媛 defends Emperor Han Yuandi 漢元帝 from a bear that had escaped from the zoo.

Images 3.7.3 and 3.7.4: scene 2: Lady Ban 班婕妤 declines to ride with another Han emperor in his imperial palanquin, "lest she should distract his thoughts from affairs of state." (Waley points out that a young girl is already riding with him.) There's a mistake in the drawing of the supports for the palanquin canopy.

Images 3.7.5 and 3.7.6: scene 3: the text reads: "In nature there is nothing high which is not soon brought low.... When the sun has reached its noon, it begins to sink; when the moon is full, it begins to wane." A man is shooting an arrow with a crossbow at a tiger on the mountain. The sun and moon are above.

Image 3.7.7: Detail of the mountain (an early landscape form). Also a tiger.

For comparison is a detail from a Han-period tomb tile with mountains and an archer shooting at a tiger. The motif of an archer shooting at a tiger on a mountain is much older than Gu: it appears, as seen here, on one of the stamped pictorial tomb tiles from the Han dynasty: the archer is seated on the left mountain in each scene, aiming his crossbow at the tiger seen near the top of the right peak. The extreme disproportion in sizes of this scene persists in the image in the *Admonitions* scroll; back to that.

Images 3.7.8 and 3.7.9: next: “Men and women know how to adorn their persons; but few know how to embellish their souls.” The picture shows ladies adorning their persons. This is more of a literal illustration to words than a picture really embodying a moral message.

Image 3.7.10: then: “If the words that you utter are good, all men for a thousand leagues will make response to you. But if you depart from this principle, even your bed-fellow will distrust you.” A bearded man sitting in a curtained bed with a lady, who is distrusting him.

Images 3.7.11 and 3.7.12: bed scene, and an actual Chinese bed (later, Ming) in the Nelson Gallery, Kansas City.

Images 3.7.13 and 3.7.14: next: “Your race shall multiply.” A man with a large family. Solid, triangular form.

Image 3.7.15: then, text says: “No one can endlessly please; affection cannot be for one alone; if it be so, it will one day end in disgust.” (I had this in my old Skira book.) This seems an odd kind of moral admonition to us, with our favoring, at least in principle, long-lasting marital alliances. But this is about attachments within the court, for the emperor and his consorts, so there was a different ideal.

Images 3.7.15 and 3.7.16: end of scroll. A lady is kneeling in the pose of “calm respect,” illustrating the text: “Fulfill your duties calmly and respectfully.”

Images 3.7.17 and 3.7.18: then, a lady is writing on a tablet that she holds; two court ladies are in front of her. Text: “Thus has the Instructress, charged with the duty of admonition, thought good to speak to the ladies of the harem.”

The “signature” of Gu Kaizhi at the end, probably added later, is not to be taken seriously.

Images 3.7.19 and 3.7.20: Some notes on the seals, inscriptions, the Qianlong Emperor (why he was called that), etc. The calligraphy is in the “slender gold” style by Emperor Huizong 徽宗, who reigned in the early 12th century.

There has been much argument about the actual date of scroll. There are essays in the 2003 volume edited by Shane McCausland, from a symposium on the scroll at the British Museum held in 2001. Wen Fong 方聞, Yang Xin 楊新, Dick Barnhart, and others all argued for an early, pre-Tang date. Papers were also given by Chen Pao-chen 陳葆真 and others. I wasn’t invited to contribute or speak—in fact, rather pointedly not invited at all. But I went all the same, got permission to talk for three minutes, used it to agree with Ch’en Pao-chen and suggest a date in the 9th century or so. I could be wrong; it could have been a bit earlier, but not pre-Tang.

I haven't pointed out the "mistakes" made by the copyist here; they are hard to see in the slides I have. But, I will do that in talking about the other handscroll composition attributed to Gu Kaizhi, *Nymph of the Luo River* 洛神賦, which exists in two early (Song dynasty?) versions plus another, incomplete, in the Freer Gallery.

(I'm leaving out a fine and important but unexciting handscroll attributed to Gu Kaizhi, *Wise and Benevolent Women* [3000, fig. 38]. But, I show images from it while talking, as follows.)

Before going on to another composition attributed to Gu Kaizhi, which exists in several versions, I want to pause and talk about a slightly later critical text on painting and a set of criteria for judging paintings.

3.8. Notes on the Six Laws

Slides of *Wise and Benevolent Women* scroll.

This is a good place to introduce, and explain briefly, the so-called Six Laws (*liufa* 六法, or Six Canons, or Six Principles; however one wants to render *fa*), contained in the introductory section of a text called *Gu huapin lu* 古畫品錄 (Classification of old painters) by Xie He 謝赫, who was active around 500 to 535. Xie He gives critical comments on painters active before his time, preceding these with his six criteria of judgment, the *liufa*. A good discussion of these is in Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, pp. 10–15; good, except that Susan Bush ends up accepting a reading of the Six Laws proposed by a scholar named William Acker, which I think was wrong. On this matter, see on my website CLP 174, put there in 2007, titled "Good Grief, Not the Six Laws Again!" which was meant to be my own last word on the subject (but obviously wasn't). I cite there several major sinologists agreeing basically with my construction of them and disagreeing with Acker's. Three different renderings—Acker's, Alexander Soper's, and mine—are conveniently printed on p. 177 of Thorp and Vinograd.

In my reading, the Six Laws are made up of three pairs of four-character phrases, each pair syntactically parallel, in good Six Dynasties style. The first pair is "Engender [a sense of] movement [through] spirit consonance" and "Use the brush with the bone method." These are the most difficult and problematic; I won't use the time to discuss them here, except to say that the "sense of movement" must have to do with the liveliness of brush drawing I referred to at the end of my first lecture, as well as the sense of animation in the things and people portrayed (as I've been trying to bring out in discussing early paintings); "spirit consonance" must refer to that kind of sympathetic resonance between things of the world that early Daoists recognized—how

the *shen*, or spirits, inhabiting things vibrate together in harmony even though removed in space. Anyway, my thoughts about the Six Laws are all on my website and in my 1961 article “The Six Laws and How to Read Them.” Seriously interested people are referred to those.

The second pair of Xie He’s laws is “Responding to things, depict their forms” and “According to kind, describe appearances.” (The artist responds to things of nature, or to other people, and catches their outer and inner nature and appearance.)

The third and simplest pair is “Dividing and planning, positioning and arranging” and “Transmitting and conveying [earlier models through] copying and transcribing.” These are simply matters of composition and positioning one’s style in a linked series of styles inherited from the past.

OK, to continue with the visuals: another important early composition ascribed to Gu Kaizhi is the handscroll composition titled *Nymph of the Luo River*.

3.9. **Attrib. to Gu Kaizhi, *Nymph of the Luo River***

Again, attribution to Gu Kaizhi is late and unreliable: the composition old, but the earliest extant version is probably not earlier than the 10th or 11th century. Gu Kaizhi was known to have painted landscape themes; he wrote an essay on how he would depict a certain scene. And he painted a portrait of a contemporary named Xie Kun 謝鯤/谢鲲, placing him among hills and rocks. Asked why, Gu explained that Xie himself had said that even while serving in court, he felt most at home away from human society, among hills and streams.

There are three versions; two complete ones are in the Palace Museum, Beijing, and the Liaoning Museum. I will spend some time with these, since differences between them are important to our understanding of Six Dynasties style.

Version in Palace Museum, Beijing: 3000, fig. 43b, p. 55; Loehr, figs. 10–11; Siren 9B, ADD. 9A–B.

Version in Liaoning Provincial Museum: 3000, fig. 43a, p. 54; T&V 5–28, pp. 180–181.

Version in Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.: Loehr, figs. 10–11, pp. 20–21; Cahill, *Chinese Painting*, p. 27; Siren 9A, 10.

Images 3.9.1, 3.9.2, and 3.9.3: slides of long sections of Beijing version.

Image 3.9.4: beginning of scroll: the poet and his company have dismounted; grooms are with the resting horses.

Image 3.9.5: the poet and his entourage. Stories of men who sought reclusion in nature in Six Dynasties texts are offset somewhat, for us, when we learn that they took with them big parties of attendants who beat down the bushes, carried provisions, shaded them from the sun, etc. These were not like Berkeley Sierra Club mountain climbers.

Image 3.9.6: and here is the nymph, as we first see her, floating over a lotus pond on the edge of the Luo River. The sun above has a raven in it; a very beautiful landscape in the archaic manner—small, outlined hills, trees, distant hills.

Image 3.9.7: the nymph alone. She turns back while inviting him...and so on. Trailing ribbons indicate real movement here. Very beautiful.

Image 3.9.8: the poet is strongly tempted, but hesitates.... The nymph, miffed, goes off over the water. Other local deities appear—the wind god, etc.—are seen in the sky. I won't identify them all.

Image 3.9.9: The nymph is departing. This version in Beijing is especially well preserved; it was published first, and we all went for it in big way, captivated by its sheer visual beauty. But later, another version came to our attention:

Image 3.9.10: in the Liaoning Museum. This also came from the Manchu imperial collection and is also complete. Same composition, pretty much. But, it has text written in spaces between the pictures (like the *Admonitions* scroll, but written in air, and the like; they don't punctuate the picture, which is continuous). Calligraphy specialists say that the writing is maybe 12th century, but it is always a possibility that it was written in later. In fact, I believe that to be the truth about the scroll: the writing was added long after the painting was done.

Image 3.9.11: slide from the original. Another feature of this version that makes it less immediately attractive is bad preservation of landscape features, which were painted in mineral green. They have suffered chemical deterioration of a kind the Japanese call *rokushō-yake* 緑青焼け : green-pigment burning. (I've had a years-long argument with a learned Chinese friend who maintains it's the yellow pigment that causes this. But no—a chemist at Freer has said through our long correspondence, which was never published. Also mounters, Meguro, others agree that it's a problem with the green pigment. I have posted on my website a note on this, under "Reminiscences," no. 74, titled "*Rokushō-yake*: Green Pigment Burns Silk." Read that if you are especially interested.

Image 3.9.12: landscape detail from the Beijing version: this deterioration hasn't happened there. Something to do with the mode of preservation?

Image 3.9.13: another detail of the Liaoning scroll, further on. The application of a heavy mineral pigment—copper compound, malachite—does the damage, not a lighter wash.

Image 3.9.14: still another slide showing this deterioration, from the Liaoning scroll, further on. Now, turning from technical matters of preservation back to style: I will use the fairy riding a phoenix here to introduce Chang Sing's master's thesis. I remember that this phoenix figured in her argument; I don't remember the argument entirely, and I haven't slides to illustrate it, but I will show with others...

Image 3.9.15: passage in which two divine beings float over water, with two others in the air above. I'll show a good detail of the upper two...

Image 3.9.16: detail. Good examples of the female figure in motion, as seen in the *Admonitions* scroll and Nelson Gallery slabs. Ribbons are attached and swirl around the figures to create space; also, there is space between them.

Image 3.9.17: section of the Beijing scroll with these two figures (I don't have detail). Note how flat they are, with no space between them. All this indicates priority for the Liaoning scroll, or at least closer adherence to the original, supposing that both are copies. I'm not arguing datings, but closeness to the original. Both probably are copies, but the Liaoning scroll is closer, both in time and in style.

Here is another comparison: the figure of the poet with his attendants, from the Liaoning scroll at left, the Beijing scroll at right. And we can see the same difference: drapery drawing that reads as depicting three-dimensional forms in space, defining volume, in the Liaoning version, whereas that in the Beijing version flattens. See, for instance, the sleeves that hang down from his arms: there are shaded folds that look like truly hanging cloth, versus the repeated, flattening lines in the other.

Image 3.9.18: further on, in the Liaoning scroll, the nymph is seen departing from the scene in a huff. Her huff is a chariot drawn by six dragons and accompanied by river monsters. Note the drawing of ribbons that billow around the chariot's frame, the far ones blown toward us by wind. We will see the same in boat scene in a moment.

Image 3.9.19: the poet is left sitting disconsolately on the bank of the river. Attendants have brought a platform seat, candles, parasol. Willow trees, and gingko? Another fine example of the man-in-nature motif.

Image 3.9.20: the poet goes off in his chariot, drawn by four horses. Note that like the emperor in the "Refusing the Seat" scene in the *Admonitions* scroll, he is accompanied by a young

woman attendant. This is China, after all. The same observations could be made as for the nymph's chariot, about the volumetric drawing of the body of the chariot.

Image 3.9.21: at one point in the poem, the poet embarks on a river. This is the boat, from the Liaoning version. Wooden pieces like rungs of a horizontal ladder are set along the edge of the deck, for the boatmen to push against when poling.

Image 3.9.22: photo of a boat in Hong Kong harbor—by Kit (Christopher) Luce. It shows these boats are still in use.

Image 3.9.23: detail of the boat in the Liaoning version. (The ribbons blow. The interior of the boat is seen through windows.)

Image 3.9.24: now, here is the boat in the Beijing version (from a reproduction). Note the ribbons. See the window at the end of the boat: a landscape painting is set into it. (Indicator of the age of the copy.) The boatmen seem to dance along, not really pushing.

Image 3.9.25: and here is the boat from the third version, probably based on the Beijing scroll and still later, although probably still Song, in the Freer Gallery. It is famous mainly because we didn't know the other two.

Image 3.9.26: detail of Freer boat. Little ink-monochrome landscape in the window.

Image 3.9.27: End of the Freer scroll. So lovely in itself, such a fine example of archaic man-in-nature theme, that I used detail of it in my Skira book:

Image 3.9.28: as here—I discussed it as an example of archaic landscape style, the creation of a space-cell by setting trees and rocks around the figure.

So much for the *Nymph of Luo River*. I hope it has been an enjoyable and enlightening excursion.

3.10. Early Landscape Texts: Zong Bing 宗炳, etc.

(Slides of foggy peaks at Mt. Lu appear while I'm talking: the eight slides were taken at or from the summit of Mt. Lu 廬山/庐山 in Jiangxi Province. They look down into the valley, with the Yangzi River in the distance. A few of us were taken there after a symposium on the 17th-century master Bada Shanren 八大山人 in Nanchang, farther south. Mt. Lu is where the Buddhist group Zong Bing belonged to met to have discussions and meditate. Susan Bush writes about this group, and I'll talk about it next.)

Up to this time, painting had been regarded, as we know from scraps of commentary on it in Han and early Six Dynasties texts, simply as a means of representation or as a moralizing

force (per the Confucian view). A 3rd-century B.C.E. writer said: “Dogs and horses are difficult to paint; demons and goblins easy to paint. Why? Because people know how dogs and horses look, while images of demons and goblins can’t be criticized for failures of visual truth.” Other texts relate to paintings’ subjects: certain images inspire virtue, etc. But from the Six Dynasties period, and especially from the first half of the 5th century, we have beginnings of a serious theoretical and critical literature about painting: Xie He’s “Six Laws,” etc.; a few fragmentary writings by Gu Kaizhi; a short text on landscape by a writer named Wang Wei (not the famous poet-painter of the Tang); and, most important, a short essay of an artist named Zong Bing titled “Introduction to Painting Landscape.” He was a devout Buddhist, part of a lay community founded by a monk named Huiyuan 慧遠/慧远 that met on Mt. Lu. There is a very good essay on him by Susan Bush, titled “Tsung Ping’s Essay on Painting Landscape and the ‘Landscape Buddhism’ of Mt. Lu,” in a volume she edited titled *Theories of the Arts in China*.

About Zong Bing we read in an early text that as he grew old he was no longer able to roam around in the mountains as he had when younger, so he painted the landscapes he recollected from his youth on the walls of his room and lay contemplating these and reexperiencing his early travels.

His essay begins by saying that “mountains and rivers have a material existence but also a nonmaterial, spiritual quality called *qu* 趣 [flavor, tendency, interest; that to which one responds]. This is why,” he writes, “sages of old roamed in the mountains.” He goes on to allude to his age and inability to travel; “Therefore,” he writes, I paint images and spread colors, constructing cloudy peaks.” Then comes a very important passage that I would render in this way: “Now, if one takes response to his eye and accord with his mind as his principle, and achieves skill in representation, then all eyes will respond to, and all minds be in accord with [his paintings].”

So, the artist manages to embody in his paintings his responses to what he sees in nature, and the viewer responds to the paintings as he or she would to scenes in nature. Is this a romantic response, like Byron’s to the Alps or Wordsworth’s to the Lake Country? They have some things in common; this Six Dynasties development is sometimes called a “romantic cult of nature.” But it is not like the Western view in which the human spirit is seen as expanding to permeate nature, making nature a kind of sounding board. No such central position is given to man in nature. Rather, a correspondence is seen between phenomena of nature and inner phenomena of the human spirit. This is part of the whole Daoist concept of the organic world,

with parts harmonizing in a noncausal way. Something of the magical remains in it: an investing of natural forms and scenes with *shen* (神, spirit, soul); the human spirit feels affinity with this and responds—if the painter captures this *shen* in a painting, the viewer responds as if to forms or scenes in nature.

I could go on at length, but what I want to stress is the basic idea that arises at this time and pervades theoretical writings: that *painting evokes responses that natural object or scene would evoke*. In my 1958 dissertation, half of it devoted to the first English-language attempt to deal with literati painting theory, I called this the “primary concept” of artistic expression in China. (What the “secondary concept” was we will learn in lecture 9.)

This is the end of this long lecture, which introduced several important paintings and a lot of what I take to be important ideas. The next time, we will move on to the Tang dynasty. Not as much talk, but great pictures.

Additional Readings

Bush, Susan. “Tsung Ping’s Essay on Painting Landscape and the ‘Landscape Buddhism’ of Mt. Lu.” In Susan Bush and Christian Murck, eds., *Theories of the Arts in China*, 132–164. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983.

McCausland, Shane, ed. *Gu Kaizhi and the Admonitions Scroll*. London, British Museum Press, 2003.

Soper, Alexander. “Early Chinese Landscape Painting.” *Art Bulletin* 23 (1941): 141–164.

Soper, Alexander. “Life Motion and the Sense of Space in Early Chinese Representational Art.” *Art Bulletin* 30 (1948): 167–186.

For those interested in the history of our field, read, ad lib., in Ludwig Bachhofer, *A Short History of Chinese Art* (New York: Pantheon, 1946).

See also the various readings on the “Six Laws” of Xie He suggested earlier in this lecture in my discussion of those:

—the section on them in Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 10–15;

the reading of them Susan Bush accepts, which I think is wrong, by William Acker;

—my article “The Six Laws and How to Read them,” *Ars Orientalis* 4 (1961).

—For texts of the *Admonitions* and *Nymph* scrolls in translation, see Hsio-yen Shih, “Poetry Illustration and the Works of Ku K’ai-chih,” *Renditions* 6: 6–29.

—For general reference for pre-Song and Song painting, for looking up information and opinions on artists and paintings, see James Cahill, *An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings* (Berkeley: University of California Press; reprint, Warren, Conn.: Floating World Editions, 2005).