

CLP 190 (1980)

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SEEN IN THREE RECENTLY-PUBLISHED WORKS**

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中央研究院國際漢學會議論文集

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中華民國七十年十月·臺灣·臺北

SOME ASPECTS OF TENTH CENTURY PAINTING AS SEEN IN THREE RECENTLY-PUBLISHED WORKS

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(Paper for the International Conference on Sinology, Academia Sinica, Taipei,
August 15-20, 1980.)

The real nature of tenth century painting (late T'ang, Five Dynasties, the very beginning of Sung) is a central enigma in Chinese painting studies. It is obvious that crucial, perhaps even revolutionary changes took place in that period; the literature tells us so, and any comparison of paintings datable before and after the tenth century leaves no doubt. On that basis we can talk about what the *changes* seem to have been; but that is not quite the same as knowing what the *paintings* of the period were like. Landscapists active in the period—Ching Hao and Kuan T'ung, Tung Yüan and Chü-jan, Li Ch'eng—are revered as masters of the ages and as the founders of schools, men who initiated the great development that landscape underwent in the centuries that followed. Yet we cannot point with confidence to any extant painting as positively by any one of these—or even as *likely* to be from the hand of one of them. Nor can we, for that matter, even be sure that any extant painting is a reliable copy after a work by any one of them.¹ How, with these limitations, can we proceed toward a fuller understanding of this phase in the development of landscape painting, an understanding without which we cannot give an adequate account of the whole development?

It may be that certain attitudes underlying our approaches to the period, attitudes partly inherited from traditional Chinese versions of the history of their painting, have come to stand in our way. Concentration on the great names, the "Big Five" of the period—Ching and Kuan, Tung and Chü, Li Ch'eng—means that when we try to deal with the tenth century we turn immediately to works attributed to these masters—and end up contemplating a collection of Sung and later pictures that mislead us as much as they inform us, I suspect, about the true character of the founding fathers' productions. Seeking to reconstruct those "primary objects" through the works of followers, we are forever pushing backwards in

¹ An exception might be the "Marriage of the Lord of the River" handscroll composition for which Richard Barnhart has made an excellent case for recognizing it as a copy after an important work by Tung Yüan; see his *The Marriage of the Lord of the River: A Lost Landscape by Tung Yüan*, *Artibus Asiae Supplementum XXVII*, Ascona, 1970. Several paintings with signatures of Tung Yüan, Chü-jan, and Ching Hao have been advanced in recent publications as possible originals, but I am not persuaded that any of them is nearly as old as it purports to be.

time, searching for the hidden beginnings of phenomena we can observe clearly in later manifestations.

This is not a wrong approach; it is even a necessary one. But its limits, and the value of other approaches, should be recognized more than they have been. What if we were to forget, for a moment, the towering masters, and judge the pertinence of the material on other grounds than its purported relationship to them? What if, instead of seeing the period in terms of what followed and was built on it, we were to investigate the characteristics of tenth century painting that do *not* continue into the Northern Sung and beyond, but represent a culmination and terminus of the long development that preceded it? This article attempts to make a start at that kind of approach.

In 1975 two paintings were published that had been excavated from a Liao tomb at Yeh-mao-t'ai, Fa-k'u county in Liaoning Province.² Both are on silk, and mounted as hanging scrolls. The tomb can be dated to the mid-tenth century or a few decades after; Yang Jen-k'ai, who first published the paintings, suggests 980 as the lower date. One of the paintings (Fig. 1) is a landscape with buildings and figures; in it we have a work securely datable to our period of concern.

When this painting was published I was reminded of another I had seen two years earlier at the Palace Museum in Peking, a small hanging scroll on silk (mounted as a handscroll) ascribed to a Five Dynasties master named Wei Hsien and titled *Kao-shih t'u* or "A Noble Scholar" (Fig. 2). It had been published in 1958 and again in 1963³; but neither the reproductions nor a viewing of the original had excited much interest in the painting, which seemed anomalous and difficult to accept as the work of a master who had served as a court artist in the Southern T'ang court along with Tung Yüan. The appearance of the Liao tomb painting, however, led to a re-appraisal of the *Kao-shih t'u* ascribed to Wei Hsien, to which it bears important similarities. Fortunately, I was able to study the Wei Hsien picture again in the original, and make detail photographs of it, on a second trip to Peking in 1977. I would like now to propose that the Wei Hsien painting should also be accepted as a reliable work of the mid-tenth century, and very probably by the master to whom it is attributed.

Wei Hsien was born in Ch'ang-an, and later served in the Southern T'ang court under its last emperor, Li Yü or Li Hou-chu (d. 978). He was best known for the ruled-line manner of architectural painting known as *chieh-hua*. The extant *Kao-shih t'u* was probably originally one of a series of six works on that theme by Wei Hsien that are recorded in the *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*, the catalog of the early

² Yang Jen-k'ai, "The Dating and Other Questions Concerning the Old Paintings Excavated from a Liao Tomb at Yeh-mao-t'ai," *Wen-wu*, 1975 no. 12, pp. 37-39.

³ *Chung-kuo hua*, no. II, 1958, pl. 1; *Chung-kuo ku-tai hui-hua chuan-chi*, Peking, 1963, pl. 21. (See addendum to this note at p. 3)

twelfth century Emperor Hui-tsung.⁴ It represents the late Han period scholar Liang Hung and his wife Meng Kuang, who so revered her husband that whenever she served him food or drink she raised the tray to the level of her eyebrows, as she is shown doing in the painting.

Returning to the landscape from the Liao tomb, we should note that it need not be, properly speaking, a Liao painting—that is, the work of a Liao (Khitan) artist. It and the accompanying painting of “Rabbits and Lilies, Sparrows and Bamboo” could as well be Chinese paintings, perhaps by artists of the northern region—some features suggest a provincial origin—that were owned by the occupant of the tomb. There is no signature or other writing on either scroll. The landscape (Fig. 1) represents a villa or palace built on a plateau in the mountains and surrounded by towering peaks. It may be a Taoist retreat.

The suggestion has been made (by Wai-kam Ho) that the painting represents, not merely a villa in the mountains, but a Taoist retreat, a kind of paradise scene. Several features of it indeed point in that direction. The heavy blue and green coloring on the distant mountains is one indicator; while by no means limited to scenes of Taoist paradises, such schematic, decorative coloring was commonly used in them. The placement of the palace buildings in the far middle distance, reachable only by a twisting upward passage from the foreground, emphasizes the idea of seclusion from the outside world. The enormous wine-gourd has Taoist associations, and *wei-ch'i* was a favorite occupation of Taoist transcendents or “immortals.” The composition is in fact closely paralleled, thematically, in one of Ting Yün-p'eng's pictures for the *Ch'eng-shih mo-yüan*, the famous compilation of woodblock renderings of ink-cake designs published in 1604, that is titled “Immortals' Dwelling in Palaces in a [Magic] Pot” (*Hsien-chü hu-ko*). (Fig. 37) In both pictures, a stream, steep banks, and trees define a foreground, outer space in which we see a figure, presumably a newly-arrived immortal, approaching the entrance. This area is separated by towering earth masses and more trees, which function as a barrier and screen, from the upper or inner space. The upper area is similarly developed in the two pictures: the terrace with two *wei-ch'i* players, surrounded by a railing; the palace buildings behind, and vertical mountains beyond. Considering that the two works are separated by more than six centuries, the basic structural corre-

Addendum to note 3: A masters thesis presently being written on this painting by Jane DeBevoise will propose that the principal subjects of the six paintings in the series (as recorded in *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*) may in fact have been exemplary women, instead of the *kao-shih* or “lofty scholars” (their husbands) who also appear in them.

⁴ *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*, *T's'ung-shu chi-ch'eng* edition (no. 1651), ch. VIII, pp. 217-219. See also Hsü Pang-ta, “Wei Hsien's Kuo-shih t'u,” *Chung-kuo hua* II, 1958, p. 59. The painting has also been discussed in an unpublished article by Richard Vinograd, “New Light on Tenth-Century Sources for Landscape Painting Styles of the Late Yüan Period,” to appear in the forthcoming Festschrift volume for Professor Kei Suzuki.

spondence between them is remarkable. It may be that Ting Yün-p'eng's picture transmits the plan of some archaic model, closer in time to the other. On a terrace in front of the upper building in the Liao tomb painting, two men are playing *wei-chi*, with a servant standing by. Below, a man with a staff approaches an entrance hall; he is accompanied by two servants, one carrying a huge wine gourd and the other a clothwrapped *ch'in*. Through the entrance hall one sees a stairway with balustrades leading to the upper level; another section of it is glimpsed through the trees further up.

Iconography, however, is not our concern here, but style. From that standpoint, what is striking in the Liao tomb painting, and unlike most Chinese paintings we have been accustomed to, is the intricate interpenetration of its spaces. We are led, in the foreground, between two strongly modeled earth banks that shape, with their confronting concavities, a hollow of space (Fig. 3). This opens back into another, similarly enclosed, in which the nearer figure group is set. In the middle ground, the sheerly-rising peak seems to block further recession, but this barrier is penetrated by the entrance and passageway (Fig. 4). The reappearance of a section of stairs higher up establishes a visual link and implies a hidden continuation. The terrace above, surrounded by trees and cliffs, provides a higher and further space, one that is backed by the palace; but this, too, opens back still farther—through an open doorway we see the roots and lower trunks of further trees (Fig. 5). Finally, the roofed corridor zigzags behind the peak, establishing visually its thickness and indicating the possibility of moving around it into a further space. Throughout, the concern of the artist is not only to define the spaces in the picture that can be visually penetrated and to provide passages from one to the next, but also to indicate the presence of further, unseen spaces lying beyond and behind the objects that shield them from our vision.

This new way of organizing the composition represents an important advance over the older, additive space-cell mode in which movement from one discrete unit of space to the next was achieved only with difficulty; it opens the way to the spatial unification of Sung painting. Outlining the development of the space-cell mode in landscape painting is outside our present purpose, and has been done by others; it can be traced from such early monuments as the early sixth century stone-engraved designs of filial piety scenes on the well-known sarcophagus slabs in the Nelson Gallery (Siren, *Chinese Painting*, vol. III, pl. 26-28) through T'ang works such as the wall paintings at Tun-huang (*ibid.*, pl. 60) or the "Ming-huang's Journey to Shu" composition known through copies (*ibid.*, pl. 83). In the landscape design on a biwa in the Shosoin (*ibid.*, pl. 48,) the receding space is already channeled between eroded, undercut banks, as in the Liao tomb painting; the plan of the picture is otherwise far simpler. Nothing datable before the Liao tomb scroll exhibits such complexity of space as it does, or encourages such elaborate visual exploration.

After noting these features in the Liao tomb painting, we can turn to the *Kao-shih t'u* (Fig. 2) the work probably by Wei Hsien, and find them present also there, handled with a greater sophistication that underscores the provincialism of the anonymous work. Again we enter a foreground space, this time between trees. Our way is blocked by a woven-bamboo fence; the gate at the left, is partly hidden by leafy branches. The fence encloses a simple, tile-roofed pavilion in which the figures of Liang Hung and his wife are enacting their exemplary relationship (Fig. 6). Through the pavilion we see another garden rock and another fence, and through the fence, the agitated surface of a pond fed by a stream flowing from a deep-cut gully—the repetition of the water pattern below and above the roof provides another visual continuity, and the same pattern appears on water surfaces in the foreground and in the upper right, where we are taken still further back to distant hills that mark the horizon.

So the picture reads if we move from foreground into distance; but a more natural reading might begin with the figures in the focal area of the middleground (Fig. 7). The placing of the figures, with one turned slightly outward and the other slightly inward, establishes the diagonally-set interval between them, a space-defining device common already by the late Han period, when it can be seen, for example, in some of the pictorial relief tiles from Szechwan province.⁶⁵ Two low tables on either side of the figures supply a crossing diagonal. From here outward, the spaces develop like boxes enclosing boxes: the floor, pillars, and roof of the pavilion; the stone terrace on which it is built; further out the fence; and outside these, the rocks, water areas, and trees, which dissolve the geometrical precision of the central area, suspending it in a natural matrix. The "boxes-within-boxes" arrangement escapes obviousness through clever camouflage: the corners of the fences are masked by rocks, bushes, or the pillars of the pavilion; none are exposed. In this as in all his planning the artist seeks to combine clarity with naturalness.

Above the pond, an eroded bank zig-zags back to the blocky cliffs (Fig. 8). To the left, the bank is separated from another, paralleling it, by the deep gully; to the right and below, another earth form wraps around it and disappears behind it. As in the Liao tomb painting, one is given a sense of being almost able to see around the masses, or down into the gully; these seem potentially penetrable, not essentially distinct from the visually exposed spaces of the picture. It is as if the artists were attempting to overcome the universal limitations of landscape painting, or any painting, which separates it from the real-world visual experience that (in different ways and degrees) it attempts to convey: an object in a picture can be represented, and seen, only from a single, fixed vantage point; however much the viewer moves the picture, or himself, he can never really see around and behind

⁶⁵ See *Ssu-ch'uan Han-hua-hsiang hsüan-chi*, Chungking, 1957, pl. 8 and 12.

the objects, or look down into the holes. The artist can only suggest, in an illusionistic way, the *possibility* of doing so; and that is just what our tenth century Chinese painters do.

Other similarities between the two pictures lie outside our theme, and need only be noted briefly here. The carefully articulated progression into distance is in both cases reinforced by tree groups diminishing progressively in height. The earth forms are heavily sculpted, strongly shadowed, and textured with loose, informal applications of brushstrokes that also model and shade; they seem unsystematized precursors of the texturestroke systems, *ts'un-fa*, of Northern Sung and later painting (Fig. 9, 10). The shapes and structures of the square-topped, deeply fissured peaks, offset to the right of center in both cases, are very similar, and the sheerness of both is accentuated by repeated vertical strokes (Fig. 11, 12). In both pictures the architecture-and figures passages are firmly embedded in landscape settings of a naturalness that carries over into the human constructions and human presence; these are accepted as real because they are part of a real-seeming world. Here we can mark a transitional stage on the way to pure landscape, in which the human elements are rigorously subordinated to the primacy of nature, on which man encroaches in only restricted and transitory ways.

If we were to move forward in time, our next monument might be the "Pavilions by Mountains and Rivers," a signed, genuine, much-neglected work by the late tenth-early eleventh century landscapist Yen Wen-kuei (Fig. 13). This and the better-recognized masterworks of Fan K'uan and Kuo Hsi provide, among extant paintings, the solid framework around which our understanding of the development of Northern Sung monumental landscape must be built. Although the Yen Wen-kuei work must be only decades latter than the Liao tomb painting and the Wei Hsien, the subordination of incident and detail is already so advanced in it as to signal a profound change in the fundamental conception of landscape painting. A sense of order and intelligibility has been achieved by limiting materials, repeating shapes and textures, reducing variety, to suggest a world in which everything is known, comprehended; what we see it what exists. Spaces beyond and behind the depicted objects are scarcely suggested, and do not concern us. A series of frontally-presented forms makes up the composition, which consists essentially of a single, massive shape tightly contained within the frame. Echoes remain of the older system of opening hollows beyond hollows, but the elimination of eye-catching detail reduces the urge to explore and discover. It is beyond our present concern to ask what positive gains attend on this great change in style, and enough to say that it makes possible the Northern Sung monumental mode.

Within the framework of our present discussion, the 1072 "Early Spring" by Kuo Hsi (Fig. 14) seems old-fashioned in certain respects—in the informal, earthy shapes and textures of the earth masses, that is, and most of all, in the way hol-

lows open back into further hollows. Perhaps Kuo preserves, in these features, elements of the style of Li Ch'eng. At the same time, the presence of atmospheric dimming in some parts of the picture signals the advent of a new way of rendering space and distance that will put a final end to the space-cell mode. In these passages, space escapes its bounds and, pervaded by haze, floods the scene to the borders and beyond. No longer shaped and defined by surrounding objects, it now defines itself through its capacity to blur or obliterate those objects, and empty silk is made to represent misty depths.

We could pursue this direction in landscape painting into the Southern Sung period, but that would take us too far afield; most readers will be familiar with the development from, say, Li T'ang to Hsia Kuei to Yü-chien. Some landscapes of the end of Sung occupy the furthest pole from the tenth century works that concern us in this paper. In the tenth century model, what is real is what is "out there," the visible and palpable world; it can be explored and analyzed in detail, and understood part by part. By the end of Sung, such a synthetic understanding of the world was impossible. Transient visual impressions and inner experience made up, for the painter, the ultimate reality, which he embodied in images that presented nature and phenomena as evanescent and dematerialized, images so nearly devoid of texture and detail that they could be apprehended all at once, instead of being "read" sequentially. It would be possible to see in this profound change a parallel to the shift in modes of thought from the "investigation of things" doctrine to the School of Mind that was dominant by the end of Sung; it is easy to see, also, why imagery of this new kind was exploited brilliantly by Ch'an Buddhist artists for statements about the world that were in harmony with their mode of apprehending it.

The third tenth-century painting that I want to consider is a large handscroll, slightly over a half-meter in height and about 1.2 meters in length, in the Shanghai Museum (Fig. 15, 16). It represents a flour mill powered by a water-wheel, and is attributed to the same Wei Hsien who is the probable artist of the *Kao-shih t'u*—in fact, it bears his signature; but the recent discovery, during remounting, of an additional signature of an unidentified artist surnamed Chang suggests that the Wei Hsien signature is an interpolation, and makes the dating of the work more problematic.⁶ The landscape elements in the scroll, earth banks and trees, resemble those in the landscapes by Yen Wen-kuei and Fan K'uan, and may indicate a date around their time, i.e. the end of the tenth or beginning of the eleventh century (Fig. 17). In any case, it cannot be more than a few decades later than the

⁶ See Cheng Wei, "Cha-k'ou p'an-ch'e t'u-chuan" (The Handscroll Depicting a Water-wheel at a Canal Lock), *Wen-wu*, 1966 no. 2, pp. 17-25; a short article by him with the same title in *Hua-yuan to-ying*, 1978 no. 2, pp. 18-19; the painting is reproduced in color there, pp. 24-25.

Kao-shih t'u and the Liao tomb painting, and although very different in subject and format, offers striking examples of some of the features of style we observed in those pictures. The painting obviously merits study on quite different grounds than style—technological (the mill, with all its mechanism, could virtually be reconstructed on the basis of what we are shown here); social and economic (the entire operation of an industry, from the delivery of the grain by carts and boats through the sifting and weighing procedures and the actual milling to the settling of accounts by the manager in the upper left corner is meticulously reported in this highly informative picture.) But style or formal structure is interlocked with content. The articulation of space clarifies the stages in the process that is depicted, and the successive openings into depth seem to correspond loosely to a social scale: the foreground is occupied chiefly by farmers and laborers, the middle area (the mill) by skilled workers, while the manager or supervisor (wearing an official's cap) and his assistants, together with another man of rank, perhaps another local official, occupy the uppermost and innermost area, raised above the levels where physical labor is performed (Fig. 18). The device of opening up forms and structures to allow visual penetration, seen throughout the picture, serves in the depiction of the mill to permit the viewer to inspect in detail the mechanism of the grinding wheels in the upper storey and of the water-turned wheels below the floor (Fig. 19).

It is not so much to this portion of the painting that I want to call attention, however, as to another, in the lower right corner, that represents a kind of aftermath to the rest. In the main areas of the picture we see the activities by which money is earned; here we see it being spent, in a wine shop conveniently located across the pond from the mill. Carts and barrows are parked outside, and a tall tower made of poles lashed together advertises the establishment. Through the window of an upstairs room four men are seen at a table drinking; a fifth, half hidden, looks out from a door in the receding side of the room (Fig. 20). The intersecting and interconnected tiled roofs that he gazes down upon, two of them sharply foreshortened, give an unusual sense of permitting visual comprehension of the complex three-dimensional layout of the buildings, and again we seem to be able to look down between them for glimpses of interior spaces.

Below and to the left is the entrance to the building, the most amazing passage of all (Fig. 21). The doorway is on the receding, foreshortened side of the building; in front of it is set an elaborate standing screen, complete with its own brackets and tiled roof; a small sign on it reads *hsin-chiu*, "new wine".⁽⁷⁾ In the

⁷ Cheng Wei, in the *Wen-wu* article cited above, notes that wine was sold by the government monopoly at two times in the year: in the spring, at the Ch'ing-ming Festival, when it was called "boiled wine" (*chu-chiu*); and in the fall, at the Mid-autumn Festival, when it was called "new wine" (*hsin-chiu*). The sign thus establishes the season depicted in the painting.

opening between the screen and the doorway appears a servant, half his body concealed by the doorpost; and, as we study this extraordinary passage to learn what the ingenious artist can possibly have prepared for us next, we realize with a shock of delight that we are looking across the room to where a pair of calligraphy scrolls hang on the far wall. The delight is partly over the unexpectedness of this remarkable presentation; nothing we have known in Chinese painting quite prepares us for it. And yet it follows naturally on developments that precede; throughout the early history of painting in China we can trace a growing skill in techniques for allowing the viewer to participate in a process of analytical exploration and discovery, and a growing fascination with the capacity of painting for objective probing of physical reality. The artist aims at persuading the viewer that the world of his painting is not only real but *all there*, and that the more he looks at it, the more he will find. The "Waterwheel" picture represents, we may assume (until some new revelation appears from among the hoards of unpublished material in Chinese museums), the furthest point attained in that direction. Nothing afterwards was to equal it; *completeness* in the world represented was scarcely to be even an ideal, except in a few untypical works.

For a final observation on this picture, to reinforce the point, we turn our attention to the ornamental tower (Fig. 22). It is a triumph of three-dimensional rendering, with angles and crossings elaborately worked out; surely a tradition of architectural drawing as a practical guide to construction must underlie this. Through the openings of the tower we see, projecting away from us, a flag on which the character *chiu*, "wine", can again be read. As we study this construction, we observe that the visual separation of the near and far sides of the tower is aided by a subtle device: the nearer posts are drawn in heavier, darker line, the further ones in thinner and lighter. The effect is related to the development in Chinese landscape painting of atmospheric perspective, which similarly presents nearer objects as darker and more distinct than further ones.

This device, which is (to my knowledge) nowhere noted in the literature of painting but must have been transmitted, along with so much else, in the unwritten traditions of artists, can be observed already in one of the earliest paintings we have, the now-famous *fei-i* or "flying garment" from Tomb #1 at Ma-wang-tui (Fig. 23). In the lower portion of the composition, which depicts a funerary offering, the sacrificial bronze vessels nearest to us are drawn in heavy line; another vessel, set slightly behind them, is in much thinner line, and is immediately read as further back, while others lined up on a shelf at the far end of the hollow of space, which is defined also by the receding rows of figures, are outlined so faintly that the line can scarcely be seen (Fig. 24). This is not, properly speaking, a *realistic* device, in either case, since intervening atmosphere could not in reality account for such dimming within the shallow spaces represented; it is more an illusionistic

technique, creating an effect of separating successive levels of depth by a knowing manipulation of the optical properties of line. Passages such as these—in fact, all the techniques and effects that concern us in this paper—should make us rethink our common pronouncements about the non-illusionistic nature of Chinese painting. Like virtually all other general statements we can make about it, this one is true for some styles and periods, quite untrue for others.

A revealing comparison can be made between the entrance to the wineshop and a similar passage in the “Spring Festival on the River” (*Ch'ing-ming shang-ho t'u*) scroll by Chang Tse-tuan in the Peking Palace Museum, the other masterwork of *chieh-hua* among surviving paintings (Fig. 25). It dates at least a century after the water-wheel picture, to the end of Northern Sung. *Chieh-hua* was surely a very conservative tradition, in which stylistic change was slow and largely unintended. And yet some change can be seen. A great deal of the old manner remains in the later painting; we are still allowed to look through the second-storey windows to see people banqueting, and down into the space between the outer and inner walls, and the artist still foreshortens carts, boats, and horses in a way that must have seemed extremely old-fashioned in the early twelfth century, when this practice had for the most part been abandoned. But the ornamental tower, although some thinner and lighter line drawing can be seen in it, is mostly now drawn with an evenness and density of line that flattens it, emphasizing surface intricacy more than depth. The same change can be seen throughout the scroll; we are one step closer to the ever-flatter, impenetrable patterns of Li Sung in the Southern Sung period and Wang Chen-p'eng in the Yüan. *Chieh-hua* in the hands of Chang Tse-tuan is still basically a descriptive and analytical mode, but one that has been compromised slightly by a tour-de-force intent—the artist seems more conscious, here, of performing in the technically dazzling *chieh-hua* manner as well as painting a picture.

I will conclude by suggesting a few directions that one might take in further investigating the phenomena we have been considering, without following those directions at length. Figure painting of the tenth century, and especially pictures of figure groups in interior settings, exhibit developments parallel to those outlined above. The “Double Screen” composition sometimes ascribed to the Southern T'ang court artist Chou Wen-chü, which exists in two early copies (Fig. 26, the version in Freer Gallery),⁸ offers an inventive variant on the spaces-beyond-spaces system: what seems at first to be a further scene is in fact a painting on a screen behind the foreground figures. The ambiguity in this picture between representa-

⁸ Freer Gallery of Art reg. no. 11.195; for a thorough treatment of the subject and history of the scroll, see Thomas Lawton, *Chinese Figure Painting*, Washington, D.C., no. 3, pp. 34-37. The other version, evidently later, is in the Palace Museum, Peking; see *Chung-kuo hua*, 1959, no. 4, p. 41. The Freer version is a Northern Sung work at the latest, and possibly even a Five Dynasties original.

tion and reality—both are in fact painted, but the viewer is obliged to read part of the picture as one, part as the other—gives a depth to the work that goes beyond the visual. And in two sections of the “Night Revels of Han Hsi-tsai,” a Southern Sung copy after a composition attributed to another Five Dynasties period figure master, Ku Hung-chung (Fig. 27), the artist titillates us by permitting us to see part—but not all—of the recessed interiors of beds, which echo the spaces of the *k'ang* placed before them. Han Hsi-tsai and his friends are seated in the *k'ang*; the occupants of the beds are not shown, but the humped bedclothes are sufficiently suggestive, and the stem of a *p'i-p'a* protruding from one of them hints that a fair entertainer has stopped her musical performance to pursue a more urgent occupation. These are not “empty spatial gimmicks,” as they were once characterized,⁹ but sophisticated uses of representational techniques that in their time expanded the descriptive, narrative, and expressive power of painting, culminating a centuries' long development that was gradual, cumulative, and consistent in direction. And it was a direction not continued beyond this point: the shift in aim and method between tenth century and later Sung painting may prove, when all the evidence is in and assessed, to be as profound and pervasive as the better-studied redirection that happened between Sung and Yüan. Chinese artists of later centuries, in pursuing such goals as immediately apprehensible content, thematic concentration, poetic directness or evocativeness, or expressiveness through abstract construction and brushwork were diverted from the concerns that have occupied us here; they return to them only occasionally, glancingly, as a few of them do in the late Ming period.¹⁰ I have proposed elsewhere that a critical reaction against the realistic and descriptive tendencies in Five Dynasties and early Sung painting may have been a strong, even decisive factor in this re-definition of the fundamental purpose of painting.¹¹ However that may be, it was no longer an analytical, visual, penetration of the perceptible world that later artists were to aim at, but a poetic and conceptual one.

During the Yüan dynasty, some tenth century works of the kind we have been considering seem to have re-emerged and come to the attention of artists of the time, who adopt motifs and elements of style from them as quotations or archaisitic allusions; and a few painters of the late Yüan appear to have been more extensively influenced by them. Since these Yüan-period echoes and derivations have been studied in detail by Richard Vinograd in an article now in press,¹² I will

⁹ Richard Barnhart, in “Survivals, and the Classical Tradition of Chinese Figure Painting,” *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Chinese Painting*, Taipei, 1972, p. 162. See also my comments on this characterization, and Barnhart's response, *ibid.* pp. 212-215.

¹⁰ See my forthcoming book *The Compelling Image: Nature and Style in Seventeenth Century Chinese Painting*, especially ch. I and III.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, last pages of ch. I.

¹² See footnote 4 above.

touch on them only briefly here.

In the category of allusive motifs, we can cite the figure standing in a doorway, half cut-off, as seen twice in the "Waterwheel" scroll (Fig. 22); it reappears in Chao Meng-fu's "Autumn Colors on the Ch'iao and Hua Mountains" dated 1295 (Fig. 28), and in works by his nephew Wang Meng.¹³ Neither of the later artists has the kind of technique needed to make the motif function in the old way, as an invitation to move around the doorjamb and into the room behind; they introduce it into their paintings, along with other motifs from the distant past, to strengthen the antique flavor they are pursuing.

More interesting are some late Yuan landscape paintings in which the artists adopt larger structural features of the tenth-century models, to the point where their paintings can properly be said to be "in the manner of" the earlier masters. An example is an undated work of Wang Meng titled "Halls of Immortals in Lofty Mountains" (Fig. 29)¹⁴ It is presently known only through a reproduction, and the question of its authenticity must remain open until it can again be studied in the original, presumably in some collection in China. But there are good reasons to accept it provisionally as an early work of the artist.⁽¹⁵⁾ It is composed on a plan quite like that of the Liao tomb painting (Fig. 1), and agrees with it in so many ways as to suggest that an original, early work of similar character lies behind it. In fact, Wang Meng states in his inscription that it is based on a painting of the same title by Ching Hao. It thus supplements the evidence from the early paintings that the landscape style we are considering was a northern style: the provenance of the Liao tomb painting, Wei Hsien's birthplace in Ch'ang-an, Ching Hao's in Ch'in-shui in northern Honan province, all point northward. The central bluffs in both pictures are made up of repeated vertical forms that darken and mushroom out at the top; their height is accentuated with stringy, vertical texture strokes; deep crevices between them extend below into narrow gorges that enclose building, constricting the space of the pictures as it draws the viewer's gaze into them. The passage at the left of Wang Meng's work, with confronting concave cliffs, one set slightly further back than the other, one turned slightly inward and the other outward, strikingly parallels the foreground and middleground passages of the Liao tomb picture. This spacedefining device is essentially the same as the old and familiar one of opposing figures across an oblique space. The evidence of these pictures does not quite suffice for calling the Liao tomb picture a provincial echo of the style of Ching Hao, but opens that possibility.

¹³ This motif can be seen, for example, in the lower left corner of Wang Meng's "Secluded Dwellings in Summer Mountains," dated 1354; see my *Hills Beyond a River: Chinese Painting of the Yüan Dynasty, 1279-1368*, Tokyo, 1976, Pl. 51.

¹⁴ Reproduced in Osvald Siren, *A History of Early Chinese Painting*, London 1933, v. II, pl. 118; at that time in the collection of Shao Fu-ying.

¹⁵ The case for a provisional acceptance of this painting as an early work of Wang Meng is made by Richard Vinograd, in the article cited in Footnote 4, manuscript pp. 26-27.

Wang Meng's "Halls of Immortals," if we can believe his inscription, is a close adaptation of a tenth century composition that he took to be by Ching Hao and is, accordingly, untypical of Wang and his period. In his later works, Wang draws more freely on several landscape traditions, and some of the stylistic traits we have been tracing appear in them, together with others from other sources. His masterwork of 1366, "Dwelling in the Ch'ing-pien Mountains" (Fig. 30), is the outstanding example. Chinese writers have noted features of the Tung Yüan-Chü-jan tradition in it, and I myself have called attention to borrowings from the Li Ch'eng-Kuo Hsi mode of landscape.¹⁶ Now we can add to these the (presumably) Northern landscape mode of the tenth century represented by the Liao tomb painting and the Wei Hsien work. From this source comes, it would seem, the heavily-shadowed earth forms that enclose, with their hollowed sides, pockets of space, one beyond another; probing the picture visually through these, one arrives at a house with figure in the far middle distance. The unnatural geology of Wang Meng's painting includes a kind of blunt, dark projection that recurs at several points in the picture, as well as in others by him. Similar forms are seen, similarly repeated in the Liao tomb picture (Fig. 1). Details of these "dog's-head" forms (Fig. 31, 32) reveal further affinities: the texture strokes, loose and indistinct, serve to impart a soft earthiness to them, to model them with light and shadow, and to activate them by directing the eye fluidly over their surfaces. This expressive shaping of earth forms belongs to the same interplay of nature and art as the strange-shaped garden rocks or *T'ai-hu shih* that appear in Five Dynasties paintings;¹⁷ in these, man the artist recreates in the painting a work of nature the quasi-artist, which seems on its part to be imitating a sculptural work of man. Natural processes of erosion and geological change are thus implicitly equated with the creative processes that bring artistic form into being. Some important part of Wang Meng's unequalled power to express human emotions through such manipulations of forms—the terms by which we would describe them, such as "blunt," "looming," "surging," etc. are equally applicable to human feelings and situations—was learned, it would seem, from the formal repertory of our tenth century masters. A passage in the upper central part of Wang's painting (Fig. 33) can be likened, in this respect, to the corresponding passage in the Wei Hsien *Kao-shih t'u* (Fig. 34), and the expressive effect of channeling space through twisting ravines, around and under overhanging masses that block and divert one's visual penetration, calls for descriptive terms that are, once more, emotionally charged: tortuous, or constricted, or convoluted. In neither case is the artist only embodying his understanding of

¹⁶ *Hills Beyond A River*, pp. 122-24.

¹⁷ For instance, in the "Eight Riders in Spring" attributed to Chao Yen; see *Three Hundred Masterpieces of Chinese Painting in the Palace Museum*, Taipei, 1953, pl. 53. See also my article "Some Rocks in Early Chinese Paintings," *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America*, XVI (1962), pp. 77-87.

geological formations or even geomantic concepts from some common one space Chinese store; these are particular, moving versions of the physical world.

A final example of Wang Meng's re-creation of the tenth century style is the last section of his "Landscape of Mt. T'ai-po," an undated (but probably late) handscroll in the Liaoning Provincial Museum in Shenyang. The opening section of the scroll depicts the approach to the temple located there, with pilgrims and monks seen on paths; at the end is their objective, the temple itself (Fig. 35, 3). Within the limits of his more amateurish style, Wang presents a view downward onto obliquely-set tiled roofs, and into the courtyards and other spaces between and below them. The effect, highly untypical of Yuan-period painting, is more closely paralleled in the architectural passage in the lower right of the "Water wheel" picture (Fig. 20); Wang must have known some painting of this kind, and imitated it freely to furnish an effective climax to his composition—after moving through the landscape to the temple, we are at last drawn *into* the temple. Like the early masters from whom he learned the technique, Wang Meng provides a rich sensory experience recalling real-world experience—the scroll is filled with color and detail that engages the viewer by making him, for instance, search for the figures through gaps in the foliage—and involves his audiences still more deeply at the end by presenting the temple as penetrable in the old manner.

After the Yuan, this mode of representation seems to have been virtually forgotten, and the Ming-Ch'ing understanding of Five Dynasties style is limited largely to the familiar motifs and mannerisms associated with Tung Yuan and Ch'eng. For a brief time in the early seventeenth century, the stimulus of European pictorial art brought by the Jesuits leads some artists and writers to explore in new paintings and re-appraisals of old, this long-forgotten mode; but that episode is short-lived. Like the parallel upsurge of interest in scientific investigation in astronomy, physiology, physics, and a cluster of other studies—an upsurge that is similarly accompanied by a re-examination of China's own earlier discoveries in these same studies—it is stifled, in the end, by the disinclination of Chinese intellectuals to engage in a simple and direct way with the here-and-now of observable phenomena.¹⁸ The great shift between tenth century and later painting proves irrevocable. Considering the glories of what followed, we can scarcely lament the change; but we can recognize, from the scanty evidence that survives, what was sacrificed in the attainment of those glories.

¹⁸ This phenomenon is discussed in the first chapter of my book *The Compelling Image: Nature and Style in Seventeenth Century Chinese Painting* (in press).

Captions

- Fig. 1. Anonymous, tenth century. "Landscape with Buildings and Figures." Hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk. Liaoning Provincial Museum. (From: *Wen-wu*, 1975 no. 12.)
- Fig. 2. Attributed to Wei Hsien, active mid-tenth century. "A Noble Scholar." Hanging scroll (mtd. as a handscroll), ink and colors on silk. Peking Palace Museum.
- Fig. 3. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 1.
- Fig. 4. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 1.
- Fig. 5. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 1.
- Fig. 6. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 2.
- Fig. 7. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 2.
- Fig. 8. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 2.
- Fig. 9. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 1.
- Fig. 10. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 2.
- Fig. 11. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 1.
- Fig. 12. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 2.
- Fig. 13. Yen Wen-kuei (active late tenth-early eleventh century.) Buildings on Mountains by a River. Hanging scroll, ink on silk. National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.
- Fig. 14. Kuo Hsi (ca. 1001 — ca. 1090). "Early Spring." Dated 1072. Hanging scroll, ink and light colors on silk. National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.
- Fig. 15. Attributed to Wei Hsien, mid-tenth century. "A Flour Mill Powered by a Water-wheel." Handscroll, ink and colors on silk. Shanghai Museum. (From: *Hua-yüan to-yüing*, 1978 no. 2.)
- Fig. 16-22, all: Detail of the same painting as Fig. 15.
- Fig. 23. Anonymous, early second century B.C. "Flying garment": funerary painting. Ink and colors on silk. From Tomb #1 at Ma-wang-tui.
- Fig. 24. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 23.
- Fig. 25. Chang Tse-tuan (active 11th-12th cent.) "Spring Festival on the River." Section of a handscroll, ink and light colors on silk. Peking Palace Museum.
- Fig. 26. Attributed to Chou Wen-chü, active mid-tenth century. "The Double Screen" (Southern T'ang Emperor Playing Wei-ch'i.) Handscroll, ink and colors on silk. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution.
- Fig. 27. Attributed to Ku Hung-chung, active mid-tenth century. "The Night Revels of Han Hsi-tsai." Section of a handscroll, ink and colors on silk. Peking Palace Museum.
- Fig. 28. Chao Meng-fu (1254-1322). "Autumn Colors on the Ch'iao and Hua Mountains." Dated 1295. Detail from a handscroll, ink and colors on paper. National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.
- Fig. 29. Wang Meng (ca. 1308-1385). "Halls of Immortals in Lofty Mountains." Hanging scroll, ink (and light colors?) on paper. Formerly collection of Shao Fu-yüing, Peking.
- Fig. 30. Wang Meng (ca. 1308-1385). "Dwelling in the Ch'ing-pien Mountains." Dated 1366. Hanging scroll, ink on paper. Shanghai Museum.
- Fig. 31. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 1.
- Fig. 32. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 30.
- Fig. 33. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 2.
- Fig. 34. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 30.
- Fig. 35. Wang Meng (ca. 1308-1385). "Landscape of Mt. T'ai-po." Section of a handscroll, ink and colors on silk. Liaoning Provincial Museum.
- Fig. 36. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 35.
- Fig. 37. Ting Yün-P'eng "immortals' Dwellings in Palaces in a (Magic) Pot" From: Ch'eng-shih Mo Yüan (1604)



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Fig. 3. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 1.

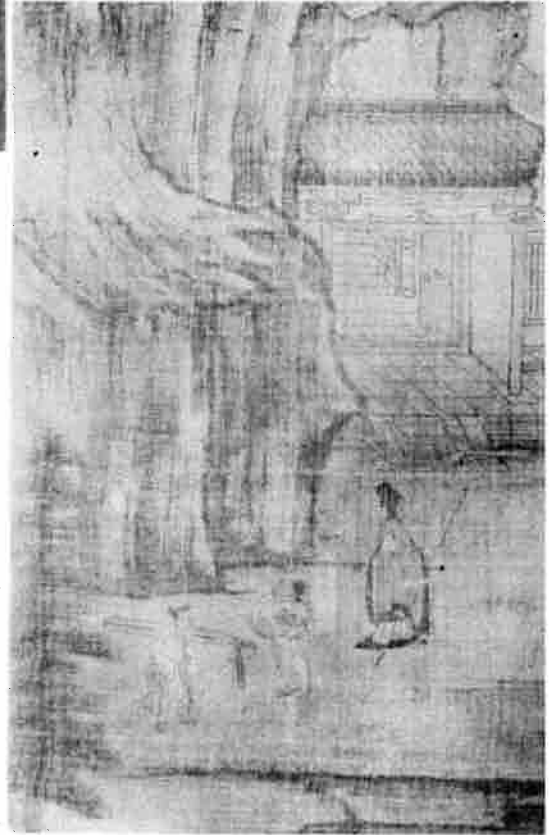


Fig. 4. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 1.



Fig. 5. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 1.



Fig. 6. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 2.

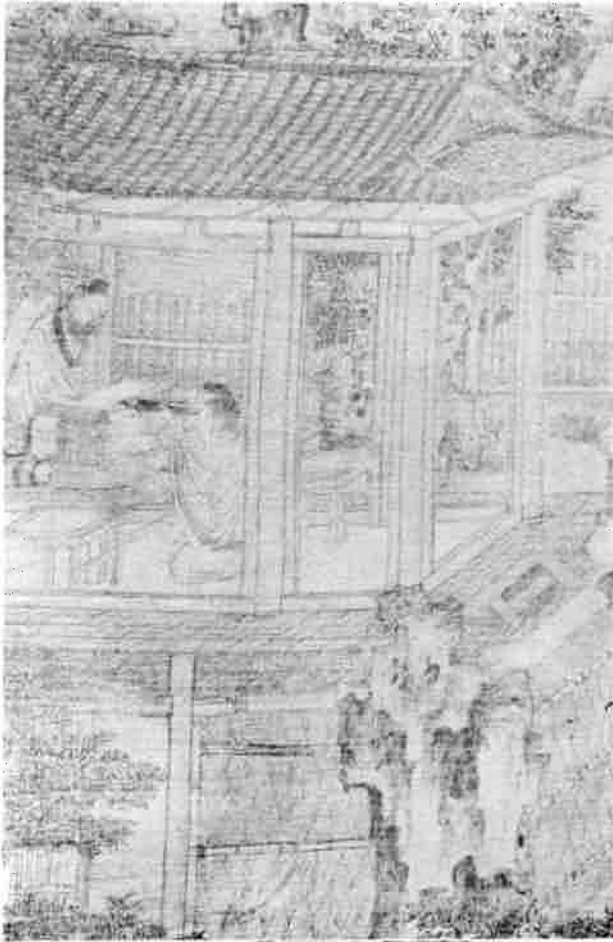


Fig. 7. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 2.

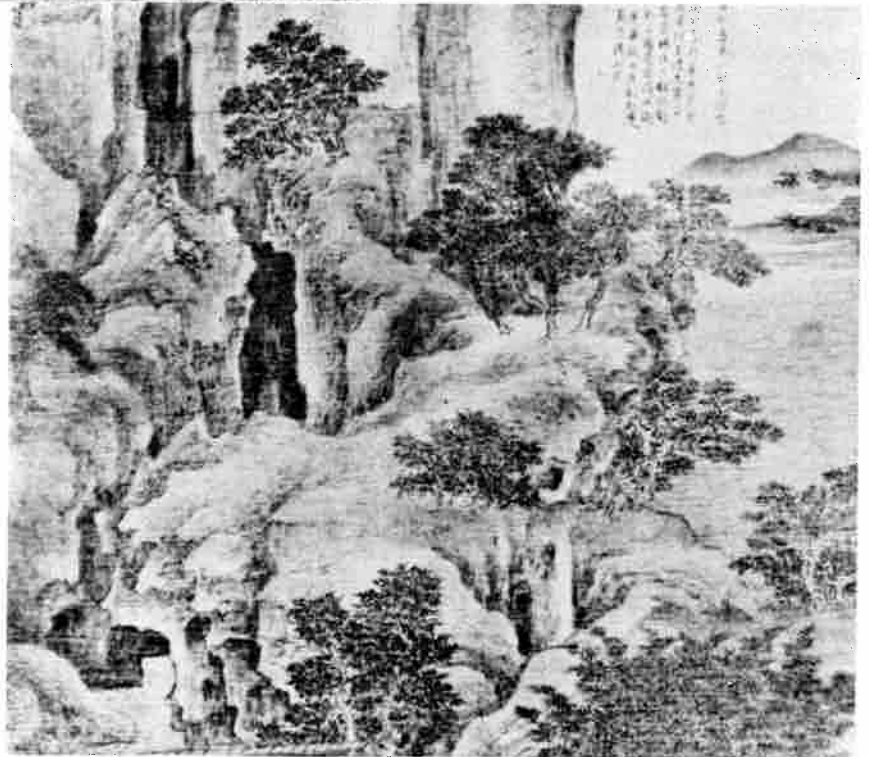


Fig. 8. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 2.

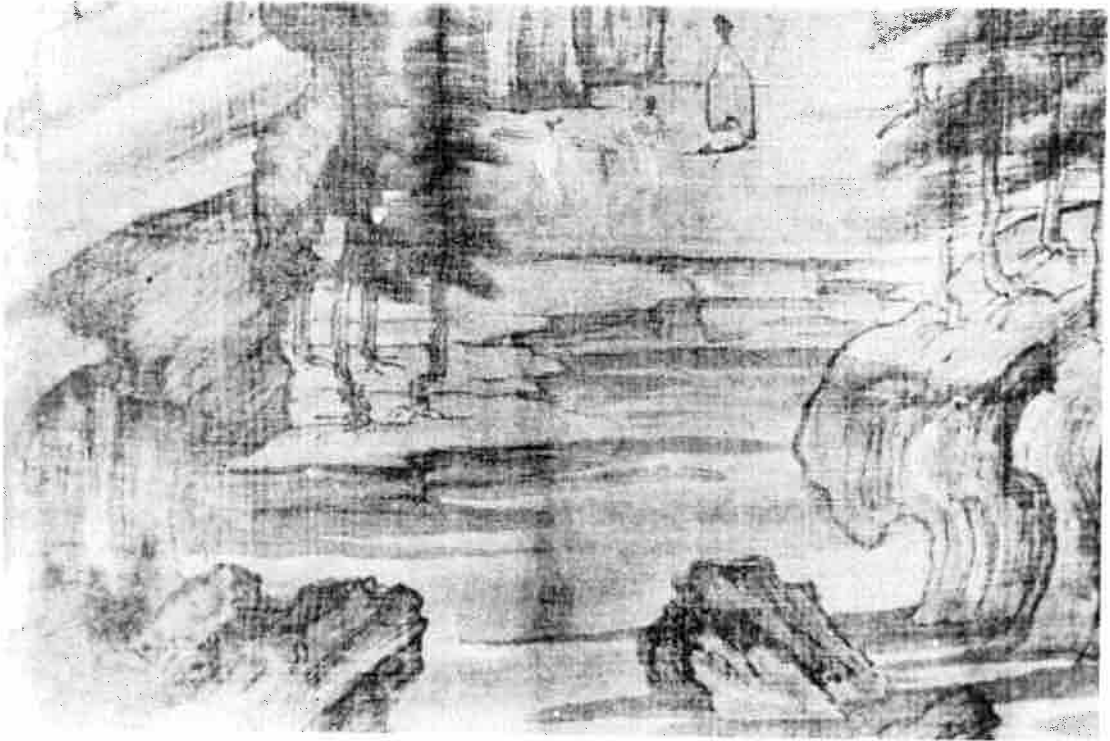


Fig. 9. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 1.



Fig. 10. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 2.



Fig. 11. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 1.

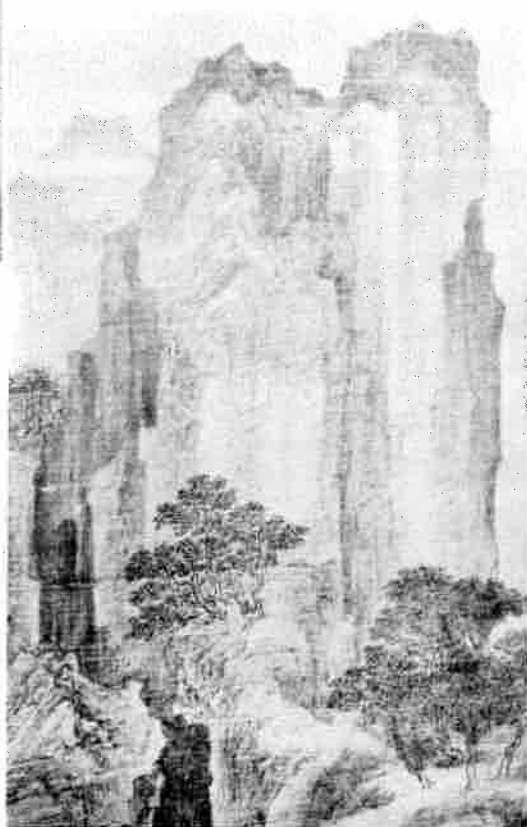


Fig. 12. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 1.



Fig. 13. Yen Wen-kuei (active late tenth-early eleventh century.) Buildings on Mountains by a River. Hanging scroll, ink on silk. National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.



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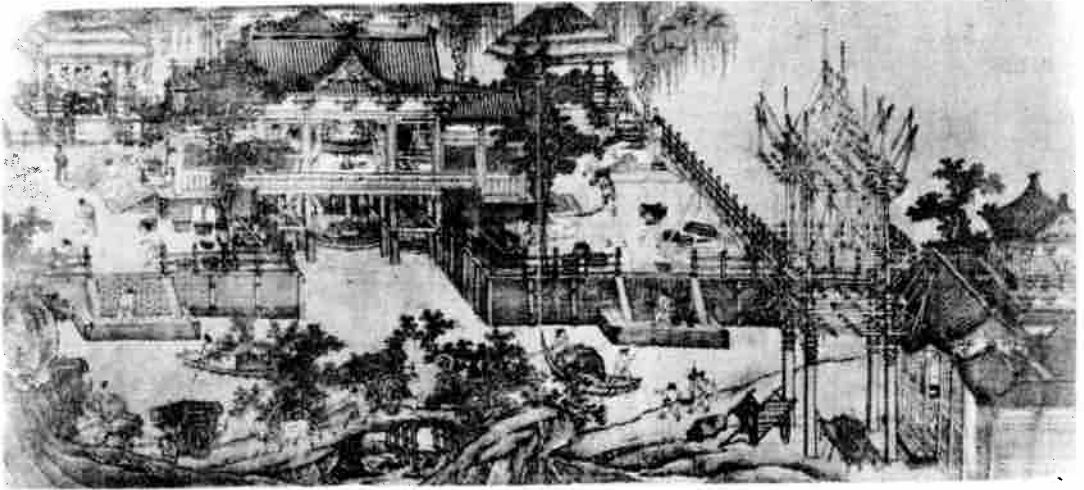


Fig. 15. Attributed to Wei Hsien, mid-tenth century. "A Flour Mill Powered by a Waterwheel." Handscroll, ink and colors on silk. Shanghai Museum. (From: *Hua-yüan to-ying*, 1978 no. 2.)

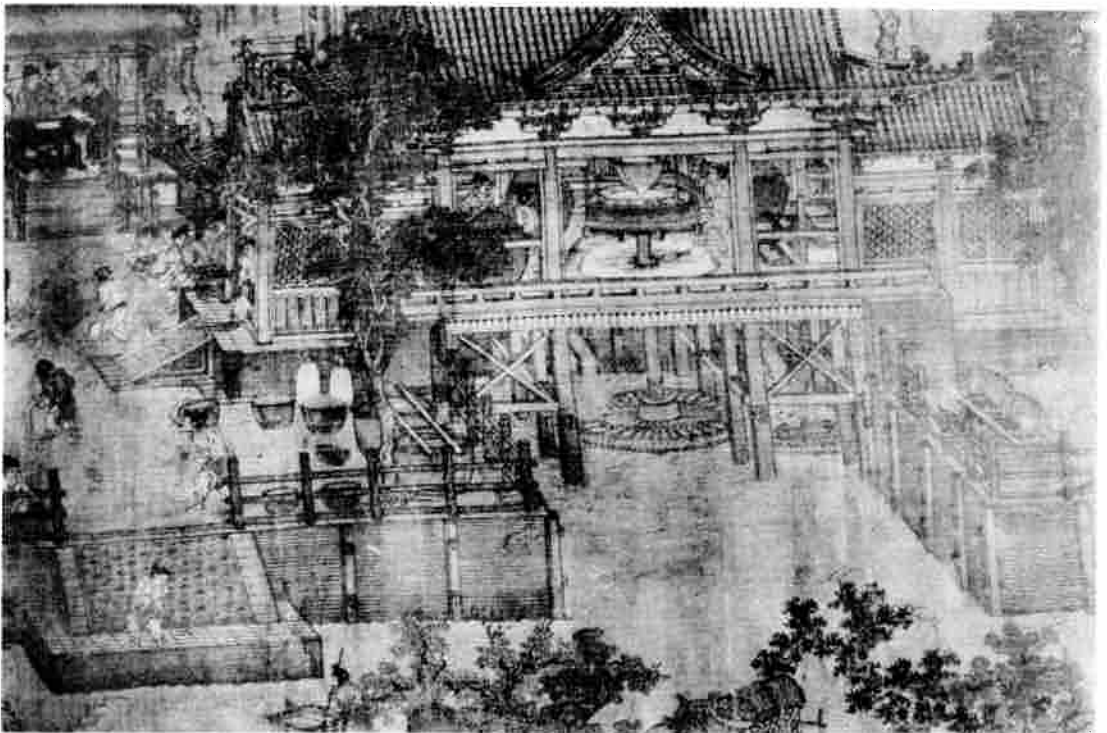


Fig. 16-22, all: Detail of the same painting as Fig. 15.

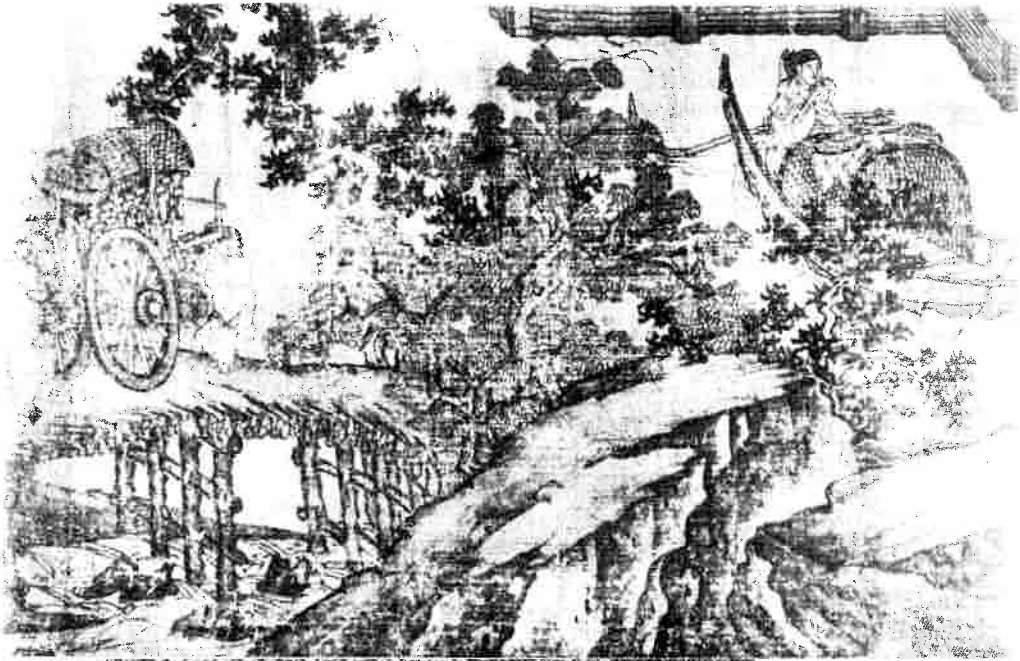


Fig. 17

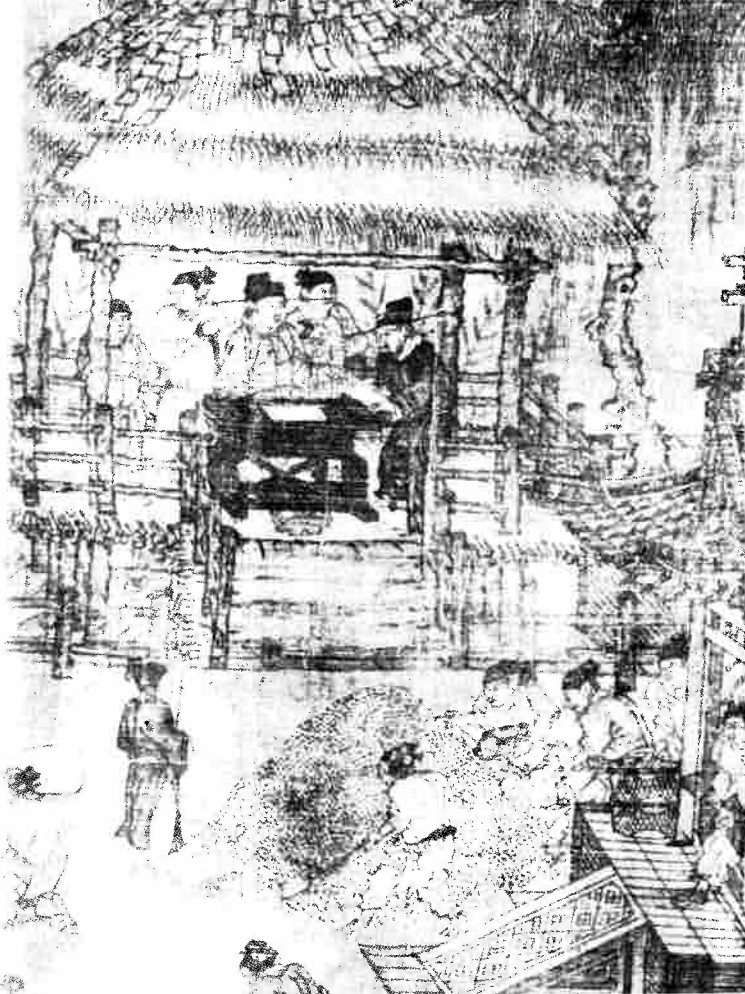


Fig. 18

Fig. 16-22, all: Detail of the same painting as Fig. 15.

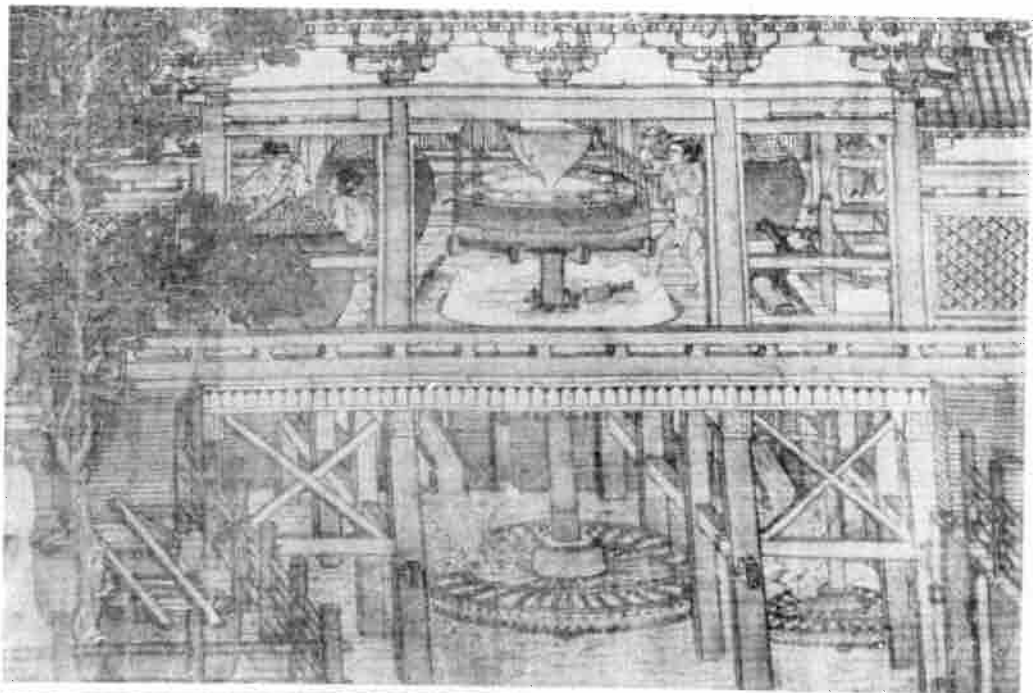


Fig. 19

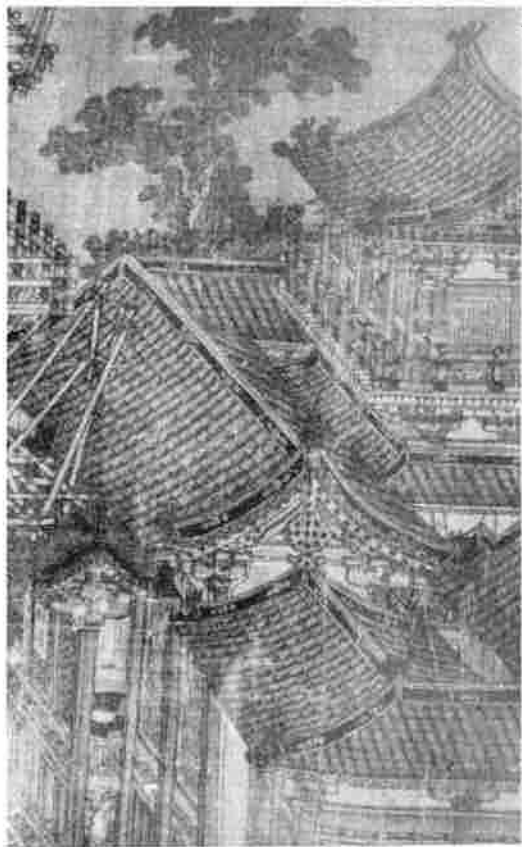


Fig. 20

Fig. 16-22, all: Detail of the same painting as Fig. 15.

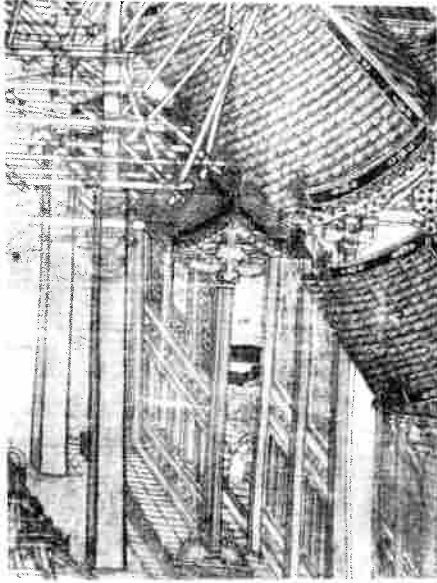


Fig. 21

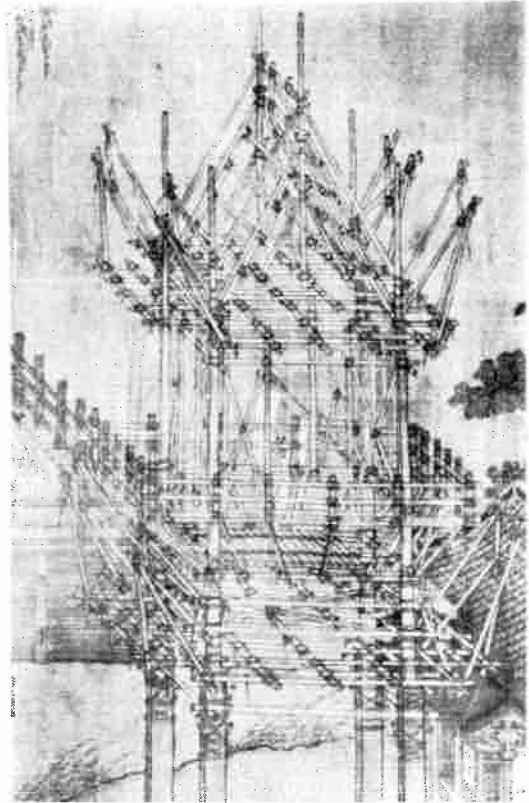


Fig. 22

Fig. 16-22, all: Detail of the same painting as Fig. 15.

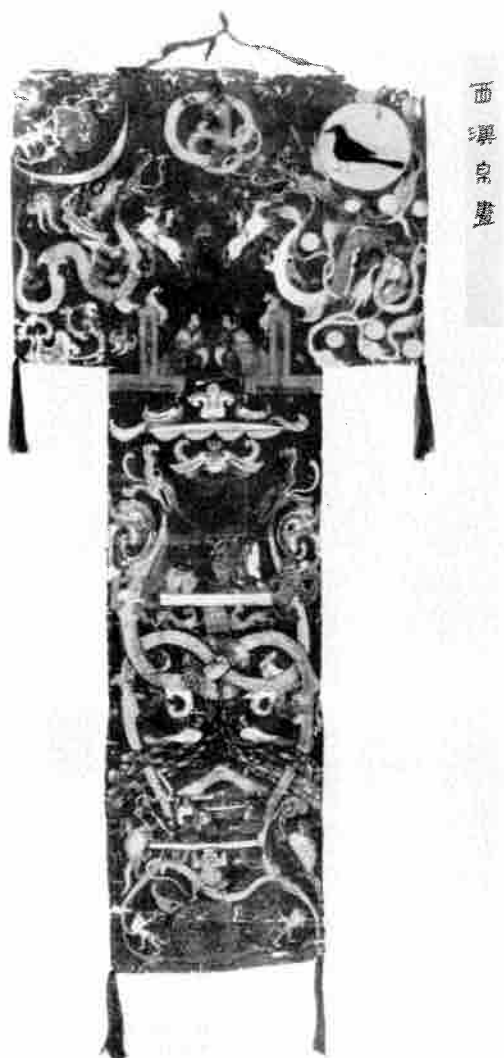


Fig. 23. Anonymous, early second century B.C. "Flying garment": funerary painting. Ink and colors on silk. From Tomb #1 at Ma-wang-tui.



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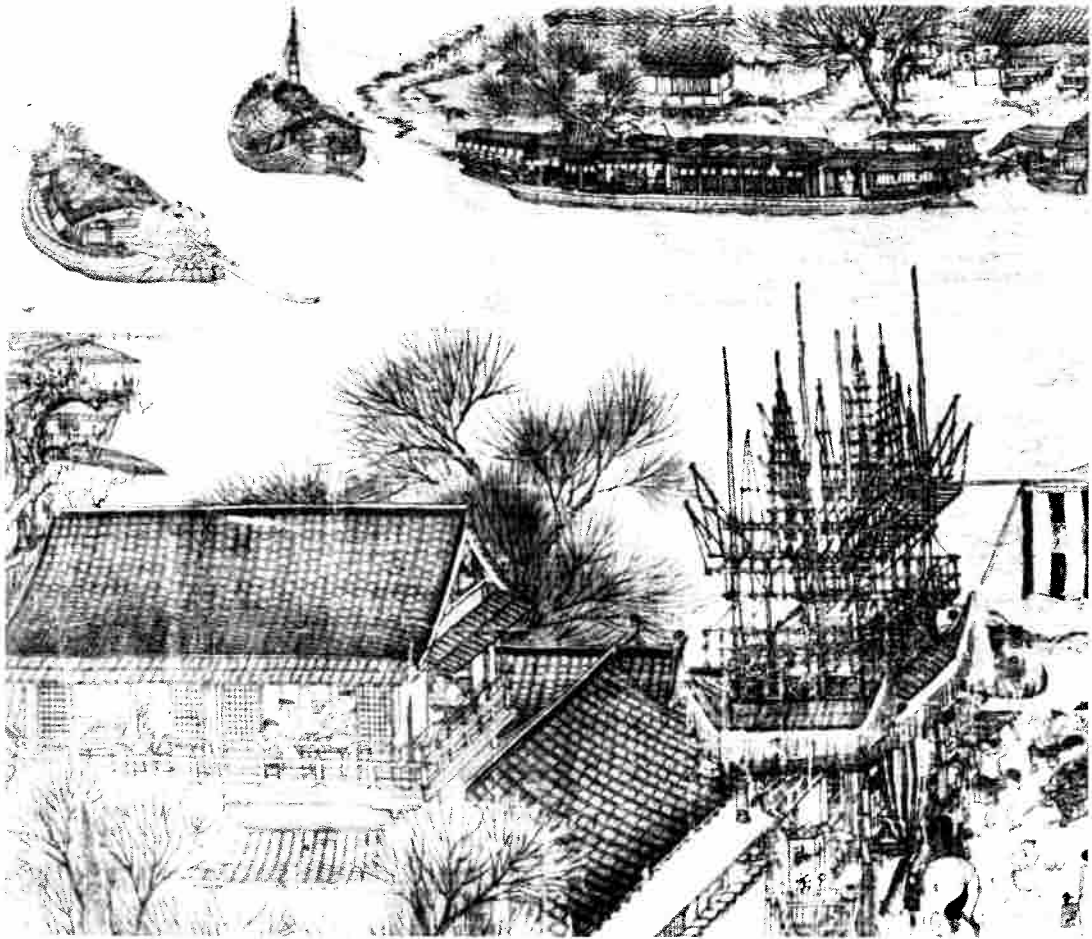


Fig. 25. Chang Tse-tuan (active 11th-12th cent.) "Spring Festival on the River." Section of a handscroll, ink and light colors on silk. Peking Palace Museum.



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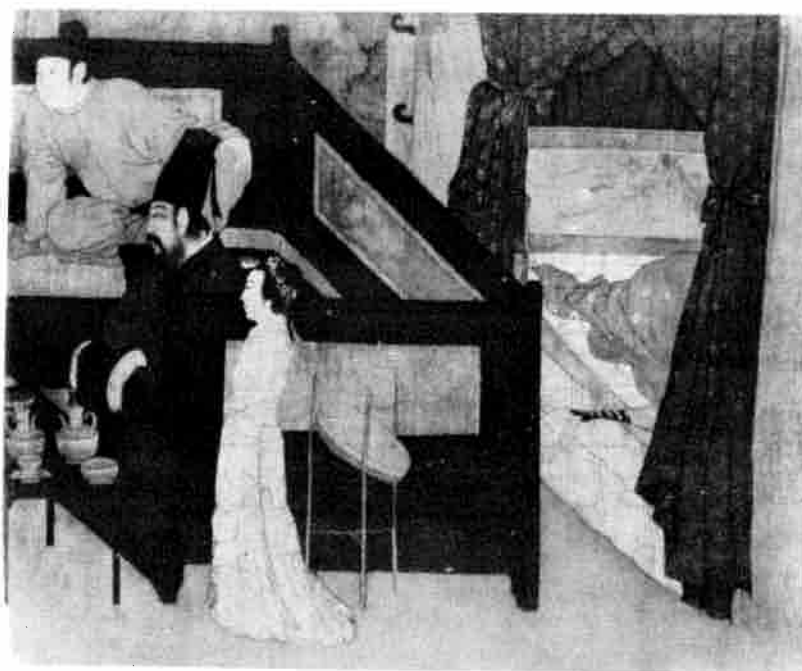


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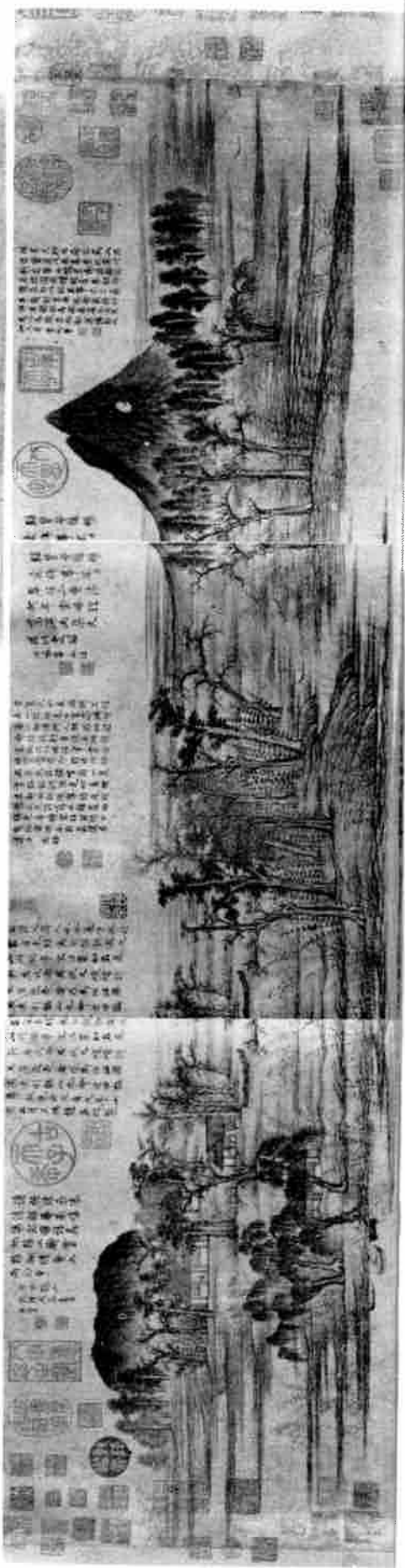


Fig. 28. Chao Meng-fu (1254-1322). "Autumn Colors on the Ch'iao and Hua Mountains." Dated 1295. Detail from a handscroll, ink and colors on paper. National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.



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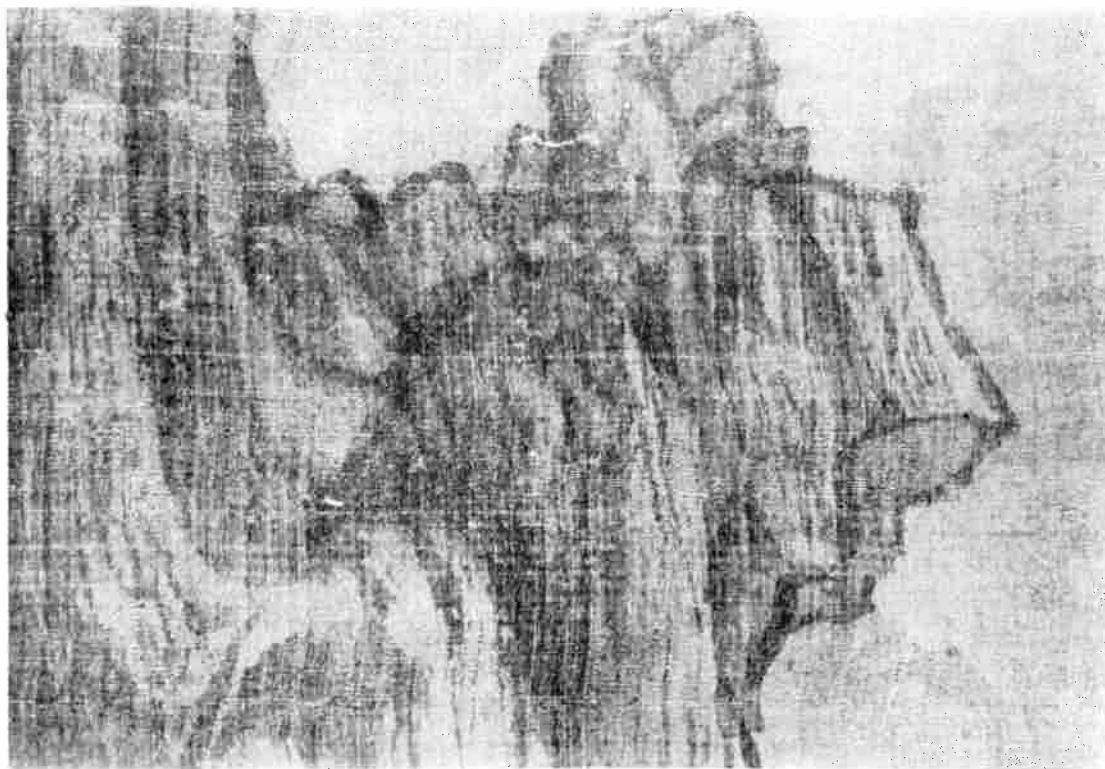


Fig. 31. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 1.



Fig. 32. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 30.



Fig. 33. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 2.



Fig. 34. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 30.

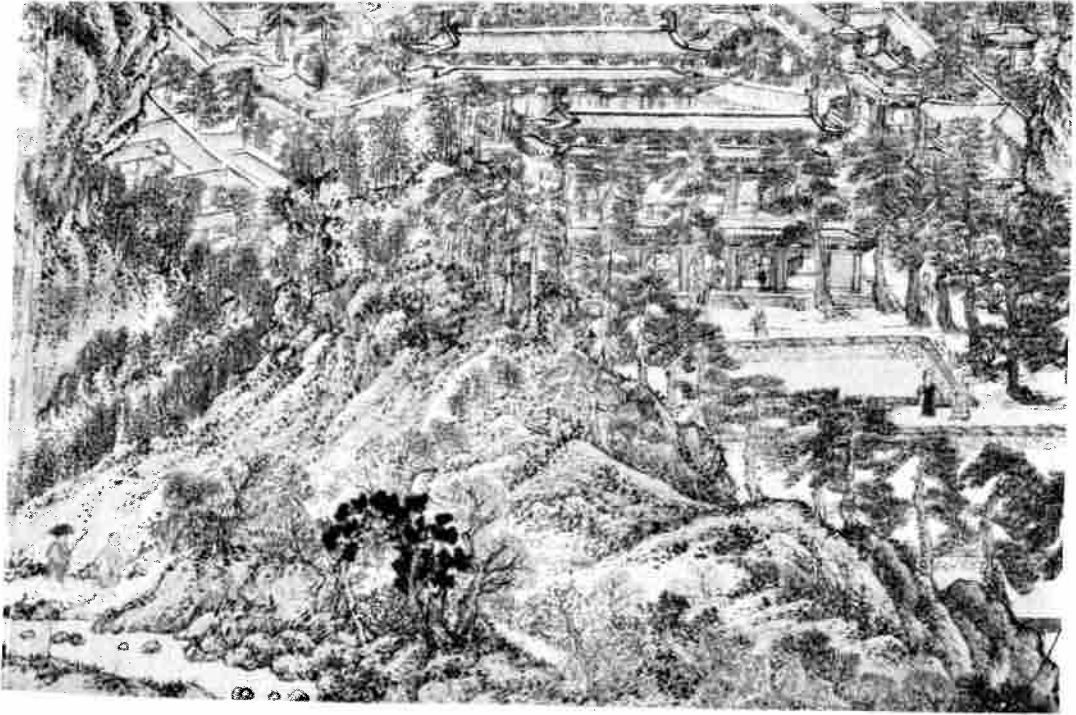


Fig. 35. Wang Meng (ca. 1308-1385). "Landscape of Mt. T'ai-po." Section of a handscroll, ink and colors on silk. Liaoning Provincial Museum.

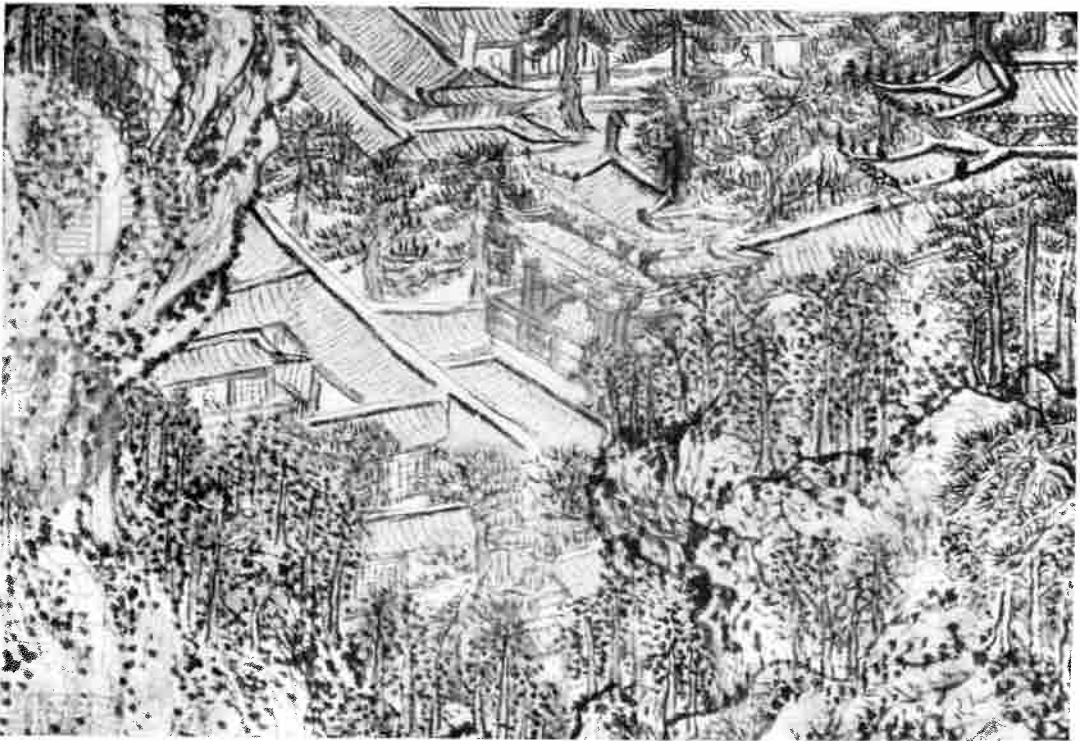


Fig. 36. Detail from the same painting as Fig. 35.



Fig. 37. Ting Yün-P'eng "Immortals' Dwellings in Palaces in a [Magic] Pot" From: Ch'eng-shih Mo Yüan (1604)