

12A Talking
Head

12A, Jin Painting; Chan Painting, Muqi

After a look at several paintings done in the north under the Jurchen or Jin dynasty during the Southern Song period, we will spend the rest of this twelfth and last lecture looking at Chan or Zen painting, mostly done in the late Southern Song period.

Now, the very concept of Chan ptg is anything but unproblematic. Quite a few Chinese art scholars question whether there is any such thing. And of course, as always, there is no final answer to this: Chan painting is a concept, not a clearly definable body of work, and those who choose to deny the concept can do so. I firmly believe in it, and you will see why.

Among the doubters is one of my former students, and one of the best Chinese art specialists active today: Marsha Weidner

Her article "Fit For Monks' Quarters; Monasteries as Centers of Aesthetic Activity in the Later Fourteenth Century" (reference in my handout) is a fine and valuable study of, among other things, how paintings were produced and appreciated in Buddhist monasteries in the Yuan period and later. I'm questioning here only her doubting, as she does near the beginning of her article, of the very existence of a Chan or Zen painting, made in China, that was rejected in its home country and preserved only in Japan. If she is right and there was no such painting, what am I going to be talking about for the next two hours or more?

in what follows.

But such doubting is common today: also done by Greg Levine, the very good scholar who teaches Japanese art history in my old department at Berkeley, and who ends his essay in the *Awakenings* catalog with these sentences::

“Difficult to come at head on, therefore, Zen Art seems at its clearest today when imagined as a field of converging and colliding objects, notions, and interpretations in which the visual is open to debate. Authenticity, adaptation, interpretation, and performance—this is arguably what zen Art has always been and perhaps what it will always be.”

Oof—again, if that is what Zen art is, what am I going to spend the next two hours talking about? I differ from those people in believing Chan painting can be defined, and art-historically traced, much more clearly than either of them admits, and I’ll attempt to do exactly that, for better or worse, even venturing onto the great unanswerable question of “What is Zen?” while you look for a long time at Muqi’s famous little picture of six persimmons.

12A¹ 12B

Lect.notes.12: The Late Sung: Ch'an Masters

Picture of me, in 1958, in Taichung. Explain why I put it on. End of series. (Implications of image). But also: working then on problem of relat. of Chan ptg w. literati ptg. . . etc.

Chin ptg (in north, during So. Sung):

- 12.1.1-7 "Streams & Mts. w/o End," long handscroll, Cleveland Art Museum; subject of early (1967), important study by Sherman Lee and Wen Fong. Eclectic work of 12th-13th cent.

- 12.2.1-3. "Summer Mountains." Met. Mus., NY. (1973.120.1) Loosely attrib. to Yen Wen-kuei follower named Ch'û Ting; this is guess. Really (I think) another Chin work from 12th cent. or so, fine as that. See Wen Fong, *Summer Mountains*.

- 12.3.1-5 *Emperor Hsûan-tsung's Flight to Shu*. Met. Mus., NY. Beyond Representation 26-31.

Continuations of literati ptg into So. Sung period (more under Chin than under So. Sung in Hangchou): hard to trace, not enough genuine work.

Wang T'ing-yûn (1151-1202) (return)

- 12.4.1-5 "Secluded Bamboo and Withered Tree" Handscroll, Fujii Yurinkan, Kyoto. Skira 96.

Read: colophon by T'ang Hou (14th cent.), Skira 95.

Li Chung-lüeh (*chin-shih* 1179, d. 1205).

- 12.5.1. Landscape. Nelson Gallery, K.C.? Lyric 1.10, p. 19. These two can be taken to represent literati ptg at its best & worst. Can imagine literati of time praising this as having real poetic quality, as opposed to those dull Academy ptgs ...

Important reference and reading for Ch'an painting:

- Helmut Brinker and Hiroshi Kanagawa, *Zen Masters of Meditation in Images and Writings*. Zurich, 1996. Major publication. Contains history of Ch'an/Zen; "Zen Aestheticism and Theory of Art," "Zen symbols and Metaphors," etc. Careful studies of many kinds of Zen ptg.

- Helmut Brinker, *Zen in the Art of Painting*. London and New York, Arkana, 1987. Shorter, easier to read.

(I just read the essay by my younger colleague at U.C. Berkeley Greg Levine in the *Awakenings* book--see below--about writings on "Ch'an/Zen art," and would be frightened off attempting this lecture if I were not too old and impenetrable for that. Good essay, anyway.)

Background for Ch'an Painting:

Likelihood of art-historical connection to literati ptg, and evidence for that, not explored enough by others. Several of Su Dongpo group, espec Huang Tingjian, strongly devoted to Chan, altho mainly Neo=Confuc BG--**Fan-lung**, monk-ptr, active early 12th cent., followed Li Kung-lin.

- 12.6.1-13 *Sixteen Arhats*. Skira 94, Suiboku 4/54-57.

Scroll has hidden signature in it--I found (bought by Freer on my recommendation from C.C.Wang.) Great series of colophons from 14c on. Seems reliable; important connection bet. Li Kung-lin and *pai-miao* ptg and later Ch'an Buddhist ptg.

- Arhat leaning agst pine. Poetic, moody. Drawing of figure, enlarged & relaxed, anticipates some late Sung Ch'an ptgs. From *pai-miao* to looser, broader style. Mu-ch'i, artist we'll treat later, carries this further; later Ch'an ptgs further still.

- Tree, etc. Closely relatable to early *wen-jen hua*, literati ptg, such as Red Cliff scroll by Ch'iao Chung-ch'ang. Separated more as So. Sung went on.

- End of scroll, Arhat? Behind waterfall, on ledge; serpent. Relates in subject to Mu-ch'i ptg we'll see. Style: kind of link bet Li K-l tradition & later Ch'an ptg.

- 12.7.1-5. Odd Arhat scroll: KC, 8 Dynasties 68. There dtd to So. Sung. "Tradition of Kuan-hsiu," eccentric monk-ptr of 10th cent., ptd arhats. cL seals & insc.--"acceptable" to literati & emp. who followed their lead.

Chih-yung Lao-niu. (1114-1193) (Old articles by Shimada; see my Index p. 77.)

12.8.1-4. - *Ox and Herdboy*. Yabumoto Kozo, Amagasaki. Seal of the artist. Sogenga 29. *Môryôga*, or *wang-liang hua*: "apparitional painting." Subject: probably no.4 in "Ten Oxherding" series: "Catching the Ox." Cf. Zen Ptg & Callig. no. 49 (Jap. series).

Li Ch'ûeh. Recorded pupil of Liang K'ai; member of Sung Academy.

- 12.9.1-5. *Feng-kan and Tiger; Pu-tai Laughing at Moon*. Pu-tai signed. Insc. written above by 13c Ch'an monk. Myôshinji, Kyoto. Siren 351, Zen 7, Suiboku 4/45-46.

Bodhidharma separate, by someone else.

Pu-tai: semi-mythical 9-10c monk, wandered around carrying huge bag of trash. Said to be incarnation of Maitreya, Buddha of future.

Mu-ch'i or Fa-ch'ang (1220s - 1280s)

Read Chuang Su on him, Bush&Shih 138-39: his ptgs not for "elegant diversion," but suitable only for Buddhist's or Taoist's rustic hut.

Born in Szechwan; studied Ch'an w. Wu-chün (d. 1239) at Chung-shan Temple near Hangchou, ca. 1215 estab. Liu-t'ung Temple nearby. (One trad. says this is where Liang K'ai went after leaving ~~monastery~~, but not sure.) Got in some trouble for making derogatory remark abt Chia Ssu-tao, powerful prime minister; had to flee for a time. (We need a serious study of Mu-ch'i in English.) Major exhib. of his work held at Gotô Museum (private mus. in Tokyo) in 1996, good catalog w fine reproductions of works by or attrib. to him, essays on him by Ebine & Ogawa, two important scholars, fairly brief and based largely on texts; and entries for indiv ptgs attrib to him.

Academy,

Chinese writers, from around his time onward, speak slightly of him as ptr of vegetables & other plants, birds, as well as tigers & dragons, wild geese, LS, fig.—great variety of subjects, all in free & easy fashion. His way of ptg "coarse and ugly, not in accordance w. ancient canons, not for refined enjoyment." Blind spot in critics: both his subjects & his style kept him from receiving critical approval. Japanese, by contrast, admired and acquired his works, treasured them, saw him as great master. Like case of Liang K'ai—curious, significant split. His brushwork: not just calligraphic vigor, a certain roughness, lack of discipline, even avoidance of it; often seems unconcerned w brushwork at all. Or, like other Ch'an artists, deliberately avoiding "good brushwork" which turns image into conventional form, readable as configuration of brushstrokes on paper; last thing they wanted. Tried for some pictorial equivalent to Chan's insistence on direct apprehension of world, self as somehow fused w it (I speak as non-enlightened being, on basis of study of Chan more than experience of it.) Breaking those conventions led to their great accomplishments, but also got them banished from Chinese canon of ptgs

Chan artists'

worth preserving. (How many artists have I written *that* about during my long career!).

Begin with his most reliable & most conservative works:

- 12.15.1- *White-robed Kuan-yin; Gibbons; Crane*. Triptych, Daitokuji, Kyoto. Signed. 3000 128, T&V 7-47, Siren 226-9, Loehr 109-11, Suiboku 3/1-3, Skira 97 (gibbons).

Kuan-yin: 173 cm. high, others 174 cm. high.

Was in col. of shogun in 14th cent. Triptych, large ptgs on silk, ink only (except for spot of red on crane's head.) Prob. not triptych originally: central piece signed, others only w. his seal. So, single Kuan-yin plus pair. Speculation on relationship of subjects thus fruitless.

- *White-robed Kuan-yin*: old subj., first ptd in ink by Li Kung-lin (traditionally). Sits by water, contemplatively, w flask w willow. Old subject, seen in Tun-huang ptgs. Seen here in perfect repose, as in Liang K'ai's Li Po, quality of drawing largely responsible for effect of ptg. Figure self-enclosed: set w/in dark BG. Style here *not* unorthodox.

- *Mother Gibbon and Child*: (not Monkey, as I stupidly labeled it in old Skira book.) Tree diag. moving inward, one downswept branch: just that (no more) consistent w standard So.Sung compositions. Gibbons used in ptg to evoke mood of wildness, loneliness. Crane also: Taoist connection w. longevity? (Old interp.: crane is vain seeking for longevity, gibbons mock human intellection, which doesn't get you anywhere in Ch'an... but...) My own feeling has always been that while perhaps some Ch'an Bud. connections here, needn't explain everything in this or other works of Mu-ch'i, style or subject, in terms of Ch'an: some of his works have obvious Ch'an assoc., others haven't.

Tree, detail: shows dif bet him and scholar-ptgs, why they spoke slightly of his brushwork. CCWang still did ...

- *Crane*: Walks w. head raised, crying out. Mists in bamboo. Etc.

- 12.16.1- *Dragon and Tiger*. Siren 342, Zen 10, Suiboku 3/71-2.

These also used as side-pieces for triptych. Also in Daitokuji.

- 12.17.1- *Arhat*. Seikado, Tokyo. Siren 335, Suiboku 3/8. Bears his seal. Also reliable work. Arhat on ledge among mists; serpent coiled around him. Sits in same wrapped-up pose as Kuan-yin, but a touch of the sinister, or forbidding here: in face, in serpent. Arhat is oblivious, unharmable. (End of Fan-lung scroll: same) Eyes blank: closed? Inward.

- 12.18.1. *Chien-tzu with Fish Net*. Siren 334. Mu-ch'i seal, accepted by Jap scholars; date of insc above suggests it might be early work of his.

Heaven + Earth,

Free drawing of upper part may remind us of Liang K'ai's *Sixth Patriarch Chopping Bamboo*; lower part in *wang-liang*, 'apparitional' manner. Among ptgs of this style, maybe most reliably by Mu-ch'i. Chien-tzu laughs; maybe moment of enlightenment? Unclear.

~~- 12.19.1. Pu-tai (Jap. Hotei) Patting His Belly. Suiboku 3/48.~~

- 12.19.3-5. Another Pu-tai, Kyoto Nat'l Mus., formerly Private Col. (Fujii? Shimada patron & advisee.) These are in loose-brushwork, what we think of as "Ch'an style."

- 12.19.6-7. The Fifth Patriarch with a Hoe. Matsunaga Memorial Museum, Kanagawa. Suiboku III/23. He was, before he became monk, a planter of pine trees, so shown here, bunch of pine seedlings hanging from his hoe. Insc. is 14th cent.; only attrib. to Mu-ch'i. Could show quite a few others.

- 12.22.1- Swallow and Hanging Willow Branch. Attributed. Tokugawa Museum, Nagoya. Suiboku III/75. Fine late Sung work. (*Mynah Bird on Pine*. Siren 343, Suiboku 3/11.)

- 12.20.1- *Persimmons, Chestnuts*. Suiboku 3/67-8, etc. Jukoin, Daitokuji. Others: *Hibiscus/Rose Mallow*, Suiboku 3/10. *Radish, Cabbage*: Suiboku 3/69-70.

These were cut, in Japan, from handscroll(s) for tea-ceremony etc. hanging.

Original form: can see in handscrolls attrib. to Mu-ch'i, Yuan or early Ming copies? NPM, Taipei & Beijing: see above.

- 12.21.1- Mu-ch'i's ptgs mostly in Japan; but two handscrolls probably copied after his works, made up of ptgs of vegetables, plants, birds, misc. subjects, are in Ch. collections (Taipei & Beijing Palace Mus. See my article "Continuations of Ch'an Ptg into Ming-Ch'ing" in *Archives of Asian Art* 50, 1997-98.) Images from Taipei scroll.

But his genuine works, and early works attrib. him, are preserved in Japan:

INTEGRATE WHAT FOLLOWS W. SEPARATE PERSIMMONS TEXT

Persimmons: Now we have to pause for a moment and think abt what we mean by Ch'an ptn. Up to now, mostly could relate by subject. Not this. Yet, to question its status as Zen ptn would be almost sacrilegious. In what sense, then, is it Zen?

Qual. of enigmatic & yet ordinary, mundane. Simplification, first of all, makes for immediacy. Also, formal means unite into single image. Effect