

LS.LectNotes.7B: Northern Song Landscape Painting, Part II

Now on to the last really <sup>great</sup> ~~major~~ master w'in the Northern Sung monumental landscape tradition: Kuo Hsi. And we have from him one major, reliable work, as we do from Fan Kuan, this one also with a title and date written on it by the artist.

But before showing his ptgs, I'm going to talk about Kuo Hsi's essay on LS ptg. <sup>This is the</sup> Most important of all landscape texts for early period, following on <sup>the</sup> Zong Bing and Jing Hao essays. Written down by his son Kuo Ssu, from ms. left by his father? Kuo Hsi served in Imperial Academy; son was a high official. <sup>There are</sup> Two good trans. of essay: in Bush and Shih, 150-54; in Siren vol. II, pp. 220-228. Siren's made by class of students working in Leiden under Prof. Hulsewe; Bush&Shih made mainly by John Hay, as I remember. Both fine.

I'll put on screen, as I talk abt this essay, some quite unrelated photos of Huangshan or Mt. Huang in Anhui Province, made on one of my climbs of that spectacular range of peaks.

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But first, let me talk about Kuo Hsi's essay on LS ptg. Written down by his son Kuo Ssu, from ms. left by his father? Two good trans.: in Bush and Shih, scattered by subject; in Siren, together, in vol. II, pp. 220-228. Siren's made by clsss of students working in Leiden under Prof. Hulsewe; Bush&Shih made mainly by John Hay, as I remember. Both fine.

Main points:- On purpose of ptg LS. (Read from Bush&Shih).

- On importance of looking at ptg from distance. Some aspects of nature also best seen from distance.
- Some LS ptgs fit to contemplate; some fit to ramble through; some fit to live in. Last finest.
- What we call local schools: "students from Shantung study Li Ch'eng, those from Shansi Fan K'uan. . . So great men & scholars don't stick to a single school.
- Necessity of having a clear conception, concentrating on essential nature of thing represented.  
(Kuo Ssu breaks in and tell abt his father's method of working.)
- Different aspects of scenery in dif. seasons, times of day, weather conditions. Interest in light and shade. Technical advice on use of figures, roads, bldgs, to lead viewer's eye through composition.
- Main mt vs. subordinate mts; pine stands out among trees. Parallel to social order: superior man, and small men who serve him.
- Effects of seasons: moods assoc. with them. Winter mts covered by storm-clouds; people depressed. Etc. Contemplation of such pictures evokes in men corresponding ideas/feelings. "It is as if one were really among the mts; such is the idea beyond the depicted scenery."
- Advice on aspects of mts., water. Watercourses are arteries of mt, gras and trees its hear; mist and clouds give them air of beauty (charm). Rocks form its bones.
- Advice on "three distances", i.e. three ways of achieving effect of distance in ptg.
- Use of poems as themes for ptg. This is first appearance of important new criterion for judgment, which will take over and push out other kinds.  
= Artist travels to see famous mts. "When I have stored up impressions of them in my mind, then with the eye unconscious of the silk and the



hand unconscious of brush and ink, marvelous, mysterious, boundless becomes that picture of mine.”

- Criticism of “modern ptrs” who just wave the brush and splash the ink. Already some open to such criticism. Amateur school of ptg was coming into being.

Now, to look at his painting. One generally recognized as genuine, great masterwork.

## SLIDES

Kuo Hsi (Guo Xi) (ca. 1001-ca. 1090)

Early Spring 1072  
- 7.11.1 “Early Spring,” signed, dtd. 1072. NPM. Skira 36, 3000 109, T&V 7-20, Loehr 73, Siren 175. Not only signed, artist has written title and date on it also. Artists’ writings on ptgs expanding—first, only signature w. title; then date (in slightly earlier b&f ptg we’ll see, 1061 ptg by Ts’ui Po); now also title.

(Talk abt it—so familiar that one is tempted to slip into cliché observations—but then has to remember that these aren’t clichés at all for younger generation, still important truths. Dick Barnhart’s brief passage on this ptg in 3000 makes the important point that as a court artist, Kuo Hsi worked for an imperial patron, Emperor Shen-tsung (reigned 1068-1085), who was broadly cultivated and a ruled over a stable realm.

Composition: preserves much of Fan K’uan and Yen Wen-kuei model, while moving into more subjective, particular vision of world. Still tripartite in both ways (etc.) But grand vision of world in flux, going through process of change—all the LS masses undercut or overhanging, and whole seems to have the inner energy of a vast organism. LS masses shaded for effect of rotundity; not so much texture strokes as overlaid brushstrokes that make them appear earthy rather than rocky. Strong effect of light-and-shadow, although no consistent light source (never in Ch ptg). Has same basic underlying quasi-narrative: people at base engaged in real-world activities; then ascent to temple near top; then pure nature towering above that. Will see in details.

- 7.11.2 – 7.11.9. Details. Talk about. Next to temple at middle right: pavilion, suggesting that people will sit there and gaze at scenery. Ptg

itself still not adapted to that purpose, as others we'll see will be; but introduces theme.

Mundane scenes at bottom; climbers ascending twd temple; temple roofs seem thru ravine at top. Trees of all types. Old devices for drawing eye into distance: diminution of trees, lightening of ink-tone.

(With temple showing): So, still follows pattern that is more or less ubiquitous in No. Sung hanging-scroll LS, which we saw first in ptg attrib. to Kuan T'ung: secular, everyday-life area at base; climbing to central area where temple located; then only pure LS above. So constant a theme that one wonders why writers of the time—and, for that matter, writers later—don't make note of it and discuss it. Bears out my often-made observation that many of the most interesting and important aspects of Ch ptg are somehow not reflected in the literature, voluminous as it is. Reason, I always said: what goes on in mind of ptrs when they work, what they have learned from past and transmit to later ptrs., very dif. from what goes on in mind of someone writing a theoretical or critical essay. Two separate worlds, with only tenuous and problematic relationship. But back to ptg:

(Etc.—show strange change-of-plan passage in mid-right. Conjecture about why artist made this strange, last-minute decision. Kuo Hsi, unlike Fan K'uan and Yen Wen-kuei, wasn't representing stable, lasting world of solid, slow-changing geology; rather, erosion, transformation. Different vision. ✓

Could spend another hour showing landscapes in Kuo Hsi manner by followers, some old and fine. School of LS founded by Li Ch'eng and continued (transformed) by Kuo Hsi is established as local school but more than that, a mode of LS that artists of later times could take up.

- 7.12.1, 7.12.2. Strong contender for earliness is "Snowy River Gorge" in Shanghai Museum. Flatter forms, more emphasis on silhouettes than on volume. Probably sec'n of screen or series, like others we've seen. No indication of human presence, not even paths. Impressive survivor from what must have been powerful composition.

7.12.3 - 7.12.5. Fine early work in Kuo Hsi style: "Clearing After Snow in the Min Mountains." CAT 47. ✓

(Various later imitations.)



- 7.12.6. "Village Among Lofty Mountains." Siren 176. Ming ptg. In London exhib.?

So much for hanging scrolls in Kuo Hsi tradition. Now on to look at two fine, earlier handscrolls attrib. to him.

- 7.13.1. "Autumn in the River Valley." Freer Gallery. Skira 37, Loehr 74 A-D, Siren 172-3. In Skira book I accepted it as probably by same artist as "Early Spring"; I wouldn't do that now. Probably a generation or so later? Forms softened, less compelling as features of real LS. View over broad valley, like K.C. Hsü Tao-ning, but less real sense of space and distance. Travelers seen at bottom.

- 7.13.2. Next section. View back to tall bldg, gate? in distance.

- 7.13.3. Detail of that. Strong, effective use of atmospheric perspective, etc. All these means thoroughly mastered by now.

- 7.13.4. Next sec'n: traveler w servant approaches hostel, or wine-shop, where he will rest or buy something to eat & drink before continuing.

Pavilion in lower left where he will sit and contemplate remaining scenery. In remainder of scrolls Buddhist temple in misty hollow, middle distance; then

- 7.13.5. flat view over eroded terrain. Crossed pines in FG a bit arty. Not quite the naturalness in detail that real Kuo Hsi achieves.

- 7.13.6. End of scroll. Flat terrain continues to distant hills. LS to be gazed at from fixed vantage point, not to be entered, explored. Great change going on. Seen already in scroll attrib. to Hsü Tao-ning in Yurinkan, Kyoto, w. two figures at far end gazing out over scenery. And "scenery" is the right word for this—and word one would never use of real Kuo Hsi.

- 7.14.1. Opening section of another handscroll attrib. to Kuo Hsi, "Lowlands with Trees," Met. Mus., former Crawford Col. Someone recently, I've been told, has done study of this intended to establish its authenticity as a genuine work of Kuo Hsi. I admire the ptg, which I've seen many times since the days we were compiling the Crawford Catalog in 1960-61. But I think it's a little later than Kuo Hsi, like the Freer scroll, and somewhat different, partaking more of the new mode of landscape.

- 7.14.2 - 7.14.6, five more sections or details, show successively. Talk.

Both Freer and Crawford scrolls have as their theme: people gazing at landscape (or gathering to do so). Pictures composed, as Yurinkan "Hsü Tao-ning" is composed, to encourage that kind of reading. Very different from real Kuo Hsi etc.

LS can't be traversed for gazing only.

- 7.15.1. Large horizontal ptg in Palace Museum, Beijing, "Eroded Rocks on a Plain." According to my Index, signed and dtd. 1078. I list it there as probably a school work of the Yuan dynasty; that still seems right.

- 7.15.2 – 7.15. 6, details. Show why not time of Kuo Hsi.

- 7.16.1. "Snowy Hills," Toledo Museum of Art. Fine school work, Yuan dynasty? Loehr 75A-D. *Story of Joseph Koerner ...*

- 7.17.1. This is right place to bring back landscape hanging scroll attrib. to Li Ch'eng in Nelson Gallery, shown but then set aside in Lecture 6 as not belonging to period of Li Ch'eng. Now we can see why, I think. . .

- 7/17/5 – 7/17/1, (etc., show details, discuss the ptg.)

Will show here, then bring back in next lecture, LS signed by artist active at end of No. Sung, under reign of Emp. Hui-tsung, named Li Kung-nien.

- 7.18.1. Li Kung-nien, late Northern Sung. "A Mountain Valley". Signed. Princeton Art Museum.

- 7.18.2 – 7.18.4, three details.

Talk of this as beginnings of what might be called a subjective kind of LS, as opposed to objective LS of great period: nature presented as complete world, to be explored visually by viewer, as visual metaphor for moving thru the world, understanding more and more of it: coincides, not coincidentally, with early stages of proto-science, which goes thru great development in 10<sup>th</sup>-11-12<sup>th</sup> cent. Great neo-Confucian philosopher Shao Yung, in 11<sup>th</sup> cent., had argued that (I quote Benjamin Elman): "human beings should not pick out things, phenomena, and affairs from a human standpoint.. . I sage could internaize perception so that "things were perceived as things." In this way, one could exhaustively fathom the principles of all things (wanwu zhi li)..." Zhu Hsi, (1130-1200) moved away from this belief; although he continued to see "the investigation of things" as basic to self-cultivation, he argued that this should be done as a means of cultivating moral principles—things perceived should be absorbed and harmonized with human feelings. We are moving into a period when the School of Mind rules Chinese thought. The principles of things lie in the mind, not outside it, in the things themselves.



Somewhere: on Shen Kua, etc., from this time to 15c? proto-science, in Needham sense. Needham problem: why (etc.) Chinese never completely adopted empirical approach. . .