

Beyond Boundaries: An International Symposium on Chinese and Korean Painting, Seoul, October 16, 2008
Opening talk by James Cahill:

Patterns of Interchange in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Painting

(For reasons that will become obvious, this talk is dedicated to Ahn Hwijoon, Yi Songmi, and Kim Hongnam.)

I stand before you this morning as a person with old and happy memories of Seoul, feeling a bit nostalgic about being back. But they are memories from nearly sixty years ago. I spent two and a half years here as an army language officer in 1946-48. And two sprouts from which my professional career might have grown and blossomed were planted here at that time. One arose from a series of informal meetings held on Thursday evenings, for a time, with Father Hunt, who in my memory was Bishop of the Anglican Church in Seoul; the two of us met there to talk about literature and art, both feeling starved for such conversations. And I read his amateurish but pioneering writings on Korean artists published in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch, and wrote home about how I wanted to work in the field of Korean painting. The other was when I bought at a local antique store three would-be Song dynasty Chinese album leaves, two of them signed with the names of famous masters. Looking these up in Siren's old History of Chinese Painting (found in a local library) and browsing among the reproductions of real Song paintings reproduced there, I determined that that would be the start of my life's work. The first resolve came to nothing: back in Berkeley, I found no one to work with in Korean art; taking a course with Evelyn McCune, a likeable person but with no training in art history, was not of much use, and there

was little to read. In the other direction, a succession of great teachers, including Max Loehr, Shûjirô Shimada, and C. C. Wang, set me on the road that has led me here today, to give a talk announced as "Approaches to Chinese Painting."

What I mean to talk about, in keeping with the underlying theme of the symposium, is not so much the study of Chinese painting in general—many of you have heard or read enough by me on that already—as the larger matter of intercultural exchanges in painting between the three great cultures of East Asia, China, Korea, and Japan. I have always been a dedicated diffusionist, and a fervent believer in the value of studies of that kind—more so, probably, than most other specialists in my field—and I've tried to explore certain aspects of the China-Japan exchange, especially the Chinese sources for Japanese Nanga-school painting. More controversially, even notoriously, I made large arguments about what certain Chinese painters of the Ming-Qing transition adopted from European pictures that had become accessible for them to see.

Let me say very briefly before going on that I was converted, some years ago, by my Berkeley colleague the late Michael Baxandall to his way of thinking about artistic transfers and adoptions, as argued in a section titled "Against Influence" in his book Patterns of Intention. He points out that the "influence" model states the matter backwards: to say that Cézanne "influenced" Picasso seems to suggest that Cézanne did something to Picasso, whereas the opposite is obviously true. As Baxandall sees it, artists are active agents who take what they want or

need from whatever artistic sources they have access to. That model underlies my talk this morning.

What I want to begin by stressing is the importance, which I have not always brought out as strongly as I should have, of the loads of associated values—cultural, political, nationalistic—that these cross-cultural transfers carried with them. And we need to recognize that the loads were not necessarily the same, often *were not* the same, for the artists who did the adopting and for those of their contemporaries who were meanwhile keeping the records, making the critical judgments, writing the theoretical literature. In developing that theme, I will begin by commenting quickly on large matters that merit much fuller consideration than I can give them here.

S1, S2. (Leaf from Ortelius's Atlas of the World; Gong Xian's "Myriad Peaks and Ravines.") An artist could be struck, as Gong Xian was struck, by the potential for creating effects of powerful drama and alienness in such a European print as this, from Ortelius's 1579 atlas. Other artists were taking up other "pictorial ideas" from the foreign pictures for a diversity of strikingly new effects, as I attempted to show in my Compelling Image lectures and book. Landscapists of that time were under critical pressure to conform to "Orthodox" rules and models for how to paint, as laid down by Dong Qichang and his followers. But many of them found those rules too restrictive for their artistic purposes, and broke free of them, accepting the risks.

S3, S4. (Here, Zhang Hong adopts, probably from a leaf like this one in Braun and Hogenberg's "Cities of the World," a new and effective way of joining near and distant shores by a narrowing bridge.) But the artists' openness to new imagery and ways of organizing that they could use in their pictures was not paralleled by a comparable openness to foreign ideas and ways of understanding the world among their contemporaries who were the powerful critics and wrote the books, and no open recognition of the artists' adoptions from Western pictures was possible, nor could the artists themselves acknowledge their new sources without calling down scorn. The outcome was that this very important factor in the exciting new directions taken by some 17th century Chinese painters has gone unrecognized in the centuries since then, and is still doubted or resented by many who prefer to go on seeing China as an insular culture,

S5, S6. (Gao Jianfu, Fox Stealing Chicken, 1928, at left; Nishimura Goun, same, 1910, at right.) Ralph Croizier's pioneering study of the Lingnan or Cantonese school of painting in early 20th century China, begun during a year he spent working with me in Berkeley, correctly traces how these artists took their styles, often by direct copying, from Japanese painters whose works they saw and acquired during their periods of study in Japan. In this case, the foreign source could be regarded more positively, since so many Chinese were going to Japan to study, recognizing the cultural advantages Japan had attained through its greater openness to the outside world. On the other hand, when anti-Japanese sentiment grew in China, the Lingnan painters found themselves under heavy criticism for adopting Japanese styles. Recognizing the positive and negative baggage carried by cross-cultural artistic transmissions is an important part of

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placing them in their historical contexts and assessing the responses they aroused; and it must be based primarily, of course, on reading and research in texts. Determining whether and how those transfers happened, by contrast, can usually be done only by careful comparisons of the paintings, in the contexts of their respective traditions. So, for this latter question, my strong contention these days is: believe what you see in the pictures, mistrust what you read in the books, especially the critical and judgmental writings.

S7, S8 Croizier's work has been followed by a welcome surge in studies of how China-Japan cultural exchanges, especially in the late period, have been two-way. Joshua Fogel and Julia (Judy) Andrews have been leaders in exploring this once-taboo area of research, organizing workshops and symposia besides publishing research of their own; Aida Wang's book Parting the Mists: Discovering Japan and the Rise of National-Style Painting in Modern China was a major contribution. (These are two leaves from an album by Ren Xiong, active in the mid-19th cent. in Suzhou and Shanghai. where active trade with Japan and a back-and-forth movement of artists exposed the Chinese to new and attractive styles and ideas.) I myself have argued that Tomioka Tessai was the inspiration for some important developments in recent Chinese painting. To point out such adoptions in no way diminishes the cultural stature and authority of China, which in its interchanges with its neighbors is certainly far more the giver than the receiver. It is only to acknowledge that like all other cultures, it is both.

S9, S10. Studies of what Japanese artists adopted from China are of course much older and fuller, and make up a major theme in any serious consideration of Japanese art. But even these have taken new directions. I opened a new area of research by showing how the early Nanga masters learned Chinese styles from actual Chinese paintings they could see in Japan, and not only, as the standard accounts had it, from woodblock-printed pictorial sources such as the Mustard-Seed Garden Manual of Painting. Once more, the disparity between the value such paintings carried for Japanese artists who used them, and the fact that by Chinese connoisseurial standards most of those paintings were decidedly low-class, not the prestigious works we see in museums, had blocked recognition of this channel of cross-cultural transmission.

By now you will be wondering: yes, but when do we get to the third of the great Far Eastern cultures, Korea? I wanted to lay out, if only in the barest outline, a few existing and accepted examples of the kind of cross-cultural transmission I am talking about before turning to Korea. And I want to acknowledge here that much of what follows is based on my reading of studies by genuinely specialist scholars, most of them here today, and my study of reproductions of paintings that I haven't seen in the originals, a methodological weakness forced on me by my late-period loss of mobility. I should state also that I am talking today only about secular painting of the later periods. Korea's contributions to the rest of Asia, and to the world, in Buddhist painting and sculpture, as well as in printing and ceramics and other areas of art, are well recognized already, and need no commentary from me. ✓

S11.S12. Another breakthrough was the recognition and documentation by Burglind Jungmann of how Japanese artists who were pioneers in the development of Nanga, such as Nankai and Hyakusen, learned from Korean sources, especially from paintings by Korean envoys in Japan. I remember very well hearing this argument, illustrated with paintings and photographs, made by my good and respected friend Yamanouchi Chôzô, a minor dealer and scholar with whom I spent a lot of time, and later by Burglind Jungmann while she was still a graduate student, and feeling strong resistance, uncomfortable that my beloved Nanga, to which I had developed a strong proprietary feeling, was being somehow encroached upon by Korean painting. Much the same way, no doubt, that Chinese listeners to my arguments about Ming-Qing artists' uses of European pictures were made uncomfortable by suggestions that their beloved and self-sufficient tradition had been encroached upon by foreign pictures. (Landscapes by Yi Yongyun, Gion Nankai, from Jungmann's book.)

S13. (her Yang Paengsan/Hyakusen comparison) My thinking was still dominated by the influence model, in which the source culture was felt to be imposing itself on the receiving culture, a pattern I now consider misleading. Such feelings were natural, then, but wrong, and we are all getting over them, or should be. Jungmann's book is a major move toward a recognition of Korea as an equal partner in the great triad, giving as well as getting.

So: the big question I want to raise, even if it has to be in a somewhat confrontational way, is this: why is part two of this afternoon's session titled " The Legacy of *Cross-Cultural Interaction Between Chinese*

and Korean Buddhist Painting," while part one is the much more neutral "The *Intercultural Understanding* of Chinese and Korean Painting." And the morning session, apart from Ahn Hwi-joon's paper, is all about Chinese painting? Is there some strange unbalance here, with no suggestion of a true China-Korea "interchange" in secular painting? Obviously there is such an unbalance, and while I don't mean to be critical, and I'm by no means capable of resolving it myself, I do want to call our attention forcibly to it, for the benefit (as I see it) of future scholarship.

The major studies of later Korean painting that have absorbed my interest over the years have mostly been writings about what Korean artists adopted from Chinese painting in the Choson/Ming-Qing periods. Ahn Hwi-joon and I were together at a symposium in Tokyo in 1982 on "Interregional Influences in East Asian Art History" in which he gave a paper on ""Chinese Influence on Korean Landscape Painting of the Yi Dynasty." (Mine was on what the great Japanese poet-painter Yosa Buson learned from Chinese painting). In March of 2001, assigned to give a keynote address at a New York University symposium on "The Arts of China, Japan, and Korea: Influences, Confluences, and Divergences," (which unhappily coincided exactly with another symposium "Establishing a Discipline: The Past, Present, and Future of Korean Art History" in Los Angeles, which drew away the most interesting people) I gave a talk in which my brief section on Korea was based heavily on the essays by Ahn Hwi-joon, Yi Song-mi, and Kim Hong-nam in the recently-published Metropolitan Museum catalog [Arts of Korea](#). Those three excellent essays are still the important underpinnings for much of what follows.

S14.S15. Let me begin with Hongnam Kim's. In a model employment of visual method, she offers close comparisons and bold new attributions, in particular recognizing two unattributed Korean landscapes in the Met's collection as two of the "Eight Views" series and arguing that they are probably the work of An Kyon, artist of

S16 the well-known handscroll in the Tenri Museum in Japan. She goes on to trace the continuation in Chosun landscape painting of the Chinese Li-Guo stylistic tradition from the Northern Song, but also to explore the part played by Korea in the development of post-Shûbun ink landscape in Japan, and the problem of Bunsei and Munch'ong—a set of problems dealt with at greater length in an important article by Ahn Hwi-joon.¹

S17.S18. I would like to differ with her argument on only one matter: I want to see Chinese painting of the Southern Song period, the post-Li Tang styles of Ma Yuan and Xia Gui, the "Chan Buddhist" style of Muqi and Yujian, as playing a larger part in Chosun landscape painting than she recognizes. This pair of paintings attributed to the mid-15th century artist An Kyon, while the rocks and mountains do indeed (as she points out) preserve echoes of the Li-Guo tradition, seem to me to transmit the Southern Song Academy tradition in deeper ways: the dramatic silhouetting of pines against mist, as Ma Yuan might have done it; the atmospheric dimming of the far shores, out of which mountains rise. I cannot argue with her historical points, such as the near-absence of

¹ See Richard Stanley-Baker, "Bunsei Revisited"; Ahn Hwi-joon, "Korean Influence on Japanese Ink Painting of the Muromachi Period."

Southern Song paintings from the collection of Prince Anp'yong (p. 393); I can only make observations based on paintings.

S19.S20. And other Chosun-period landscapes reproduced by her and by Ahn Hwijoon, Yi Songmi, and others,, convince me that Korean painting, along with Japanese, perpetuated in a vital way a great tradition of landscape painting which—at least judging from extant and known paintings—had no significant continuation in Ming China. (On the left, a landscape attributed to Shûbun, Japanese, late 15c. Seattle Art Museum; on right, a landscape by Yang Paeng-son, Korean, early 16c.) Ahn Hsi-joon, in his very important article "Korean Influences on Japanese Ink Painting of the Muromachi Period," recognizes and defines this Korean contribution, but in a context of its influence on Muromachi painting; I would like to see the Korean continuations of Southern Song academy style credited, along with its Japanese counterparts, as taking up and carrying on a great mode of landscape that had been discontinued in its home culture.

S21.S22. That Sesshû, for one, was able to absorb and build on the Southern Song tradition, painting with brilliance and deep understanding in the Ma-Xia and Yujian styles, is demonstrated by an album by him, from which these are two leaves—an album that is mysteriously ignored by Japanese Sesshu scholars (another large issue that I cannot elaborate on here,) Sesshu's claim that he learned virtually nothing from Ming artists during his time in China has much truth in it—no Ming artist, judging from extant paintings known to me, appears to have been as capable as Sesshû and some of his contemporaries and followers of capturing the essential

qualities of these late Song models. And it would appear, even from the few paintings I know, that we can say the same of Korean landscapists of the same period.

S23, S24. (An anonymous Korean landscape in the Metropolitan Museum, identified by Hongnam Kim as one of the Eight Views²; a section of Xia Gui's great handscroll "A Pure and Remote View of Streams and Mountains.") While there are certainly elements of Ch'an Buddhist painting style in the Met landscape, as she points out, it also belongs to what I want to see as a continuation by Korean artists of Southern Song academy style, including Ma-Xia. I suspect that the rejection of that tradition by Ming and later Chinese critics as outmoded and low-class has overly affected recent Korean scholars, leading them to underplay its continuations in Chosun-period landscapes.

S25 (A well-known painting by Zhang Lu, a Zhe-school artist of the Ming, in the Tokyo National Museum.) The Zhe school in Ming, the nominal heirs to the Southern Song academy, represents more a rejection of basic values of late Song painting than a continuation of them—large, bold forms on the surface instead of subtler ones sinking into atmospheric depth, drama instead of poetic mystery. The Zhe-school masters, working under the pressure of an almost moralistic critical rejection of Southern Song Academy styles, pursue vigorous brushwork and surface-oriented effects instead of depths and nuances.³ Japanese landscapists appear to

²Kim, "Eight Views," p. 400.

have been mostly unaware of this Ming development, which is scarcely reflected in Muromachi painting; but some Korean painters, as Yi Songmi and others point out, learned and practiced the Ming Zhe School styles.⁴

As we see here, the load of negative associations and values that a style or a cultural practice may carry in China, even while on more neutral or objective grounds it continues to be completely viable and attractive, can bring about its discontinuance. But its inherent values, quite apart from those overlaid on it by the sometimes oppressive forces of Chinese culture, can allow its continuation elsewhere, within a different cultural context.

In recognizing this great collective renunciation by Ming artists and their patrons of a highly developed, still thoroughly viable and attractive style, we can see it as one example of a pattern of such renunciation³ with which any student of Chinese culture must be familiar. No other great civilization, I think, has so regularly exhibited it: initiating some large cultural practice, carrying it to the highest level ever to be attained, and then, as if by some sweeping collective decision, deciding not to do it any more, relinquishing it for others to take up and continue. As examples of this phenomenon, think of these: explorations of the world by sea, the high development of a proto-science (the Needham problem), the

³ A third element that I am leaving out of these necessarily over-simplified formulations is of course the artists' clientele, or patronage, who can be so awed by critical disapproval of a style or subject as to discourage artists who are their contemporaries from practicing it.

⁴ Korean Landscape Painting, pp.67-72.

achievement of the highest refinements of multi-block color printing—all in effect renounced by China, to be carried on by others. And now it is the Southern Song landscape style brought to sublime levels of depth and subtlety by followers of Li Tang, including but not limited to Ma Yuan and Xia Gui, and the misty landscape mode of Muqi and Yujian, that is taken up and continued by landscapists of Korea as well as Japan. Can this chapter in Korean painting be reconstructed, on the basis of surviving works and new attributions, and a Korean counterpart to Muromachi *suiboku* landscape be recognized?? I would suggest that this remains an important area for further investigation by Korean specialists, which would establish more fully another important contribution by Korean painters to the whole body of East Asian art.

On the question of what Chinese painters may have adopted from Korean painting, in a truly two-way cultural interaction, I am certainly not ready to make more than tentative suggestions. Even though, as I have argued, artists seem often to make their choices more or less independently of the heavier implications of the transfers, we should probably look for situations in which the adopting culture is taking a relatively strong, self-confident position with respect to the source culture. For Korea and China, one such period, as Yi Songmi outlines in some depth and detail, is in the second half of the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth.⁵ At that time, as she writes, the fall of the Ming and the conquest of China by the Manchus left Koreans considering themselves "the legitimate heirs to that grand cultural tradition" of Confucian China; they even referred to

⁵ "True Views" p. 340 ff.

themselves as "minor China." And it is at this time that the tradition of "true-view landscapes," the subject of her chapter, develops in Korea.

S26, S27 (Korean painting of Ming date, by unknown artist, showing the departure of a Korean official, preserved in a Japanese temple.) The background of that tradition might be seen in such paintings as this: (identify). The landscape (seen in the detail at right) rises flat and vertical as a backdrop, with identifying materials spread over it as on a map.

S28 Or this "Gathering of Officials" recently acquired by the Asian Art Museum in S.F., dated 1576, a work similar to the "Gathering of Scholars at Tukso-Dang Hall" from around 1570, also by an unknown artist, that Yi Songmi reproduces. I offer these two examples to supplement hers, following her excellent discussion. Ridges and hilltops are arranged as a pattern over the vertical surface. To my knowledge, no paintings of this kind were done in Ming China.

S29, S30 This development culminates, as she writes, in the work of Kyong-son (1676-1759), especially in his striking depictions of the Diamond Mountains, such as the one at right done in 1734.⁶ As recorded in Ch'oe Wan-su's book on that artist, Kyong-son's paintings were not only known in China, but were for sale on the Beijing art market.⁷

6

⁷ Ch'oe, Wan-su. ed. and trans. by Youngsook Pak and Roderick Whitfield, Korean True-View Landscape Paintings by Chong Son (1676-1759). pp. 59-60: "Kyômjae's Reputation in China." I am grateful to Youngsook Pak for the generous gift of this book, brought to me just when I needed it.

S31, S32. So, when Chinese artists of the Imperial Academy in Beijing are faced with demands from their emperors for paintings of particular places, and have no useful models to speak of in the Chinese landscape tradition, they appear to turn to the Korean type as practiced by Kyong-son and others. At left, Leng Mei's painting of the Bishu Shanzhuang or Villa for Escaping the Heat, done in the 1720s-30s; at right, Dong Bangda's "View of a Buddhist Monastery, somewhat later.

S33, S34. Or these: "The Qianlong Emperor Enjoying the Snow," and Zhang Ruocheng, "Peaks of Xing'an," also from the Qianlong era.

S35 ← The latter, in its strong patterning of starkly repeated linear mountain peaks, seems especially close to Kyong-son's Diamond Mountains pictures. I offer these parallels, as I said before, only as a possibility, but a strong one, to be followed up more seriously by others better equipped than I to pursue it..

→ **S36.** And I must acknowledge that my argument was somewhat anticipated by Hongnam Kim's suggestion that this anonymous fan painting in the Liaoning Provincial Museum, catalogued and published as a late Song work, might in fact be a Korean painting of the Diamond Mountains. A bold suggestion, but boldness is what we need.

S37, S38. It may also be that the Qing or Manchu Academy masters, commanded to produce detailed pictorial records of large-scale events and ceremonies spread out over an extensive ground plane, again made use of earlier Korean models, such as Han Si-gak's "Special National

Examination. . . " handscroll, painted in 1664,⁸ at left. (At right: "Offering Sacrifices at Xiannong Altar," an anonymous Academy work from the Yongzheng era, the 1720s-30s.) Again, I don't know of any Ming Chinese paintings that suggest themselves so strongly as possible models. But this is an even more incautious suggestion, to be strengthened or rejected on the basis of deeper research by others in future.

S39,S40 Finally (my last slides): Innovative achievements in Qing figure painting done in the north, the Beijing region, in the 18th century might possibly depend in some part on adoptions from Korea. The little-recognized but brilliant artist Cui Hui, painter of these two: an imaginary portrait of the women poet Li Qingzhao at left, an illustration to a poem by her at right) has as his place of origin Sanhan, a region in present-day Liaoning. That in itself doesn't prove that he was of Korean ancestry, but his surname, Ch'oe in Korean, suggests that he might have been. Whether any connections can be traced with Korean figure painting is for others to investigate.

Ending:

Artists, at least good ones, are always open to new pictorial ideas that they can use for their desired creative effects.. They are forever taking things from earlier art, other artists, other kinds of art, art of other places and other cultures, that they are able to see. Think of Shitao,, or Hokusai, or Picasso--it virtually defines a good artist's openness to adopting useful new ideas from whatever sources are accessible to them . It is the critics

⁸ Reproduced in part in Yi Songmi, Korean Landscape Painting, Pl. 46.

and wrongheaded scholars who can narrow or seem to shut off the artists' options, saying that it's OK for them to adopt from *this* source, not from *that*, for nationalistic and other reasons. And it's the job of us, as would-be open-minded art historians trying to break free of the biases and mind-sets that have plagued intercultural art studies and continue to do so, to recognize what really happened, break the barriers, reveal the cultural interactions that have in fact enriched art whenever and wherever they have happened. Thank you.