

CLP 194 (1982): Liang Kai, 'Sogengfa', and Chan Bunting

Lecture V.

S.S. In ~~xx~~ previous lecture, we considered two great masters of So. Sung Imperial Acad., Ma Yuan and Hsia Kuei, and also Ma Lin, son of Ma Yuan. We ended our treatment of Ma Lin with this ptg dated 1254. Want to return to late Sung landscape ~~xxnight~~ today to see a few more landscape paintings of that period, and then conclude by treating the problem of Liang K'ai, late Sung master of figure painting. Here we depart from ~~xx~~ theme of these lectures, which has been Sung LS ptg. I felt that considering works of Liang K'ai will raise interesting problems about how to deal with stylistic diversity within works of a single artist; also, how much diversity can be allowed, and what kind, before we begin to question the authenticity of the ptgs?

S.S. In Japan, three LS with figures, from series of Four Seasons--Fourth (spring) ~~xxxx~~ lost. This is autumn. Man on ledge beneath pine tree; gazing out into space. Diagonally-divided composition of So. Sung in extreme form. Theme popularized by Ma Yuan; became somewhat stereotyped in later works.

- ← S. He is gazing at two cranes flying in the evening sky, against sunset clouds. Subtle, and yet perhaps a bit too conscious in its purpose: artist trying a bit too hard to affect viewer.
- S. Winter scene from series. Wanderer pauses on path, turns back, hearing cries of gibbons in tree over waterfall. Feeling of loneliness, wilderness. This is also expressed in setting, and in composition: two long, thin stalks of bamboo; evocative hollow of misty space behind figure. Composition based on S-curve; overhanging cliff: this kind of composition popular in 13th cent.

S.S. Summer scene: another traveler caught in summer rainstorm, his clothes blown by wind. Effect of wind and rain also shown in pine tree. Ptg that superbly transmits experience of being in rainstorm--impression of scene rather than careful description. In this style, we have arrived at opposite extreme from stable, carefully described landscapes of Northern Sung. Human being is focus of composition, and focus of feeling that the ptg generates.

- ← S. Upper part. Loose, free brushstrokes represent rain, or wind-blown tree, or slope of hillside--hard to tell which, because all combined, or fused, into single image. Space, mist, rain, as felt by person in them, are basic matter of the picture; solid forms seem dissolved, made insubstantial. This is true of much of late Sung painting: artist seems to dematerialize his world, to deny and solidity (substantiality) of it, and to suggest that it is evanescent, only existing in human experience. I suggested in the previous lecture that this quality in late Sung landscape seems to agree with new trend in philosophy, School of Mind 心學, which becomes dominant trend in late Sung.

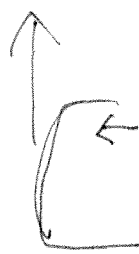
S.S. Last section of handscroll in Shanghai Mus. by Li Sung, artist in Imperial Ptg Acad. in late 12th and early 13th cent.--contemporary of Hsia Kuei. Represents West Lake at Hangchow. Here, too, the artist, instead of describing each element of his picture separately, treats them all as unified vision--the way the eye would actually perceive them. Trees, bank of lake, rooftops etc. make up single image, can be apprehended together; can't be broken up and "read" part by part. This is based on atmospheric perspective technique, but carried further--whole picture now drawn dimmer, indistinct.

李嵩

Hsia Kuei

S. For extreme contrast, I put beside this a section of Ch'ing-ming shang-ho t'u, about a century earlier in date. Chang Tse-tuan and Li Sung were both Acad. artists; and Li also specialized in chieh-hua 界畫, fine-line architectural drawing. But the two ptgs represent profoundly different ways of representing the visible world.

The extremely detailed, analytical style of the Ch'ing-ming shang-ho t'u supplies us with lots of information about city of Kaifeng, its buildings and boats and people. But the human eye doesn't really see that way--can't take in that much detail and information, except by looking for a long time. Li Sung's painting approximates more closely the way the eye really sees--the actual experience of standing on a mountain and looking down on the West Lake. Once more, this is typical of So. Sung ptg in that it transmits experience more than information.



S. M. Hsia Kuei was contemporary of Li Sung in Academy; his painting has some of same character--lots of misty space. But Hsia Kuei tends to show more clearly whatever he shows at all. Forms more distinct, even though partly enveloped in mist. Not fused together as in other painting.

S. S. In Tokyo National Museum is handscroll representing "Dream Journey on Hsiao and Hsiang Rivers" 潇湘卧游图 which is masterpiece of this new style. Has false signature of Li Kung-lin, 11th cent. master of figure painting; but couldn't be so early. Fine work by another artist. Colophons dated to 1160s, so must be around that time or a little earlier. Here, too, hills and ~~river~~ groves of trees painted in way that suggests they are dimmed and blurred by atmosphere. Very subtle gradations of ink tone give great sense of depth. S. Detail. Some fine-line drawing of houses and figures; but scarcely noticeable when one first looks at the ptg--subdued, hidden.

李公麟

This is ptg to be contemplated--can't walk into it, as one could No. Sung LS, or comprehend it, study it part by part. Have to apprehend it all at once, as unified visual experience. S. S. End of scroll. Hills disappear into far distance. False inscription of Li Kung-lin at end.

S. S. An 11th cent. landscapist named Sung Ti 宋迪 had represented "Eight Views of Hsiao and Hsiang Rivers" ; later artists also depicted these themes. One set in Japan is attrib. to Wu-ch'i, great 13th cent. Ch'an 禪 Buddhist master. (Subject of Ch'an ptg in Sung and Yuan is large and interesting one; I may devote special lecture to it in November. Will only touch on it today.)

牧溪

This is "Evening Glow on Fishing Village" 渔村晚照图 from this series. Unsigned; not sure these are really by Wu-ch'i. But fine 13th cent. works, anyway.

First section, and detail. As we follow the development of Sung LS, we find the artist including less and less in his picture, and telling us less and less about it. Suggestive manner of painting, rather than descriptive. Brushstrokes can scarcely be said to represent trees, bank, etc.; essentially amorphous, in themselves; readable only in context of whole as representing these things.

S. Latter half of scroll. Effect of light and shadow on rocks, produced with rough brushstrokes--perhaps done with straw brush, or some other kind of stiff brush. Artist can now evoke space and atmosphere easily, quickly.

S. S. Another in series: Boats Returning from Distant Inlet 远浦归舸. As you roll the scroll, you first see nothing substantial at all--then two dimly-seen sailboats--then distant shore appears, and finally near shore, with trees, inn, figures. Picture more and more abbreviated; artist needs less to convey his poetic theme.

S. S. "Evening Bell from Temple in Mist" 烟寺晚钟 (?) A 12th cent. writer named Teng Ch'un 邓椿 had ridiculed this kind of painting, which pursued subtle poetic effects, saying

that it is obviously impossible to represent the sound of a bell in a painting. But not impossible at all, if we broaden our definition of "represent," to include symbolize. What artist does is provide visual analogue, or symbol, for sound of bell reverberating outward--temple in trees is focus of composition; other trees, roofs, are like echoes of this, further and further out.

This tendency to reduce the visible matter in the picture seen at extreme point here; but another of series carried it even further:

→ S. "Geese Alighting on Level Sandbank" 平沙落雁

Almost nothing left--a few geese and reeds in middleground, flights of geese beyond, distant hill represented with a few strokes of ink.

This, too, is a dead end. Teng Ch'un tells us that already in his time, 12th cent., people were scoffing at ptgs of this kind, saying "All a painter has to do, these days, is hang a blank piece of silk on the wall, and he's on his way to fame."

S.S. Other great 13th cent. landscapist in this style is Yu-chien 玉澗 (probably Jo-fen 若芬 Yu-chien.) These artists' works were not appreciated by Chinese collectors and critics of later periods, who wrote that they were coarse and not worth looking at. As a result, they have survived only in Japan--no examples in China (so far as I know.)

This is "Mountain Village in Clearing Mist" 山市晴嵐 Made up entirely of broad, wet strokes of ink which, if seen alone, would not seem to represent anything at all. But seen in context of whole ptg, miraculously turn into earth banks and hillsides with trees, and allow one to understand location of parts of picture in space. Bridge on bottom; then two figures climbing path toward village, which is seen only as roofs. That's all--the rest just amorphous brushstrokes. Artist defines minimum of scene, suggests rest only vaguely, makes viewer fill it in.

Landscape after this goes in very different direction--great development of wen-jen hua 文人画 (scholar-amateurs') school of landscape painting in Yuan dynasty. This misty, evocative kind of LS seldom even attempted by later artists, never done so well again. (Has some further development in Japan in 15th cent. and after.)

S.S. Here is another great LS ptg of 13th cent. Belongs to style of period in way space curves out of depth (S-curve), in concentration of detail in a few places, and in the way it presents carefully-selected materials to produce particular effect. Represents cold, northern border region of China. Two travelers on ~~xxxxx~~ ponies, wearing heavy cloaks and fur hats, are making their way toward a gate 関 seen dimly in the pass above. Perhaps they are leaving China to venture out into cold, alien regions. Feeling of Chinese for their homeland expressed here; travelers turn to each other, as if wanting to shut out hostile environment. Old trees are stumpy, unbeautiful; little vegetation. Powerful, original, moving ptg. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ This is a signed work by Liang K'ai, brilliant 13th cent. master.

S.S. Same ptg in color slides. White pigment on trees represents snow. Empty space here seems ominous, bleak, uncomfortable--not like the warm voids of Ma Yuan's paintings. Completely different view of world.

I want to use Liang K'ai to suggest ways in which we can associate style of an artist's works with his circumstances, his position in history and in art history, as we can learn about it from reading. One of our problems as art historians is to pull together the works of art as they survive, on the one hand, and on the other the documentary evidence (records), and use each to illuminate the other.

Liang K'ai came from Shantung Province, and entered the Imperial Academy in Hangchow at the beginning of the 13th cent. He was successful enough as an Acad. artist to be awarded the Golden Belt 金帶, but, according to accounts, he left this hanging on the wall and quit the Academy. One story is that he went to live in a Ch'an Buddhist temple in the Hangchow region.

Most of his works are preserved in Japan (this one in Tokyo National Museum.) But a few genuine, fine works survive in Chinese collections. These works preserved in China, however, scarcely seem to be by same artist as works in Japan. Chinese writers of later times tend to stress eccentricity of Liang K'ai. He called himself Liang the Wastrel 梁風子; drank a lot, associated with low-class people, etc. Japanese writers, by contrast, are inclined to stress Ch'an Buddhist aspects of his work, see him as great Ch'an artist. Which is true Liang K'ai?

Answer: both. He was an extremely versatile painter, depicting various subjects in various styles. This is characteristic of artists working at late stage in a tradition. Artists who are born into a strong, healthy tradition, at its height, are likely to settle comfortably into that tradition, accept it wholly. Twelfth cent. Acad. artists in China did that--not so much diversity in their works--all maintained uniform level of quality. As if nobody in 12th cent. Acad. could paint a bad picture. This level achieved through conformity with standard.

In 13th cent., at end of Sung, artists in more uncomfortable art-historical situation. Tradition breaking up; dead ends. What is artist to do? Minor artists in trouble; but great, original artist ~~like~~ can be inspired to undertake experiments, produce brilliantly innovative works. Liang K'ai was such an artist.

S.S. Signed fan ptg by him in U.S. private collection. Man walking by stream, turns to look across river; great overhanging cliff looms over him. Typical 13th cent. composition (like one of "Ls of Four Seasons" seen at beginning of lecture.) Simple, powerful composition. Other: signed fan in Palace Museum, Beijing. Two birds flying by a willow tree; moon. Also a simple, expressive composition. (Pigment on birds has made silk deteriorate, by chemical action, retouched, so look odd.)

→ S. Liang K'ai was pupil of Chia Shih-ku, minor master in Academy. In first lecture, we saw this signed album leaf by him--LS in tradition of Li T'ang. But Chia Shih-ku was chiefly a figure painter, follower of Li Kung-lin in pai-miao 白描 manner.

W S.S. Here is handscroll in U.S. private collection by Liang K'ai, a frontispiece illustration for a scroll with a Taoist text. Must be very early work, representing the kind of pai-miao figure ptg in Li Kung-lin tradition that Liang learned from his teacher Chia Shih-ku. Very different from his typical figure ptgs, which we'll see later; but we can accept it on basis of historical record of his having been Chia Shih-ku's pupil.

Of course, a forger could read the same historical record, fabricate a ptg to agree with it. That sometimes happens. How do we know that this isn't such a case? Several reasons for

accepting it as genuine, although untypical, work. Ptg. is believable as 13th cent. work; is of high quality; and some features in fig. ptg. agree with Liang K'ai's later works. Can't take time to demonstrate this; you'll have to take my word for it.

S.S. In Palace Mus., Taiwan, this picture of T'ao Yuan-ming walking under pine tree, holding chrysanthemum. Another example of typical 13th cent. composition, diagonally divided but with weight in upper part ~~ax~~ instead of lower. Figure emerges diagonally from depth of ptg.

This is relatively orthodox work in late Sung Acad. manner; like Ma Lin, etc. Figure large, and in the center; idealized setting; smooth, elegant drawing of trees and rocks. (Not so much so as Ma Lin--Liang K'ai always independent, never conforms completely to pattern.)

Implications of subject (T'ao Yuan-ming) for Acad. artist is something I'll treat in later lecture.

← S. Detail of trees. Something dark, tangled, moody, about the painting of the trees. Again, like Ma Lin.

S.S. Here is signed album leaf by Liang K'ai in Shanghai Museum, representing Pu-~~ta~~ 布袋, fat monk of late T'ang period who went around with bag of junk, became kind of saint in Ch'an Buddhism. (Identified with Maitreya 彌羅, Buddha of Future.)

Rather grotesque, fat figure, grinning. Chinese ptg usually avoided this kind of intensity or exaggeration in facial expression, grossness in body.

This agrees with Chinese version of Liang K'ai as Liang Feng-tzu, the eccentric painter. Japanese would have difficulty accepting this as by same artist as great Ch'an paintings we'll see later, which are preserved in Japan; but I think it is same artist. Genuine work, fine in its way. Painter's output can be quite large and diverse; taste of people of time, and of later periods, determines what will be preserved. So we see only one side or aspect of painter. Chinese preserved one kind of Liang K'ai, which fit their image of him; Japanese preserved another kind.

only a fraction of it survives;

S.S. In Palace Museum, Beijing, fan-shaped album leaf signed Yu-ch'ien t'u-hua Liang K'ai pi 御前圖畫梁楷筆. Represents some story 故事 --don't know what--monk, two scholars, servant.

← S. Figure. Line is rather mannered, not so strong and bold as in other works. Signature is also different from others: thinner, more orthodox writing.

Again, many Japanese and U.S. scholars would reject this as not really by Liang K'ai. I'm not sure of it myself. But possible to see this as early work, before he ~~fix~~ had fully developed his powers. Still using heavy, rather hard brushwork of Academy style, but moving toward his abbreviated brushwork 簡筆 manner.

S.S. This is a famous work by Liang K'ai in Japan, representing Sakyamuni Coming Out of the Mountains 出山釋迦. Signed: Yu-ch'ien Liang K'ai 御前梁楷. Indicates that it belongs to his period as court artist. But doesn't mean that ptg was done for emperor; only that Liang K'ai was a painter ~~work~~ who worked for emperor.

Subject: Sakyamuni, who was to become the Buddha, ~~it~~ tried practicing ~~ascetic~~ asceticism for several years in mountains, but found it was fruitless, came out, finally reached enlightenment 悟 and became Buddha.

Composition of 13th cent. type: figure emerges from constricted

space into open area, like visual symbol of emerging from hardships in the wilderness to pursue enlightenment.

But, although Liang K'ai makes use of composition and techniques of Acad., whole effect of ptg very different. Portraying harsh environment, suggesting sensory deprivation, effects of ascetic practices. Nothing that is pleasant or comfortable in picture; bare trees are ~~xxx~~ spiky, project toward him as if menacingly.

← S. Upper prt of figure. Drawn as non-Chinese, Indian: long nose, heavy beard, hair on chest and arms. But expression of bitterness in face is universal, not particular to any culture; so is the slightly contorted posture of his emaciated body. Chinese painting does not usually concentrate expression in the face this way; faces tend to be impassive, and emotion is expressed in other ways--by posture of figures, relationship to setting, etc. This ptg is exceptional, and very moving.

A painting like this might have been done for a Ch'an Buddhist temple, since the Ch'an sect emphasized the idea of enlightenment in earthly life, rather than paradise after death.

S.S. In ~~Shanghai~~ Shanghai Museum, handscroll in 8 sections, "Stories of Eight Famous Monks" 八高僧故事图卷. This is one of them, picture of Bodhidharma 达摩 facing the cliff, meditating. Style is consistent with late Sung Academy style; could have been done for temple. Not so strong as "Sakyamuni Coming Out of Mountains," but probably from around same period, when he was serving in the Academy.

S.S. Another section: scholar coming to pay reverence to monk who lived in tree. Signature of Liang K'ai on rock. Caricature- Figure of servant, also monk, have rather ~~caricature-like~~ faces. This painting is another that belongs with slightly eccentric view of Liang K'ai; quite different from thoroughly serious image of him presented by paintings preserved in Japan. Ptgs with this touch of ~~humor~~ humor, or grotesque, were not in Japanese taste, not exported to Japan. Those in styles associated with Ch'an Buddhism, on other hand, not in Chinese taste, so not preserved here. We end up with what appears to be two artists; really two sides of same artist.

By this time, many Ch'an priests were painting as amateurs; they were developing special styles for representing Ch'an themes.

S.S. Twelfth century Ch'an monk named Chih-yung Lao-niu painted pictures of buffalo and herdboys in very pale, broad brushstrokes; critics of time called it "ghostly" or "apparitional painting" 閻两画. The question of why this style is especially suited to Ch'an Buddhism is one that I would like to take up another time--I can give a lecture on Ch'an ptg. This is only surviving work of Chih-yung Lao-niu, with his seals.

← S. Figure of herdboy. Drawn in quick strokes that express his activity more than they describe his form.

Liang K'ai, when he worked for Ch'an temples in Hangchow region while serving in Academy, must have come into contact with this style; we can hypothesize that he changed from Academy style to Ch'an style. So works in abbreviated manner related to Ch'an Buddhism are presumably his later works.

S.S. Here is Liang K'ai's painting of Sixth Ch'an Patriarch, Hui-neng 慧能, attaining enlightenment while chopping a piece of bamboo. Signed; in Tokyo National Museum.

He might have left the Acad. out of artistic dissatisfaction with the decadent state of Acad. ptg; or for spiritual reasons, because he wanted to live in monastery and practice Ch'an meditation; or for political reasons, because SolSung court was dangerous place to be, living in temple would be safer.

Setting reduced to a few rough strokes (done with straw brush?) for earth bank in foreground, a few more for tree, with a vine wrapped around it (to establish its cylindrical shape--without the vine, would be flat.) All the energy of the ~~figure~~ composition is concentrated in the figure. Spiritual intensity caught in arrested action. Knife about to slide through bamboo, as mind slices through illusion in Ch'an thought.

Liang K'ai works with great spontaneity; but his technical training as Acad. master underlies this. Even though figure gives impression of having been dashed off quickly, it has sense of solidity; weight of body is convincingly distributed on two feet; feeling of articulated body under clothes. Heavy, brusque brushstrokes communicate sure movements of artist's hand; this excitement and energy is imparted to figure of Hui-neng. Great technical achievement, even though it seems spontaneous, dashed off. Such ptgs don't depend on Ch'an enlightenment so much as on firm mastery of technique of ptg.

← S. Part of Liang K'ai's greatness is his ability to adapt techniques--types of brushwork, composition, etc.--to his expressive needs of the moment. When he wants to convey idea of spiritual intensity manifested in action, uses this kind of brushwork. When he wants to convey sense of repose, uses another kind, as we'll see later.

S.S. Companion to this is ptg of Ch'an master (also Hui-neng?) tearing up a sutra 經. Ch'an Buddhists didn't have same respect for holy texts that other Buddhist sects did; believed that understanding could be communicated master-to-pupil, directly, often in strange, unintelligible statements and questions, or knocks on head with stick. (Ch'an painting tries to have same direct impact on viewer as knock on head.) So Ch'an master in this ptg is expressing his scorn for written texts by tearing one to shreds. Jagged, forceful drawing communicates this idea directly--not by describing figure carefully, but by abstract mode of expression--using abstract or formal qualities of brushstroke.

S.S. Liang K'ai's masterpiece in "abbreviated brushwork" manner is this imaginary portrait of the T'ang poet Li Po, who is shown walking forward and chanting a poem. In Tokyo National Museum; Japanese National Treasure. Subject has no special connection with Ch'an Buddhism, and yet Japanese consider it a Ch'an painting because it seems to them to communicate some quality of Ch'an enlightenment.

Artist uses broad brush for most of it, holding it at a slant in drawing the robe. Extremely simple, and yet has feeling of bulk, partly through use of shading within brushstroke (one edge, made by tip of brush, sharper and darker than other.) Slight bulge in front suggests, perhaps, hands under robe.

← S. The success of Liang K'ai's great work is apparent when we compare it with an imitation. This is in Palace Museum, Taiwan. Often published, but a forgery, I think. Titled "Immortal in Splashed Ink" 灑墨仙人. Signature of Liang K'ai. In real Liang K'ai ptg, every stroke, however loose it looks, functions in portraying figure. In forgery, lots of splashy, meaningless brushstrokes. Doesn't have economy of other. Such ptg as Liang K'ai's may look easy to do; everybody wants to pick up the brush and do one. But when you try, you find it isn't easy at all.

← S. Strokes for hem of robe, shoes. If you saw this detail alone, you might think it was a landscape, or something else--couldn't read it as bottom of robe and shoes. Only readable that way in context of whole. In that context, the brushstrokes

serve their function perfectly to provide solid base, for figure, suggest forward motion.

← S. Upper part. Not so much sense of speed, energy in drawing as ~~other~~ Hui-neng picture; seems slower, more relaxed. And this quality in brushwork is imparted to figure, which seems also more calm, self-contained. Again, abstract qualities of brushwork adapted to characterizing the subject. This is true of much of the best Chinese painting, in which certain movements of the brush characterize a stalk of bamboo or the stem of a lotus or a bird's beak, catching the very nature and ~~subject~~ substance of the thing.

S. Head. Only a dozen or so strokes, but very expressive--can feel noble character of man, something of his psychology.

This kind of figure ptg, like similar trend in late Sung LS, almost comes to end after Sung; no artists can do it on the same level afterwards. Some attempts by Japanese artists, occasionally by Chinese; but with a few exceptions, never rise to height of best Sung masters.

We began this series of lectures with a consideration of the landscapist Li T'ang, and I tried to show how one can construct a stylistic series out of the works associated with the artist and his followers, and judge the authenticity and dating of works attributed to him according to one's understanding of their position within this series.

This method is effective when we are dealing with a fairly continuous development, and with an artist who seems to have some consistency in his output. The problem of Liang K'ai is different: because of his less stable art-historical situation, the traditions of ptg he inherited, his involvement with history (living at end of dynasty), his output of ptgs exhibits a much greater diversity in subject and style. For an artist of this kind, we have to try to understand the different directions his painting takes in relation to the different circumstances under which the ptgs were done. I have ~~done this~~ for Liang K'ai only in a very quick, inadequate way; of course more thorough study would have to be done before we could be confident about solving problems of authenticity in his works.

My lectures have been heavily weighted toward considerations of style, and questions of how to determine the dating and authenticity of ptgs. I felt that these matters might be most useful to you in supplementing other approaches you will learn from other lectures or from reading. I have not given you much information about the artists' lives; you can get that better from books. A great deal of excellent research on the biographies of artists has been done by Chinese scholars in recent years, and all of us in Chinese art studies depend heavily on it. Also, the great tradition of Chinese connoisseurship has been continued in recent years by specialists such as Mr. Hsu Pang-ta of Palace Museum, who recently published excellent book on connoisseurship in Chinese painting.

Most important failing in my lectures, perhaps, is that in pursuing matters of style, I have neglected questions of the meaning of the ptgs, except for occasional remarks on the philosophical or metaphysical implications of the successive modes of landscape painting. Art-historical studies today in the U.S. and Europe are giving more attention to questions of meaning than to style; and my own recent studies have mostly been in that direction. Perhaps, when I return in November from trip to Japan, I can give two or three extra lectures on that subject--on Ch'an Buddhist ptg and how it conveys Ch'an ideas;

on political and social meanings in painting.

Finally, I want to ~~xxx~~ repeat what I said at the beginning: that I am offering these lectures only in the hope that they can give you some useful ideas and approaches that supplement or augment what you learn from the Chinese scholars whose lectures you hear or whose books you read. Chinese ptg ranks among the major achievements of world art, and is admired and studied in many parts of the world; and our individual studies can be greatly enriched by friendly exchanges of ideas and information. Quite a few groups and delegations of U.S., European, and Japanese specialists have come to China in recent years to study your collections and learn from your specialists, and have been shown warm hospitality by Chinese scholars, museum staffs, and artists. We have had the opportunity to welcome some Chinese specialists in Chinese art to the U.S. recently, and hope to welcome many more in the future. This exchange of people and ideas, as well as books and ~~xxxxxx~~ photographs, will have a very beneficial effect on studies of Chinese painting, leading to new, higher levels of understanding of our subject.

I want to express my thanks once more to Professor Jin Weinuo ~~fxr~~ and to the Central Academy for giving me the opportunity to give these lectures, and for their hospitality and help in my own research.

Thank you.

JW x 405 MC

CLP 133, Part 6, on Chan Ptg.

CLP 194 ^B Sōgen-ga and Ch'an Painting
(1982, cf CLP 133) ①

CAHILL, 1982

LECTURE VI: "SOGEN-GA" AND CH'AN PAINTING

This is the first of two lectures that will complete the series I'm giving at Central Acad. this autumn. First five, delivered here in September, dealt mostly w. problems of style in Ch.ptg., using Sung & pre-Sung LS ptg as material for demonstrating methods of making stylistic series, determining authenticity, constructing pattern of development of an artist's career, etc. These last two lectures will be concerned instead w. problems of meaning in Ch.ptg. First will be on "Sōgen-ga"---that is, Ch.ptgs. of Sung & Yuan as collected & appreciated in Japan---and also on ptg associated with Chan, or Zen, sect of Buddhism. Second, to be given next Monday morning, will be on problem of social & political content in Ch.ptg.---what form it takes, how we recognize and define it.

宋元畫
禪

Sōgen-ga, or Ch. Sung-Yuan ptgs as they have been preserved in Japan, supplements Sung-Yuan ptg as we know it from Ch. collections; on the whole, kinds of ptgs the Jap. collected not same as those Chinese appreciated & transmitted. Some overlapping, espec. in works of So. Sung Academy masters; but for most part, represent quite dif. views of Sung-Yuan ptg. This is not an isolated phenomenon: what we have preserved for us of ptg in China, and what we know about it is only small fraction of what was actually produced; and Chinese tastes, opinions of critics & collectors, largely determined what was preserved. Sometimes a single ptg is preserved, by chance, which must represent large category of ptg that was for some reason judged harshly by Ch. critic so that collectors, didn't treasure & preserve it, and almost nothing of it survives. Ch'an (Zen) ptg is one such case: if it were not for historical accident of its export to Japan, and preservation there, we would know nothing about it---virtually nothing of it survives in China.

Last ~~year~~ spring I organized for our Museum at U. of Calif an exhibition on this theme, called Sogen-ga: Ch. Ptgs of Sung & Yuan Dynasties as Collected and Appreciated in Japan. Also held seminar on this theme. Since these ptgs ~~will~~ still little-known in China, seemed good subject for lecture here. Also, allows us to consider large problem: what do we mean when we speak of "Ch'an ptg?" Will return to that problem later.

S.S. Maps. Most of ptgs exported to Japan were from Northern Chekiang region. This for several reasons. So. Sung capital of course located in Hangchow; principal center of ptg in this period. But also, artists working in other places in region, e.g. Ningpo, port city where trade carried on w. Japan. (Most of Jap. trade at this time with ~~xxxxxxx~~ Ningpo; sometimes w. cities up Yangtze River.) Also, Jap. Buddhist monks who came to China to study mostly stayed at monasteries in this No. Chekiang region, brot back ptgs they acquired there. ~~xxx~~ began coming in 12th cent., many more in 13th & 14th---great period of importation of Ch'an, and Sogen-ga, to Japan. Ptgs became popular in Japan, in great demand, so some commercial importation of them.

寧波

S.S. Lots of ptgs imported at this time were either by artists working in the So. Sung Academy or imitations of them by minor artists working outside it. (Flower ptg, late 12c., by one of these; ptg by Ma Yuan.) Ptgs of this kind had profound effect on dev. of Jap. ptg; but that's a subject outside our concern.

S.S. At this time, small schools or families of artists were specializing in ptgs of particular subjects, working in certain places, producing pictures of a decorative and symbolic kind. Peony pictures: carried meaning of wealth, opulence. Also lotus pictures, other subjects. Thousands of these exported to Japan. School of artists in P'i-ling 毗陵, present-day Ch'ang-chou 常州, specialized in pictures of insects and grasses.

S.S. Here is late Sung or Yuan ptg of chrysanthemums, by unknown artist, representing this type. These ptgs never taken seriously by Chinese, unless provided with fake signatures of great masters.

S.S. Another detail. Decorative ptg, and realistic portrayal of natural subjects, considered low-class by Sung theorists. Also, they paid no attention to works of minor local masters. Ptg of chrysanthemums in ink by some noted scholar-official, although far lower in artistic quality than this, would have been treasured and recorded. A Chinese bias in favor of scholar-amateur artists, has somewhat impoverished our heritage of Ch. ptg. by preventing works of this kind from surviving, except in Jap. collections.

S.S. Ptg of quail. A number of these preserved in Japan. Usually attrib. to court artist Li An-chung, who specialized in ptg quail; but really by anonymous, small masters. Traditional Chinese critics, to this day, believe that fine ptgs must be done by famous masters; always try to attach a name to the ptg. My good friend and teacher Wang Chi-ch'ien always argues that way.

S.S. Another ptg of quail, on lower artistic level, by some minor 14th cent. master. Large output of these; they survive only in Japan.

S.S. Another subject for specialist artists was fish. Sometimes just the "pleasures of fish" 魚樂圖: sense of freedom of movement, harmony with environment--Taoist idea. Sometimes carp leaping upward, symbolizing scholar striving for high official rank.

S.S. Squirrels a popular subject--don't know what the significance of the theme was. Two artists to whom they are attrib. in Japan: Sung-t'ien 孫天 and Yung-t'ien 翁天. Neither recorded in Chinese records. Existence of Sung-t'ien attested by seals and one signed work; Yung-t'ien is only a name. Quite a few artists who exist in this way only as names attached to old ptgs in Japan; presumably small local masters, long-forgotten in China.

S.S. Ptgs of stalks of tall bamboo growing by rocks: a number of these in Japan, mostly attrib. to an artist

李安忠

named T'an Chih-jui 檀芝瑞, Another who is known only in Japan. Some of ~~xxxx~~ these ptgs inscribed by Chinese Ch'an priest named I-shan I-ning 一山一寧 who came to Japan in 1299 and died in 1317. So presumably late Sung, 13th cent. ptgs. Again, nothing quite like them preserved in China. Δ Not Ch'an ptgs, originally--works of minor local artists, again, not Ch'an priests. But adopted into Ch'an context in Japan. Perhaps were brought back by monks who went to China, later ~~xxx~~ were hung in Ch'an temples, as simple, unostentatious decoration, or for contemplation? Perhaps used that way also in Chinese temples--no records.

文同

(S.S.) Anon. late Sung ptg of two stalks of bamboo in rain, in ink monochrome. Quite different from standard Chinese ink-bamboo ptg tradition, stands outside that development. Artist doesn't care about brushwork, established ways of arranging leaves, etc., or preserving heritage of Wen T'ung, etc. as scholar-artists did. Instead, concentrates on direct experience of object, isolated, contemplated. I will speak later about this quality, and how it relates to Ch'an; for now, just want to point out that it is present in works that originally had no special association with Ch'an, but were adopted into Ch'an context in Japan.

(S.S.) Landscape after rain; anon. 13th or early 14th cent. work. Man with broad hat walks through misty middleground space; fog rises from wet earth. Evocative, spacious scene. Artist disregards proper Chinese brushwork, composition; works in wet, loose manner. Hard to fit into Ch.ptg as we know it from Chinese sources; some people even try to deny Chineseness of these ptgs, call them Korean, or Japanese.

of Arhats, of Kings of Hell + 王國

(S.S.) ~~But they are Chinese; similar pictures appear in the background screens in Sung-Yuan ptgs, imported to Japan from Ningpo in late Sung period. Belong to local school in No. Chekiang region, somewhat affected by styles of Academy (Li T'ang, Hsia Kuei etc.) but later, looser. Completely obliterated in China, probably ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ because critics disparaged it, or ignored it.~~

(S.S.) Another work of the type: water buffalo in river, herdboys on shore, done in broad, wet strokes of ink. We may be inclined at first to dismiss such ptgs as minor, or low-class; but only revealing our traditional Chinese bias, if so: we have to realize that our understanding of Ch.ptg. is based mainly on what survives in China, and that this has been subjected to a kind of screening, or censorship, by Chinese critics over the centuries which has wiped out all that they didn't approve of, or almost. Ptgs preserved in Japan help to fill out this incomplete picture.

禪宗畫

Now, to the problem of Ch'an ptg. (Go back one ^{side} on right.) We use this term as though it were a precise one--as though we knew exactly what we mean when we speak of "Ch'an ptg," "Ch'an-tsung hua," "Zenga." But in fact we mean a number of different things, and should distinguish between them. We can broaden the question to ask:

what kinds of relationships can a ptg. have to a religious sect, or to a philosophical school or doctrine? ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ If we speak of Buddhist ptg., i.e. ptg. of the orthodox Buddhist sects, the matter is relatively simple: ptgs. of Buddhist subjects, done for use in Buddhist ceremonies, for worship in Buddhist shrines and temples, etc. But for Ch'an, or Confucianism, not so simple. Some of the possible relationships are these:

- The ptg. can depict some deity or ~~xxx~~ saint within the sect; it can, that is, be an icon.
- It can depict some story or personage associated with that sect.
- It can be used somehow in that sect--as an object of worship or contemplation--even when its subject has no special connection with the sect.
- * It can be painted by a member of that sect (a priest-painter, etc.)
- * It can somehow embody, or express, the ideals of that sect or that doctrine. It can be a kind of pictorial expression of its beliefs. This is the most complex kind of relationship, the most difficult to define, and in the end the most interesting.

We can speak of Confucian ptg., for instance, as ptg. that portrays scenes from the life of Confucius or some other philosopher of the school; ptg. that represents didactic anecdotes from the Confucian writings (scenes of filial piety, etc.); ptg. that functioned somehow in a Confucian context (e.g. in a Confucian temple); or ptg. done by Confucian scholar-amateur artists, which transmit some quality of their Confucian cultivation, and so preserve Confucian values over the centuries. (I wrote an article on this subject years ago: "Confucian Elements in the Theory of Ptg.")

Now we will go through the same series, with examples, for Ch'an ptg.

(S.S.) An anonymous ptg. of Bodhidharma, Yuan dyn. (Signature of Yen Hui 顏光輝, probably not genuine.) This is Ch'an ptg. in simplest sense: Bodhidharma was the semi-legendary Indian master who brought Ch'an doctrine to China in 6th century, and so became the first Ch'an patriarch in China.

✗ Bodhidharma sometimes depicted facing a stone cliff, meditating, while his disciple (the Second Patriarch) Hui-k'o tries to persuade him of his seriousness. (At last Hui-k'o cuts off his left hand to convince him of his seriousness, and Bodhidharma takes him as a disciple.)

(S.S.) Here is same subject as depicted by 11th cent. master Liang K'ai, in scroll in Shanghai Museum. I devoted one lecture in this series to Liang K'ai, and showed how he has an ambivalent status: a master in the Imperial Academy, and also a master of Ch'an ptg. This scroll is still more in the Academy ~~xxxx~~ style, but the subject is Ch'an.

羅漢

(lo-han)
 S.S. Arhats are a common subject in Ch'an ptg. Ch'an doctrine did not aim at being reborn in paradise, but rather at enlightenment in earthly life; so the arhats, enlightened beings who still lived in this world, were ideal figures in Ch'an.

S.S. For the same reason, the scene of Sakyamuni Coming Out of the Mountains 出山釋迦 is important in Ch'an: the search for enlightenment (Japanese satori 小悟). This is another well-known ptg by Liang K'ai. Ch'an was a system of what Japanese call jiriki 自力, in which one attained one's spiritual goal through one's own effort, not through outside help; and Sakyamuni's long, painful quest for enlightenment, which is revealed in the bitter face and emaciated body, was a moving image of this.

S.S. Images of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas do not play any such role in Ch'an as they do in other Buddhist sects, as images of worship. But the representation of the White-robed Kuan-yin 白衣觀音, painted in ink, had a special place in Ch'an, as an image of meditation, which is the basic practice in Ch'an. (The name Ch'an is a phonetic rendering of the first part of the Sanscrit term dyana, meditation.) The image of the White-robed Kuan-yin in ink monochrome is said to have been created by the great figure ptr Li Kung-lin in the late Northern Sung period. In the 12th cent. ptg on the right, from one of a series of "500 Arhat" ptgs in Japan, we see the Arhats holding and contemplating a ptg of this kind. On the left, an actual example, from the late Sung or Yuan dynasty.

S.S. Patriarchs of Ch'an are sometimes depicted--on the right, the Sixth Patriarch, Hui-neng 慧能, who is credited as founder of the "sudden ~~waxix~~ enlightenment" 頓悟 branch of Ch'an, and who is supposed to have come to the monastery as a poor laborer, with his hoe over his shoulder. (Ptgs of this kind are usually unsigned, but often bear inscriptions by Ch'an monks, and frequently can be dated by the inscriptions on them, even when the artist is unknown.)

Another popular Ch'an subject was Pu-tai 布袋, a fat, uncouth monk of the late T'ang period who carried a bag of rubbish; the ptg of him on the left is by Liang K'ai, and is in the Shanghai Museum. Pu-tai was believed to be an incarnation of Maitreya (Mi-lo-fo), the Buddha of the Future. (The fact that several of Liang K'ai's ptgs are preserved in China doesn't go against my statement that Ch'an ptg. has not been preserved here; they are all in his academic manner, none in the "Ch'an" manner of his works in Japan.)

S.S. ~~can~~ Portraits of Ch'an monks also played a part in the sect; when a student had completed his studies with a Ch'an master and was returning home, or leaving to found a temple of his own, he would be presented with a portrait of the master as a remembrance, to recall the master's teaching but also his personality. Person-to-person transmission was very important in Ch'an. A number of portraits of this kind were brought back to Japan by monks who went to China to study, and are

Not true!

still kept in Japanese temples, and hung on the day of the ceremony honoring the founder of the temple. This one is of Chung-feng Ming-pen 中峰明本, a great Ch'an master who lived in No. Chekiang Province and who was the teacher of many Japanese monks; consequently, a number of portraits of him survive in Japan. Insc. at top is by Ming-pen himself, a noted calligrapher; at left is another example of his writing, highly prized by Japanese. Calligraphy is another art that ~~was~~ was important to Ch'an, and again, finest examples of Ch'an callig. are nearly all in Japan.

(S.S.) Still another popular subject is the Ch'an-hui t'u 禪會圖 or "Ch'an Meeting Picture," which depicts some notable meeting between a Ch'an master and some secular figure, an official or scholar. These are based on stories in the Ch'an literature, which consists largely of anecdotes of this type: the scholar asks the Ch'an master a question, and receives an enigmatic but profound reply. Or else the disciple questions the master, and is answered with some seemingly nonsensical statement, or is hit over the head with a stick, or something else to shock him out of trying to think his way through the problem. The one on the right, from the scroll by Liang K'ai, depicts a T'ang dynasty monk who lived in a tree. The example on the left is by Yin-t'o-lo 田陀羅, a monk-amateur of the Yuan period, whose name is a phonetic transcription of the Indian name Indra.

In these two we can observe a crucial distinction: Liang K'ai's picture is of a Ch'an subject, but in an Academy style; Yin-t'o-lo's is a Ch'an subject portrayed in what we call a Ch'an style. What we mean by that is a subject I'll come back to in a moment.

(S.S.) On the right is another ptg from the series of 500 Arhats, in which the arhats are watching gibbons in a tree; a mother gibbon clutching her child, and the father reaching with a long arm for some fruit. The gibbon, in Ch'an imagery, stands for simple human desires: devotion to one's child, or to getting food. The arhats have ~~risks~~ attained a spiritual level above these human attachments.

The ptg on the left, depicting a mother gibbon clutching her child and reaching for something, is typical of many ptgs of this subject preserved in Japan. This one is attrib., like most others, to the greatest of the Ch'an artists, Mu-ch'i (We will see a ptg of a gibbon actually by him later.)

牧經

Ptgs of ~~birds~~ gibbons do not always carry this meaning; in other contexts, such as in court Academy ptg, they have other meanings: loneliness, the wilderness, etc.

(S.S.) Similarly with the image of the water-buffalo: in Academy ptg, it stands for the bucolic life of the countryside, getting away from the court and the city. But in the Ch'an Buddhist context, in pictures of buffalo and herdboys, it represents the heavy, earthy element in man, the grosser feelings and desires that the higher ~~faculties~~ faculties (the herdboy) are always trying to control. In this ptg, boy is

pulling on rope attached to buffalo's nose, and hitting it with bamboo switch. But without much effect. Great bulk of buffalo, and nervous, energetic figure of boy, make the point perfectly. (A set of "10 Oxherding Pictures" + 牧圖 were used in Ch'an to symbolize stages in attaining enlightenment.)

Here, we can speak of a Ch'an ptg in several respects: the subject; the artist, who was a Ch'an monk; and the style. Up to the 12th cent., ptgs by Ch'an Buddhist monk-amateurs seem to have represented only a branch of scholar-amateur ptg (士大夫畫, 文人畫). Ch'an monks were included among the amateur artists of the late Northern Sung, in the circle of Su Tung-p'o; they painted plum blossoms in ink and other standard scholar-amateur subjects. But from the 12th cent. through the 13th and 14th, they became a separate current or school, with ~~hsk~~ their own subjects and styles, significantly different from those of the Confucian scholar-ptrs.

(S.S.) (another detail) This ptg is by Chih-yung Lao-niu 智游 老牛, 12th cent. Ch'an monk who lived in Hangchou and specialized in ptgs of water-buffalo, doing them in very pale ink and diffuse, unclear brushwork; critics of the time referred to them as wang-liang hua 罔兩畫 or "apparitional ptg" (ghostly ptg). May have been one of founders of Ch'an style--not enough evidence to say. Anyway, ptgs in rather pale ink and loose brushwork continued to be done by Ch'an monks through late Sung, into Yuan.

(S.S.) Here is example of "Sakyamuni Coming Out of Mts." by one of these 13th cent. monk-amateurs, in derivative of wang-liang manner. Suited Ch'an because it is unassertive, not clear and spelled-out; makes the viewer participate in creating the image--not all done for him.

(X.S.) Liang K'ai's great ptg of "Li Po Walking and Chatting a Poem" related to this manner, but on much higher artistic plane. Pale, diffuse brushstrokes seem to characterize the subject as calm, free-spirited. As I remarked when speaking of this ptg in my lecture on Liang K'ai, this is not a Ch'an subject; and yet all Japanese art-lovers consider it a Ch'an ptg, because of style. Also, much of Chinese literati culture of Sung and earlier came to Japan with Ch'an, was appreciated in Ch'an temples before it was known elsewhere; so it came to be associated with Ch'an in Japan. Ptgs of Su Tung-p'o or Lin Ho-ching often seen in Ch'an contexts in Japan.

(S.S.) Another Liang K'ai work exemplifies another type of subject in Ch'an ptg: the depiction of the moment when some master attained enlightenment. Hui-neng, in this famous picture, attained it while chopping a piece of bamboo. Energy and spontaneity of brushwork catch the spiritual intensity of the moment; again, one can properly speak of Ch'an style here. Ptg that shakes you out of lethargy of everyday experience; immediacy & impact of Ch'an experience. Ch'an experience.

S.S. One of Ch'an monk-amateurs in late Sung, Jih-kuan 日觀, specialized in ptg grapes; this is one of his finest. In a sense, this is part of general phenomenon of "ink-plays" 墨戲 by amateur artists; and yet, very different from works of Confucian scholar-amateurs. More concerned with catching real nature of object in swift, spontaneous brushstrokes; doesn't follow disciplined brushwork of wen-jen hun.

④ Brushstrokes seem loose, improvised; but catch the very nature and substance of grape leaves turning in space, twisting tendrils. This is true of best Ch'an ptg: sets it apart from rest of ink-ptg tradition.

⑤ Another monk-amateur, Po Tzu-t'ing 伯子庭, did ptgs of grasses--plainest of subjects, plain style, or no style--no sense of deliberate, pre-existing style in either picture; ~~artist works free of conventions, constraints~~ Such ptgs were condemned by critics for representing trivial, vulgar subjects and for sloppy brushwork. They missed the point, of course.

S.S. Other monk-amateur artists painted landscapes: best of these, from surviving works was Jo-fen Yü-chien 若芬 景園. One of "8 Scenes of Hsiao-Hsiang Region" 瀟湘八景圖 by him. Not espec. a Ch'an subject: had been painted often before by artists who were not Ch'an Buddhists. This splashed ink manner, also, had been done earlier by other artists. So we can ask: in what sense is this a Ch'an painting? Artist wasn't even a Ch'an Buddhist; belonged to T'ien-t'ai sect. Whole concept of "Ch'an ptg" becomes problematic.

Asking this question brings us back to the question I posed at the beginning: what relationship can a ptg have to a religious or philosophical doctrine?

In answering that kind of question, I try to avoid any formulation that suggests that the doctrine or idea somehow caused the style, or brought it into being. People writing about such ptgs as this typically say: if the artist hadn't been a Ch'an Buddhist, couldn't have ptd. such a picture. But if identification of artist as Jo-fen Yü-chien is correct, artist wasn't a Ch'an Buddhist. Nevertheless, ptg is generally regarded as masterpiece of Ch'an ptg. In what sense is it that?

I would like to suggest that whatever the artist's intention can have been (and we can never know), the ptg functions as a Ch'an ptg for all those who see it that way because of certain formal or structural affinities with Ch'an doctrine or Ch'an experience; certain elements of style that allow it to work as Ch'an ptg. These features of style didn't arise out of Ch'an; they existed already; the artist chose them, from among the available possibilities because they suited his purpose of the moment; perhaps he altered them to make them better suited, or combined them in new way.

When we assume this, the question becomes: what makes these elements of style suited to Ch'an? What does such a ptg have in common with doctrines of Ch'an?

First: like Ch'an, the ptg is suggestive, not explicit; it doesn't tell the viewer all that he needs to know, but offers hints, a few identifying details in the midst of a lot of amorphous, non-descriptive brushstrokes.

Second: Like Ch'an, it presents an ordinary scene: no spectacular mountains or extraordinary scenery. Ch'an transforms everyday experience into mystical, or transcendent, experience; so, in its way, does such a ptg as this.

Third: like Ch'an, the ptg presents a unified world, not one made up of a lot of separate things, to be read part by part. In Ch'an experience of world, one apprehends it directly, as unified field, without intellectual analysis or sense of this-vs.-that. Such a ptgs as this, similarly, is apprehended all at once, as immediate experience; one doesn't stop to admire style, or read details. So it is a pictorial parallel to Ch'an mode of experiencing the world.

Fourth: Another kind of immediacy and intensity is caught in the brushwork, which transmits the sure, swift movements of the artist's hand and brush. This parallels the sudden, spontaneous actions and utterances of the Ch'an masters, which reveal their state of enlightenment.

I could add other parallels, but these should suffice to make my point: that this kind of ptg offers structural ~~and~~ affinities to Ch'an doctrine that account for the ~~artist's~~ viewer's acceptance of it as "Ch'an ptg," whatever the artist may have intended.

I would suggest that whenever we are faced with problem of interrelating styles and ideas, we can best do it in this way: not asking "How did this style arise out of this idea?" but rather, "Why was this style chosen as congruent with this idea?" or "Why is a ptg in this style experienced as suited to this idea, in harmony with it?"

(S.S.) Another set of ptgs of "Eight Views of the Hsiao-Hsiang Region," in a related style, is attributed to Mu-ch'i, the greatest of the Ch'an masters of painting. He was born in the early 13th cent., and must have died shortly after 1280; he lived the latter part of his life near Hangchow. Hundreds of ptgs in Japan are attrib. to him; only a few of them can be accepted as really by him.

(S.S.) Famous triptych by him in Daitokuji 大徳寺, Ch'an temple in Kyoto, is masterpiece among his surviving works. Centerpiece is "White-robed Kuan-yin, signed; finest among the many extant versions of this subject. Not especially loose or free in execution; rather conservative. Meditative aspect of Kuan-yin perfectly expressed.

(S.S.) At left, crane stalking through bamboo grove; at right, mother gibbon and child. These probably were not originally associated with the Kuan-yin; were a separate pair. Practice of combining ptgs into triptychs apparently originated in Japan--nothing like it recorded in China, although probably based on Chinese arrangement with ptg of Buddha in center, two Bodhisattvas at sides.

(S.S.) Other: gibbon mother clutching child, sitting far from viewer, at end of branch. In Ch'an this subject can represent, as I remarked earlier, human desires to be transcended; crane could be futile human desire for eternal life, since crane symbolizes that. But animals are ~~portrayed~~ portrayed with too much dignity, poignancy, to be simply caricatures of human desires; deeply perceptive studies of animals that seem to comment on, not travesty, the human condition.

Note detail of branch: done in ~~lx~~ lax, "sloppy" brushwork. If Mu-ch'i had used standard, "proper" brushwork, by Chinese standards, his ptg would have taken on an artistic dimension, to be perceived as artistic creation, work of man working within culture. As it is, it seems quite artless, and all the more moving as an image. Just as Ch'an Buddhism cuts through barrier of intellectual analysis and established patterns in its perception of the world, so does Ch'an ptg cut through conventions, including standard ideas of "good brushwork," to achieve its immediacy of effect. But this approach also turned the Chinese critics against it: writers of the late 13th and 14th cent. condemn his ptgs as crude and vulgar, "suitable only for hanging in monks huts, not for refined appreciation." His genuine works, as a consequence, are all preserved in Japan.

(S.S.) This ptg of an arhat meditating bears a seal of Mu-ch'i, and its similarities in style to the White-robed Kuan-yin make it acceptable as his work, I think. A mysterious, disturbing picture: the rocks all point inward toward the arhat, as though threatening; a huge serpent is coiled around him, with its head in his lap, looking up menacingly. But he continues to meditate, oblivious to all this, and impervious.

(S.S.) A number of other, lesser ptgs bear Mu-ch'i's seal, but in most cases it was added in Japan to works by his followers, which were imported in large numbers. This picture of a dove in bamboo, which was in our exhibition, is one that may really be from Mueeh'i's hand. Again, the picture avoids Chinese conventions of brushwork, and standard arrangements of bamboo leaves etc., so much that the first reaction of a Chinese viewer might still be: this is simply bad ptg. My friend Wang Chi-ch'ien still says this about Mu-ch'i: his images are fine, but his brushwork is weak. However, it is a deliberate "weakness," which permits the picture its simple, artless, direct effect. It presents the calm image of the dove and bamboo without any intervening screen of style.

(→S.) Having seen all these, we can understand, finally, why such a ptg as this famous small picture of "Six Persimmons", attrib. to Mu-ch'i, can be considered a masterpiece of Ch'an ptg. It is extremely plain, unassertive; the persimmons don't seem to symbolize anything, or represent

any established image with set meaning: they just exist. The underlying message, if there is one, is: see things for what they are, don't intellectualize them. The ptg appears so simple and artless that it might seem to be beyond analysis. However, if we do analyze it as an artistic structure, we see that it essentially repeats a single form, spread laterally, consists of repetitions of with slight variations in shape and placement, and strong contrasts in ink tone. The darkest form is in the center; another, slightly lighter, at one side; another still lighter at the other side; and so forth, in a clearly stepped (or scaled) arrangement. The effect of this is to approximate the way the eye perceives, the phenomenon of focus: sharpest and clearest in the center, less and less clearly defined farther out. So one takes in the six perimmons, visually, as a single image, instead of "reading" them one by one.

Sk- Returning to the bamboo ptg attrib. to T'an Chih-ju, the minor local master of ink bamboo pictures, we find that this artist has used exactly the same system. It is a simple, effective method of giving the ptg a quality of unity & immediacy; part of 13th centll period style, no doubt, not exclusive to Ch'an. (And yet the recognition of this quality helps us to understand why the bamboo ptg. could function as a Ch'an ptg, whatever its origin.)

So we realize that even the most spontaneous-looking effects depend, in fact, on a kind of artfulness; but the artist, through ~~sp~~ supreme skill, is able to disguise this, make his picture seem as artless as a work of nature. This is one of great achievements of Ch'an ptg; but also of some of the best Ch.ptg. of other schools and periods as well. One has to be a highly accomplished artist to do this; one doesn't necessarily have to be a Ch'an Buddhist.

I realize that I have made the concept of Ch'an ptg much more problematic and unclear than you thought it was going to be; but relationships between works of art and ideas and historical circumstances will always be problematic and unclear. I almost hesitate to ask for questions, since they will probably be questions that I can't answer; but I will try, if there are any.

Next Monday morning, my last lecture will deal with the complex question of social and political content in Ch. ptg, what forms it takes and how we find it and interpret it.