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21-22 = lecture 4B
4B

LS Lect.notes.4B Tang Landscape Painting

Part Two of Lecture 4, in which we will look at some of the scant evidence that survives for what must have been great development, now mostly lost, of landscape painting in the T'ang period. Still dealing with a few fragments and some ptgs we can take to be copies of T'ang works, of uncertain reliability. But even these give us some sense of the very important developments of this period, as we read of them in the writings of the time and later. Landscape was becoming established as a separate genre of painting, still secondary to figure and religious painting but now absorbing the efforts of major masters, and being the principal concern of a few of them. Something approaching "pure" landscape must already have existed in the pre-T'ang period, if we believe the writings of Tsung Ping and others. But now we can observe the early stages of its development in T'ang.

4.10.0. Wall painting (copy) in tomb of Prince I-te (Yide), early Tang. 3000 39 (landscape unclear). Artist actually known: name Ch'ang Pien (Chang Bian) inscribed on them; he is recorded as follower of Li Sixun. This identification was made, as I recall, in catalog by Jan Fontein of exhib. he organized of copies of T'ang wall ptgs while he was curator at Boston MFA.

-4.10.1-4. Four slides, one at a time.

Discuss:

Cf. Shen Gua on views of architecture, Bush & Shih p. 112.

"Blocky" drawing of LS above: I would guess that if we had the original T'ang ptg which we'll see in a copy a bit later, "Emp. Minghuang's Journey to Shu," we would see some such construction of rocks. Flattened out by copyist?

4.11.0. Landscape with Musicians on Elephant. Painting on leather, from plectrum guard on biwa (lute) in Shôsôin in Nara. 8th century. 3000 61, p. 69. (Earlier in this lecture, saw Bodhisattva banner from there. T'ang origin, presumabl.) Ed. Schafers, "Golden Baches."

- 4.11.1-6. Six slides, shown successively.

Talk: musicians on elephant known also from tomb figurine—haven't slide, but well-known. So confirmed, not imagination. Persians? Lots of foreigners in T'ang China, espec. capital, Ch'ang-an.

Far distance, with flying geese, sunset.

Indicates some interest in weather, time of day etc. So from records.

Me on camera talk



4.16.0. Hokke Mandala, great and famous painting now in Boston M.F.A., from Japan—Japanese claim it as Japanese, most still? see it as Chinese, 8-9 cent. in date—that is, a genuine T'ang painting. Represents Buddha preaching great sermon on Vulture Peak, story in Lotus Sutra, in which the historical Buddha lays out the grand plan of the universe of Mahayana Buddhism.

- 4.16.1. But what interests us now is LS seen behind Buddha, on both sides; visible only with infra-red photography. Like ink-monochrome landscape. Creviced, fissured forms, “layered” in Chinese term. Shading with graded wash from one to next. Establish look of receding, eroded mountainside. In distance, winding river, far hills. Paths going around forms: suggest other side. Trees twisted in grotesque shapes. Bleak grandeur: a quality sought in early Chinese ink-landscape painting.

- 4.16.2, other side. Rare example of ink-monochrome LS from T'ang. Maybe Wang Wei made some stylistic innovation that helped open way for this? Can't say. This was topic of first dissertation completed under Wen Fong at Princeton, Kiyō (Kiyohiko) Munakata, who went on to publish annotated translation of essay by great 10th cent. master Ching Hao. I was reader, friend.

- 4.17.0. Fragment from a Buddhist banner, found in Central Asia, 8th-9th cent. in date. (3000 80,) Pine and cypress trees., Sense of growth, survival under harsh circumstances (we will see a whole school of landscape painting that pursues this aspect of nature.) But also sense of brush movement, curling, slightly hooked strokes for twigs. Shading of trunk for cylindricality. Suggests new direction, along with Hokke Mandala LS details: instead of color, ink monochrome; instead of visual beauty, something harsher, stronger; instead of lush scenery, bleaker, emphasizing difficulty of survival. We will see LS that follows this new direction developing in centuries that follow, Five Dynasties and Northern Sung periods. Artists collectively working to find brushstroke equivalents, so to speak, for materials in nature—tree branches and twigs, textures of rocks and hillsides, etc.—that convey appearances of those things, enough for artist's purposes, while also conveying growth and change but also a grand coherence within great organic world that is their subject, all through brilliantly varied but controlled brushwork.

But before we get to that, a lecture on other kinds of Five Dyn. ptg.

“splashed ink.”) Credited with founding whole school of cultivated ptrs; “literati ptg” critics took him as their forefather. Su Shih, or Su Tung-p’o, even ranked above Wu Tao-tzu, writing in a poem: “Though Master Wu Tao-tzu was supreme in art,/ He can only be regarded as an artisan-painter./ Wang Wei soared beyond images,/ Like an immortal crane released from the cage.” We don’t know what lies behind this judgment; can’t know what Su Shih knew of Wu and Wang. Maybe only beginning of literati bias that poisons ptg theory and criticism in later times by limiting it mainly to the opinions of the literati, who can only see work of literary, cultivated men as necessarily superior to work by “artisan painters,” as they eventually come to call them. Wang Wei, in any case, was ideal combination of attributes: poetry, calligraphy, ptg. Nothing of his work survives, except in distant, unreliable copy.

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- 4.15.1-3. (Show as I’m talking). Ink rubbings from stone engravings made after 10th cent. artist’s copy of Wang Wei’s series of paintings of his villa and its surroundings, the Wang-ch’uan t’u. Orig. wall ptgs; copied shortly after his time; copies preserved, engraved? 3000 78 (complete but illegible), Siren 91.

- 4.15.4, 4.15.5. Two sections from many handscroll copies based on rubbings of engravings. Numerous copies made from the engraved designs, some purporting to be original Wang Wei works. (Whole volume by Kohara, in *Bunjinga Suihen* series. . .) 3000 78 (complete but unreadable),

- 4.15.6. Attrib. Wang Wei, “Boat on Snowy River.” Alb. leaf, in lost mixed album. Reprod. In Siren 97, Sullivan, Sherman Lee. Supposed to represent his graded-ink wash technique, *p’o-mo*. But here, we not only can’t judge closeness of ptg to Wang Wei, we can’t even see the ptg—if anyone knows where it is, write me.

- 4.15.7. Attrib. Wang Wei, “Clearing After Snowfall Along the River.” Ogawa col., Kyoto. Siren 92-3, Cf. Loehr Fig. 41, Siren 94-6, another version. Much appreciated by late Ming critic/theorist Dong Qichang; he took it as reflecting real style of Wang Wei. Wen Fong wrote article on it; he takes it more seriously than I do. Doesn’t seem to me earlier than late Ming, after maybe Song original.