

7B talking  
head

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## SLIDES

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

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

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

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

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