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At the End of the Stream: Copy in 14th to 17th Century China

There were no single words in Chinese equivalent to the English word copy. By contrast, there were four distinctive types of copy: *Mo* (□), the exact copy, was produced according to the original piece or the sketch of the original piece; *Lin* (𠄎) denotes the imitation of an original, with a certain level of resemblance; *Fang* (𠄎) means the artistic copy of a certain style, vaguely connected with the original; and the last one, *Zao* (𠄎), refers to purely inventive works assigned to a certain master's name.

Pictorial art in China first emerged as patterns on ritual vessels, then was transmitted to wall paintings and interior screens; later it was realised on horizontal hand scrolls, vertical hanging scrolls and albums.

As in other cultures, the primary task of a painter living in ancient times was to produce pictures for keeping records and for decoration, but normally confined to religious establishments, commemorative occasions or instructive stories. Very few wall paintings from these early times remain today, but the sketches of them were preserved. For instance, the Buddhist *Volume of Paintings* by Zhang Shengwen (act. 1163–1189), compiled in 1180, is believed to be a copy of the sketches for the wall painting in a Buddhist temple in South China.

A very small number of the screen paintings survived. They have been removed from the panels and remounted as scrolls. The formats of handscroll, hanging scroll and album were commonly used to preserve functional paintings since the 8th century. One of the earliest existing examples of handscroll, *The Admonitions of the Court Instructress*, attributed to the 4th-century master Gu Kaizhi (ca. 345–406), has in fact two surviving copies. The one preserved in the British Museum is considered to be a faithful copy of the lost original, compiled in the 5th–8th centuries. The other monochrome paper scroll copy, in the collection of the Beijing Palace Museum, is a 12th century copy.

By the 14th century the three formats became the form preferred by artists, and remained unchallenged until the early 1900s, when the European tradition of easel painting came to provide an alternative.[1] The album was the last major painting format to develop. It arrived along with the evolution of leaf-books. The album was first used to preserve small paintings, later being adopted by artists as a new format for original work and also as teaching resource or notebook for the artist himself.

In the process of the material change, it's noteworthy that *Mo*, the faithful copy, was involved in three slightly different ways: 1. to transmit an image from manuscript/powder version to final work; 2. to transmit an image from a damaged/aged work to a new material support; 3. to transmit an image from the original piece to a new format. The first one was closely related to the production procedure, which was also commonly used in European artists' studios. The second approach is determined by the fragile nature of Chinese painting. When the original was inaccessible, copies were considered as precious as the original. The tradition of preserving by substituting originals continued until 1958, when the art expert Feng Zhonglian (1919–) was authorised by the Palace Museum to produce an exact copy of the *Along the River during the Qingming Festival* of the 12th century.

In addition, learning by copying was a long and universal tradition. In calligraphy, exact copies were produced since ancient times (the 3rd to 6th centuries). Some works of calligraphy were authorised by the ruler to be carved onto stele. The steles were open sources for aspiring students, scholars, dealers and connoisseurs. Using the rubbings from the steles, students were able to study the master's structure and style without seeing the genuine piece. By the same token, copying of painting masterpieces was widely practised, since the original famous works existed in numerous versions through the ages when copies of

copies, and copies of copies of copies (of copies) functioned as models for succeeding generations.[2] The original paintings were more difficult to reach than we might imagine. The hand scrolls were often carefully stored in caskets of fir wood and only unrolled from time to time for private pleasure or for conservation purposes. The hanging scrolls were used for display and decoration, but were supposed to be changed every three to five days.[3] In the olden times, without a public exhibition system, the paintings were mostly collected and preserved in the imperial palace and in the libraries of high-ranking officials. The originals spread out through descriptive texts, sketch/powder versions, and various copies. The study copies were normally titled with *Lin*, “After X”, to distinguish them from forgeries. The paintings bearing titles started with *Fang*, “In the manner of X”, they were more likely innovative creations based on past styles.

This article is concerned with the phenomenon of copy-making in 14th to 17th-century China. The discourse is led by a series of essential questions: Who were the copyists? What was the purpose or motivation? Who were the end-users? What messages do the copies convey?

The answers to these questions unfold a panorama of the Chinese art history revolving around the employment of pictures.

Historical background

The break-through moment in the evolution of Chinese painting was the Northern Song dynasty (10th–12th century), especially in the period of the emperor Huizong (1082–1135), an art devotee. There was no other period in Chinese history in which court patronage played such a vigorous and vital role in the recruitment and training of artists, and in the arbitration of taste in art.[4] With the establishment of the Institute of Painting, which raised the Painting Bureau to a much higher rank and integrated painting as part of the state examination for selecting officials, the Huizong period signalled the end of the era when painters were perceived merely as manual workers. More importantly, a number of painters now came from backgrounds that might be described as “scholarly”, in that as children

they had been schooled in the classics, poetry and calligraphy up to a relatively advanced age.[5] With maturity, they had two typical career paths: they either painted in their spare time while serving as government officials, or they chose to live as “professional” scholar-painters. They were normally sophisticated in painting and calligraphy as well as poetry and literature. They were enthusiasts of art connoisseurship and criticism. For the scholar painters, to study painting subjects and genres was also to explore the shifting hierarchies constructed in art criticism writings to order and place them in the world.[6]

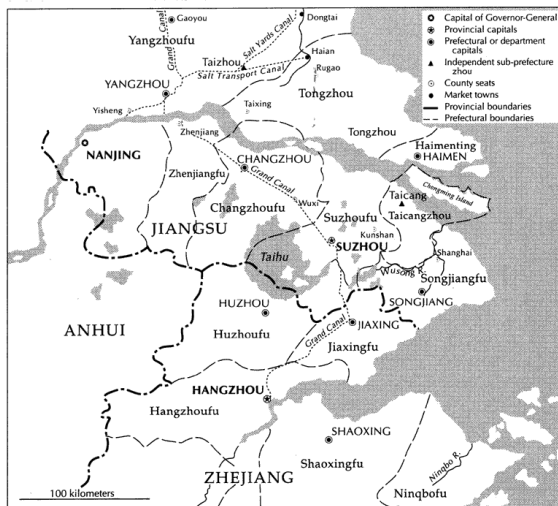
The invasion of Mongolians and the fall of Song dynasty disrupted the court patronage. As the Mongolians established their capital in the North (Beijing) and named their regime “Yuan” in 1279, the majority of scholar-painters moved to South with the Song emperor and the remnant of the regime. After the final demolition of the Song state in 1279, the Chinese scholars remained distant from the Yuan court partly because of patriotism, partly because of Yuan’s policy of racial and ethnical discrimination.

Authority was returned to Chinese rulers in 1368, but the awkward situation of the scholars and artists did not change. The Ming emperors offered reasonably strong patronage during the early 15th century, but such sponsorship declined as the dynasty continued and the personal interest of later emperors diminished.[7] Private patrons played a prominent part in this period, and their impact continued in the subsequent dynasty.

Furthermore, Ming emperors valued military men more highly than the scholars and continued Yuan’s practice of flogging officials in public and ordering the death of scholars who they suspected of plotting rebellions.[8] The officials who relinquished their posts and returned home, together with the scholars who did not gain degrees, gathered in the wealthy and agreeable climate Yangzi valley of South China (fig. 00) and became the “hermit class”, or gentlemen of leisure. Their life remained calm until the mid-17th century, when another foreign force, the Manchus, invaded and eventually established their regime Qing (1644–1912).

In the Ming period, the line between scholar painter and “professional” scholar painter was not that clear.

The scholar painters produced paintings and calligraphies for their own pleasure, as well as a social grace. They gave their works to scholar friends who shared the same values and art taste but they also responded to commercial requests. Copies and repetitions in this period existed for various reasons. Just as Titian would reproduce several nude paintings based on the same sketch as his patron requested, scholar painters repeated their patterns or classical patterns on request. Wealthy collectors commissioned excellent painters to reproduce their art collection, which was too difficult to preserve in private hands. Alongside the prosperous trade in art dealing, there was also an unprecedented boom in the forgery business, especially in the city of Suzhou.



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Fig. 00: Jiangnan area in 17-19th century, by Paulo Santangelo, "Urban Society in Late Imperial Suzhou", in: *Cities of Jiangnan in Late Imperial China*, ed. Linda Cooke Johnson (Albany, 1993), p. 116.

From mimesis of nature to art historical art

A faithful representation of nature was the ultimate purpose for art before the literati painters dominated the art scene. Guo Xi (after 1000–1090), the preeminent court painter of Northern Song dynasty, showed his approach to "naturalistic landscape" painting in his writing *Lofty Ambition in Forests and Streams*. He gave a concise summary on the constantly changing nature:

"The clouds and vapors of a landscape are not the same throughout the four seasons. In spring they are bright and harmonious, in summer dense and brood-

ing, in autumn scattered and thin, and in winter dark and gloomy. [...] A mountain nearby has one aspect. Several miles away it has another aspect, and some tens of miles away yet another. Each distance has its particularity."[9]

The text resulted from an incredible meticulous observation. Accordingly, his extant works showed rich experiences of outdoor painting. In his masterpiece *Early Spring* (fig. 01), he carefully arranged the landscape according to the natural rules: overlapping triangular mountain forms are stacked up in a continuous sequence on the vertical picture plane, thereby achieving the illusion of continuous recession; the mountain forms are presented frontally and additively in parallel planes, with unconnected forms dissolving artfully into mists at their base, creating the impression of a visually unified space.[10] Not only the hierarchical arrangement of mountains created a sense of order, the path on the far left also implies an endless extension beyond the view. The scale of the boat, figures and the secluded temple hidden amid the hills described the enormous space and distance, not to mention that they were painstakingly depicted in verisimilitude. One can feel that the picture came from a long trip in nature.

The shading technique used to depict cliffs, mountains and rocks is *cun* (brush stroke). The masters of early times developed their representative brush strokes based on practices and visual experiences. Painters living in the North side of Yellow River experienced the view of lofty rocky mountains, saw alpine forests and hence invented "axe-cut strokes", painted with "a breath vigorous, heroic and unrestrained, a brush force old and mighty"[11] (fig. 02). Painters living in low elevation, river and lake areas, such as the lower Yangzi river region in the Jiangnan area, portrayed round and earthy mountains, "trees dense and green in misty tones"[12]. Southern painters like Dong Yuan (act. 930s–960s), used a combination of soft, wet-ink technique and sensitively rubbed brushstrokes, namely "hemp-fibre strokes" (fig. 03). The contrasting styles were termed respectively as "Northern School" and "Southern School" by later art theoreticians and connoisseurs.

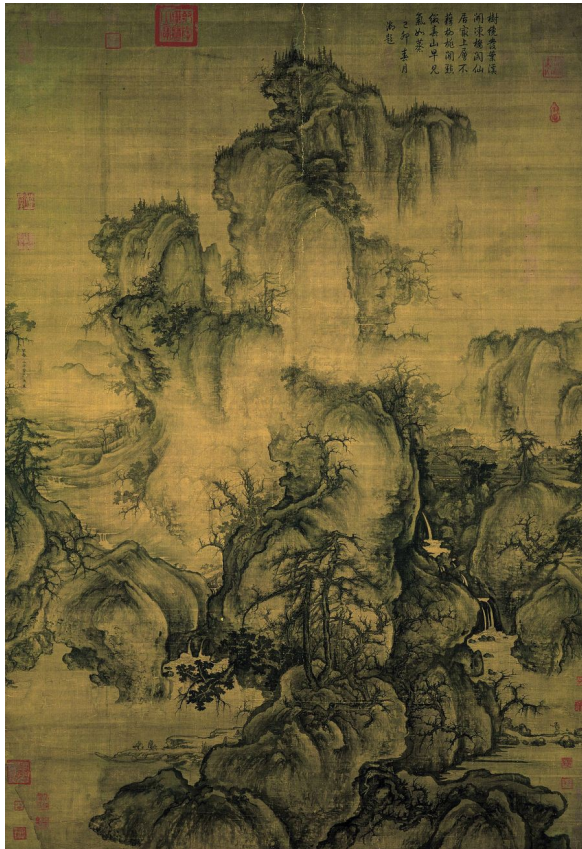


Fig. 01: Guo Xi; *Early Spring*; 1072; ink and light colours on silk; 158,3 x 108,1 cm; National Palace Museum, Taipei.

However, from the 13th century onwards, the *cun* derived from and serving for naturalistic representation were categorised and epitomised and became the content of a painting instead of approaches. The idea conveyed by the image gradually surpassed the representational purpose. In subsequent centuries, scholar painters allied painting with literature and calligraphy and so established the consensus of periodical styles. How the styles were inherited and evolved formed the basis of literati painting history. It was an art about art; or as Max Loehr puts it, “an art historical art”.[13]



Fig. 02: Li Tang; *Wind in Pines Among a Myriad Valleys* (detail); undated; ink and colours on silk; 188,7 x 139,8 cm; National Palace Museum, Taipei.

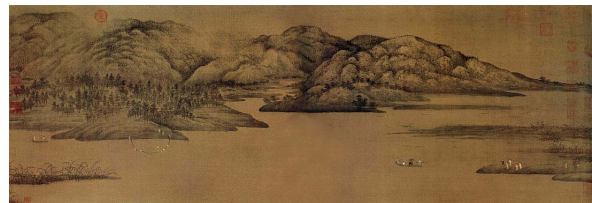


Fig. 03: Dong Yuan; *Xiao and Xiang Rivers*; undated; ink and colours on silk; 50 x 141,4 cm; Palace Museum Beijing.

Art historical art

The revered scholar-official, calligrapher and painter Mi Fu (1052–1107) who lived towards the end of the Northern Song, was the only one to develop a long-ranging view of the history of Chinese painting and calligraphy based on stylistic evolution.[14]

As an astute observer of old masters' techniques, he claimed himself to be endeavoured to “collect ancient scripts” in practice. His calligraphy art reached its zenith when every single character in his writing referred to a particular classic style. He gradually established his original style in this process, until “no one can tell who I modelled.”[15] Literati painters respected the same rule, the practice of “collecting” was a highly intellectual activity that prominently displayed their knowledge of history. The pride of being a “collector” profoundly related to Confucianism.

Confucius expressed the preciousness of past: “The Master said, ‘I transmit rather than create; I believe in and love the ancients.’”[16] Song Confucianism scholar Zhu Xi commented:

“Transmit means simply to hand down from the old; make means to create or originate. Therefore, to create is impossible except for a Sage, whereas to transmit is within the capacity of a Worthy. [...] However, at that time the work of creation was fairly complete; the Master therefore made a Great Synthesis of the various Sages and struck a Mean. Although this was ‘transmission’, his merit was twice that of making.”[17]

In Confucian definition, the greatest achievement of a gentleman is to “make a Great Synthesis”. The “Great Synthesis” can merely be achieved by learning from the past masters and transmitting their knowledge to subsequent generations. Originality should emerge from the high quality work of transmitting.

Built on the Confucianism ideology, archaism tradition was prevailing in all fields of the Chinese culture and life in all eras. The classicism in painting came to be an exclusive groundwork in 14th century China.

After the Mongol conquest of 1279, the foundation of Chinese society was shattered by the ‘barbarians’. The Mongol established a capital in the North. The old capital of Southern Song, Jiangnan area, was relatively prosperous and independent. For the intellectuals isolated and gathered there, sourcing back to the local painters who were prominent in past centuries and whose names were identified with Jiangnan and the Jiangnan style of landscape (such as Dong Yuan mentioned above), meant to intensify the already strong local pride. The attempt emerged as well from the embodiment of local pride as from the artistic authorities to whom Southern painters could turn to for revitalisation and direction.[18]

Among the Yuan painters, the influential politician, calligrapher and painter Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322) was acknowledged as a creator of a “Great Synthesis” in respect to literature, calligraphy and painting. He was also a vital proponent of “Classicism”. [19] Zhao was the offspring of the royal family of the previous dynasty. He received a nearly compulsory invitation from Yuan ruler and later became the statesman of Yuan.

Though he earned condemnation by other Song loyalists, if we look back in his life, he was endeavoured to apply the Confucian ideals to the new regime and thereby restored the cultural tradition.

Zhao was held in the highest esteem by painters of his own time and throughout the Yuan dynasty, numerous comments have been made by other writers even after his death. In the biographical art histories of Yuan dynasty, stories as the following were noted:

“Wang Yuan [...] from Hangzhou began to study painting when he was young. Zhao Wenmin [Zhao Mengfu] gave him many lessons, so his paintings all were modelled after the ancients, without a single stroke in the academic style. His landscape follows Guo Xi; his flowers and birds follow Huang Quan; his figures follow Tang painters. [...] he was a supreme artist of this age.”[20]

“Chen Lin [...] was skilful in painting landscapes, figures, flower and bird paintings, all following the ancients and attaining a marvellous level. Whenever he saw some paintings, he would copy or imitate them, always being able to achieve truthfulness, for he benefitted by many explanations of Zhao Weigong [Mengfu’s posthumous title], so that his paintings were free of vulgarity.” [21]

It seems that Zhao Mengfu constantly encouraged painters to imitate past masters’ styles, which evidently inspired them and improved their skills. Zhao left a number of poems and colophon writings, but unfortunately gave no comprehensive art theory. In a much later publication (compiled in 1616), a paragraph which was supposed to be written by Zhao on one of his paintings was quoted:

“The most precious quality in a painting is the spirit of antiquity. If this is not present, the work is not worth much, even though it is skillfully done. Nowadays, people who are able to paint with a fine brush in a delicate manner and to lay on strong and brilliant colours consider themselves skilful painters. They are absolutely ignorant of the fact that works in which the spirit of antiquity is wanting are full of faults and not worth looking at. My paintings may seem to be quite simply

and carelessly done, but true connoisseurs will realise that they are very close to the old models and may therefore be considered good. This is told for real connoisseurs and not for ignoramuses.”[22]

Learning from various sources, Zhao absorbed styles and techniques from artworks of high antiquity to recent times. He covered the whole spectrum of painting history: characteristics of high antiquity, such as the use of iron-wire lines, blue-and-green rocks and mountains, the spacing of the trees, the space-cell arrangements; landscape stylistic principles that might derive from Tang poet and painter Wang Wei (701–761); he also most likely benefited from Southern masters, such as Dong Yuan, and creatively transformed the Northern School in his last twenty years.



Fig. 04: Zhao Mengfu; *Autumn Colours on the Que and Hua Mountains*; 1296; ink and colour on paper, 28,4 x 90,2 cm; National Palace Museum Taipei.

Paintings are the most convincing evidences for these credits. The “spiritual communion” with Dong Yuan is revealed in Zhao Mengfu’s artistic transformation of Dong’s style. The first thing we should take into consideration is Zhao’s contact with the works of Dong Yuan: Did he have access to genuine Dong Yuan paintings? Which were the ones he modelled after?

As recorded in the catalogue of the Song imperial collection, there were seventy-eight paintings under Dong Yuan’s name conserved in the collection. The Mongol conquest has caused the dispersal and deconstruction of the imperial collection. The avid collector and preserver Zhou Mi (1232–1298) was an early admirer of Dong Yuan, who was a close friend of the Zhao family. Under his influence and guidance, the young painter Zhao Mengfu was enthusiastic about Dong Yuan. It is also recorded that Zhao rescued the *Xiao Xiang Rivers* and the *Awaiting the Ferry of Dong from the North* (where Yuan ruler established the capital city) during 1286 and 1295, and brought them back to the South after retirement. The *Riverbank* later even

became the subject of Zhao Mengfu’s poem.[23] After having acquired the two Dong Yuan paintings, Zhao completed a monumental piece *Autumn Colours on the Que and Hua Mountains* in 1296 (fig. 04).

According to the inscription written by Zhao, *Autumn Colours on the Que and Hua Mountains* was made for his intimate friend and teacher Zhou Mi. It is based on his travel experience to Zhou’s ancestral home district in the North. After having been called upon to serve in the Yuan government, Zhao was appointed to be Assistant Civil Administrator (or Lieutenant Governor) of Jinan Prefecture in 1292, where both Mount Que and Mount Hua-bu-zhu as mentioned in the work title were located. He stayed for three years in that post. Hence, the painting was firmly connected with an actual location. However, in reality, these two mountains with unusual appearances were geographically distant from each other (around ten kilometres). The painting was made after Zhao returned to the South. It’s a short scroll on paper in colour and ink, 28,4 cm by 93,2 cm.

The Autumn Colours on the Que and Hua Mountains looks like two separate book leaves combined and connected by the trees and sandbar in the middle foreground. The blue-and-green colouring delivered the characteristic high antiquity. Compositionally, Zhao organised the image in correspondence with Dong’s style: horizontally open space, marshy land and river cross over each other, fishermen and cottages located in the middle ground, the mountains at far behind a group of trees. The willows on the banks are identical to the ones on the *Awaiting the Ferry* (fig. 05), so do the straight upward groves at the foot of the mountains.

Aside from the analogies, in the transformation lies the innovation. Zhao’s most ground-breaking innovation was the brushwork. It’s notable that the chemistry between paper and ink makes the brush strokes on paper more vivid and conspicuous than on silk. It’s fair to say that Zhao chose to paint on paper because he was deliberately seeking for a better presentation of the calligraphic lines. The light and moist hemp-fibre strokes and foliage dots in Dong’s work were employed to mould the mountain and banks into naturalistic shapes, while Zhao used the same strokes but much more expressively to describe the contrasting materia-

lity. The loftiness and loneliness of the steeple Mount Hua makes a contrast with the soft, all-over marshes of that region. The distinctive strokes flowing over the whole scroll created a dynamic rhythm as well as a strong sense of unity.



Fig. 05: Attributed to Dong Yuan; *Awaiting the Ferry at the Foot of the Mountains in Summer* (detail); undated; ink and colours on silk; 49,8 x 329,4 cm, Liaoning Provincial Museum (National Palace Museum Taipei).

Zhao Mengfu's experiment of calligraphically distilling Dong Yuan's manner went further in *The Water Village* of 1302 (fig. 06). *The Water Village* was painted on paper in monochrome. The composition is even closer to Dong Yuan's model, whereas the hemp-fibre strokes were extremely dry and sketchy, in contrast with the soft and wet brushstrokes showed in Dong Yuan's original. It's basically a flowy running script written in the form of landscape.



Fig. 06: Zhao Mengfu; *Water Village*; 1302; ink on paper; 24,9 x 120,5 cm; The Palace Museum Beijing.

From those works of Zhao it is evident that the classicism he promoted was in fact a bold transformation of a past master's style and brushwork. In doing so, the tradition was revived and renewed. Zhao Mengfu set out to create a style based on specific classical models, models that become a kind of textbook, and the common property and knowledge of the literati masters who would follow in the tradition.[24] It was to this new tradition that Dong Qichang (1555–1636), the esteemed art theoretician, connoisseur and scholar-official painter of Ming dynasty, looked back as a basis for formulating his theory of literati painting.

Dong Qichang was born in a prosperous town near Shanghai, in Jiangnan area. He was later nominated a bachelor of the Han Lin Academy. He was lucky

enough to get in touch with and even possess a number of original masterpieces. Benefited from his close friend Xiang family, the greatest collector family of the day, Dong was allowed to appreciate a large amount of originals, including the painting *Autumn Colors on the Que and Hua Mountains*. On this painting, Dong Qichang commented:

"During the Yuan period painting was extremely popular, but only the Dong Yuan-Ju Ran [Dong Yuan's protégé] tradition was influential. [...] This is the result of the taste of the time, for it was Zhao Wenmin [Mengfu] who brought the standard and style to a fresh level, correcting our eye judgment [...]."[25]

By the time Dong Qichang left the comment, the fall of China to yet another foreign rule (Manchu) was foreseeable, identity crisis was aroused by the native's subjection. Motivated by a high moral sense of purpose and identity, Dong Qichang defined an orthodox lineage of literati painting tradition, in order to "[bring] the standard and style to a fresh level, correcting our eye judgement" as Zhao once did. Analogous with the Zen Buddhism's division into Southern and Northern schools, Dong Qichang divided the past stylistic models into Northern and Southern schools, roughly according to the motifs, brushwork and geographical factors. The former is retrograded and morally suspected, the latter is orthodox.[26] The Southern school started from Wang Wei, then enriched by Dong Yuan and Ju Ran (active 960–80), revived by the Great Four Yuan masters, Zhao Mengfu, Huang Gongwang (1269–1354), Ni Zan (1301? –1374) and Wu Zhen (1280–1354). Their styles are the ones that the real literary painters ought to study and follow.

In his critical essay *Hua Yan*, Dong Qichang argued that to avoid imitation of either nature and historical art styles, painting should be approached as if it was calligraphy. He wrote:

"If one considers the uniqueness of natural scenery, then painting is not the equal of mountains and waters. But if one considers the wonders of brush and ink, then mountains and waters can never equal painting."[27]

Rather than imitating nature, the calligraphic painter must learn to “subdue” nature to “art’s constraint”. [28] Built on this revolutionary perception, Dong Qichang epitomised the past styles and summarised the achievement of the masters.



Fig. 07: Dong Qichang; *The Qingbian Mountains*; 1617; ink on paper; 224,50 x 67,2 cm; Cleveland Museum of Art.

On how to achieve a “Great Synthesis” in landscape painting, he outlined the secrets:

“In painting the level-distance view, follow Zhao Dandan [Zhao Lingjiang]; in painting layers of mountains and stacks of peaks, follow Jiang Guandao [Jiang Shen, 1090–1138]. For texture strokes, see Dong Yuan’s hemp-skin, as well as the dotted cun strokes of his Xiao and Xiang Rivers. [...] Having gathered [all

these styles] into a Great Synthesis, [the master] will come out with innovations of his own.” [29]

Compared with the paragraph quoted in the first section, written by early master Guo Xi, the focus and ultimate purpose of painting shifted dramatically. Since imitating is the most important method, Dong Qichang was convinced that the outstanding originators of previous centuries were benefited from one ultimate model. In the second volume of his publication *Hua Chan Shi Sui Bi*, he wrote:

“Ju Ran studied Beiyuan [Dong Yuan], Huang Zijiu [Huang Gongwang] studied Beiyuan, Ni Zan and Yuanzhang [Mi Fu] studied Beiyuan. There is only one Beiyuan. But each one of these [followers] is different from the others.”

Dong Yuan was also his model: In his painting attributed to Dong Yuan, the Qingbian Mountain in the manner of Dong Yuan (1617) (fig. 07), he integrated the style of Dong Yuan with Wang Meng’s (1308–1385) renowned piece *Dwelling in the Qingbian Mountains* (1366) (fig. 08).

Compared to Zhao Mengfu’s painting in the style of Dong Yuan, neither the composition nor the general style of this painting is visually connected with the Dong Yuan’s signature style, namely the horizontally stretched-out mountains and rivers, the soft forms, the light and wet-ink brushwork. Yet, Kohara Hironobu argues that the model for the Qingbian Mountain was supposed to be the *Travellers amid the Autumn Mountain*. In the colophon Dong wrote for another painting, he claimed that Dong Yuan’s *Travellers amid the Autumn Mountain* was in his collection. In addition, the dense arrangement and intensive strokes are comparable to Wang Meng’s painting. However, the superficial similarities, such as the vertically arranged mountains or the location of the cottages, are insufficient to explain the link between the original and the copy. The abstract and volumetric mountain forms on Qingbian writhe and turn, growing upward in a kinesthetic and expressive landscape style. The tender and dense representational shading technique of Dong Yuan (Wang Meng also combined dry and wet strokes) was replaced by dry, calligraphic, parallel and straight

hemp-fibre strokes, to build up the composition and represent the movement of “the breath-momentum of the artist’s physical movement”.[30] This “after Dong Yuan and Wang Meng’s manner” piece bears traces of the two masters, but is more likely an embodiment of Dong Qichang’s rediscovery of the “momentum”, meaning the directional force of structured forms laying at the core of a painting.

Clearly, resemblance was not Dong Qichang’s purpose of imitation, on the contrary, he implemented his paradoxical approach of “resembling by not resembling”. A comment on Dong’s creative imitation of Yuan master Huang Gongwang, written by 18th century painter Wang Yuanqi (1642–1715), confirmed his approach and achievement: “The paintings of Dong Qichang show little resemblance to Huang Gongwang’s paintings, but in bone structure and flavour they are purely of Huang Gongwang.”[31] By the same token, paintings titled “After Master X’s manner” in Ming and Qing period (16th to 19th century) shared little pictorial resemblance with the original. Sometimes it was deliberately so, sometimes it was a result of modelling after a copy of alteration or typological accretion.

Questioning that imitating masterpieces could have suppressed creativity was noted in some publications. Dong Qichang’s contemporary Gu Qiyuan (1565–1628), who lived in Nanjing, was a strong opponent to classicism. In the preface for the Gui Hong Guan Catalogue, he argued:

“[some say] nowadays a painter must study old masters, otherwise he is not qualified to talk about painting. [...] If there is anyone who truly understands the principles of Gu, Lu, Zhang, Zhan [abbreviated names of painters], he does not need to copy every trace of their works.”[32]

The pursuit of newness and inventiveness was reflected in paintings of Gu’s artist friends, such as Wu Bin (1591–1626) and Gao Yang (active 1573–1620). Unfortunately, the exciting new direction was dreadfully disturbed by the fall of the dynasty.



Fig. 08: Wang Meng; *Dwelling in the Qingbian Mountains*; 1366; ink on paper; 141 x 42,2 cm; Shanghai Museum.

Study copy

Traditionally, art historians and theoreticians were also connoisseurs and painters at the same time. They left their opinions on what a painter should achieve, and how he should learn painting.

The six laws proposed by Xie He (500–535?) were of central importance in Chinese painting theory. The first five defined the movement spirit consonance the painting should engender, the method of using brush, the arrangement of forms and colours, while the sixth is “transmitting and conveying [earlier models, through] copying and transcribing”.[33]

Attaining form-likeness of the earlier masterpiece is no doubt the path to comprehend the excellent “bone method”, “colouring technique” as well as “positioning”. The sixth law is frequently cited and discussed when it comes to the issue of copying in traditional Chinese art. It is necessary to point out that Xie’s texts were written from his experience as a fashionable portrait painter. Moreover, at Xie He’s time, the preliminary sketches were made out of charcoals; after amending and adjustment, the picture would eventually have been transmitted onto a wall or a brick surface. Transcribing was necessary for learning, it was also the last step of making a painting.

The “copy” in Xie’s law refers to the methodology of craftsmen and professional painters which certainly shares some similarities with the scholar-amateurs’ learning process, yet is disparate. To produce a faithful copy, a “powder version” is required.[34] The copyist can either apply white powder on the back of the pattern, then use a bamboo or wooden awl shape instrument to trace the design of the draft, or to pierce holes along the outlines of the forms in the draft with a needle, then tap the holes with a powder bag. In order to make a copy from a masterpiece, literati painters would place a paper next to the original or they would copy it from their memories.

From reading the passages quoted on Zhao Mengfu’s influences on painters of his time, the copying practice was evidently not common in the literati painter circle. Yet after Zhao, it became the only path leading to success. Study of painting then began with a search for ancient masterpieces to be used for study and repeated close copy until the old master’s every turn and pressure-change of the wrist had become second-nature.[35]

Dong Qichang was born in an ordinary family, so he had no chance to inherit an art collection as Zhao Mengfu had. Yet he benefited from friends’ collections. He once noted in colophons:

“On the evening of the last day of the third month, 1577, I lit a candle and tried my hand at painting a landscape. I have loved [painting] more and more ever since. In those days I used to visit the home of the Drafter [of the Central Drafting Office] Gu Zhongfan [Gu Chengyi], and [there] look at paintings by the old

masters. The four great masters from the end of the Yuan delighted me most.”[36]

“After becoming an official, I used to borrow paintings to copy from the connoisseurs of Chang’an [Beijing].”[37]

During his whole life, Dong Qichang amassed several dozens of such copies. They composed a large part of his oeuvre and served as the ground of his theories on painting. In the collection of the Palace Museum Beijing, there are the *Sketches of Traditional Tree and Rock Types* painted by Dong Qichang, sketch notes of trees and rocks copied from paintings of old masters. “Whenever he made a large composition, he copied from these sketches”, wrote his intimate friend and later owner of the sketches, Chen Jiru (1558–1639).

The sketchbook is a 527,7cm long hand scroll. Next to some drawings, Dong Qichang left notes, such as “red tree”, “thick ink”, “dots should be broad”, “round dots”, “not many”. His study on pattern is also revealed in his writings. In *Hua Chan Shi Sui Bi*, he stated: “Every master has a different composition and texture in landscape painting, [one] should not make mistakes. Though trees are different [...] for [depicting] the willow, [one can apply the style of] Zhao Qianli [Zhao Boju]; for pine tree, then [one can apply the style of] Ma Hezhi; for withered tree, then choose Li Cheng’s model. It’s a rule that should never be changed.” This set of “acquired vocabulary” was gained through his lifelong copy training, and passed on to the disciples through his sketches.

The 17th-century painter Yun Shouping (1633–1690) recorded that: “Wang Fengchang [Wang Shimin, 1592–1680] of Lou Dong was passionate about painting from a very young age. His grandfather asked Dong Wenmin [Dong Qichang] to paint some trees and rocks as powder draft for Wang to study via copy. Dong Qichang made a series of sketches. [...] He also wrote down principles of depicting the ‘bone of stone’, texturing methods, delineating and colouring. [...] painters of the past valued the powder version the most, this is why.”[38] From this passage, it’s reasonable to infer that Dong Qichang has made more than one sketch for pedagogical purpose. There

is indeed one more copy preserved in Boston University.

In addition to the sketchbook, Dong Qichang left a number of albums to his son and student.[39] Dong Qichang compiled his first albums in 1596, then invested a major portion of creative energies on albums in the 1620s. In these he carried out his most ambitious stylistic exploration. Album painting is a format akin to a book, each album contains 8 to 10 leaves. Every page is a landscape image painted in the manner of a specific master. Dong Qichang's albums provided a capsule exposition of the Southern school lineage before Ming times, some included criticisms and comments.

The materiality of the album coincides with the needs of Ming literati painters. An album is smaller than a scroll, easy to carry around, and allows to be painted in a slightly more leisurely pace.[40] Besides, the album could be employed as a proper gift. On one of Dong Qichang's landscape albums, the collector wrote: "Every time Wenmin [Dong Qichang] passes by Jing kou, he resides at Mr. Zhang's garden. Most of the works he created here are ink-plays in small scale." Some albums were possibly produced under such circumstances, they symbolised friendship and expressed gratitude.

Unlike the albums in a creatively transformed manner, one finds some faithful copies in the pedagogical albums. The album *Large Emerging from Small* whose authorship is debatable is the most prominent work. It's an album with twenty-two pages in varied sizes. Each painting is displayed next to a comment on the style, possibly transcribed from the colophon on the original piece. The preface of *Large Emerging from Small* and the comments are believed to be genuine writings by Dong Qichang, though some experts believe the real author is Dong Qichang's disciple Wang Shimin.

The album is modelled after masterpieces of Song and Yuan dynasties, including works of Li Cheng, Dong Yuan, Ju Ran, Fan Kuan (960–1030), Zhao Mengfu and others. Various sources show that the original models of these copies were at first in Dong Qichang's collection, later they belonged to Wang Shimin.

"Large" refers to the grand vista of art history as well as to the original work. Of the twenty-two paintings, four can be matched with their original model, including works by Fan Kuan and Ju Ran, conserved in the National Palace Museum, Taipei.[41] The original Fan Kuan is as large as 206,3 cm by 103,3 cm, in the ratio of 2:1 while the small copy is only 57,5 cm by 34,9 cm, in the ratio of 1.67:1. Compared with the original Fan Kuan's *Travelers Among Mountains and Streams*, the copy was done with astonishing accuracy. The structure, details and diverse brushwork were authentically represented. Although the foreground in the copy is elevated and enlarged, the copy lacks the antique character and "the force and majesty"[42] (fig. 09/fig. 10).



Fig. 09: Attributed to Dong Qichang; *Large Emerging from Small*, the second leaf; undated; ink and colours on paper; 31,9 x 60 cm; National Palace Museum Taipei.



Fig. 10: Fan Kuan; *Travelers Among Mountains and Rivers*; undated; ink and light colours on silk; 206,3 x 103,3 cm; National Palace Museum Taipei.

The vast change in measurements and scale arouses a question: what is expected to be transcribed or conveyed through the small copies? Researcher Wang Jingling in his paper *Establishing Paradigms. Wang Shimin and the Large Emerging from Small Album* provided an explicit analysis of the album and an inspiring conclusion. Wang was convinced that the copies were aimed to represent the “dragon vein” of the paradigms. “Dragon vein”, a term derived from Dong’s theory, refers to the compositional structure.

As illustrated in the last part, Dong Qichang conceived that “momentum” was the core of painting. To produce a living, volumetric pictorial space, the momentum and the proper use of “dividings and unitings” is vital. In an often-quoted statement, he wrote:

“When an ancient master worked on a large scroll, he made only three or four large ‘dividings’ and ‘unitings’ and in that manner accomplished the whole composition. Although within the composition there are many small parts, the principal aim is to grasp the momentum of the forms.”[43]

To schematise the compositional structure, the loftiness, the distance and the sense of order prevailing in the original *Travellers Among Mountains and Streams* were cancelled. Instead, the typical Song composition – one dominating mountain as chief over the assembled hills, the foreground hillock inclining toward the main mountain, leading an S line upwards – was stressed out (see also fig. 01 *Early Spring*). The internal structure and kinetic movement of the selected masterpiece was highlighted in the album. Through the edited small copies, four major types of composition were listed out: the first type is represented by Fan Kuan, the second type relied on one major mountain and one secondary hill, while the third type is one major mountain and two secondary hills, the fourth type is Ni Zan’s distinct “one river two banks” composition.[44] At the same time, the distinguishable characters of time, taste and personality embedded in the originals faded away.

Sketches for formal works such as wall paintings were much smaller than the formal works. The sketches could therefore be put in storage, available for future conservation work or for multiple productions. The

making of smaller copies from the formal works took a reversed path and turned the downsized copy into a sketch model for ensuing painters. More importantly, the album was a mutual corroboration of the style paradigms and painting history and theory Dong Qichang pronounced.

Following this album, making Large Emerging from Small became considerably trendy in the 17th century. Other 17th century painters, especially friends and disciples of Wang Shimin, produced dozens of Large Emerging from Small Albums in the subsequent thirty years.[45] But it’s notable that they were modelled after Wang’s album, instead of directly imitating original works.[46]

Social Engagement

An evident change in 14th-16th century China is the advent of the “hermit class”. The scholar-officials who were disappointed with their career life retreated to their home town and gathered with literati who refused to attend state examination and lived on ancestral property, so that a new social class gradually came into shape. They built gardens and libraries and enthusiastically collected ancient books and high-quality paintings.[47] They spend much time together, organising banquets in their gardens, appreciating antiques and communicating via poems and paintings. Painting in this context was comparable to currency, an insubstantial social transaction between members of the elite.

Several commissioned works retained the pleasant moment of the elegant gatherings. Through paintings like *Elegant Gathering at Nanping* (1460) by Dai Jin (1388–1462) or *Elegant Gathering in the Apricot Garden* (1437) by Xie Huan (1371–1440), we learn about the activities on the gatherings and the way of appreciating art. *Elegant Gathering at Nanping* was created for the local resident Mo Ju who asked the painter Dai Jin to depict a gathering that had taken place over a century earlier at the estate of his grandfather. In the occasion depicted “for their mutual pleasure they wrote poems and prose”. [48] *The Elegant Gathering in the Apricot Garden* (fig. 11) provided a detailed panorama of such an event. At the left corner, two offi-

cials are enjoying a hanging scroll held up by a young servant with bamboo pole, the stand-by servant is about to untie a hanging scroll while the other is wrapping up a hand scroll. Another scholar is ready to write something, probably his comment of the painting, on an unfolded scroll.

It was normal in these gatherings that scholars would spontaneously compose poems and paintings which were later transcribed onto one scroll, thus becoming a precious souvenir of such an event. The *Yaocao Thatched Cottage Hand-Scroll* (1540) (fig. 12) was made under such circumstances. According to the inscription the gathering took place in 1540, in the cottage of a hermit named Cai Shupin. Soon after it started, Wen Jia (1501–1583), with fellow students of his father Wen Zhenming (1470–1559), Qian Gu and Zhu Lang, co-painted the cottage and the garden on paper. Soon after, Shi Yue added narcissus on the side of the stones. Inspired by the painting, each member composed a poem and transcribed it at the end. The multiple authorship painting might seem confusing as a work of art, yet it was a tool of great strategic importance in the creation and maintenance of a network of connections.[49]



Fig. 11: After Xie Huan; *Elegant Gathering in the Apricot Garden* (detail); 1437; ink and colour on silk; 37,1 x 243,2 cm; Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fig. 12: Wen Jia and others; *Yaocao Thatched Cottage Handscroll*; 1540; ink and colour on paper; 28,3 x 114,8 cm; Shanghai Museum.

In spite of the gathering motif, some patterns were extremely popular and frequently repeated in literati painter's work. One of the Great Four Yuan masters, Ni Zan, was born in a wealthy family, talented and

well-educated but he refused to pursue an official rank in the barbarian's regime. Grown up under the nurture of the art collection of his family, Ni was renowned for his fine taste and excellent calligraphy and painting. His whole life he repeated the same composition and idiom: the sandbar with groves and a lonely thatched hut at the foreground, river horizontally crossed at the middle-ground, earthy and soft mountains at the high-end of the image. The flinty, dry-brush stippling strokes amply create the movement of air. The artist's reclusive spirit pervades his imagery. Among the twenty extant "In the style of X" pictures of Ming master Shen Zhou (1427–1509), eleven are titled in the style of Ni Zan. Shen Zhou preferred to live in retirement rather than risk the vicissitudes of government service, which coincides with Ni Zan's choice. As a leading cultural character of the 15th century, Shen Zhou was considered influential. Naturally, a painting in the style of Ni Zan compiled by the contemporary great hermit was extremely demanded. The inscriptions indicated the extant "After Ni Zan" paintings, some were responses to requests from the recluse scholars, Zen masters, some were presents for friends and members of the family.[50] Shen Zhou's hall was all the time crammed with "intellectuals and vulgarians".[51] Nonetheless, it's necessary to point out that Shen Zhou was not the best follower of Ni Zan, neither a faithful imitator. His Ni Zan style paintings were criticised for "not as elegant and simplified as Ni's original".[52]

Dong Qichang's "After Ni Zan" paintings were also abundant. He passionately praised Ni's work as "the embodiment of the high elegance".[53] Furthermore, Dong quoted Shen Zhou's word in a colophon, "In Jiangnan area, a collector's level of taste depends on whether there is a Ni Zan painting in his collection".[54] The parlance implies that a Ni Zan painting not only signifies a classic pattern in the historical art, but alludes to a large corpus of cultural and social values external to mere style imitation.

Craig Clunas, in his book *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China*, appropriated the term "iconic circuit" from Carlo Ginzburg to demonstrate how the pattern exchanged in public and private circuits.[55] He also argued that the dichotomy public/private circuits is not applicable to Ming China, since there were more circuits than we could circumscribe. However, "In the

style of Ni Zan” paintings certainly circulated in more than one circuit, in the circuits of hermit intellectuals, of officials and sometimes of the merchants. Clunas wrote that “The Landscape in the style of Ni Zan could be seen as inhabiting a different ‘iconic circuit’, in the sense that it signifies only the other work of art”, whereas such painting also suggested good taste, social identities and relations, all exterior to the work of art.

By virtue of social engagements, the paintings were compiled with various purposes, some were gifts for birthday, some were friendship souvenirs for parting, and some were on request. To fulfill the large amount of demands, it was common to produce several paintings from one single sketch. *The Guan Mountains in Snow* hand scroll of 1528 by Wen Zhenming was a response to a request made by his friend Wang Chong (1494–1533) on a snowy day in the temple they lodged. The painting took the painter five years to complete[56] (fig. 13). An undated scroll *Snow Mountains* appears to be identical, in the colophon the painter explained it was “a gift to Wang Chong’s brother”. It seems odds that Wen produced two identical paintings as gifts to the Wang brothers. If they were both genuine works of Wen, they were possibly based on one sketch.



Fig. 13: Wen Zhengming; *Deep Snow in Mountain Passes* (detail); undated; ink and colour on paper; 25,3 x 445,2 cm; National Palace Museum Taipei.

Nevertheless, asserting that making copies is enough to establish one’s fame in traditional Chinese art world would be arbitrary. Wen Zhenming’s fellow apprentice Qiu Ying (1494–1552) was a copyist par excellence. He started as a decorator and never cultivated among gentlemen, but he was celebrated for his exquisite technique and originality. Qiu Ying and his patronage shared a rather straightforward contract-based relationship. Taking one of his main patrons Xiang Yuanbian (1525–90) for instance, Qiu lived with Xiang for several years as a painter-in-residence. During this period, he copied ancient works in Xiang’s collection. His original works became Xiang’s property and entered his collection of contemporary art. Qiu may also

have made paintings to be used as commemorative gifts to others and perhaps advised Xiang on fine points of painting useful in connoisseurship.[57] The residency experience gave Qiu opportunities to scrutinise classic masterpieces in several private collections which nurtured his art. Learning from the paintings of the gatherings, scholar-painters often have merely a few hours to watch a genuine piece with friends on the side. By contrast, Qiu was allowed to have the originals for days or weeks, to make copies next to the original. Qiu’s intimate contact with original masterpieces was undoubtedly one of the main reasons of his achievement.

Qiu’s monumental copy of *Along the River during the Qingming Festival* (fig. 14) is a hand scroll of almost 10 meters long, 30 centimetres wide. The all-inclusive panoramic picture was originally a depiction of the prosperity and lively scene of 12th century capital city Bianjing, by Northern Song court painter Zhang Zeduan (1085–1145). The original scroll is slightly narrower, only half of the length, 5 meters. The scroll depicted more than 800 people, more than 60 domestic animals of various kinds and 200 boats, not to mention the diverse buildings and furniture (fig. 15).



Fig. 14: Qiu Ying; *Along the River During Qingming Festival* (detail); undated; ink and colour on silk; 30,5 x 987 cm; Liaoning Provincial Museum.

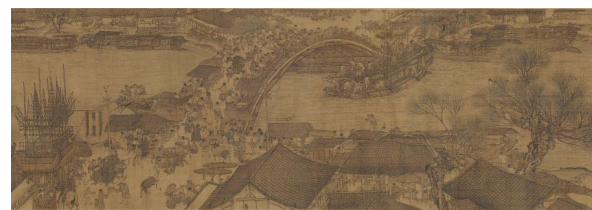


Fig. 15: Zhang Zeduan; *Along the River During Qingming Festival* (detail); undated; ink and colour on silk; 24,8 x 528 cm; The Palace Museum Beijing.

According to the inscription written by Wen Zhenming, the original scroll entered the imperial collection, hence removed from public sight, yet the sketch remained in collector Zhu’s place, therefore Qiu was commissioned to produce a faithful copy. Another colophon by Wen noted that when the original work

was still in the hand of the collector Xu Wenjing, Qiu Ying once borrowed it to make a copy (for practice possibly).[58] Imitating such a work with rich content is assuredly difficult. Surprisingly, the painter appropriated the concept and general structure, but renewed the Northern Song society views with the Ming city of Suzhou (where Qiu and other Ming masters lived in). In the prolonged scroll, Qiu described more than 1400 people in detail, the urban plan, scenes such as a wedding, a banquet, gatherings, buildings and boats, he even included the emerging business of Ming times Suzhou, every tiny detail is flawlessly and vividly depicted. The whole volume is naturally sectioned by mountains, rivers, ramparts and bridges. Its structure not only reflects the real physical geography and environment of Suzhou, but also blends the innovative conception of the painter. The painter skillfully rendered the whole image with bright and subtle blue-and-green colouring, which was matured in the long period of scrutiny and copying masterpieces.

The gigantic masterpiece was a commissioned copy, and possibly has provoked series of similar reproductions,[59] yet the originality and the outstanding artistic value remained undebatable. In a re-transcribed inscription, Wen Zhenming asserted that “Qiu’s copy is faithful and on an appreciable high level [...] in future it will be considered equivalent to Zhang’s original piece.”[60] Judging from the countless later copies modelled after Qiu’s version and the amount of compliments and commends in following centuries, Wen was certainly unmistaken.

Conclusion

In 1997, the Metropolitan Museum received a painting originally belonging to the renowned collector Oscar L. Tang. The painting named *Riverbank* (fig. 16) arose the passions of scholars and connoisseurs. The debate on whether it’s a monumental piece of the 10th century master Dong Yuan or a modern master’s forgery was heated. Numerous scholars argued against the authenticity of the work and suggested that it is undatable or simply a modern copy.[61] One of the main causes of the disagreement was that there are not enough acceptable 10th century data to compare with.

However, some scholars voiced in approve of the authenticity. According to them, the evidence of the physical as well as the stylistic analysis firmly suggest that the *Riverbank* is a product of the 10th century. But the authenticity question remains unsolved – there is no sufficient material to prove that the work came from the hand of Dong Yuan.

The individual style of a Chinese master as Dong Yuan was recognised through writings, faithful copies and artistic copies. Too often, in consequence of the materiality and function of early paintings, most originals were damaged or lost, whereas the extant works neither have seals, signatures nor titles. The eminent 10th century painting *Xiao and Xiang Rivers* attributed to Dong Yuan, was in fact named by Dong Qichang in the 16th century. He picked a title from the catalogue of the Northern Song imperial collection, which seemed to match with the image. The representative brushwork “hemp-fibre stroke” and “alum head” of Dong Yuan were only assigned to him after Zhao Mengfu imitated Dong Yuan. Before the 13th century, the person Dong Yuan was mentioned only in a few words, his works were barely described.



Fig. 16: Attributed to Dong Yuan; *Riverbank*; undated; ink and colour on silk; 220,3 x 109,2 cm; Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The real image of the early master was erased by time, the later painters' employment of ghost-writing and high tolerance on forgery brought the authenticity problem to another level. An anecdote depicts the booming Suzhou forgery industry: It is said that when Wen Zhengming's painting once left his residence, thousands of copies were produced instantly. Copies of Dong Qichang's painting coexisted with his genuine work. In Jung Tai Ji, he tells of the wide distribution of forgeries of his works:

"[...] forgeries of my work made by people from Wu [Suzhou] can be found everywhere. Whenever I visit scholar-officials, they always show me their collections [of my works]. Although I know that many of them are fakes, I never argue with these collectors."[62]

The high tolerance partly comes from the self-esteem of being a scholar not a businessman, it partly conforms to the social custom. Imagine how embarrassing it would have been, if Dong Qichang had pointed out that his acquaintance had been deceived.

Copy in China has never carried such negative connotations as it does in the West. The lack of the consensus of uniqueness and originality resulted in paintings in series, as well as in countless "after manner" and homage versions. In this context, George Kubler's notions of "prime object" and "linked series" were widely applied to interpret how copies function in the evolution of Chinese art history.

Furthermore, Joan Stanley-Baker offered a constructive view of copies. She divided the copies accepted by Chinese art connoisseurs and collectors into four types: quasi-original, evolved image, altered image and accrued image. The first type refers to a work produced by a contemporary or an apprentice of the original master or accurate and faithful copy; the second type is a clear evolution of a masterpiece or style, while the third is a reinterpretation on style; the fourth kind is a forged painting or a painting with a forged seal and inscription. She went further to term the copies instrumental in creating the received persona of the artist's original style as "the accretions with functional authenticity".[63] In his study on Dong Yuan, Yin Jinan gave an enlightening conclusion that Dong Yuan is more of a constructed art historical con-

cept, consisting of a series of paintings assigned to him and abundant later copies, rather than a real person.[64] It seems undeniable that our perception of a master's style-image undergoes a continual transformation through productions of different times, by different followers and forgers.

The nature and function of copies as described here was not exclusive in China, but it is also to be found in Japan and other Oriental cultures. To a certain extent, the existence of copies disturbs the construction of a firm history of art based on change of style, but if we let go for a moment the obsession of identifying the hands and personal style, would it not be inspiring to consider the nature of an artwork as collaborative efforts at different times, in different societies?

At last, a quote of one of the Ming literati and poet Yuan Hongdao (1568–1610) is appropriate to put here to intrigue new reflections on the relation of imitators and originator:

"As there are originators, there will be imitators at the end of a stream, and because of those at the end of a stream, there will again be originators."[65]

Endnotes

1. Hongxing Zhang (ed.), *Masterpieces of Chinese Painting 700–1900*, London 2013, p. 19.
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3. Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things. Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*, Cambridge 1991, p. 42.
4. Sherman E. Lee, *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting. The Collections of the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, and the Cleveland Museum of Art*, Cleveland, Ohio/Bloomington, Indiana 1980, p. 25.
5. Zhang 2013, *Masterpieces of Chinese Painting 700–1900*, p. 29.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
7. Lee 1980, *Eight Dynasties*, p. 35.
8. Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting. Su Shih (1037–1101) to Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555–1636)*, Hongkong 2012, p. 151.
9. Hsio-yen Shih/Susan Bush, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1985, p. 152.
10. Wen C. Fong, *Why Chinese Painting Is History*, in: *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 85, no. 2, 2003, 258–280, p. 273.
11. Shih/Bush 1985, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, p. 182.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
13. Max Loehr, *Art-Historical Art. One Aspect of Ch'ing Painting*, in: *Oriental Art* 16, Spring 1970, pp. 35–37, p. 36.
14. Stanley-Baker 1995, *Old Masters Repainted*, p. 15.
15. Fu Mi, Hai Yue Ming Yan, <http://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=752313&remap=gb,20-11-2017>.
16. Christian F. Murck, *Artists and Traditions. Uses of the Past in Chinese Culture*, Princeton 1976, p. 3.
17. Murck 1976, *Artists and Traditions*, p. 4.
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19. Li 1965, *The Autumn Colors on the Ch'iao and Hua Mountains*, p. 70.

20. Ibid., p. 72.
21. Ibid., p. 71.
22. Ibid., p. 76.
23. Gaohua Chen (ed.), *Sui Tang Wu Dai Hua Jia Shi Liao*, Beijing 2015, p. 342.
24. Richard Barnhart, *Marriage of the Lord of the River. A Lost Landscape by Tung Yuan*, in: *Artibus Asiae, Supplementum*, vol. 27, 1970, p. 3-5+7+9+11-60, here p. 49.
25. Li 1965, *The Autumn Colors on the Ch'iao and Hua Mountains*, p. 84.
26. Lee 1980, *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting*, p. 43.
27. Wen C. Fong, *Between Two Cultures. Late-Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Chinese Paintings from the Robert H. Ellsworth Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York 2001, p. 168.
28. Wen C. Fong, *Tung Ch'i-ch'ang and Artistic Renewal*, in: Wai-Kam Ho (ed.), *The Century of Tung Ch'i-Ch'ang 1555-1636*, vol. 1, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 1992, p. 43-54, here p. 49.
29. Ibid.
30. Maxwell K. Hearn/Wen C. Fong, *Along the Riverbank. Chinese Painting from the C. C. Wang Family Collection*, New York 1999, p. 41.
31. Liang Yang (ed.), *Qing Chu Si Wang Shan Shui Hua Lun*, Shandong 2012, p. 174.
32. Shouqian Shi, *Cong Feng Ge Dao Hua Yi. Fan Si Zhong Guo Mei Shu Shi*, Taipei 2010, p. 294.
33. The first is called "engender [a sense of] movement [through] spirit consonance". The second is "use the brush [with] the 'bone method'". The third is "responding to things, image [depict] their forms." The fourth is called "according to kind, set forth [describe] colours [appearances]". The fifth is called "dividing and planning, positioning and arranging". The sixth is "transmitting and conveying [earlier models, through] copying and transcribing". (James Cahill, *The Six Laws and how to Read them*, in: *Ars Orientalis*, 4, 1961, p. 372-381.)
34. <http://www.cafa.com.cn/c/?t=218492> 10-09-2017.
35. Stanley-Baker 1995, *Old Masters Repainted*, p. 17.
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37. Ibid., p. 394.
38. Yun Shouping, Ou Xiang Guan Ji, <http://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=986892&remap=gb#p22>. 22-11-2017.
39. e.g. *Landscapes Painted for Wang Shimin*, album of eight paintings, ink and colour on paper, collected in Shanghai Museum.
40. The hanging scroll is normally 89-150 cm by 50 cm, the hand scroll is around 50 cm high with varied length.
41. Kohara Hironobu, *Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's Connoisseurship in Tang and Sung Painting*, in: *The Century of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang 1555-1636*, vol. 1, p. 81-104, here p. 91.
42. Fang-ju Liu (ed.), *Exemplar of Heritage. Fan Kuan and His Influence in Chinese Painting*, Taipei 2017, p. 15.
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45. According to Wang Ching-ling, the *Large Emerging from Small* was made by Wang Shimin during 1627-1636, while albums made by other painters were compiled during the 1660s. Ibid., p. 179.
46. Ibid.
47. James Cahill, *Parting at the Shore. Chinese Painting of the Early and Middle Ming Dynasty 1368-1580*, New York 1978, p. 60.
48. Mary Ann Rogers, *Visions of Grandeur*, in: Richard Barnhart (ed.), *Painters of the Great Ming. The Imperial Court and the Zhe School*, New York 1993, p. 127-193, here p. 147.
49. Another distinctive case would be *Landscape volume* (1466), by Du Qiong, Shen Zhou and Liu Yu. It was a birthday gift for their mutual friend, a retired scholar-official, as commemoration of his 60th birthday.
50. Xueyan Han, *Song Ting Shan Se. Jiao Wang Yu Ying Chou Zhong De Shen Zhou Fang Ni Shan Shui Tu Shi*, in: *Yi Shu Bai Jia*, no. 4, 2007, p. 67-72, here p. 71.
51. Ibid., p. 75.
52. Hui Zhong, *The Study of Shen Zhou's Landscape in Ni Zan Style*, unpublished 2015, p. 22.
53. Wenru Yan and Jun Yin (eds.), *Dong Qichang Quan Ji*, Shanghai 2013, p. 181.
54. http://www.mam.gov.mo/MAM_WS/ShowFile.ashx?p=mam2013/pdf_theses/635896831553470.pdf 02-01-2018.
55. With regard to sixteenth-century Europe, Ginzburg differentiates two iconic circuits, one public, widespread and socially undifferentiated, the other private, circumscribed and socially elevated. Craig Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China*, London 2006, p. 113.
56. <http://theme.npm.edu.tw/exh103/WenZhengming/en/en03.html>. 10-01-2018.
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58. Wanzhang Zhu, *Qiu Ying de Mo Gu Yu Chuang Xin. Yi Qingming Shanghe Tu Wei Li*, in: *Mei Shu Yan Jiu*, 5, 2017, p. 16-22, here p. 18.
59. Ibid., p. 20.
60. Ibid., p. 21.
61. Kohara Hironobu remarks that it "has no date, no time to which it can be attributed" and he draws the conclusion that "a no-time painting means a contemporary piece". Wen C. Fong, *Riverbank. From Connoisseurship to Art History*, in: Judith G. Smith/Wen C. Fong (eds.), *Issues of Authenticity in Chinese Painting*, New York 1999, p. 259-291, here p. 288.
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Summary

In traditional Chinese art, copying masterpieces was widely practiced, the famous works existed in numerous versions through the ages when copies of copies, and copies of copies of copies (of copies) functioned as models for ensuing generations. Restricted by the material and the nature of painting and calligraphy, copy in China has never carried such dark connotations as it does in the West. The lack of the consensus of uniqueness and originality, resulted in paintings in series, as well as in countless “after manner” and homage versions.

This article is concerned with the phenomenon of copy making in 14th to 17th century China. The discourse is led by a series of essential questions: Who were the copyists? What was the purpose or motivation? Who were the end-users? What messages do the copies convey? Answers to those questions unfold a panorama of the Chinese art history revolved around the employment of picture.

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Title

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