Xuanhe Catalogue of Paintings

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Chapter Twenty

Prefatory Explanation for Ink Bamboo

In the search for form-likeness in painting, if it is lost when [the artist] gives up the vermilion, yellow, lead white, and clamshell white of “the reds-and-blues,” then how can he have understood what was really of value in painting?¹ Brushwork is not an aspect of the painting skills involved in using vermilion, yellow, lead white, and clamshell white. Therefore, when there are [bamboos] painted in light ink, whether upright or leaning, that by not emphasizing form-likeness uniquely attain what is beyond representation, often these are not the product of staff painters but were made by poets and writers. No doubt they had absorbed in their hearts the eight- or nine-hundred-[li] expanse of [bamboo] in the Yunmeng marshes.² Since they could not describe them in literary works, they had recourse to brush and paper, [depicting them] as rising above the cold to brush the clouds, or standing jade-like as they brave the snow.³ As they beckon to the moon or whistle in the wind, though it may be a blistering hot day, it makes a person want to put on a

¹. A similar sentiment is expressed in an appreciation of a picture called Ink Bamboo by Huang Quan, written by Li Zonge (965–1013), the Hanlin Academician, for a painting owned by Su Yijian (958–996); Li’s text is recorded in SCMHP. See Lachman, Evaluations, 80–81.


³. Liu Daochun wrote that images of bamboo in snow conveyed the idea of “bearing the cold.” See Lachman, Evaluations, 85.
padded coat. With regard to the conception of the composition, can [a picture] of scarcely one foot that can still describe ten-thousand li be something a common craftsman could achieve? There are only twelve painters of ink bamboo and “small scenes” here, from the Five Dynasties period to this dynasty. From the Five Dynasties period, there is only Li Po. From this dynasty, there are those in the generation of Jun, Prince of Wei, “Upright and Erudite,” and the scholar Wen Tong, which shows that those who specially sought form-likeness without the use of color are rare in this world.

Ink Bamboo, including Small Scenes

Five Dynasties
Li Po

Song Dynasty
Prince Jun, Lingrang, Lingbi, Lady Wang, Li Wei, Liu Meng-song, Wen Tong, Li Shimin, Yan Shian, Liang Shimin, Monk Mengxiu

Li Po 頗 (also written Po 坡) was a man of Nanchang. He was good at painting bamboo, in which the atmosphere and tone had an ethereal buoyancy. He did not seek petty ingenuities, but emphasized appeal. He painted in a strong-willed and forthright manner that gave his works the feeling of life, yet few of them circulated. It was bamboo that men of the past couldn’t live a day without, and whenever Ziyou saw bamboo, he would stop to visit, no matter whose house it was. Whenever Yuan Can saw bamboo, he would stop and linger. The Seven Worthies [of the Bamboo Grove] and the Six Transcendents [of Bamboo Stream] made

4. See ZGMSJRMCD, 400; Soper, Experiences, 31.
5. Referring to two anecdotes in Shishuo xinyu about Wang Huizhi (d. 388). See Mather, A New Account of Tales of the World, 388 (XXIII.46) and 398 (XXIV.16).
6. Yuan Can (420–477) was a Grand Councilor under the Liu Song dynasty. For this episode, see his biography in Li, Nan shi, 26.704.
their retreats among bamboo, which is why poets, writers, and lofty scholars all have a sentimental attachment to it. Po practiced no other art, for his mind was set only on bamboo, which shows that what was in his heart was far above the mundane. At present, there is one work kept in the palace storehouses:

_Bamboo Thicket_

The prince and emperor’s uncle Jun, “Upright and Erudite,” was the fourth son of Emperor Yingzong. As a youth he was self-possessed, and as an adult, he was cleverer than others. His natural character was one of loyalty, filiality, and fraternal love. When he lived in the Eastern Palace, in the years of the Xining and Yuanfeng eras, he sent up ten memorials requesting to live outside the palace. Out of regard for the feelings of his other brother, Emperor Shenzong did not permit this. In the beginning of the Yuanyou era, he again firmly made his request, expecting that now it would surely be granted. The two palaces of the Grand Empress Dowager and Emperor Zhezong did not want to go against his wish, so they agreed to his request. This shows his qualities of loyalty, filiality, and fraternal love were never forced. He was not addicted to pleasures, but only surrounded himself with books and spent time with his brushes. He did large seal, small seal, and flying white scripts, and

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7. For the Seven Worthies, see Mather, _A New Account of Tales of the World_, 371–376. For the Six Transcendents, see the Lu Huang entry in chapter 3.

8. Li Kan (1245–1320) said, in his treatise on bamboo, that a friend had given him this picture, which he called “a former Xuanhe object.” See _Zhupu xianglu_, reproduced in Chen, _Sui Tang huajia shiliao_, 307.


10. This quality was attributed to his brother Hao in the dynastic history. See Toghto et al., _Song shi_, 246.8720.

11. According to the dynastic history, the one who sent the memorials was his brother Hao. In the Yuanyou era, they were allowed to live outside the palace, in the Xianyi ward, in mansions opposite each other, where their nephew, Emperor Zhezong, visited frequently. See Toghto et al., _Song shi_, 246.8720.
the brushwork in his large and small characters was heroic and noble.\textsuperscript{12} For amusement, he did small works of flowers, bamboo, vegetables, and fruit, and scenes of hard-to-depict subjects, all of them as bright as though before your eyes. He used ink to depict the flourishing tips and firm joints of bamboo, whistling in the wind or dripping with dew, brushing the clouds and filtering the moon, fully exhausting their subtleties. He was also good at shrimp and fish in rushes and aquatic grasses, ancient trees and reedy rivers, with the flavor of the clouds and water at a distant embankment. This is nothing the painter- artisans could grasp by “peeping through the fence.” At present, there are seventy works kept in the palace storehouses:

- *Leaves of Bamboo Shoots and Flourishing Bamboo*, two pictures
- *Small Scene, Leaves of Bamboo Shoots*, one picture
- *Silver-Banded Bamboo Shoots*, one picture
- *Firm-Jointed Bamboo Shoots*, two pictures
- *Cut-Branch Tender Twigs*, one picture
- *Cut-Branch Autumn Twigs*, one picture
- *Cut-Branch Ancient Bamboo*, one picture
- *Flourishing Bamboo*, one picture
- *Rushes and Bamboo*, two pictures
- *Bitter Bamboo*, one picture
- *Ducks at the Foot [of Bamboo] Sketched from Life*, two pictures
- *Ink-Wash Bamboo Thicket*, four pictures
- *Ink-Wash Flourishing Bamboo*, two pictures
- *Ink-Wash Reeds and Bamboo*, two pictures
- *Ink-Wash Old Bamboo*, one picture
- *Ink-Wash Young Ginger*, one picture
- *Ink-Wash Bamboo Shoots*, two pictures
- *Ink Bamboo and Orioles*, two pictures

\textsuperscript{12} Zhao Jun is one of the three people, including Li Yu and Guanxiu, who are also treated in *Xuanhe shupu*. See Gui, *Xuanhe shupu*, 3.37–38.
Lingrang of the royal house, whose style name was Danian, was a fifth-generation descendent of the Cultured Ancestor.\textsuperscript{13} Lingrang was born and raised in the palace, amid the aristocracy, yet he devoted himself to the classics and histories. For amusement, he dallied with brush and ink and was particularly successful in the skills of “the reds-and-blues.” He enjoyed collecting works of calligraphy and painting from the Jin and Song periods onward, so that at a glance he could identify their best features. Although attainment in the arts may be inferior, isn’t this better than playing chess or going hunting?\textsuperscript{14} In terms of the flavor of his paintings of lakes, marshes, and groves of trees and those of wild ducks and geese in mist and clouds, the feeling of seclusion and repose is obviously the most successful aspect and was much valued by his generation. Even though the scenes he depicted were the slopes and riverbanks just outside the capital city, they seem like the beautiful scenery in the mountain peaks and ranges and rivers, lakes, and streams of Jiang, Zhe, Jing, and Xiang.\textsuperscript{15} His paintings were not inferior to those by artists of the Jin and Song dynasties. Once, at the Dragon Boat Festival, he presented a fan he

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Small Scene, Ink Bamboo,} two pictures
  \item \textit{Ink Bamboo,} thirty pictures
  \item \textit{Ink Bamboo, Spring Growth,} two pictures
  \item \textit{Cut-Branch Ink Bamboo,} one picture
  \item \textit{Four Views of Ink Bamboo,} one picture
  \item \textit{Ink Bamboo, Spring Growth in Freezing Dew,} one picture
  \item \textit{Ink Bamboo, New Branches Dipped in Blue,} one picture
  \item \textit{Ink Bamboo, Upright Joints in Icy Frost,} one picture
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{13} See ZGMSJRMCMD, 1274; Chen, \textit{Song, Liao, Jin huajia shiliao}, 408–422. Zhao Lingrang (act. ca. 1070–d. ca. 1101) is listed in the register of the royal family in Toghto et al., \textit{Song shi}, 223.6487, as a descendant of Zhao Defang (951–981), the fourth son of Emperor Taizu, the “Cultured Ancestor.”
  \item \textsuperscript{14} This seems borrowed from Zhang Yanyuan’s rhetorical question, “What has this [i.e., looking at paintings] in common with the mental activity required for chess?” From “On the Origins of Painting,” in Acker, \textit{Some T’ang and Pre-T’ang Texts}, 1:78.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} The general area of modern Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Hubei, and Hunan provinces.
had painted, and Emperor Zhezong wrote on the back of it: “We have seen this, and the brushwork is marvelous.” He then wrote out the two characters for “National Eminence” and gave them to him, which was considered an honor at the time. His post was Deputy Military and Surveillance Commissioner for the Chongxin Army, and he had the posthumous position of Commander Unequaled in Honor. He was posthumously enfeoffed as Duke of Rongguo. At present, there are twenty-four works kept in the palace storehouses:

- *Ink Bamboo and a Pair of Magpies*, two pictures
- *Silkworm Thorn, Bamboo, and a Pair of Birds*, two pictures
- *Four Views of Landscape*, four pictures
- *Small Scene*, two pictures
- *Bamboo in Wind*, one picture
- *Streams and Mountains in Spring*, one picture
- *Traveling amid Summer Streams*, one picture
- *Autumn Embankment and Flock of Wild Ducks*, one picture
- *Wintry Sandbank in Dense Snow*, one picture
- *Wild Geese Gathered on a Riverbank*, one picture
- *Ink-Wash Mynas*, two pictures
- *Strange Rocks, Bamboo, and Silkworm Thorn*, two pictures
- *River in Snow*, one picture
- *Village in Snow*, one picture
- *Distant Mountains*, one picture
- *Visiting Dai [Kui]*, one picture

Lingbi of the royal house is good at painting ink bamboo, and all his works are admirably natural and unrestrained.\(^\text{16}\) There are many painters of bamboo, yet few do not pursue form- likeness but fully capture their graceful and wonderful appearance with effortless elegance. Thus,

\(^{16}\) See ZGMSJRMCD, 1274. Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 222.6403 and 244.8684, where it says he was alive during the Xuanhe era. He was a descendant of Zhao Defang, the fourth son of Emperor Taizu.
[when painters make bamboos that are] horizontal, leaning, bent, and straight and show each [attitude] from front and back, the brushwork and ink tonalities are all quite obvious in their striving for effect. Others do exposed roots all gnarled and bent, [or plants] snapped by the wind or heavy with rain, and although they wield the brush with playful ingenuity, they are too often constrained by the rules, so the style becomes common and the spirit weak. They never achieve success in naturalism. Only scholars are not this way. As they have no imperative to be skilled at this form-likeness, they can conceive of compositions that are unrestrained and unconventional. Making sparse branches and elegant leaves, not establishing too much at the beginning, their brushes move freely, without any stiffness. Simple brushwork and a complete conception is all that is needed for the elegant charm of bamboo. With common painters, the effort is put into ingenuity, so the meaning never gets expressed, and the more detailed the brushwork, the more confused it becomes. Extraordinary painters put their effort into carefree expression, and so the meaning is always rich. The more abbreviated their brushwork, the more refined it is. These are truly contradictory modes. Since Lingbi took Wen Tong as his guide, he was able to avoid a common style. He was appointed to serve as Defense Commissioner of Hengzhou. At present, there is one work kept in the palace storehouses:

_Ink Bamboo_

The wife of Prince Jun, the Prince of Wei, “Upright and Erudite,” the Yueguo Consort of Wei, née Wang, had as her ancestors the Secretariat Director Qin Zhengyi and Wang Shenqi. Because they rendered meritorious service in helping the Cultured Ancestor pacify the realm, theirs were made Meritorious Official families, and although a lovely sheltered girl has never been known to continue a family’s military glory, thanks to her dignified intelligence and virtuous prudence, the Yueguo Consort

17. See ZGMSJRMCD, 65, under née Wang (Wangshi). It is not clear if she was alive at the time of writing or not.
of Wei was a worthy successor to that model from antiquity, Great Aunt Cao. Due to the virtue of her famous clan, at sixteen sui, Miss Wang was married to the “Upright and Erudite” Prince. Her character was gentle, agreeable, and quiet, and she did not love jewelry or ornaments, but entertained herself each day with books and historical documents, in order to improve her self-restraint along the model of the virtuous women of antiquity. Her seal and clerical scripts employed the brush methods used since the Han and Jin, while her poetry had the air and tone of [the sound of] a stream running through a grove. She painted bamboo using light ink, and she fully captured their forms, whether upright or leaning. The viewer might think that their shadows had fallen on the silk. If her thoughts were not uncommon, how could she have achieved this? At present, there are two works kept in the palace storehouses:

Ink Bamboo, Sketched from Life, two pictures

The imperial son-in-law Li Wei had the style name Gongzhao. His forebears were men of Qiantang, who later came to the capital when, as the family of the Zhongyi Empress Dowager, they had the good fortune to become imperial in-laws. Emperor Renzong called him to appear before him in a side hall. Asked his age, he replied “thirteen.” When the emperor asked after his studies, he answered calmly, so he gave him a seat and permitted him to eat. When Wei departed from the palace he expressed his thanks and when later he came to the palace again, his deportment was ceremonious. Renzong considered him special, and he

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18. This is Ban Zhao (45–ca. 115), the litterateur, who assisted her brother, Ban Gu, in the writing of Han shu.
19. An allusion to the legend of the invention of “ink bamboo” by a certain Lady Li, an artist who traced the moonlight shadows of bamboo on the paper of her windows. See Tang Souyu (act. 19th c.), Yutai hua shi, in Huashi congshu, Yu Anlan, ed., v. 5 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1963), 2:11.
20. See ZGMSJRMCD, 393.
21. The empress, née Li (987–1032), was the birth mother of Emperor Renzong.
called for his attendants to take the young man to be shown to the empress. Not long afterward, an edict was issued honoring him with the Yanguo Princess.\textsuperscript{22} Wei was good at doing ink-wash paintings. Whenever inspiration arose, he would paint, but when it was spent, he threw the paintings away, not wanting other people to know, which is why so few of his works circulated and scholar-officials know nothing of Wei's ability. His whole life he was fond of chanting poetry, and he had talent and a nimble wit. He was also capable at such scripts as draft cursive, flying white, and “san clerical,” all of which were appreciated by Renzu.\textsuperscript{23} It appears his painting style developed out of his flying white calligraphy, which is why he did not use colors but chose to employ ink-wash. He held the posts of Military Commissioner of the Pinghai Army and Acting Grand Preceptor. He was posthumously granted the title of Commander Unequaled in Honor and the epithet of “Cultivated and Respectful.” At present, there are two works kept in the palace storehouses:

\textit{Ink-Wash Reed Shoots}

\textit{Lake Rocks}

Liu Mengsong was a man of Jiangnan.\textsuperscript{24} He was good at using ink-wash to do flowers and birds, and he created effects of lighter and darker colors by using paler and deeper shades [of ink], so they set each other off. If he had used colors, it would not have added a thing. He created his own atmosphere and style. He did \textit{Bent Bamboo} pictures that were quite skillful. Since bamboo fundamentally grows straight upward, high bam-

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{22} For the princess (1038–1070), see Toghto et al., \textit{Song shi}, 248.8776–8777.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Yue Ren says “san clerical” means using a \textit{sanzhuo} 散卓 brush to write clerical script (Yue, \textit{Xuanhe huapu}, 405n5). \textit{Sanzhuo} brushes were made by the Zhuge family of Xuanzhou in Song times and admired by many, including Su Shi, Huang Tingjian, and Cai Tao. See \textit{Zhongwen dacidian} 13567.67 and Cai, \textit{Tieweishan cong-tan}, 5.94–95.
  \item \textsuperscript{24} See ZGMSJRMCD, 1327; Lachman, \textit{Evaluations}, 88–89; Soper, \textit{Experiences}, 63.
\end{itemize}
boos that are tall and straight, warding off the snow and rising above the frost, are simply admirable. Now Mengsong’s bent and twisted bamboos did not have this posture. Instances where Creation did not give something its complete form, or where a thing was unable to achieve its full potential through some constraint, or something was born in the wrong place, these are all misfortunes for those things, and they may be used to depict an admonition. At present, there are three works kept in the palace storehouses:

*Magpies in Snow*, two pictures
*Bent Bamboo*, one picture

The civil official Wen Tong, whose style name was Yuke, was a man of Yongtai County, Zitong. He was good at painting ink bamboo, for which he was famous in his day. Generally, in the realm of brush and ink, lodging inspiration in objects is displayed in ink-wash amusements. Once, when he was governor of Yangzhou, he built a pavilion in Yundang Valley, where he enjoyed himself and relaxed morning and evening, which increased his skill at painting bamboo. As the moon set on the solitary pavilion, his elegant bamboo seemed to flutter as though the breeze had moved them. Without having grown up from shoots, they are fully formed, because he had entered [the Way] through his skill. Sometimes he enjoyed doing ancient stumps and old felled trees, done only in light ink. Even a master of “the reds-and-blues” who had the utmost skill could not paint something with this look. If Yuke’s skill at painting ink bamboo were not because he possessed such superior natural intelligence as well as “a thousand acres of Wei River bamboo in his breast,” how could he have prevailed over such a multitude of other men

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26. This information is not found in the dynastic records concerning Wen Tong or in THJWZ, only in Su Shi’s “Record of Wen Tong’s Painting, *Bent Bamboos of Yundang*.” Reproduced in Chen, *Song, Liao, Jin huajia shiliao*, 366–367.
like this?²⁷ He held the post of Vice Director of the Bureau of Honors and took office as a Subeditor in the Imperial Archives. At present, there are eleven works kept in the palace storehouses:

*Ink-Wash Bamboo and Sparrows*, two pictures  
*Ink Bamboo*, four pictures  
*Cut-Branch Ink Bamboo*, one picture  
*Sparse Bamboo Growing as a Green Wall*, one picture  
*Applied-Color Bamboo*, one picture  
*Ancient Tree and Tall Bamboos*, two pictures

The civil official Li Shimin, whose style name was Zhidao, was a man of Chengdu and the younger brother of Shiyong.²⁸ His calligraphy was about as good as his brother’s, and he was particularly skilled at large characters. He could do large characters of over ten feet without any strain. He was also good at archery. Every arrow he shot hit the target, and over the course of a hundred shots, not one missed it. Shimin was a capable official and skilled at “the reds-and-blues,” so since calligraphy and painting come from a common source—though with the appearance of the tadpole, large seal, and small seals scripts, calligraphy and painting diverged—it’s natural that both Shimin and his brother attained fame in their time for calligraphy and painting. His official title was Gentleman for Court Audiences.²⁹ At present, there is one work kept in the palace storehouses:

*Poetic Intent*  

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²⁷. This phrase in single quotes is a paraphrase of a poetic line by Su Shi in his “Record of Wen Tong’s Painting, Bent Bamboos of Yundang.” Reproduced in Chen, Song, Liao, Jin huajia shiliao, 367.  
²⁸. Shiyong’s entry is in chapter 12. It is not clear if Shimin was living at the time of writing. See ZGMSJRMCD, 376.  
²⁹. This is a prestige title, not a post. See Hucker, Dictionary of Official Titles, 318.
Yan Shian was a man of Wanqiu, Chenguo. His family had for generations worked as doctors. It was his nature to enjoy making ink-plays, and his scenes of chastetree, catalpa, sour orange, and brambles, or overgrown cliffs and eroded banks were all extremely skillful. He excelled at bamboo, and he completely captured them when the wind has stopped and the skies clear, or in a twilight scene obscured by a fine vapor, or with frosted branches and snow-covered stems, some noble and unsullied, others soft and pliant. Secretariat Director Wang Deyong, who had the posthumous epithet of “Martial and Respectful,” loved to collect paintings of flowers and bamboo. Shian did an _Ink Bamboo_ and presented it to him. As soon as Deyong saw it, he could not stop exclaiming over its beauty, and he considered it the best in his treasure chest. He sent a memorial to have him made an instructor in the Directorate of Education’s School of the Four Gates. Later students often took his pictures as models. At present, there are two works kept in the palace storehouses:

_Ink Bamboo_, one picture
_Cut-Branch Ink Bamboo_, one picture

The military official Liang Shimin 師閔 (also written 士閔), whose style name is Xunde, is a man of the capital, who was appointed to fill a vacancy in the Right Section by hereditary privilege. His father He taught Shimin poetry and calligraphy, so Shimin has a fairly good understanding of their main points. He was capable at poetry composition, and

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30. See ZGMSJRMCD, 1438; Soper, *Experiences*, 67; and Lachman, *Evaluations*, 87–89, the source for this entry.
31. Wang (987–1065) was a high official and a patron of the arts. See Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 278.18.
32. Hucker says this school for the sons of lesser nobles and officials existed only nominally in the Song. See Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, no. 5719.
33. See ZGMSJRMCD, 909. For Right Section, see Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, no. 8091.
later, because he loved to study poetry and calligraphy, his father told him to study “the reds-and-blues.” As soon as he began, it was as though he was already practiced at it. He excels at flowers, bamboo, birds, and other creatures. He learned the painting methods of the men of Jiangnan. His work is detailed without being careless and serious without being too free. Since he mainly kept to their rules and methods, his flaws are few, but as his painting came from his father’s order rather than coming from what he had internalized, it was produced by formula and could not escape the constraints of being produced by formula. Generally, those who are constrained can still become free, while those who are already free cannot become constrained. In the main, Shimin’s painting is still on the rise and is sure to become free. At present he serves as Left Military Grand Master and, as Prefect of Zhongzhou, is in charge of the Chongfu Temple in the Western Capital. At present, there are two works kept in the palace storehouses:

*Fresh Clearing over a Willow Stream*, one picture

*Riverbank with Reeds in Dense Snow*, one picture

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34. In 1112, the title Commissioner for the Palace Audience Gate of the East (Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, no. 7450) was changed to this title. See Toghto et al., *Song shi*, 169.4055.

35. Zhongzhou was a prefecture controlled by the Song government through local native leaders, on the border of modern Guangxi Province and Vietnam. Since no Chinese official would be sent to fill this position, it was clearly a sinecure. Supervision of the Chongfu Temple was also a sinecure, granted to many, including Sima Guang, as something akin to a pension. See Murck, “The ‘Eight Views of Xiao-Xiang’ and the Northern Song Culture of Exile,” 119.

36. A painting in ink and light colors on silk, called *Riverbank with Reeds in Dense Snow*, now in the Beijing Palace Museum, not only has the title and the signature, “your servitor, Liang Shimin,” at the end, but it also has a title slip at the beginning, with Liang’s name and the title of the painting written out in the distinctive “slender-gold” script. For a color reproduction, see Richard Edwards, *The Heart of Ma Yuan: The Search for a Southern Song Aesthetic* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), pl. 8. Ebrey notes that it bears an impression of a seal reading “Daguan” (*Accumulating Culture*, 389).
Monk Mengxiu was a man of Jiangnan. He liked to send for and host painters of exceptional technical skill, and when he got a good painting from one, he would always pay him the highest price. He studied Tang Xiya's paintings of flowers, bamboos, and birds and fully captured these creatures' attitudes in mist, clouds, wind, and snow. This probably resulted because he had spent his whole life appraising these models. At present, there are twenty-nine works kept in the palace storehouses:

- *Bamboo in Wind*, fourteen pictures
- *Bamboo Shoots*, seven pictures
- *Bamboo Thicket*, six pictures
- *Bamboo in Snow*, one picture
- *Bamboo in Snow and a Pair of Birds*, one picture

### Prefatory Explanation for Vegetables and Fruit

Watering garden plots and learning vegetable gardening, these are what the ancients asked about. The “chives of early [spring] and the cabbages of late [autumn],” as well as “pear-leaved crabapples and green plums,” have been passed on by literary men, and hence it is only suitable that vegetables and fruits have appeared in “the reds-and-blues.”

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37. ZGMSJRMCD, 1251, has two entries for Mengxiu, one as a man of Tang, the other as a man of Song, probably because Li Kan (1245–1320), in his *Zhupu*, says Mengxiu was a man of Tang. In his *Huashi*, Mi Fu does not seem to accord his painting the respect he would give to a Tang picture. See Vandier-Nicholas, *Le Houa-che de Mi Fou*, 117. Moreover, there is no evidence for ink bamboo as a topic in Tang times.

38. See the “Explanation of the Headings” for the story from *Zhuangzi*, ch. 12, about the old man lugging a pitcher (Watson, trans., *Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 134), and Fan Chi requesting of Confucius to learn vegetable gardening (Huang, trans., *Analects*, 133).

39. In a well-known exchange recorded in the biography of Zhou Yong (ca. 473), the Heir Apparent Xiao Changmao (458–493) asked him, “Which vegetables have the best flavor?” Yong replied, “At the beginning of spring, the early chives; at the end of autumn, the late cabbages.” See Xiao Zixian (489–537), *Nan Qi shu* (Bei-
Yet skill at sketching vegetables and fruits from life is most difficult to achieve. Critics consider vegetables out in the wilds easier to master than vegetables at the water’s edge and vegetables at the water’s edge easier than vegetables in gardens and fields. Fruit that has fallen to the ground is considered easier to master than fruit on a cut branch, while fruit on a cut branch is easier than fruit on the tree. Now this is a truly profound insight for investigating the level of a painter’s skill. Further, what about the duckwood and artemisia used in sacrifices and the cherries offered to rulers? In those cases, would painters simply be amusing themselves with vermilion and lead white? Poets know much about the nature of grasses and trees, insects and fishes, so when painters forcibly lay hold of Creation and their imaginations penetrate its mysteries, this is also the work of poets. Such things as grasses and insects are frequently seen in the metaphors and allusions of poets, which is why they have been included here. From the Chen dynasty to this dynasty, there are only six men here whose names have been transmitted and whose paintings are extant. In Chen, there was Gu Yewang, in the Five Dynasties period there was Tang Gai, and in this dynasty there was the group including Guo Yuanfang and the Buddhist monk Juning. Others whose pictures have been handed down are detailed [elsewhere] in this Catalogue. Though Xu Xi excelled at cicadas and butterflies, connoisseurs thought of Xi as good at depicting flowers, so even though he also excelled in other categories of subject matter, he is not listed here, too. Others such as Hou Wenqing, monk Shouxian, and Tan Hong all gained

jing: Zhonghua shuju, 1972), 41.732. The words “pear-leaved crabapples and green plums” were taken as the title of a well-known letter by Wang Xizhi and much used afterward by poets. The letter is recorded in Xuanhe shupu, in Wang Xizhi’s entry in ch. 15 (Gui, ed., Xuanhe shupu, 285). A poem by Su Shi contains the lines: “Once when the Three Institutes was sunning its calligraphy, to protect it from insects,/ I chanced to see Crabapples and Green Plums.” Amended slightly from Egan, The Problem of Beauty, 207.

40. Cherries were offered as tribute to the Tang emperors, as attested by poems by Han Yu and Du Fu. See Egan, The Problem of Beauty, 96.

41. This is in contrast to the organization of Liu Daochun’s SCMHP, in which several artists are listed in more than one category of painting. Xu Xi’s entry in
fame from painting grasses, insects, and melons. For his skill, Wenqing was made a Painter-in-attendance, but with Gu Yewang at the front and monk Juning at the end, Wenqing and Shouxian could not fit between them in the correct order, which is why this Catalogue does not record them.

Vegetables and Fruit, including Medicinal Plants, and Grasses and Insects

Chen
Gu Yewang
Five Dynasties
Tang Gai, Ding Qian
Song Dynasty
Guo Yuanfang, Li Yanzhi, Monk Juning

Gu Yewang, whose style name was Xifeng, was a man of Wujun. At seven *sui* he had read the Five Classics, and by nine *sui* he was good at literary composition; he understood everything about astronomy and geography, and he excelled at painting. He served as a Capital Commandant under the Liang dynasty, and later, when the Prince of Xuancheng was serving as Prefect of Yangzhou, Yewang and Wang Bao of Langye

chapter 17 of this Catalogue says “he often roamed about in his vegetable garden,” and there are four pictures of vegetables listed.

42. On Hou Wenqing (act. ca. 1070s), see the entry in Soper, Experiences, 66–67. Monk Shouxian is unknown. According to Yu Jianhua, Tan Hong (act. ca. late 10th c.)譚宏 should be 鍾宏; see ZGMSJRMCD, 1530; Soper, Experiences, 64.

43. The term I translate here as “medicinal plants” is *yaopin*, which should mean “medical drugs.” I chose “medicinal plants” in order to agree with the larger category of fruits and vegetables, even though there are no paintings listed here of either medicinal plants or medicines, unless one views onions or lotuses as medicinal.

were both his advisors. Since Yewang was good at painting pictures, the prince ordered Yewang to make a painting of ancient worthies and Wang Bao to transcribe an encomium. People of the time referred to this as “The Two Perfections.” He was especially skilled at painting grasses and insects. Since he knew so much about the nature of grasses, trees, insects, and fishes, which is the business of poets, painting was Yewang’s silent poetry. He served the Chen dynasty as Director of the Chancellery. At present, there is one work kept in the palace storehouses:

### Grasses and Insects

The hometown of Tang Gai is unknown. He was good at painting birds, fish, and growing vegetables, and he was praised for his skill in his day. Fish, insects, and plants are very minute and subtle. Were it not for his profound understanding of living things, expressed and shown in his depictions, they would be difficult to comprehend. His pictures of wild birds, growing vegetables, fish and shrimp, and aquatic creatures circulated in the world. With regard to paintings of fish and shrimp, they may be shown as creatures in rivers and ponds or on the table in a kitchen, but paintings of aquatic creatures are rarely seen. What if they were strange and powerful creatures that on occasion agitated fierce winds and violent thunder as they smashed through ten-thousand li of waves, never swimming in mid-stream where their horns could be bent or they might strike their foreheads? A painting of that would be impressive, indeed! Gai’s paintings of aquatic creatures probably had this quality. At present, there is one work kept in the palace storehouses:

45. He knew about “the names of birds, beasts, grasses and trees” because Confucius said this was one value of studying the *Book of Songs*. See Huang, trans., *Analects*, 168.
47. “Striking the forehead” seems to be a reference to the description of the *zhān* fish in the *Shui jing* by Li Daoyuan (d. 527), who says this fish goes upstream to become a dragon. If it fails, it strikes its forehead (against a stone wall) and returns. See Yue, *Xuanhe huapu*, 416n6.
Growing Vegetables

Ding Qian was a man of Jinling. At first he worked at bamboo painting, but later he also became good at painting fruits and vegetables, applying his colors in light and dark shades to make them lifelike. He could imitate weevils and their damage, which made people try to brush them off, as if they were real. He once painted a picture of onions, for which he was praised and encouraged by Li of Jiangnan, who personally wrote the two characters for “Ding Qian” on it, probably because he considered it such an extraordinary painting. Later, Kou Zhun collected it as a treasured piece. At present, there are three works kept in the palace storehouses:

Lotus and Lotus Roots, Sketched from Life, one picture

Onions, Sketched from Life, two pictures

The military official Guo Yuanfang, whose style name was Zizheng, was a man of the capital. He was good at painting grasses and insects, in which he could lodge his inspiration with ease, and the way he showed them crawling, flying, chirping, and jumping was completely lifelike. He was much appreciated by officials of his day. When he employed casual brushwork, which was abbreviated and simple, he achieved the height of refinement, but whenever he sought ingenuity through embellishment, everything he added only did harm. This is truly what [Zhuangzi] called “when the external is prized, the inner becomes awkward,” as when one is betting for gold [in an archery contest]. A critic used this to slight him. Generally, the scheme of Creation gives no thought at the start to

48. See ZGMSJRMRCD, 8; Liu, Wudai minghua buyi, 110; Soper, Experiences, 38.
49. Kou Zhun (961–1023) was an eminent official and military general. See Toghto et al., Song shi, 281.9527–9535. Guo Ruoxu said this picture was currently (ca. 1080) owned by Wang Shen. See Soper, Experiences, 38.
50. See ZGMSJRMRCD, 948; Soper, Experiences, 45–46.
51. See Watson, trans., Complete Works of Chuang Tzu, 201.
52. The critic was Guo Ruoxu, whose entry on Guo is the basis for this entry. See Soper, Experiences, 45–46.
an integrated whole, but as each thing assumes its own shape and color, each has what is appropriate. But if you chisel and polish one thing after another to make each lovely, how can you achieve something complete and integrated? Therefore, though the carving of the mulberry may be skillful, if it takes three years to make a single leaf, the gentleman finds it unacceptable.\(^{53}\) How can art not be immediate, but come close to nature by degrees? Yuanfang had the official position of Palace Courier.\(^{54}\)

At present, there are three works kept in the palace storehouses:

*Grasses and Insects*, three pictures

The military official Li Yanzhi was good at painting insects, fish, grasses, and trees, with the elegant overtones of the poet.\(^{55}\) Sketching from life was his special skill, and he never fell into the bad habits of the staff painters of recent times. When depicting birds flying or beasts walking, they must be shown in pairs, in order to give each thing the appeal appropriate to its nature. He reached the official position of Palace Eunuch of the Left Duty Group.\(^{56}\)

At present, there are sixteen works kept in the palace storehouses:

*Grasses and Insects, Sketched from Life*, ten pictures

*Cut-Branch Flowers, Sketched from Life*, one picture

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53. The “Illustrations of Laozi’s Teaching” (Yu Lao) chapter of Han Feizi tells of a man who carved some mulberry branches from ivory that could not be told from the real thing, for which he was rewarded, but when Liezi heard about it, he responded by saying, “If you do not follow the course of reason and principle but learn from the wisdom of one man, it is the same as to make a single leaf in three years.” See W.K. Liao, trans., The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzu, 2 vols. (London: A. Probsthain, 1959), 1:220.

54. According to Hucker, Dictionary of Official Titles, no. 4264, one who held this post was “likely a member of the eunuch-staffed Palace Domestic Service.”

55. See ZGMSJRMCD, 361.

Fish Swimming beneath Fruiting Crabapple, one picture
Pair of Cranes, one picture
Pair of Roebucks, one picture
Pair of Crabs, one picture
Chirping [of Insects], one picture

Monk Juning was a man of Piling. He was fond of drinking wine, and when he had drunk to his heart’s content, he liked to amuse himself with ink. Though the brush force in his paintings of grasses and insects was strong and vigorous, he did not particularly seek form-likeness. He signed each picture: “Painted by Juning while tipsy.” After seeing his work, Mei Yaochen appreciated his extraordinary quality and wrote a poem for him, in which is this line:

Little insects create interest in the roots of the grass; the tipsy ink-painter is actually quite practiced.

After this, Juning’s reputation increased considerably, and art lovers who get one of his pictures consider it a treasure. At present, there is one work kept in the palace storehouses:

Grasses and Insects, one picture

57. Wang Anshi wrote a poem describing branches of “golden sand” blossoms (crabapple) hanging over a pond. See Wang, Wang Linchuan quanji, 26.141.
58. Monk Juning was active in the 1050s. See ZGMSJRMCD, 513; Soper, Experiences, 67, the source for this entry.