

SESSHŪ TŌYŌ'S SELECTIVE ASSIMILATION OF MING CHINESE PAINTING

ELEMENTS

by

HUI FANG

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Student: Hui Fang

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This thesis has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture by:

Charles Lachman	Chairperson
Akiko Walley	Member
Maram Epstein	Member

and

Kimberly Andrews Espy	Vice President for Research & Innovation/Dean of the Graduate School
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Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School.

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

Hui Fang

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Department of the History of Art and Architecture

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Title: Sesshū Tōyō's Selective Assimilation of Ming Chinese Painting Elements

Sesshū Tōyō (1420-1506) was a preeminent Japanese monk painter who journeyed to China in the mid-fifteenth century. This thesis focuses on a diptych of landscape paintings by Sesshū, *Autumn and Winter Landscapes* 秋冬山水図 (*Shūtou sansui zu*), to analyze how Sesshū selectively synthesized traditions of Chinese painting tradition that had already been established in Japan and the art conventions he discovered in fifteenth-century China. To contextualize this topic, this thesis explores the revival of the Southern Song (1127-1279) painting tradition which had impacts on both contemporary Chinese painters and landscape painters in Japan during the fifteenth century. I also analyze the culture of Japanese Zen monastics and their art-related activities and the transformation of Southern Song painting traditions within China in the early Ming period (later half of the fourteenth century-first half of the fifteenth century).

## CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Hui Fang

### GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene  
Peking University, Beijing, China

### DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Arts, Art History, 2013, University of Oregon  
Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy, 2010, Peking University, China

### AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Chinese painting  
Japanese landscape painting in Muromachi period (ca. 1336-1573)  
Sino-Japanese art exchanges in the 15<sup>th</sup> century

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Curatorial Intern, Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, Eugene, Oregon, 2010 -2012

Teaching Assistant, Department of Art History, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon,  
2011-2012

Graduate Summer Intern, Asian Art Department, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New  
York, 2011

Chinese Teacher, Eugene Chinese School, Eugene, Oregon, 2011

Graduate Research Fellow, Visual Resource Collections, University of Oregon, 2011

Planning Committee Member, 18th International Congress of Aesthetics, Beijing, 2010

Research Assistant, Center for Visual Studies, Peking University, China, 2009-2010

### GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

Mr. and Mrs. Eric G. Clarke Research Grant in Oriental Art, University of Oregon, 2010,

2012

Peking University Education Foundation Scholarship, Peking University, China, 2009

Junior-Thesis Prize, Department of Philosophy, Peking University, China, 2009

Hua Zang Scholarship (Award for Outstanding Academic Performance in Humanities),  
Peking University, China, 2007-2008

Award for Excellent Academic Performance, Peking University, China, 2007

PUBLICATIONS:

Fang, Hui. "Literature Review on Gender and Feminism." in *Annual of Contemporary Art of China 2009*, edited by Qingsheng Zhu. Guilin, China: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2010.

Fang, Hui. "Literature Review on Methodology of Art History." in *Annual of Contemporary Art of China 2009*, edited by Qingsheng Zhu. Guilin, China: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2010.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Sesshū Tōyō (雪舟等楊, 1420-1506) was one of the most preeminent painters in the history of Japanese painting. Besides his accomplishment in painting, his legendary travel experience in Ming China from 1467 to 1469<sup>1</sup> also makes him a unique figure in the history of Muromachi painting (ca. 1336-1573), and many art historians believe that this experience offered the artist a chance to gain exposure to contemporary art trends in China, thereby greatly enriching Sesshū's artistic vocabulary and style.

Sesshū traveled through the eastern part of China as part of Japanese delegation as a “Purchaser-Priest.”<sup>2</sup> The trip started from Ningbo, a major port in Sino-Japan commerce, and went on to Beijing, the capital of the Ming Empire. After returning to Japan, Sesshū frequently recalled this experience and fragments of his memory of China are scattered throughout his paintings and writings. These records open a window to Sesshū's opinion of Chinese and Japanese paintings. Among these writings the preface to *Splashed-Ink Landscape* 破墨山水図 (*Haboku sansui zu*, Fig. 1-1; see the Appendix for all figures) particularly merits attention:

Sōen, the Tripitaka librarian from Sagami, has been studying painting under me for years, and already has developed a style of his own. He has devoted his heart and mind to the Way of Painting and has obtained artistic maturity. This spring Sōen told me that he would be returning home and said: 'I desire to have one of your paintings to keep as the most precious possession of my abode and bequeath to my descendants as an heirloom.' For several days he kept making the same request repeatedly. Although my eyes are misty, my spirit exhausted, and I do not know what to paint to satisfy such a request, his determination has

touched me. So I took up my worn brush and paint this image with light ink. Upon handing it to him I said as follows: "I once traveled to the Great Empire of Song,<sup>3</sup> crossed the great Yangtze River northward and reached Luo (Beijing). There I looked for a painting teacher. However, painters [who can paint] pure and excellent works turned out to be rare. At that time Zhang Yousheng 長有聲 and Li Zai 李在 (act. 1426-1435) were famous. [I/people] followed [their teaching]. [They] taught the mastery of coloring as well as the principle of splashed-ink painting. After several years I returned to my homeland (Japan), only to know more clearly that my painting predecessors, Josetsu [如拙, act. c. 1405-23] and Shūbun [周文, died c. 1444-50] all followed their masters without embellishing or abbreviating the painting models that were transmitted to them. Having travelled in both China and Japan, the more and more I came to the admiration of lofty spirit as well as the virtuosity of these two masters." In response to the request of this disciple, I humbly brush this inscription.<sup>4</sup>

相陽宗淵藏主從余學畫有年，筆已有典刑，游意於茲藝，勉勵尤深也。今春告歸，謂曰：“願獲翁一圖以欲為我家箕裘青氈。數日於余責之。雖余眼昏心耄不知所以製逼于其志輒拈秃筆、洒淡墨與之曰：余曾入大宋国，北涉大江，经齐鲁郊，至于洛求画师。虽然，挥染清拔者，稀也。于兹长有声并李在二人得时名，相随传设色之旨，兼破墨之法。尊摯而归本邦也。熟悉吾祖如拙、周文两翁制作楷模，皆一乘前辈，非敢增损也。历览支倭之间，而弥仰两翁心識之高妙者乎。應子之求不願嘲書焉。明應乙卯季春中澣日。四明天童第一座老境七十六翁雪舟書。

This long self-reflective preface composed by Sesshū in 1495, twenty-six years after his trip to Ming China, is located between the picture and six eulogistic poems by six leading Zen priests in Kyoto. As we can see from the beginning part, the preface, together with the painting, is a response to the request of Sesshū's pupil Josui Sōen (如水宗淵, act. late 15<sup>th</sup>–early 16<sup>th</sup> century), who begged for a painting from his teacher before heading back to his hometown in Sagami Province.<sup>5</sup> This specific scenario indicates that this writing is more than a normal farewell essay, but functions more as crucial instruction for a departing pupil who is going to disseminate the teacher's artistic skill and philosophy independently.<sup>6</sup>

After a brief humble introduction to the specific context in which the preface was

composed, Sesshū offers an autobiographic precis recollecting his travel to Ming China, and in the end delivers his comments on painters in Ming China and Japan. In his recent thought-provoking article on *Splashed-Ink Landscape*, Yukio Lippit insightfully infers that the preface functions as a brush-to-brush transmission of artisanal secrets between the teacher Sesshū and the pupil Sōen, emulating the mind-to-mind transmission of the Zen essence in the master-disciple relationship.<sup>7</sup> By presenting this autobiographic passage, Sesshū as the teacher not only proclaimed his belonging to the prestigious Josetsu-Shūbun lineage but also advised the orthodox path for Sōen's future painting career.

To readers with an adequate knowledge of Chinese and Japanese art history, it is inevitable to notice the strong opinion Sesshū holds in this preface: Due to his disappointment in the Beijing art circle, he turned back to Japan and emphasized his great appreciation of the achievement of Josetsu and Tenshō Shūbun, whom he claimed as precursors of his own painting lineage. He also pointed out the “advantages” of these two Japanese painting masters: Their painting styles “all followed their predecessors<sup>8</sup> without addition or subtraction.”

Curiously, such a statement is not consistent with what we can observe in Sesshū's art practice. Those paintings executed after his travel to China exemplify revolutionary visual change when compared to those in the Josetsu and Shūbun tradition. Indeed, his post-1469 oeuvre presents a strong affinity with contemporary Ming paintings, especially the recent styles popular in Ming Zhe School 浙派.<sup>9</sup> More importantly, it was these new

elements and styles that emerged after his trip to the continent that distinguished him in Japanese painting circles, and eventually assisted him in inaugurating a new painting epoch.

To what extent did Sesshū's travel to Ming China influence and enrich his art vocabulary and style? Where did this Japanese painter stand in the mid-fifteenth century Sino-Japanese art exchange? How can we understand the discrepancy between Sesshū's assertion in the preface to *Splashed-Ink Landscape*, and his actual painting practice? In this thesis, I will explore possible answers to these questions in a case study of Sesshū's *Autumn and Winter Landscapes* 秋冬山水図 (*Shūtou sansui zu*, Fig. 1-2 & 1-3), by comparing them with paintings by Zhe School masters Dai Jin (戴進, 1388-1462) and Li Zai (李在, active 1426-1435). Executed in the transitional period between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, by which time Sesshū had reached his full artistic maturity, *Autumn and Winter Landscapes* were approximately contemporary works of *Splashed-Ink Landscape*. By comparing this diptych with paintings by Dai Jin and Li Zai, I will illustrate the degree of influence of the two Ming landscape masters on Sesshū's late works, and will consider whether or not Sesshū's critical thought expressed in the preface for *Splashed-ink Landscape* was reflected in this set of paintings. I argue that Sesshū's *Autumn and Winter Landscapes* demonstrate a distinct acceptance of the Ming styles while he still remained attached to some aesthetic preference deriving from his Japanese stylistic lineage.

As what will be articulated in Chapter II and Chapter IV, Sesshū's paintings



demonstrate a strong stylistic connection with Ming dynasty Zhe School paintings by sharing similar motifs, composition and brushwork features. The two Ming painters I use as comparisons are not picked out of nowhere. Dai Jin, a productive painter from the 1420s to the early 1460s, was regarded as the most influential of the early fifteenth century professional and court painters. Although Dai Jin's active period was at least six years prior to Sesshū's visit to China,<sup>10</sup> the new fashion in style established by him remained dominant in Zhejiang and Beijing (these two regions were important stops during Sesshū's travels). Some of Sesshū's works, for instance, *Eka Cutting Off His Arms* 慧可断臂图 (*Eka danpi zu*, Fig. 1-4) justify that Sesshū was able to imitate Dai Jin's paintings (Fig. 1-5) or their copies. Li Zai was one of the two painters in Beijing mentioned in Sesshū's preface for *Splashed-Ink Landscape* and from whom Sesshū's had learned painting skills.<sup>11</sup>

I will build my thesis through three successive chapters. Chapter II offers a brief overview of the artistic background of Sesshū in Japan. Issues such as the previous art exchange between China and Japan, society's expectation for priest-painters in fifteenth-century Japanese culture, and the different roles landscape paintings played in the Japanese Buddhist monastic life will be discussed. This will help to explain what artistic preparation Sesshū acquired before his first-hand observation of China. In Chapter III, I will briefly review Sesshū's biography and his travel to China based on the episode of Sesshū's artistic activities scattered throughout historical records and individual writings. Chapter IV will take a look at the fifteenth-century art circle in Ming China and

a broad picture of Sino-Japanese relationships. An introduction to the two major painting schools at that time, Zhe School and Wu School, will be offered. To help reconstruct the scene Sesshū would observe during his stay in China, I will examine the tradition and revolution in painting practice of Zhe School masters in the first half of the fifteenth century. In Chapter V, I will concentrate on a stylistic comparison between *Autumn and Winter Landscapes* and their Ming contemporary paintings, most by Dai Jin and Li Zai. Particularly, I will study the selective assimilation of Ming elements with special focus on spatial arrangement and brushwork.

As an influential painter who launched a new epoch of painting in the Muromachi period, Sesshū has been the protagonist of extensive scholarship for decades. His relationship with Ming art circles has also attracted much scholarly attention. In her MA thesis<sup>12</sup>, Ng Yuk Lan provides a comprehensive study on Sesshū's life and art. She also includes translations of many first-hand resources from Chinese and Japanese texts.<sup>13</sup> A recent article by Yukio Lippit offers an inspiring study of Sesshū's artistic subjectivity within his art and writing.<sup>14</sup> Shimaō Arata, a Japanese specialist on Sesshū, in one of his recent essays has corrected and clarified for popular audiences many misunderstandings of Sesshū's life and practice, and contextualized Sesshū's words and activities in the original time and situation.<sup>15</sup> In his newly published book discussing landscape painting within the East Asian scope, Shi Shouqian analyzes how the Chinese books on painting could have influenced Sesshū's knowledge and taste. Another paper in the same book locates Sesshū's travel to Beijing in the history of Chinese Ming dynasty painting, thus

giving readers a new perspective to this topic other than those traditional approaches.<sup>16</sup>

In the aspect of the Japanese painting tradition within which Sesshū received his primary training, two articles by Richard Stanley-Baker attentively point out that the direct stylistic connection between Ming and Japanese painting can be traced back to one or two generations prior to Sesshū's time. In his study on a landscape painting attributed to Shūbun, Yoshiaki Shimizu expounds the transitional *Shūbunesque* style between Shūbun and Sesshū. As a background, Yukio Lippit's doctoral dissertation provides a helpful review of pre-1600 Muromachi painters, as well as a thought-provoking discussion on the concept of "Sōgen-ga 宋元畫" within a Japanese context.<sup>17</sup> In his paper on Zhe School's influence in Japan, Taiwan scholar Chen Jiejun contributes to the topic by bringing in his lens as a specialist in Chinese art.<sup>18</sup> These scholarships epitomize a well-established ground for further exploration of my thesis.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> It is widely accepted that Sesshū was the most, probably the only, well-known painter who had been to China during the Muromachi period (1336-1573).

<sup>2</sup> Jon Carier Covell, *Under the Seal of Sesshū* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1975), 16.

<sup>3</sup> Here the Great Empire of Song refers to China.

<sup>4</sup> Translation based on Covell, *Under the Seal*, 22-23 and Yukio Lippit, "Of Modes and Manners in Japanese Ink Painting: Sesshū's Splashed Ink Landscape of 1495," *The Art Bulletin* 94 (2012): 61.

<sup>5</sup> However, Sōen ended up in Kyoto. See Lippit, "Of Modes and Manners," 50-77.

<sup>6</sup> Lippit sees this painting as a message intended for the Gozan in Kyoto. He claims that

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Sesshū anticipated Sōen would transport the painting to the capital to gather inscriptions from senior monks, therefore to author a redemptive, valedictory address to his high-ranking contemporaries there. See Lippit “Of Modes and Manners,” 53.

<sup>7</sup> Lippit, “Of Modes and Manners,” 50-77.

<sup>8</sup> However, no clues about who these “predecessors” were can be found in this inscription.

<sup>9</sup> Further introduction to Zhe School will be given in Chapter IV.

<sup>10</sup> Dai Jin died in 1462.

<sup>11</sup> The painter Sesshū had studied with, Li Zai, was in his late 80s (Kaiqian Jian 簡楷倩, “Xuezhou sanshui huihua zhong chanyi de biaoqian 雪舟山水繪畫中禪意的表現 (Presentation of Zen in Sesshū's Suibokuga Paintings)” *Shuhua yishu xuekan 書畫藝術學刊*, no. 4 (2008): 497). Zhang Yousheng (長有聲), another Chinese painting teacher Sesshū mentioned in his inscription on the Splashed-Ink Landscape, was very likely a miswritten name of Zhang Yousheng (張有聲). Zhang was not a major painter in the history of Ming dynasty art since little information is available about him in the literature except for the fact that he was somehow influenced by the Zhe School (Jianhua Yu 俞劍華, *Zhongguo huihuashi 中國繪畫史 [History of Chinese Painting]* (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館, 1962), 295).

<sup>12</sup> Yuk Lan Ng, “Sesshū and Chinese Academic Painting,” (Master’s thesis, University of Hong Kong, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> However, while Sesshū’s travel to Ming China is reviewed in detail, Ng’s thesis does not touch the discontinuity in Sesshū’s own styles after his exposure to Ming art in person, but lays its focus on the relationship between Sesshū’s painting and Southern Song paintings.

<sup>14</sup> Lippit, “Of Modes and Manners,” 50-77.

<sup>15</sup> Arata Shimao 島尾新, “Watashi no sesshū zō 私の雪舟像” in *Sesshū e no tabi 雪舟への旅* ed. Yamaguchi Kenritsu Bijutsukan 山口県立美術館 (Yamaguchi-shi, Japan: “Sesshū e no Tabi” Ten Jikkō Iinkai 「雪舟への旅」展実行委員会, 2006), 218-225.

<sup>16</sup> Shouqian Shi 石守謙, *Yidong de taohuayuan: dongya shijie zhong de shanshuihua 移动的桃花源- 東亞世界中的山水畫 [Peach-Blossom Spring in Moving: Landscape Painting in East Asia]* (Taipei, Taiwan: Yunchen wenhua, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> Yukio Lippit, “The Birth of Japanese Painting History: Kanō Artist, Authors, and Authenticators of the Seventeenth Century,” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2003).

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<sup>18</sup> Jiejìn Chen 陳階晉, “Luetan zhepai zai riben de huixiang 略談浙派在日本的迴響 [Study of Zhe School’s Influence in Japan],” in *Zhuisuo zhepai 追索浙派 [Tracing the Che school in Chinese painting]*, ed. Jiejìn Chen 陳階晉 and Lai Yuzhi 賴毓芝 (Taipei, Taiwan: Guo li gu gong bo wu yuan 國立故宮博物院 [National Palace Museum], 2008), 234-243.

## CHAPTER II

### MUROMACHI PAINTINGS FROM EARLY TO MID-FIFTEENTH CENTURY

#### **Collecting Activity of Chinese Painting since the Twelfth Century**

As early as the sixth century, Japan started to import painters from China (and Korea) to aid in the construction and decoration of Buddhist temples. The skills of these immigrant painters, together with the most recent knowledge of art trends on the continent, were passed down through generations and formed one of the most important sources for later Japanese painting.<sup>1</sup> The trade and cultural communion between China and Japan proceeded through the following centuries and new art resources were continuously introduced to Japan.

In the late twelfth century, Zen, one of the most influential schools of Mahayana Buddhism, which originated in China, was introduced to Japan.<sup>2</sup> Zen monasteries strategically established strong affiliation with Ashikaga shōguns and the powerful local daimyos. They quickly developed to become the pivotal intersecting point in Sino-Japan cultural exchanges and the major cultural centers in the Muromachi period. Temples in the Gozan 五山 (“Five Mountains”) system<sup>3</sup> in the Rinzai sect were regarded as Meccas of learning for both warriors and courtiers. In these Zen monasteries, the masters not only taught Zen and other Buddhist doctrines, but also Chinese culture, which was considered a higher culture with regard to poetry, classic literary works, art, etc.<sup>4</sup>

The prosperity of Zen temples stimulated additional need for paintings in

monasteries, such as *chinsō* 頂相<sup>5</sup> and ink landscape paintings, a new form of painting introduced to Japan in the twelfth century. This passion continued throughout the Muromachi period when Zen monks, especially Zen monks in the Rinzai School, actively brought Chinese culture and art into Japan.<sup>6</sup> During this process, paintings from China entered the art collections of Japanese monasteries and the shōgunate in abundance.<sup>7</sup>

Two extant inventories of Chinese painting collections, *Butsunichi-an kōmotsu mokuroku* 佛日庵公物目録 (herein after *Butsunichi-an*) and *Gyobutsu on'e mokuroku* 御物御絵目録 (herein after *Gyomotsu on'e*), can give us a glimpse into the composition of these collections in the fourteenth and fifteenth century. *Butsunichi-an* was compiled in the mid-fourteenth century by *Butsunichi-an* 佛日庵, a subtemple of the Engaku-ji 円覚寺 in Kamakura 鎌倉. In the entry, one can see that most of the paintings came from the brush of Chinese Zen-priests. Out of the eighty-four paintings in total, fifty-nine are *chinsō* and *dōshakuga* 道释画<sup>8</sup> while only ten paintings are landscapes.<sup>9</sup> Seven of these paintings are done by Muxi 牧谿 (13<sup>th</sup> century), a Southern Song dynasty Zen-painter who was famous for his spontaneous brushwork.

*Gyobutsu on'e*<sup>10</sup> was the inventory of Ashikaga shōgun's Chinese art collection, compiled by the shōgun's art advisor and collection curator Nōami 能阿彌 (1397-1471). Although paintings by Muxi still form a large part of the collection, *Gyobutsu on'e* demonstrates a new fashion by collecting Chinese paintings by Song dynasty (970-1279) court painters, especially those by Liang Kai 梁楷<sup>11</sup> (act. 12<sup>th</sup> century-early 13<sup>th</sup> century), Ma Yuan 馬遠 (ca. 1160-1225), Ma Lin 馬麟 (act. 1190-1224) and Xia Gui 夏圭 (act.

1180 -1230). All of these painters were active during the regime of Emperor Ningzong 宋寧宗 (1168-1224, reign 1194-1224).<sup>12</sup>

As a natural consequence of more and more paintings entering Japanese Buddhist temple collections, temples started to build independent painting studios and employed *ebusshi* 絵仏師, painters working for Buddhist temples.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, they started to encourage their own members to take part in painting practice and incorporate ink painting styles and techniques they learned from the imported Chinese paintings. At first, the most common way to study ink painting was by imitating paintings imported from China. According to the research by Yukio Lippit, by the mid-fifteenth century, six modes of “modal painting” based on different Chinese masters were established: Xia Gui, Muxi, Liang Kai, Ma Yuan, Sun Junze (孫君澤, fl. 13th century), and Yujian (玉澗, act. early to mid-13th century). Among these modes, the ones following Xia Gui’s style were most prominent.<sup>14</sup>

As time went on, Japanese painters gradually mastered the idioms from China and started to generate their own style traditions.<sup>15</sup> However, while the Southern Song court paintings were usually viewed as the most important exemplars for Muromachi painters, styles also derived from the Northern Song painters Fan Kuan 范寬 (10<sup>th</sup>-early 11<sup>th</sup> century), Guo Xi 郭熙 (ca. 1023-1085), and Li Cheng 李成 (ca. 916-967). The Northern Song painters were later revived during the Jin and Yuan dynasties and held their own place in Japanese art circles. The style of these artists was usually categorized as *koyō* 旧様, or “old style”.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, *shin’yō*<sup>17</sup> 新様 (lit. = “new style”) was dominant in



the fifteenth century. The two Zen priest-painters highly praised in Sesshū's inscription on the *Splashed-Ink Landscape*, Josetsu and Shūbun, were two of the most outstanding painters excelling in *shin'yō* of the early fifteenth century.

Although few records concerning the life of Josetsu are extant today, we can reconstruct the basic image of him based on some supporting resources. This monk-painter, who probably worked as a professional or semi-professional painter at Shōkoku-ji 相國寺, was most likely hired during the tenure of the sixth abbot, Zekkai Chūshin 絕海中津 (1336-1405).<sup>18</sup> Due to the intimate connection between the Ashikaga shōguns and Shōkoku-ji, Josetsu also worked for the shōgun's commissions occasionally. Shūbun, on the other hand, has a much clearer profile in history. He is usually regarded by art historians as the successor (or the direct pupil) of Josetsu, working in Shōkoku-ji as a priest-painter. However, compared to Josetsu, Shūbun was a much more important figure in the bureaucracy of Shōkoku-ji. While Josetsu served as a priest painter solely, Shūbun also held the position of *Densu* 殿司,<sup>19</sup> that is, he oversaw the temple's construction and maintenance.<sup>20</sup> In addition, he received a stipend from the Ashikaga shōguns, indicating his close relationship with the latter.<sup>21</sup>

Strongly influenced by Chinese "modal paintings," the collections from the Muromachi period show that the Japanese had a constant interest in paintings from the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279). As the leading Zen painters who were active several decades before Sesshū, Josetsu and Shūbun are the best examples to demonstrate such a tendency.<sup>22</sup> The *Catching a Catfish with a Gourd* 瓢鮎図 (*Byōnenzu*, Fig. 2-1) by

Josetsu<sup>23</sup> clearly followed the “one-corner” composition that originated in Ma Yuan’s paintings, such as *Walking on a Mountain Path in Spring* 山徑春行 (*Shanjing chunxing*, Fig. 2-2). In both paintings, the primary subjects are pushed to the lower-left corner, leaving the other part of the paintings almost empty. The bamboo branches in Josetsu’s painting elegantly extend above the fisherman, just as the flying willow twigs crown the walking scholar in Ma Yuan’s painting. The “one-corner” style and the figure crowned with tree branches can also be seen in Ma Yuan’s *Gentleman Viewing the Moon* 高士觀月 圖 (*Kōshi kangetsuzu*, Fig. 2-3), which is now in the MOA Museum of Art in Shizuoka, Japan.

Although authentic paintings by Shūbun still remain arguable,<sup>24</sup> one can observe a strong stylistic affinity between the paintings done in Shūbun-style and the Southern Song paintings. In *Reading in the Bamboo Study* 竹齋讀書圖 (*Chikusai dokushozu*, Fig. 2-4), the painting that many scholars believe is most likely to be authentically Shūbun’s,<sup>25</sup> the “one-corner” style is still a key characteristic: the lower-right corner is densely filled with images painted with clear and darker ink strokes while the mountains, trees and the embankment on the left side are only lightly depicted. This aesthetic taste was inherited by Shūbun’s followers. In another landscape in the Shūbun-style from the late fifteenth century (Fig. 2-5), many typical visual elements of Southern Song paintings can be observed: the mild slope beside the river in the foreground, the vertiginous rocky peak with big pine trees<sup>26</sup> and small human figures in the middle ground, and ambiguous remote mountains and river shores suggested by light ink-washes and strokes on the other

side of the background. Further, the subtle balance between the dark and light ink, linear strokes and planar ink-washes, and solidness and emptiness are also typical Southern Song features.

By the late fifteenth century, styles of Southern Song painting masters had been absorbed by Japanese painters and impacted their practice profoundly. According to an entry in *Onryōken nichiroku* 蔭涼軒日録 from 1485, the artist Kanō Masanobu 狩野正信 (1434-1530) was summoned by a patron<sup>27</sup> to paint ten paintings for interior decoration. Concerning four proposed sketches by the artist, the entry commented:

[The sketches were] painted in the style of Ma Yuan. The paintings in the Gosho-in of the Saishi-an, however, are already in the style of Ma Yuan. The style of Li Lung-mien [Kung-lin] was taken under consideration. In the patron's opinion ... there are already among those [in the Hall?] paintings in Li Lung-mien style. And there are numerous Ma Yuan style paintings. The consultations continued.<sup>28</sup>

As we see in this text, by the time this entry was completed, first-class Japanese painters such as Kanō Masanobu were able to work in a variety of Chinese painting styles, most of which were based on or imitations of the styles of Southern Song court painters like Ma Yuan.

Nevertheless, when juxtaposing original works from the Southern Song court and those by Shūbun and his fifteenth century followers, one can observe the similarity as well as the distinction between these two groups of painters.

The aesthetic ideal prevailing in the Southern Song court is best reflected in the most representative form of Southern Song art: small scale paintings on silk fans (and album leaves). In paintings of this form, the artists like Ma Yuan and Xia Gui depict the misty,

exquisite charm of the landscape of Hangzhou, the capital of the time. The geographic soft feature of this Jiangnan region<sup>29</sup> worked seamlessly with the elite taste of the highly-cultured royal family<sup>30</sup> and produced everlasting masterpieces such as *Lake View with a Palace Lady Riding a Deer* (Fig. 2-6) by Ma Lin, son of Ma Yuan in the thirteenth century. In the painting, the artist carefully situates the pictorial motifs in the lower right corner, all executed with clear but refined brushstrokes. The misty, elusive scenery of the left space, which takes up about four fifths of the whole picture, is implied with pale ink-washes and fine lines indicating the ripple on the water.

The pictorial part of Josetsu's *Catching a Catfish with a Gourd* 瓢鮎図 (*Byōnenzu*, Fig. 2-1) can be seen as one of the limited examples following this fashion. However, because the small formats of fan or album leaf require an intimate and close viewing circle, thus restricting the capability to publicly display the paintings, they did not enjoyed significant success in Muromachi Japan. In this era, paintings were popularly used in interior decoration to exhibit the owner's power and artistic tastes. In the early fifteenth century, hanging scroll paintings, used to decorate the interior space of buildings, were in fashion among the aristocratic, military and Gozan monastic elite resident halls.<sup>31</sup>

Another entry in *Onryōken nichiroku* describes preparations for a traditional festival *tanabata* 七夕:

In the early morning, people presented flower vases ... Two pairs of enclosing *byōbu* [folding screens] were erected to decorate the apartment. Twenty-five scroll paintings were hung all around. There were sixty-five flower vases, and it was difficult to find enough flowers for all the receptacles. Other articles were substituted [for flowers] ... The atmosphere was indeed awe-inspiring.<sup>32</sup>

The fads in the fifteenth-century Japanese art circle were a remote and discrete echo of the styles that had been in fashion since the twelfth century in China. In fact, they are a natural consequence of the continuous absorbing and transformation of styles from the continent throughout Southern Song, Yuan and early Ming dynasty. At the same time, the arts in China were also experiencing a transmutation based on their own traditions.

Although the Mongol rulers during the Yuan dynasty no longer supported the art popular in the Southern Song dynasty after the fall of the latter in 1279, this tradition was retained in the region of South-east China and developed into a new hanging scroll format. Works by Sun Junze, a fourteenth century painter from Zhejiang Province, had significant impact on the styles of Muromachi painting. In a pair of hanging scrolls entitled *Pavilion and Landscapes* 樓閣山水圖 (*Rōkaku sansuizu*, Fig. 2-7), now in the Seikadō Collection, the typical square format from the Southern Song dynasty is elongated into a hanging scroll format, while the basic motifs such as the giant pine trees, palatial pavilions, angular rocks filled with “ax-cut strokes”<sup>33</sup> and distant mountains remain the same as those from Southern Song paintings (Fig. 2-8).<sup>34</sup>

The new trends that emerged in the newly founded Ming dynasty, which will be explained in detail in Chapter IV, can be seen in fifteenth century Japanese painting practices as well. Favoring one-corner or one-sided composition was no longer the only fashion in Japan. Instead, Japanese painters started to imitate those Zhe school painters by emphasizing centralization in their composition. This can be exemplified in *Color of Stream and Hue of Mountain* 水色巒光 (*Suishoku rankōzu*, Fig. 2-9), another painting

quite probably done by Shūbun himself. In the painting, the artist makes a peculiar combination of the one-corner norms, which derive from Southern Song tradition, and the central mountain norm, which comes from the new manifestation of the Northern Song monumental landscape style in Zhe school paintings.<sup>35</sup>

### **Art and Cultural Milieu of Gozan Monastic Life**

As a consequence of the active importing of Chinese art and culture in the Gozan monastery circle, Muromachi Zen priests eventually incorporated landscape painting into their cultural and social life. It was under this circumstance that a new form of painting, *shigajiku* 詩畫軸, came into history. *Shigajiku*, usually translated as “poem-and-painting scrolls,” allowed a way to combine painting, calligraphy, poems and prose in one scroll (usually a hanging scroll). As a form with more poetic dimensions and religious implications, it gradually prevailed in Gozan starting in the late fourteenth century.

The elite Gozan monks not only looked up to Buddhist knowledge from the continent, but also imitated their Chinese priest-teachers from Song and Yuan dynasties in all aspects. As was common in China, early Muromachi Zen monks’ interest extended to other important Chinese intellectual traditions: including literati or *bunjin* 文人 culture, Taoism and Confucianism, and Neo-Confucianism. Meanwhile, they also actively participated in secular activities and introduced literati lifestyles and ways of social communication into monastic life. The form of landscape paintings, which was widely accepted as the symbol of spiritual freedom, was gradually brought into the Gozan elite

circle.<sup>36</sup>

An extant text by Chūhō En'i 仲方円伊 (1355-1413) helps us to picture how a *shigajiku* was produced within the Gozan elite circle. First, an advanced Zen priest composed a Chinese poem on a narrow, long hanging scroll. Then a professional painter, probably a monk-painter working in the temple, was requested to paint an image to complete the poetic scene. With the primary scroll, Chūhō invited his friends to have a gathering and asked everyone to compose inscriptions, often Chinese poems, on the left space on top of the long hanging scroll. Eventually, the scroll was sent to a highly-respected Zen priest, who would ask another monk to compose the preface.<sup>37</sup> From this description, we can see that the final work resulted from cooperation between several Zen-priests and professional painters in the Gozan system and performed an important role to connect these individuals from different places.

Two facts extrapolated from this cultural practice attract my attention. First, by comparing the Gozan monks to their Chinese prototypes, we learn that the *shigajiku* fashion—interaction between literati with the assistance of professional painters—shares great similarity with the fashion in late Yuan and early Ming literati circle,<sup>38</sup> which occurred much later than the time when the Southern Song painting styles were dominant on the continent. That is to say, the Muromachi Zen monks were aware of the contemporary intellectual life styles of late Yuan and Ming dynasties. Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that the painting styles burgeoning on the continent were introduced to Japan simultaneously. However, what we can observe in history is that these new trends

in painting hardly surpassed the impact of Southern Song styles in the Muromachi painting circle, and remained in a subordinate position.

Secondly, the status of monk-painters in the Gozan system was comparatively insignificant in the early Muromachi period. In Chūhō's account, which is no later than 1413, no information was provided concerning the name of the painter. Instead, it was the inscriptions by the prestigious Zen monks that were essential to such a collaborative work. For example, within the work of Josetsu and Shūbun, who are widely regarded as the top Zen-painters of their time, we can rarely find any painting bearing their signatures. One possible explanation would be that these Zen-painters usually received their training in temple studios that had a strong focus on painting; meanwhile, their lives were intensely engaged with successive commissions either from the temple or the shōguns. Such a lifestyle left them less time and freedom in developing other literati skills such as poem-composing and calligraphy in contrast to the elite priests. An anecdote from Kitsusan Minchō 明兆 (1351-1431), a contemporary of Josetsu, shows that the painting practice of the artist's life was so intense that he could not even pause to meet his ailing mother.

Minchō's old mother became seriously sick in Awajino, therefore she wanted to see Minchō. By that time Minchō was in Tōfukuji drawing the *Five Hundred Arhats*. Since he had not even finished half of this project, even though this was against his mother's will, he could not leave the project of Buddhist painting. Therefore, [Minchō] painted a self-portrait and sent it to his mother to console her ...<sup>39</sup>

By the mid-fifteenth century, when Sesshū set off for his travel to Ming China, the Muromachi art circle, especially the Gozan art circle, had developed its unique artistic



atmosphere after 200 years. As a Zen-painter working professionally at the major Gozan temple Shōkoku-ji, Sesshū received his training in painting in the art studios within the temple under the instruction of certain painting teachers. It was by imitating the imported Chinese modal paintings, especially those by famous Southern Song painters, that he absorbed their fundamental skills and aesthetic taste. In order to become a competitive painter of the time, the artist had to be able to master various styles of the Chinese models such as Ma Yuan and Xia Gui simultaneously. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the influence from later Chinese painting practice could not be observed within the Japanese art circle. Priest-painters at Shōkoku-ji were producing their works to meet different commissions both from the shōguns and the temple. In the poem-exchanging communications between high-ranking literati monks, who were emulating their Chinese contemporaries in late Yuan and early Ming dynasty, these Zen-painters were also requested to paint paintings on particular themes to accompany the text. Although many of these artists did not hold a high official position in the monasteries and their names were unrecorded on their works, they played a significant role in the integrating of Chinese images and aesthetic tastes into Japanese culture.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Yukio Lippit, “The Birth of Japanese Painting History: Kanō Artist, Authors, and Authenticators of the Seventeenth Century” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2003), 25-26.

<sup>2</sup> The teaching of Zen was quickly adopted by the Kamakura shōguns, who overpowered the imperial court in Kyoto and were the actual rulers of the nation. By the following Muromachi period, Zen had become the dominant Buddhist School in Japan.

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<sup>3</sup> Around 1336 the focus of Zen activities in Japan shifted from Kamakura to the Kyoto region, among which the group of Zen temples in Kyoto known as *Gozan* (five-mountain system) became the center during the early and mid-Muromachi period. These temples were the religious and cultural center of the society. The Zen priests in *Gozan* played their roles as agents for the Sino-Japan trade supported by the shōgunate; therefore, they were able to acquire the most up-to-date knowledge in Chinese culture. See Paul Varley, “Cultural Life in the Muromachi Period” in *Of Water and Ink: Muromachi-Period Paintings from Japan 1392-1568*, ed. Watanabe, Akiyoshi, Hiroshi Kanazawa, H. Paul Varley, Julia P. Henshaw, and Cynthia Jo Fogliatti (Detroit, Mich: Founders Society, Detroit Institute of Arts. 1986), 21-37.

<sup>4</sup> Tsuneko S. Sadao and Stephanie Wada, *Discovering the Arts of Japan: A Historical Overview* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2003), 140.

<sup>5</sup> *Chinsō* is a Zen master’s portrait offered to a disciple as acknowledgement of the latter’s religious enlightenment. See Lippit, “The Birth of Japanese Painting History,” 34.

<sup>6</sup> The earliest record of importing Chinese paintings in Japan can be traced back to the Kamakura period (1185-1333) based on an inventory in Engaku-ji 円覚寺. See Yongli Lin 林永利, “Research of the portrait picture monk Sesson at Moromachi time 室町時代畫僧雪村人物畫之研究,” *Shuhua yishu xuekan 書畫藝術學刊*, no. 6 (2009): 65-80. <http://cart.ntua.edu.tw/upload/vercatalog/ver.006/ver.00606.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Sadao and Wada, *Discovering the Arts of Japan*, 141.

<sup>8</sup> *Dōshakuga* refers to paintings on Daoist and Buddhist themes.

<sup>9</sup> Ng Yuk Lan, “Sesshū and Chinese Academic Painting” (Master’s thesis, University of Hong Kong, 1997), 11.

<sup>10</sup> Gail Capitol Weigl, “The Reception of Chinese Painting Models in Muromachi Japan,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 35, no. 3 (1980): 257-272.

<sup>11</sup> Unlike the other three court painters, Liang Kai was importantly renowned for his Zen-themed paintings, most of which were probably produced after his resignation from the royal painting academy.

<sup>12</sup> Curiously, Muxi, whose name frequently appears in the earlier *Butsunichi-an* inventory, was active fifty or more years later than the four painters who worked in Emperor Ningzong’s court. *Butsunichi-an* was first compiled in 1320, and later edited and revised in 1363 and 1365. *Gyobutsu on’e* was compiled during the regime of

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Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1436-1490, reign 1449-1473) by Nōami, indicating that the text was completed between 1449 and 1471. This was about a hundred years after the *Butsunichi-an* was done. Why did Muxi, who appeared later in history, enter into the collections in Japan before the other major Chinese painters who were his precursors?

The anachronistic phenomenon described above pushes us to scrutinize the historical background of the Sino-Japanese art exchange in the fourteenth and fifteenth century. The art collecting of Chinese paintings in Japan was significantly stimulated by the golden period of Sino-Japanese trade during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Considering the proliferation of Chinese painting in the collection of Buddhist temples and the shōguns, expertise on Chinese painting, especially knowledge of renowned painters and the ability to work on authenticity issues, also enjoyed increasing demands. As a result, writing on Chinese art history and art theories were introduced to Japan together with the works of art in the exchange. Among these books, *Tuhui baojian* 圖繪寶鑑 (Lit.= Precious mirror for examining painting), an encyclopedia book on Chinese painting published in 1366 was probably the most important instruction manual for Japanese collectors and the first book that systematically introduced and promoted Southern Song academy painters such as Ma Yuan and Xia Gui. Travelling to Japan in the early fifteenth century, *Tuhui baojian* presumably evoked an interest in these painters in Japan. Additionally, the complete dispersal of art collections during drastic transitions between Yuan and Ming dynasties between 1360s and 1500s also enabled Japanese buyers more accessibility to paintings which were exclusively circulating in Chinese elite circles. Consequently, paintings by famous Southern Song academy painters, which enjoyed a much higher reputation than Zen painters like Muxi in the mainland, found their way to major Japanese collections. See Shouqian Shi 石守謙, “Huashi zhishi de chuanbo: Xia Wenyan Tuhuibaojian yu Xuezhou de yuedu 畫史知識的傳播--夏文彥《圖繪寶鑑》與雪舟的閱讀 (Transmission of the Knowledge in Painting History: Influence of Tuhuibaojian by Xia Wenyan on Sesshū’s Reading,” chap. 5 in *Yidong de taohuayuan: dongya shijie zhong de shanshuihua 移动的桃花源--東亞世界中的山水畫 [Peach-Blossom Spring in Moving: Landscape Painting in East Asia]* (Taipei, Taiwan: Yunchen wenhua, 2012), 219-276.

<sup>13</sup> Lippit, “The Birth of Japanese Painting History,” 31.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>15</sup> Akiyoshi Watanabe, “The Reception of Chinese Painting in Medieval Japan” in *Of Water and Ink: Muromachi-Period Paintings from Japan 1392-1568*, ed. Watanabe, Akiyoshi, Hiroshi Kanazawa, H. Paul Varley, Julia P. Henshaw, and Cynthia Jo Fogliatti (Detroit, Mich: Founders Society, Detroit Institute of Arts. 1986), 39-46.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph D. Parker, *Zen Buddhist Landscape Arts of Early Muromachi Japan (1336-1573)* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1999), 87.

<sup>17</sup> The term *shin’yo* was used to refer to those styles derived from Northern Song Chinese paintings.

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<sup>18</sup> Parker, *Zen Buddhist landscape arts*, 67.

<sup>19</sup> *Densu* was then called *Tokan* in imitation of vernacular Chinese. Jon Carier Covell, *Under the Seal of Sesshū* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1975), 7.

<sup>20</sup> The institutional system of medieval *Gozan* monasteries was usually divided into Eastern and Western divisions. Monks in one division were devoted mostly to religious meditation and learning, while the ones in the other division were responsible for administrative issues. The administrative work would include temple maintenance, property and financial management, and crafts such as painting. Therefore, the large production of paintings was heavily in debt to the service of monks in the painting studios attached to the big temple. See Parker, *Zen Buddhist Landscape*, 86. Shūbun, who was in charge of administrative work at Shōkoku-ji, was plausibly a high-ranked officer in the administrative division.

<sup>21</sup> Ng, “Sesshū and Chinese Academic Painting,” 22.

<sup>22</sup> Although Josetsu and Shūbun were considered the leading Zen painters of the Shōkoku-ji in Kyoto, few reliable works can be found today attributed to them. According to Tanaka, three paintings can be attributed to Josetsu. However, the authentic paintings executed by Shūbun are still waiting for further research. See Ichimatsu Tanaka, *Japanese ink painting: Shūbun to Sesshū* (New York: Weatherhill, 1972), 65-96. In Mason’s *History of Japanese Art*, “Reading in the Bamboo Study” (c. 1446) is considered one of the authentic works done by Shūbun. Penelope Mason, *History of Japanese Art* (New York: Abrams, 1993), 201.

<sup>23</sup> Akiyoshi points out that Josetsu painted this masterpiece for the fourth shōgun Ashikaga Yoshimochi (足利義持, 1386-1428) in a “new mode” (*shin’yo*), which meant the style of the Southern Song court painters like Liang Kai and Ma Yuan. See Watanabe, *Reception of Chinese Painting in Medieval Japan*, 42-43.

<sup>24</sup> Tanaka, *Shūbun to Sesshū*, 65-96.

<sup>25</sup> Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 201.

<sup>26</sup> The two giant pine trees in the middle ground, one bowing leftward and the other extending upwards, are also characteristic elements one can repeatedly see in the Southern Song paintings. For example, *Viewing Plum Blossoms by Moonlight* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and *Landscape with Great Pine* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) by Ma Lin (ca. 1180-after 1256) Hui-shu Lee, *Exquisite moments: West Lake & Southern Song Art* (New York: China Institute Gallery, 2001), 72-75.

<sup>27</sup> The patron was presumably Ashikaga Yoshimasa 足利義政. See Gail Capitol Weigl,

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“The Reception of Chinese Painting Models in Muromachi Japan,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 35, no. 3 (1980): 261.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Jiangnan 江南 is a geographic area in China referring to lands immediately to the south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, including the southern part of the Yangtze Delta.

<sup>30</sup> In Southern Song court, rulers’ artistic taste was formed based on their long-term practice and tradition in art and poetry since the early 11th century, which culminated in the 12th century Huizong Academy.

<sup>31</sup> For in-depth discussion on the intention of this trend in *Bafuku* resident halls, see Weigl, *Reception of Chinese Painting Models*, 257-272.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 264.

<sup>33</sup> An ax-cut stroke uses the side of the brush to create a downward-slanting stroke, suitable for lending a feeling of solid ground, edges and corners to mountains, cliffs, and steep slopes. Because the faces of mountains and rocks executed in this manner seem as if they have been cut with hammers and chisels, this is termed the "ax-cut stroke."

<sup>34</sup> Curiously, as a representative follower of Ma-Xia style in Yuan dynasty, Sun Junze remained obscure in Chinese art history. Most of his extant works are in Japan and have a significant impact on the Japanese painting. Jiejing Chen and Lai Yuzhi, ed., *Zhuisuo zhepai* 追索浙派 [Tracing the Che school in Chinese painting] (Taipei, Taiwan: Guo li gu gong bo wu yuan 國立故宮博物院 [National Palace Museum], 2008), 166. According to Chen Jiejing’s research, because Zhejiang province was the center for Sino-Japanese commerce between twelfth to fifteenth century, the style of Sun Junze, who was a resident of Zhejiang Province, was probably influenced by the artist taste of Japan, which emphasized the decorative aspect of painting. See Jiejing Chen 陳階晉, “Luetan zhepai zai riben de huixiang 略談浙派在日本的迴響 [Study of Zhe School’s Influence in Japan],” in *Zhuisuo zhepai* 追索浙派 [Tracing the Che school in Chinese painting], ed. Jiejing Chen 陳階晉 and Lai Yuzhi 賴毓芝 (Taipei, Taiwan: Guo li gu gong bo wu yuan 國立故宮博物院 [National Palace Museum], 2008), 242.

<sup>35</sup> Richard Stanley-Baker, “Marching in Time: Muromachi Ink Painting and the Zhe School,” in *Painters of the Great Ming: The Imperial Court and the Zhe School*, ed. Barnhart, Richard M., Mary Ann Rogers and Richard Stanley-Baker (Dallas, Tex: Dallas Museum of Art. 1993), 335.

<sup>36</sup> For a detailed introduction to the birth of *shigajiku* in *Gozan* monastic life, see Parker, *Zen Buddhist Landscape*.

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>39</sup> The Chinese text reads: “明兆老母在淡路國臥病，故欲一見兆。兆時在東福寺方畫五百羅漢。其功未半，雖背老母之命，佛像圖畫之事又不忍捨之。因自寫真致之與母，慰其心。） From Kano Einō 狩野永納, *Honchō Gashi* 本朝畫史, accessed October 2, 2012, <http://kindai.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/851680>.

## CHAPTER III

### BIOGRAPHY OF SESSHŪ

#### **Sesshū: Background and His Early Training in Painting**

In 1420, Sesshū was born into a humble samurai Oda 小田 family in Akahama 赤濱, a small village in Bitchū 備中 province (now Okayama Prefecture). According to *Honchō Gashi* 本朝畫史, a book written in the seventeenth century by Kanō Einō 狩野永納 (1631-1697), probably when he was 12 years old Sesshū enrolled at a Rinzai Zen temple Hōfukuji 寶福寺 in the Bitchū Province.<sup>1</sup> In 1440, Sesshū moved to Shōkoku-ji in Kyoto, the head of the five most prominent Zen temples of Japan and probably started his residency as an attendant to Shunrin Shūtō 春林周藤 (d. 1463).<sup>2</sup> By that time the painting master of Shōkoku-ji 相国寺, Shūbun, was in a high point of his career<sup>3</sup> and Sesshū was believed to have been one of Shūbun's pupils according to several records of his contemporaries.

Between 1440 and 1460, Sesshū was commonly referred to by his formal name Tōyō 等揚, or a name referring to the position he held at the temple<sup>4</sup>: Yō Shika 揚知客. Later scholarship also presents that he probably had used the name Sessō Tōyō 拙宗等揚 in his early signatures. Even though no existing paintings with the signature of Tōyō or Yō Shika are available today, some extant paintings bearing the signature of Sessō Tōyō provide us a chance to see the early styles of Sesshū during his stay at Shōkoku-ji.

In 1460, Sesshū left Shōkoku-ji to Suō 周防 Province (now Yamaguchi Province). There he set up his own temple called Unkoku-ji 雲谷寺 with the sponsorship of the local

daimyo Ōuchi 大内 family. One should notice that by the time he left Shōkoku-ji, the top Zen temple in the capital in his time, Sesshū was in his early 40s, which was no longer young given the average lifespan of medieval Japanese people. Two possible reasons could explain his motivation to migrate to the westernmost Yamaguchi province. First, Sesshū's move happened not long before the primary priest-painter at Shōkoku-ji, Shūbun, passed away (around 1462). Before the master's death, the position of official painter for the Ashikaga shōguns was passed to Oguri Sōtan 小栗宗堪 (1413-1481), who was one of Sesshū's peers and pupil of Shūbun. Shimaō Arata proposes that Sesshū's move was propelled by his disappointment in his low status and a dim future at Shōkoku-ji, and he intended to reclaim a new career in Ōuchi's territory.<sup>5</sup> However, considering the fact that Sesshū did not even enter the Ōuchi family temple, Kōshaku-ji, but set up a small temple himself, promoting his status in Suō seems an insufficient reason for this moving. Secondly, although Suō was located in the very west of Japan's main land, it controlled the bottleneck exit from Inland Sea of Japan to the port city Ningbo 寧波, China. Since the early 1460s, the Ōuchi dominated the Sino-Japanese trade and controlled the *kangō-in* 勘合印, voucher released by Chinese government for official trade.<sup>6</sup> As the first stop of many Japanese ships after their voyage to China, Suō likely provided a large number of imported Chinese paintings in the market. This also meant a good opportunity for gifted artists in Chinese-style paintings like Sesshū: The Ōuchi family, with their increasing collection in Chinese art, would need a specialist like Sesshū. Meanwhile, the rich collection of Chinese art, as well as closer connection to the continent, probably impelled Sesshū's migration.



## Sesshū's Travel in Ming China

Even though scholars proposed various presumptions<sup>7</sup> about Sesshū's reason to join the trip to Ming, the only fact we know is that probably seven years after moving to Suō, Sesshū became part of the voyage to the mainland. In late 1467, three ships came from the shōgunate government, the Hosokawa and the Ōuchi formed a diplomatic fleet and departed from Hyōgo 兵庫 and made their first stop at Ningbo in Zhejiang Province in early 1468. Tenyo Seikei 天與清啓 (act. 1450-1470), a Zen priest from Kennin-ji 建仁寺 in Kyoto, was appointed as the chief envoy, and Keian Genju 桂庵玄樹 (1427-1508) from Yamaguchi was in charge of the Ōuchi's ship Teramaru 寺丸.<sup>8</sup> Sesshū's name did not appear in the list of officials, but in a later document of an Ōuchi temple he was referred as "The Purchaser-Priest."<sup>9</sup> Shimaō Arata also proposes that in a time when the technique of photography was not available, it was very likely that Sesshū was commissioned by the delegation to sketch scenery of China, which was quite a common practice among Japanese overseas missions.<sup>10</sup>

In early 1468, the Japanese deputation arrived at Ningbo, the most important harbor in Sino-Japanese trade since the twelfth century. During his stay in Ningbo, Sesshū visited the famous Zen temple Tiantongsi 天童寺 located to the southwest of city center. According to later records, he was warmly welcomed by the temple and was invited to sit in the first seat (the seat next to the Abbot) in the Meditation Hall. Probably very proud of this special experience, Sesshū signed with the honorific title he received, "First Seat of the Meditation Assembly at Tian-tong [temple] in Mt. Si-ming (四明山天童第一座, *Shimyōsan Tendō Daiichiza*)" on many of his works after returning to Japan.<sup>11</sup> Besides Tiantongsi, Sesshū also visited Ayuwangsi 阿育王寺, another major temple in the region

of Ningbo. The memory of the visit was cherished by Sesshū. Two years after his return, he executed a pair of compositions of Ayuwangsi and Jinshansi 金山寺, two monasteries he had visited in Zhejiang and Jiangsu province.<sup>12</sup> The landscapes and scenes he saw on his trip stayed fresh in his mind until the last years of his life, which can be seen in another Jinshansi painting he created for Banri Shūkyū 萬里集九 (b. 1428- d. ca. 1507) in his seventies.<sup>13</sup>

In his preface to *Splashed-Ink Landscape*, Sesshū briefly describes his route from Ningbo to Beijing: I once traveled to the Great Empire of Song<sup>14</sup>, crossed the great Yangtze River northward and reached Luo (Beijing). (余曾入大宋国，北涉大江，經齐鲁郊，至于洛求画師。) Following to the most common route from Ningbo to the capital in the Ming dynasty, many important cities such as Hangzhou, Suzhou and Yangzhou were necessary stops for the Japanese delegation. Hangzhou was the capital of the Southern Song dynasty. By the time Sesshū was visiting, the city was still the major center for paintings highly influenced by Southern Song styles. In all likelihood, as the Priest-purchaser of the Ōuchi family<sup>15</sup> and part of the delegation, Sesshū would have been able to see many paintings in temple collections and dive into the Hangzhou art market to search for works by famous Southern Song painters, whose works had shaped the aesthetic atmosphere he was trained in. In the end of 1468, the official mission eventually reached Beijing after travelling over a thousand miles.

According to records from Japan, Sesshū's painting garnered great fame for him in the capital. In Genryū's *Hantō Bunshū* 半陶文集, even the Ming emperor admired Sesshū's painting:

Sesshū brought his skill in painting and went to China. When the Ming Emperor

saw his paintings, he considered them as the treasure of the nation, and did not allow him to paint without his edict. Then the Emperor designated Sesshū the “First Seat of Mt. Tiantong (Tiantongsi)” to praise his accomplishment in painting.<sup>16</sup>

挾藝達往中華，天子觀其畫，以為國奇寶，非有詔不得畫，遂命為天童名山第一座，以旌其藝焉。

Another legendary story during Sesshū’s stay in Beijing was recorded in Hōfu

Ryōshin’s 呆夫良心 (act. mid-15th century) *Tenkai Togarō ki* 天開圖畫樓記:

The commander of the Ministry of Rites in the Ming Empire, Yao Kui ordered Sesshū to paint on the central wall of their office. He said: “Even though there are over thirty countries sending tributary missions to China, I have never seen paintings [as good as] yours.” In addition, because the Ministry of Rites was in charge of *keju* (Civil Service Examination), all the elite scholars who passed the exam would come to this hall. When these scholars came, Yao asked them to come together and pointed to the painting on the wall, and emphasized that “this is the excellent brushwork by Japanese Zen priest Sesshū. Even a foreigner has such marvelous skills, [as Chinese people], you should also work seriously to reach this level in your own field.” Even in a great empire like China, [Sesshū] was still highly admired [by the people there] as this.

大明國北京禮部院，於中堂之壁，尚書姚公命公令畫之。曰，凡今外藩重譯入貢者，殆到三十餘國，未見如公之所畫。況又本部司科舉事，則中朝名士，莫不升斯堂者，及是時而召諸生指壁上，必言是乃日本上人揚雪舟之墨妙也，外夷而猶有斯絕手，二三子何各勤汝之業，以不至于斯域乎。方於大邦，見加賞嘆若此也。<sup>17</sup>

As a painter, Sesshū also paid special attention to the art trends in the capital. In

his inscription on *Small Landscape Scroll* (Marquis Asano Collection), he recollected that

many top Chinese painters were imitating the styles of Gao Kegong 高克恭 (1248-1310),

a Yuan dynasty painter, and he also followed the trend:

I once travelled to the south (China) and saw paintings by their famous masters. Many of these painters followed the style of Yanjing (Gao Kegong). I also engaged in this fashion. Every time I painted a landscape painting, I would imitate Yanjing.<sup>18</sup>

予嘗南遊，看中朝名手畫，以彥敬為師者多矣，爾來予亦從一時之好，凡畫山水則效顰于彥敬。

Other than imitating the prevailing styles from paintings, Sesshū also looked for painting masters to study painting skills:

There I looked for a painting teacher. However, painters [who can paint] pure and

excellent works turned out to be rare. At that time Zhang Yousheng and Li Zai were famous. [I/people] followed [their teaching]. [They] taught the mastery of coloring as well as the principle of splashed-ink painting.

至于洛求画師。虽然，揮染清拔者，稀也。于兹長有声并李在二人得時名，相隨伝設色之旨，兼破墨之法。

A set of *Four Season Landscapes* (Fig. 3-1~3-4) done in 1468 shows that Sesshū was quite conversant with the prominent styles of Ming painting. These four monumental hanging scrolls demonstrate a strong sense of centrality and symmetry, both of which are important new characteristics of fifteenth century Ming painting. In these paintings, Sesshū also follows Ming court painters' usage of different motifs, including travellers, wineshops, villages, rustic huts, pavilions, and monasteries to render an ideal world in a systematic, logical order. Two paintings he executed for Jin Shi 金湜 (act. mid-15<sup>th</sup> century), a native artist of Ningbo, follow the trends in Ming court by depicting themes of ancient sages and auspicious figures.<sup>19</sup>

As a painter accompanying the delegation, Sesshū's painting practice on one side was driven by personal interest; on the other side it was part of his official responsibility.<sup>20</sup> Many of his paintings were based on direct observation (or the nature sketches he did during the trip) of the sceneries he had seen in China.<sup>21</sup> From Sesshū's later reflection on his experience in China, he valued the sceneries and customs he had observed in Ming, rather than the learning experience with Ming painters:

Within the great Empire of Tang (Ming China), there are no painting teachers. This is not to say that there are no paintings, just that there are no painting teachers. They (the painting teachers) are the mountains such as Mt. Tai, Hua, Heng and Heng; rivers including Yangtze River, Yellow River, Huai River and Ji River; exotic plants and animals; various people and diverse customs that are the essence of paintings of the Great Empire of Tang. Considering the rules of splashing ink, the methods of mastering brushes are both understood in my mind and responded with my hand, [I think the practice of painting] ultimately depends on myself rather than others. This is what I mean by saying that there are no painting teachers in the Great Empire of Tang.<sup>22</sup>

而曰大唐國裏無畫師。不道無畫，只是無師。蓋泰華衡恒之為山，江河淮濟

之為水，草木鳥獸之異，人物風化之殊同，是大唐國之有畫也。而其潑墨之法，運筆之術，得之心，而應之手，在我不在人，是大唐國之無師也。

This comment echoes the preface on *Splashed-Ink Landscape* in claiming that there are no painting teachers (or good painting teachers) in China but offers a different reason. The genuine way of learning painting, Sesshū claims, is not from teachers but from observing the world.

### **Sesshū's Art and Activities after the Travel to China**

It is remarked in *Hantō Bunshū* that upon Sesshū's return to Japan, his fame increased tenfold.<sup>23</sup> According to Ryōshin, Sesshū's painting was so popular in society that aristocrats, monks, and merchants all fervently visited him to request a piece of his work.<sup>24</sup> As his fame in painting grew in his late years many people flocked from regions over the country to study painting with him.<sup>25</sup> In 1476, Sesshū moved to Ōita 大分 in Bungo 豊後 Province (now Ōita Prefecture) in Kyūshū and built his studio entitled Tenkai Togarō 天開圖畫樓 (Lit. =Heaven-created Painting Pavilion). Due to the succeeding uprisings after the Ōnin War (応仁之乱, *Ōnin no ran*) happened in 1467, Sesshū was forced to leave his residence in Bungo and set off on a nationwide travel in the late 1470s. The travel Sesshū did between the late 1470s and 1486, when he settled down in Yamaguchi, again presumably offered him a good opportunity to observe and sketch the natural scenery along the way.

In Yamaguchi, Sesshū set up his studio on the old Unkoku-an site and again named it Tenkai Togarō 天開圖畫樓. For both of these two studios under the same name, Sesshū invited two Zen-priests, Hōfu Ryōshin and Keigo, to compose prose eulogies. According to scholars' research, both of these were highly influenced and crafted by Sesshū's

personal will, and it was likely that they were used as a way to realize Sesshū's self-fashion and self-promotion.<sup>26</sup>

Nearly all notable masterpieces bearing the signature of Sesshū were executed during his stay in Yamaguchi starting in 1486. Paintings from this period show that Sesshū was still an avid learner of modal paintings in his senior age, which can be seen from *Oxherding after Li Tang* 牧牛图(倣李唐) (*Bokugyū zu hō ri tou*, Fig. 3-5), *Summer Landscape after Xia Gui* 夏景山水图(倣夏珪) (*Kakei sansui zu hō Kakkei*, Fig. 3-6) and his *Splashed-Ink Landscape* after the style of Yujian. Meanwhile, he also initiated his independent exploration in styles and themes, as we can see from his works such as *Autumn and Winter Landscapes* 秋冬山水图 (*Shūtou sansui zu*, fig. 1-2, 1-3) and *Ama no Hashidate zu* 天橋立图 (lit. =Bridge of Heaven, Fig. 3-7).

Various reasons have been discussed by scholars with respect to Sesshū's late success in Japan and the possible relationship between his travel to China and his success. According to Shimaō Arata, after the Ōnin War in 1467, the elite Gozan system was drastically devastated. This break from the old system provided Sesshū a chance to establish his reputation on the ruins. Taking the honorific title Sesshū received in Tiantongsi as an instance, it was quite common for Japanese monks to receive such a title in important Chinese monasteries during their travel. Therefore, before the Onin War it probably would not be treated as something special in the Gozan system. However, during a time when the old system was destroyed, such a title was more easily used to avoid questioning in society and acquire considerable attention. The decline of the capital Kyoto, where the Gozan cultural center was located, and the rising of regions such as Yamaguchi also gave Sesshū a good opportunity to expand his national influence.

Furthermore, Sesshū's travel experience in China gave him significant confidence in his robust, bold painting style, which did not win him a bright career in Shōkoku-ji, because it shows great stylistic affinity with those works by some popular Chinese painters.<sup>27</sup>

Yukio Lippit believes that the idealized image of Sesshū, as a great Zen painter and priest, was constructed through years of careful self-fashion and his active dissemination of his legendary life narrative.<sup>28</sup>

As to what is questioned by scholars, many accessible resources about Sesshū were created under the artist's personal influence. However, even though not all of the information is reliable, it is still reasonable to conclude that the travel and learning experience in China had significantly changed the fate of this ambitious Zen painter coming from insignificant origins. In his late years, Sesshū actively used and interpreted his stories in China to stress his image as a successful art ambassador between these two countries, and an accomplished Japanese painter achieved marvelous success in the Ming Empire.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Ng, "Sesshū and Chinese Academic Painting," 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>3</sup> Yoshiaki Shimizu and Carolyn Wheelwright, *Japanese Ink Paintings* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 87.

<sup>4</sup> Sesshū was appointed as the guest receptionist, Shika 知客 at Shōkoku-ji. Jon Carier Covell, *Under the Seal of Sesshū* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1975), 20.

<sup>5</sup> See Arata Shimaō 島尾新, "Watashi no sesshū zō 私の雪舟像" in *Sesshū e no tabi* 雪舟への旅 [The Trip to Sesshū] ed. Yamaguchi Kenritsu Bijutsukan 山口県立美術館

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(Yamaguchi-shi, Japan: "Sesshū e no Tabi" Ten Jikkō Iinkai 「雪舟への旅」展実行委員会, 2006), 219-221. In a high-level temple in the Gozan system, the decisions on advancing monks' official status and religious rank were based on various factors including one's progress in Zen, personality, intellectual suitability for the position, and family and social connections. In real practice, the last factor played a significant role due to the certain financial and political concerns (Collcutt, *Five Mountains*, 226-227). In such a situation, even though Sesshū had spent 20 years in Shōkoku-ji and displayed his talent, the way to high official positions was very likely closed to him due to his modest origin.

<sup>6</sup> See Martin Collcutt, *Five Mountains: the Rinzai Zen monastic institution in medieval Japan* (Cambridge, Mass: Published by Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1981), 150; and Covell, *Under the Seal*, 12.

<sup>7</sup> According to Shimaō Arata, in a time when the technology of photography was not available, it was a common practice to include a professional painter in the delegation to foreign countries in order to sketch down the landscape and customs of other countries. The painting activities of Sesshū, Shimaō claims, was his personal willing on one hand, and Ōuchi family's commission on the other. See Shimaō, "Watashi no sesshū zō," 220.

<sup>8</sup> For more information about this voyage, see Ng, "Sesshū and Chinese Academic Painting," Chapter 2.

<sup>9</sup> Covell, *Under the Seal*, 16.

<sup>10</sup> Shimaō, "Watashi no sesshū zō," 220.

<sup>11</sup> For example, this title was used in his signature on his *Long Landscape Scroll* 山水長卷 (*Sansui chōkan*, c. 1486; Mori Collection, Yamaguchi, Japan) and *Splashed-Ink Landscape* (Tokyo National Museum). The authenticity of this title has been questioned by some scholars, considering Sesshū was only a low-rank Japanese Zen monk by that time, while Tiantongsi was one of the most crucial Zen monasteries of the Empire. In his book *Under the Seal of Sesshū*, Covell suspects that the hierarchic significance of this "First Seat of the Meditation Assembly at Tiantong [temple] in Mt. Siming" was probably exaggerated in Sesshū and his friends' writing. (Covell, *Under the Seal*, 19).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>14</sup> Here the Great Empire of Song refers to the Ming Empire.

<sup>15</sup> In an Ōuchi temple's later documentation, Sesshū was designated as the Purchaser-Priest in the delegation (Covell, *Under the Seal*, 16).



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- <sup>16</sup> Ng, “Sesshū and Chinese Academic Painting,” 44.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>19</sup> Shouqian Shi 石守謙, *Yidong de taohuayuan: dongya shijie zhong de shanshuihua 移动的桃花源--東亞世界中的山水畫* [Peach-Blossom Spring in Moving: Landscape Painting in East Asia] (Taipei, Taiwan: Yunchen wenhua, 2012). 214-215.
- <sup>20</sup> Shimao, “Watashi no sesshū zō,” 20.
- <sup>21</sup> Two years after his return, he executed a pair of compositions of Ayuwangsi 阿育王寺 and Jinshansi 金山寺, two monasteries he had visited in Zhejiang and Jiangsu province. The landscapes and scenes he saw in his trip were preserved fresh in his mind until the last years of his life, which can be seen in another Jinshansi painting he created for his friend Banri Shūkyū in his seventies. See Covell, *Under the Seal*, 26, 32.
- <sup>22</sup> Ng, “Sesshū and Chinese Academic Painting,” 43-44.
- <sup>23</sup> Genryū, *Hantō Bunshū*, see *Ibid.*, 48.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.
- <sup>26</sup> See Shimao, “Watashi no sesshū zō, 222-224. Yukio Lippit, “Of Modes and Manners in Japanese Ink Painting: Sesshū’s Splashed Ink Landscape of 1495,” *The Art Bulletin* 94 (2012): 50-77. Ng, “Sesshū and Chinese Academic Painting,” 51.
- <sup>27</sup> Shimao, “Watashi no sesshū zō,” 223.
- <sup>28</sup> Lippit, “Of Modes and Manners,” 52.

## CHAPTER IV

# THE CONTEMPORARY ART CIRCLE IN CHINA DURING SESSHŪ'S STAY

To contextualize Sesshū's travel and learning experience, it is necessary to take a look at the art circle in the Ming Empire. In 1368, Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328-1398, reign 1368-1398) subverted the Mongol rule and founded the Ming dynasty. This meant that the ruling power of the nation returned to the Han Chinese, the largest ethnic group in China. The early Ming dynasty saw a revival of Southern Song painting styles. In the early 1410s, the third emperor of the Ming dynasty, Emperor Chengzu 明成祖 (1360-1424, reign 1402-1424) started to move the capital from the southern city Nanjing 南京 to Beijing, to further strengthen the nation's northern borders. This project included construction of numerous government offices, renewing Beijing's basic service systems, and most importantly, the constructing of the new imperial residence, the Forbidden City 紫禁城. The formal move took place in 1421, after about 10 years of construction.<sup>1</sup>

This move created thousands of job opportunities for painters and craftsmen nationwide to work for the court. With the support of the imperial family, some outstanding painters were appointed by the government with official titles. Some of them also worked outside of the court for high-ranking ministers and other clients in the art market. According to Mu Yiqin, at least 15 important painters “greatly valued in their time 為時所重” “had reputation among the high-ranking ministers 名動公卿間,”<sup>2</sup> not to mention the other painters who were not renowned.

Most of these painters came from Zhejiang province, where the Southern Song court resided and its art traditions were well preserved. Due to their close stylistic relationship, these artists were later referred to as *zhepai* 浙派, or the Zhe School.<sup>3</sup> Because of its geographic and historical connection with the Southern Song dynasty, Zhe School painters were informed of the artistic tradition as well as the aesthetic ideals of the painters who were active in the Southern Song time such as Ma Yuan and Xia Gui. Nevertheless, painters from adjacent regions of Zhejiang, including Fujian and Jiangsu provinces, can also be included in the Zhe School, considering their analogous styles. It was these Zhe School masters such as Dai Jin and Li Zai who introduced the long suppressed Southern Song styles to the new Ming capital and significantly contributed to the formation of the initial Ming Painting trends.<sup>4</sup>

An anonymous painting from the beginning of the Ming dynasty, *Scholar on a Lakeshore* (Fig. 4-1), displays typical influence from the Southern Song style. The diagonal division of space reminds one of Ma Yuan's famous "one-corner" composition. The figures gazing into the endless empty space, the giant pine tree crowning above the scholars, the slender peaks painted with light ink-washes in the background; all recall idioms from Southern Song paintings. In paintings by Dai Jin (戴进, 1388-1462), who is recognized as the founder of the Zhe School, the elements from Southern Song paintings were also evident. In his *The Hermit Xu You Resting by a Stream* (Fig. 4-2), Dai Jin employed the "ax-cut stroke," a painting technique popularly used in the works by Southern Song painters to strengthen the angular feeling of the rocks. The clear and bold contour of the pine tree, together with the light outline and pale ink-washes of the mountains in the background, remind one of the *Scholar Viewing a Waterfall* (Fig. 4-3)

and *Viewing Plum Blossoms by Moonlight* (Fig. 4-4) by Ma Yuan.

Li Zai (李在, 1426-1435), the Chinese painter from whom Sesshū is recorded to have learned painting techniques during his stay in Beijing,<sup>5</sup> also excelled in Southern Song styles. In one illustration to the *Homecoming Ode of Tao Yuanming* 歸去來兮圖 (*Guiqulaixi tu*, Fig. 4-5) by Li Zai, one can observe that the brushstrokes were executed in a fast and audacious way with minimum numbers of brushstrokes. By doing this the artist animated the images of the scholar Tao Yuanming (陶淵明, ca. 365-427) and his servant with vitality. The artist's release from the detailed brushstrokes and meticulous depiction of images also suggest the inner joyfulness of the protagonist Tao Yuanming upon regaining a pastoral life of freedom. The technique applied by Li Zai, usually referred to as "abbreviated-brushstroke painting" 簡筆畫, was a legacy of Liang Kai, a Zen painter active in the thirteenth century. Liang Kai's masterpieces in this style, such as *Li Bai Strolling* 李白吟行圖 (*Rihaku ginkō zu*, Fig. 4-6) and *The Sixth Patriarch Cutting Bamboo* 六祖截竹圖 (*Rikuso secchiku zu*, Fig. 4-7) were highly valued and popularly imitated by Japanese artists like Sesshū. One example is Sesshū's imitations of Liang Kai's *Kōjyoheizu after Ryōkai* 黃初平圖(傲梁楷) (*Kōjyoheizu hō Ryōkai*, Fig. 4-8) in a series of imitations of Chinese paintings by the artist.

Nevertheless, the Zhe School masters in the first half of the fifteenth century were more than "revivers" of the Southern Song styles. Probably oriented by the taste of the sovereign,<sup>6</sup> these painters did not only perpetuate those old styles but created a distinct stylistic movement by assimilating Northern Song styles passed down through the Jin 金 湜 (1115-1234)<sup>7</sup> and Yuan 元 (1271-1368) dynasties in northern China. Thus, the

stylistic foundation of Zhe School in early Ming was a fusion of artistic technique and landscape scenery of the Li-Guo (styles of Li Cheng<sup>8</sup> and Guo Xi, masters of Northern Song landscape paintings), and Ma-Xia (style of Ma Yuan and Xia Gui) styles.<sup>9</sup> In some paintings from this period, the Zhe School masters abandoned the “one-corner”/diagonal structure learned from Southern Song paintings and moved the major subjects back to the center. This revolutionary shift is most evident in hanging scroll format. In Li Zai’s *Loft Leisure at a Countryside Manor* 山莊高逸圖 (*Shanzhuang gaoyi tu*, Fig. 4-9), which was formerly attributed to Guo Xi with spurious signature, one can observe that Li Zai follows the rules proposed in Guo Xi’s famous text on painting practice and theory *Linquan gaozhi* 林泉高致 (Lit=The Lofty Message of Forest and Streams). The major mountain, which symbolized the majesty of the emperor, is stably located in the center of the picture, rather than on the side as we can see in Southern Song paintings. The other peaks and hills surrounding the major mountain were all yielding humbly, exaggerating the monumental effect of the center peak. All the pictorial elements are carefully depicted in a well-proportioned manner, implying the good order of the society.<sup>10</sup>

Besides implementing ideas from Northern Song painters, Zhe School masters also assimilated styles and brushworks from paintings by literati or amateur artists. The clear and strong outlines in Southern Song paintings were replaced by more ambiguous dotted lines to create a sense of ease and relaxation.<sup>11</sup> The revolutionary development in lines can be seen in Li Zai’s *Landscape* 山水圖 (*Sansui zu*, Fig. 4-10). The artist avoided using lines in depicting most of the mountains, rocks and streams. Instead, the boundary was defined by the variation of different ink-washes. Dai Jin, the leader of Zhe School, applied dense horizontal short strokes to blur the well-defined boundaries in his *Men in a*

*House over a Stream* 畫山水 (*Hua shanshui*, Fig. 4-11).

While Zhe School painters were reaching their highest success, some painters in south China also developed their own style and taste in painting and formed the Wu School 吳派. Painters of the Wu School usually came from scholar families and were well educated in Chinese classics. Unlike the Zhe School inheritance of styles from Southern Song paintings, Wu School masters acquired their inspiration from the literati paintings of the Yuan dynasty, and traced their lineage to the scholar-painters in the Tang (618-907) and Northern Song dynasty (960-1279). Since most of them were amateur painters, they established distinct art aesthetics which emphasized more the self-expressive aspect of paintings than the mastery of painting skills. In *Living in Retirement* 幽居圖 (*Yūkyō zu*, Fig. 4-12) by Shen Zhou (沈周, 1427-1509), the leading master of the Wu School and a contemporary of Sesshū, one can see that the masses are meticulously formed by numerous dry-brushstrokes and ink dots. Distinctive and striking outlines which one can see in Southern Song paintings are no longer favored by scholar-painters like Shen Zhou who had more subtle sensibilities. Compared to the “one-corner” and similar compositions one can normally see in Southern Song styles, the composition in *Living in Retirement* is well balanced: The artist punctiliously filled the surface with pictorial or calligraphic elements. All the strategies assist to create a stable and peaceful atmosphere, implying the pastoral inner world of the scholar-artist. Even though Sesshū did not leave any direct comments on the Wu School, his oeuvre, most of which emphasizes a sharp and stimulating contour, suggests that the Wu School styles probably did not have a noticeable impact on his painting practice.

The Jiangnan area had been the center of the Sino-Japan trade since the twelfth

century, when the Southern Song court, then in Hangzhou, vigorously promoted foreign trade as one way to relieve the financial crisis caused by the shrinking of its former territory in northern China.<sup>12</sup> Through the following three hundred years, Chinese paintings travelled from the port city Ningbo to Japan. As Akiyoshi has pointed out, Japanese painters “learned from whatever imported Chinese paintings they had access to.”<sup>13</sup> Further, what the Japanese painters could observe depended on what the Japanese merchants and Zen monks could purchase in China and successfully transport to Japan. Thereafter, the prevailing Southern Song styles in Zhejiang province, which was the center of Sino-Japan commercial and cultural exchanges, became the most significant origin of the dominant styles in the archipelago. The styles of Southern Song, Yuan, and early Ming painters successively shaped the artistic fashion in Japan and the Jiangnan area from the twelfth century to the fifteenth century. By contrast, since most of the scholar-painters did not need to support themselves by selling their works, literati paintings were mostly confined to the scholar’s circle as a medium of social exchange and were much less purchasable. As a result, far fewer literati paintings were transmitted to Japan and their influence on Japanese painters was minimal. Therefore, to a Japanese painter like Sesshū, whose art practice was initiated within the conditions, the paintings of the Zhe School were inherently more familiar than the Wu School ones.

Beijing, where Sesshū looked for a painting teacher in the later 1460s, was experiencing a decline in art due to the long-term political unrest of the previous twenty years. In the year of 1449, Emperor Yingzong 明英宗 (1427-1464, regime 1436-1449, 1457-1464) of Ming was captured during an unsuccessful expedition against the Wala 瓦剌 Mongolians. This baneful event caused great turmoil for the following twelve years.

Led by the commander of Ministry of War, Yu Qian 於謙 (1398-1457), Beijing saw the enthroning of the new emperor, Emperor Yingzong's younger brother, and experienced a crisis in defending against the invading Wala army in 1449. Eight years later, Emperor Yingzong was reinstated after a palace coup. However, only four years later, in 1461, the peace was broken again by another attempted coup led by Cao Qin 曹欽 (?-1461). In 1464, the son of Emperor Yingzong, Emperor Xianzong 明憲宗 (1447-1487, regime 1464-1487) ascended to the throne. During Emperor Xianzong's reign, eunuchs and his favored consort Wan manipulated both governmental affairs and the imperial harem and raised many detrimental problems in the empire.<sup>14</sup> In a time when the whole bureaucratic system was mired in political conflicts, the field of painting faded as a point of interest in the capital.<sup>15</sup> By the time Sesshū arrived in Beijing, probably in late 1467 or early 1468, many painters who were active in the Beijing art circle had left the capital to avoid the turbulent political atmosphere.<sup>16</sup>

Sesshū's visit to China happened during a crucial transitional moment in Ming dynasty painting history. On one hand, he was able to observe the last glory of the first generation of Zhe School masters, who not only brought the painting styles from the Song dynasty to the capital, but also created new styles by assimilating elements from Northern Song and literati painting. On the other hand, Sesshū also likely witnessed the decline of the Beijing art circle in the late 1460s, as many gifted painters chose to leave the capital to avoid possible risks to their lives. Although it was also during this time that the literati Wu School stepped on the stage of Chinese painting, Sesshū was less likely to get access to painting of this circle than those by the Zhe School masters.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See John D. Langlois Jr., “The Hung-wu Reign, 1368-1398” and Hok-Lam Chan, “The Chien-wen, Yung-lo, Hung-his, and Hsüan-te Reigns, 1399-1435,” in *The Cambridge history of China*, vol.7, *The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644*, Part I, ed. Twitchett, Denis Crispin and Frederick W. Mote (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 107-205.

<sup>2</sup> Yiqin Mu 穆益勤, *Mingdai yuanti Zhepai shiliao 明代院體浙派史料* [historical records of Zhe School painters working in the Ming Painting Academy] (Shanghai, China: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe 上海人民美術出版社, 1985), 7-17.

<sup>3</sup> For more introduction of the history of the Zhe School, see Richard M. Barnhart, Introduction to *Painters of the Great Ming: The Imperial Court and the Zhe School*, ed. Barnhart, Richard M., Mary Ann Rogers and Richard Stanley-Baker (Dallas, Tex: Dallas Museum of Art. 1993), 1-20.

<sup>4</sup> James Cahill, *Parting at the Shore: Chinese Painting of the Early and Middle Ming Dynasty, 1368-1580* (New York: Weatherhill, 1978), 5, 22.

<sup>5</sup> Whether Sesshū actually met Li Zai or not is still an arguable topic. Lippit argues that it was not possible since by the time Sesshū arrived in China, Li Zai had already passed away. (Yukio Lippit, “Of Modes and Manners in Japanese Ink Painting: Sesshū’s Splashed Ink Landscape of 1495,” *The Art Bulletin* 94 (2012): 57.) However, according to Jian Kaiqian (簡楷倩), the teacher-student relationship recorded by Sesshū was possible since Li Zai was still alive, though in his late 80s, while Sesshū was visiting Beijing. See Kaiqian Jian 簡楷倩, “Xuezhou sanshui huihua zhong chanyi de biaoqian 雪舟山水繪畫中禪意的表現 (Presentation of Zen in Sesshū's Suibokuga Paintings)” *Shuhua yishu xuekan 書畫藝術學刊*, no. 4 (2008): 497.

<sup>6</sup> For more information about the influence of the taste of the court on early Ming paintings, see Shi Shouqian 石守謙, “Mingdai huihua zhong de diwang pinwei 明代繪畫中的帝王品味,” *Guoli Taiwan daxue wenshi zhexue bao 國立台灣大學文史哲學報* 40, (1993): 227-291.

<sup>7</sup> Jin Dynasty was founded in 1115. The Jin court did not become the actual ruler over northern China until 1127.

<sup>8</sup> 李成, 919- ca. 967. Landscape painter in the late Five Dynasties and early Northern Song dynasty. His style threw a foundational influence on later Northern Song landscapists such as Guo Xi.

<sup>9</sup> Jiejin Chen 陳階晉 and Lai Yuzhi 賴毓芝, ed., *Zhuisuo zhepai 追索浙派* [Tracing the Che school in Chinese painting] (Taipei, Taiwan: Guo li gu gong bo wu yuan 國立故宮博

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物院 [National Palace Museum], 2008), 27.

<sup>10</sup> The Chinese text reads: “大山堂堂爲衆山之主，所以分布以次岡阜林壑爲遠近大小之宗主也。其象若大君赫然当陽而百辟奔走朝会，無偃蹇背却之勢也。長松亭亭爲衆木之表，所以分布以次藤蘿草木爲振契依附之師帥也，其勢若君子軒然得時，而衆小人爲之役使。無凭陵愁挫之態也。” The English translation reads: “A great mountain is dominating as chief over the assembled hills, thereby ranking in an ordered arrangement the ridges and peaks, forests and valleys as suzerains of varying degrees and distances. The general appearance is of a great lord glorious on his throne and a hundred princes hastening to pay him court, without any effect of arrogance or withdrawal [on either part]. A tall pine stands erect as the mark of all other trees, thereby ranking in an ordered arrangement the subsidiary trees and plants as numerous admiring assistants. The general effect is of a nobleman dazzling in his prime with all lesser mortals in his service, without insolent or oppressed attitudes [on either part].” From Guo Xi, *Linquan gaozhi 林泉高致*. Translation from Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih, *Early Chinese texts on painting* (Cambridge, Mass: Published for the Harvard-Yenching Institute by Harvard University Press, 1985), 153.

<sup>11</sup> James Cahill, *Parting at the Shore: Chinese Painting of the Early and Middle Ming Dynasty, 1368-1580* (New York: Weatherhill, 1978), 45, 48-49.

<sup>12</sup> Kawazoe Shoji, “Japan and East Asia” in *The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. 3: Medieval Japan*, ed. Yamamura, Kozo (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 396-397.

<sup>13</sup> Akiyoshi Watanabe, “The Reception of Chinese Painting in Medieval Japan” in *Of Water and Ink: Muromachi-Period Paintings from Japan 1392-1568*, ed. Watanabe, Akiyoshi, Hiroshi Kanazawa, H. Paul Varley, Julia P. Henshaw, and Cynthia Jo Fogliatti (Detroit, Mich: Founders Society, Detroit Institute of Arts. 1986), 40.

<sup>14</sup> Denis Twitchett and Tilemann Grimm, “The Cheng-t’ung, Ching-t’ai, and T’ien-shun Reigns, 1436-1464,” in *The Cambridge history of China, vol.7, The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, Part I*, ed. Twitchett, Denis Crispin and Frederick W. Mote (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 305-342.

<sup>15</sup> Shouqian Shi 石守謙, *Yidong de taohuayuan: dongya shijie zhong de shanshuihua 移动的桃花源-- 東亞世界中的山水畫* [Peach-Blossom Spring in Moving: Landscape Painting in East Asia] (Taipei, Taiwan: Yunchen wenhua, 2012), 200-205.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER V

### ASSIMILATION AND REJECTION OF MING ELEMENTS IN *AUTUMN AND WINTER LANDSCAPES*

While ink paintings in China and Japan shared similarities for many years, over time the artistic styles of the two countries drifted apart. The Southern Song style, which had been treasured in both China and Japan in the fifteenth century, was modified and developed by the Zhe School masters by introducing new pictorial elements, while Japanese painters stayed more loyal to the classical idioms. Sesshū's journeys to China enabled him to experience a clash between the new styles in China and the classical styles in Japan. His *Autumn and Winter Landscapes* reflect that this Japanese painter had actively assimilated new styles employed by Ming masters exemplified by Dai Jin and Li Zai. This can be observed in his special arrangement, which emphasizes fullness and solidness rather than the lightness one can observe in the styles of Josetsu and Shūbun. However, *Autumn and Winter Landscapes* also display Sesshū's insistence on his Japanese stylistic lineage, which in his eyes was more faithful to the depth and richness of the "true" Chinese traditions of the Southern Song.

#### **Formal Analysis**

*Autumn and Winter Landscapes* (Fig. 1-2 & Fig. 1-3) is a diptych of hanging scroll paintings from the transitional period between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,<sup>1</sup> by which time the preface on *Splashed-Link Landscape* had already been executed. The diptych, now a National Treasure in the Tokyo National Museum, was originally housed

in the Manshu-in 曼殊院 temple in Kyoto. Although photographs of the diptych exhibit a monumental visual impression, the paintings are actually done on paper of moderate size, measuring 47.7 cm (18.8 inches) in height and 30.2 cm (11.9 inches) in width.<sup>2</sup> Like many of Sesshū's landscape paintings, *Autumn and Winter Landscapes* were painted exclusively with ink. In the upper-left corner of *Winter Landscape*, the artist inscribed his signature *Sesshū hitsu* 雪舟筆 (lit. = "brushed by Sesshū"). Sesshū's personal seal reading *Tōyō* 等揚 is stamped right below the signature.

*Autumn Landscape* can be divided into three parts: foreground, middle ground, and background. The painter introduces the viewer into the painting with a sketched slope attached to the right bottom edge. As seasonal indicators of autumn, two askew trees standing on top of the slope stretch their naked branches dramatically. Behind the boulder in the lower-right corner appear several house roofs, and a mountain path zigzagging into the pictorial space. Embracing the path is a massive stony hillside, crowned with three tall pine trees executed in a rapid manner. Beyond them rises a tall, angular summit contoured in dark, thick ink strokes. Because it is shadowed behind these giant pine trees, the summit does not create a rigorous visual impact within the picture. Waterscape, a motif commonly used in Muromachi landscape paintings to stress misty atmospheres and generate hazy scenery, is squeezed by waterside rocks and reeds into a very limited space in the left part of the picture. Between the two bodies of water is a cluster of rocks and reeds. Behind the reeds are several fishing boats, which can be recognized by their canopies and masts. Just like the ambiguously implied route of the path, imagination is also needed to connect the two sections of water beyond the boundary of the picture.

The extension of the path brings the viewer to the middle ground, consistently drawn

with clear and sharp brush strokes but done in lighter ink tonality. Instead of steep hillside and rapidly sketched motifs like those in the foreground, Sesshū moderates the atmosphere in the middle ground with the mildly spreading slope and carefully illustrated palace-style architecture. Two small human figures facing each other flank the end of the path in the middle ground. The interaction between them, probably a casual conversation, captures the viewer's attention. At the same time, the bushy scrub lying in front of the buildings also visually terminates one's progression into depth. In terms of ink tonality and the texture of brushstrokes the scenery in the painting can be divided into two separate spaces: before the shrubs in the middle ground is an accessible secular world which welcomes viewers to enter and walk through. The space beyond the scrub, on the contrary, is an enigmatic world one could only gaze at from afar. Beyond the middle ground in the background, Sesshū lightly applies light, watery ink washes to imply some distant mountains floating in the air.

Though it can still be divided into fore, middle, and background, the spatial relationships in *Winter Landscape* appear less three-dimensional than those of its counterpart. The foreground in *Winter Landscape* mirrors the basic structure of *Autumn Landscape* with a mixture of slopes, water, trees, and mountain paths. In the lower-right corner a path ascends from the shore close to where a small boat anchors. Two naked trees grow right beside the bank and a small figure wearing a broad-brimmed hat has probably just come out from the boat and is walking along the path towards the architecture in the middle ground. Above the hillside on the right a massive cliff hangs down from the top of the painting and overwhelmingly occupies a third of the space. At the end of the path appears a scene very similar to the one in *Autumn Landscape*: a

complex of palace-style buildings culminating in an elaborate high pavilion decorated with a double-layered roof. In the far background behind the building, several distant crystal snow mountains stand out against the overcast sky, which is darkened with diluted ink washes.

To exhibit a sense of depth, Sesshū depends on the recession of ink tonality and legibility in *Winter Landscape*. The outline of the hillside in the lower-left corner, which is also closer to the viewer, is executed in a much bolder manner compared to those in the middle and the background. To display the landscape covered under snow, Sesshū applies few texture strokes on the surface of slope closest to the foreground. Such a strategy also strengthens the sharp visual impact of the winter theme.

### **Space Arrangement**

Compared to *Reading in the Bamboo Study* (Fig. 2-4), which is believed to be one of the most authentic Shūbun-style paintings, *Autumn and Winter Landscapes* demonstrate distinctive differences by its spatial composition. In *Reading in the Bamboo Study*, the major motif, a tall hill standing on the right side, can be visually abstracted into a slender right triangle standing with the smallest acute angle reaching upwards. The elongated image goes hand-in-hand with the narrow hanging scroll format and the general subdued ink tonality. The mass center naturally lies on the lower-right corner, thus producing an asymmetrical feeling.

By contrast, in *Autumn and Winter Landscape* the importance of the one-sided, asymmetrical composition, which almost becomes a norm in Shūbun-style paintings, is replaced with a more balanced spatial arrangement. In *Autumn Landscape*, precipitous hills are substituted by mild slopes stretching horizontally rather than upwards. The basic

triangular slopes are staggered one after another while receding into the background. While moving from the foreground to the background, every layer renders as one-sided or triangular composition and has a tendency of leaning on one corner as we can see from the Shūbun-style paintings. However, because they are piled one after another as an integral series, the viewer's attention shifts between right and left while proceeding into the painting. This also follows the rhythm of the zigzag path. In *Winter Landscape*, Sesshū makes his balanced structure by sliding in motifs on the opposite side after each layer of the space. Each motif in the painting, including the slopes in the foreground, the cliff hanging from the top, the downswept tree in the corner, and the diminished pavilion in the middle ground, can perform as a locus for viewing and pulls the viewer's attention in its own direction. None of them are more or less important than the other. In fact, they all independently perform crucial roles in their own respect. In contrast to the simple, flat space relationship seen in Shūbun-style paintings such as *Reading in the Bamboo Study*, *Autumn and Winter Landscapes* includes full richness in terms of how the fore, middle, and background function as a whole.

The spatial arrangement in Sesshū's diptych expresses a strong willingness to experiment with new solutions in spatial arrangement, which corresponds to the painting practice of Ming dynasty masters Dai Jin and Li Zai. In Dai Jin's *Seeking the Dao in the Mountains* 洞天問道圖 (*Dongtian wendao tu*, Fig. 5-1), which probably could be traced back to his early stay at Hangzhou during the 1420s, the painter introduces the viewer into the painting realm with a mild, dome-like slope in close foreground. The connection between motifs from the foreground to the background is realized with an ascending path. Just like what one can see in *Autumn Landscape*, following the zigzagging path into the

painting, Dai Jin places layers of slopes staggered one after another. Meanwhile, he implies the receding of space by diminishing the tonality of motifs, a strategy which can also be found in Sesshū's diptych. *Spring Mountain in Rich Verdure* 春山積翠圖 (*Chunshan jicui tu*, Fig. 5-2) (painted in 1449) displays even more similarity with *Autumn Landscape*. In this painting, the tripartite composition is formed by three triangular slopes which progress from the foreground to the background. Like *Autumn and Winter Landscapes*, the viewer's attention moves between left and right when proceeding deep into the mountain.

Li Zai, perhaps the top landscapist of the early fifteenth century, also displays a similar tendency in composition in his extant paintings. According to the biography of Li Zai, he was then renowned for his painting in the style of Northern Song master Guo Xi 郭熙 (act. 1068–1078), who was famous for his monumentality, symmetry, and subtle texture strokes. However, when juxtaposing *Early Spring* 早春圖 (*Zaochun tu*, Fig. 5-3), a representative painting by Guo Xi and *Lofty Leisure at a Countryside Manor* 山莊高逸圖 (*Shanzhuang gaoyi tu*, Fig. 4-9) by Li Zai, one can observe the new spirit that emerged from Li Zai's brush. In *Early Spring*, the feeling of centrality consistently extends from the center-located foreground to the monumental major mountain standing in the center background. Even though the painting is filled with myriad nuances, there is only one main path for viewing, predetermined by the artist. However, *Loft Leisure at a Countryside Manor* renders more complexity in the fore and middle ground. Instead of a bird's-eye view of the foreground from above like Guo Xi uses in *Early Spring*, *Loft Leisure at a Countryside Manor* starts the entrance with a more approachable scene: two scholars and a servant step into the painting in the lower-right corner and not far away



from them is a rustic house enclosed with a bamboo fence. Rather than providing a firmly determined visual path, Li Zai uses staggered triangular slopes and cliffs, zigzagging paths and plateaus, and sophisticated waterscapes to provide diverse experience for visual traveling in the painting. It is hard to find a single stop for viewing when one's sight is travelling in the rich fore and middle ground, as can be seen in the practice of Dai Jin and Sesshū.

The hanging cliff cut off in *Winter Landscape* is also a new phenomenon in Muromachi landscape painting. Before Sesshū, the closed scene of a rocky cliff cut off by the top edge of the painting was normally found in figure paintings. One example of this is *Tao Yuanming and Li Bai Viewing a Waterfall* (Fig. 5-4 & 5-5) in a middle fifteenth century triptych by Chūan Shinkō 仲安真康 (act. mid-15<sup>th</sup> century). By rendering the main figure against the only partially visible cliff, the artist creates a sense of closeness in the painting. However, when it comes to landscape paintings in the hanging scroll format, it is more common to see a bird's-eye view of the major mountains, which in many cases is standing amid waterscapes as we can see in a *Landscape in Shūbun Style* (Fig. 2-5) from the Seattle Art Museum. Such design of space was also standard in early Ming paintings as we can observe in many masterpieces from the Zhe School.

Dai Jin was likely one of the predecessors who broke the boundary between landscape painting and figure painting, and introduced a more intimate feeling into landscape in hanging scroll format. In *Pavilion in the Summer Mountain* (Fig. 5-6), the massive granite mountain shadows above the palatial villa resting below. Only the lower part of its bulky mass is framed into the scene, demanding viewers to complete the big monumental picture with imagination. In an *Autumn* (Fig. 5-7) landscape by Dai Jin, the

artist only delineates the lower part of the cliff facing the water. As a gifted painter familiar with most accessible painting styles of his time, Dai Jin creatively combined this old norm, probably from figure painting, in new ways, thereby generating a fashion for his own epoch. An adventurous and knowledgeable painter just like Dai Jin, Sesshū distinguishes his works by adding similar motifs in his paintings. Such a cut-off cliff appears in a summer scene from a set of *Four Season Landscapes* 四季山水図 (*Shiki sansui zu*, Fig. 5-8), and repeated several times in his *Landscape of the Four Seasons* 四季山水図 (山水長卷) (*Shiki sansui zu, sansui chōkan*, Fig. 5-9) in a long handscroll format.

### **Decreasing Importance of Waterscape and Increased Sense of Solidity**

Another stunning feature in Sesshū's painting practice is the decreasing importance of waterscape. As briefly introduced in Chapter II, probably from as early as the 1460s Japanese landscapists started to show appreciation toward solidness rather than the former favored fashion in providing grand void space. In his article on a post-Shūbun painting in the Freer Gallery, Yoshiaki Shimizu writes that "The empty space so prominent in the Shūbun style would lose its preeminence, displaced by intrusive solids."<sup>3</sup> Many concurrent paintings of *Autumn and Winter Landscapes* could visually justify this statement. For instance, in a *Landscape* 山水図 (*Sansui zu*, Fig. 5-10) by Kenkō Shōkei (賢江祥啓, act. late 15<sup>th</sup>-early 16<sup>th</sup> century), the expansive waterscape, the typical norm to generate feelings of emptiness and poetic imagination, is replaced with a squeezed flow of river, meandering from the foreground into the background.

However, Sesshū was probably the first to directly connect this fashion to Ming

practice. In *Autumn Landscape*, Sesshū drastically diminishes the function of waterscape and fills the space with incisively clear motifs such as sharply outlined boulders and slopes. The space of water is compressed within those triangular, solid slopes and is squeezed to a discrete and very limited space in the left side. Concrete motifs in the background, a granite slope and the palatial buildings block the viewer's look into the distant space. In *Winter Landscape*, the space for waterscape occupies only a small portion in the lower-right corner, and every motif in the painting, including the mountains covered with snow in the distance, is stressed in clear brushlines. While most of his precursors and contemporaries in Japan were still lingering in traditional fashions to create a lofty and misty atmosphere, and wandering between solidness and ambiguity in practice, Sesshū directly represents the scene of nature with his powerful strokes, creating pictorial scenery that is more approachable to the viewer.

It is this solidity and directness that mark Sesshū's closer connection to Ming masters Dai Jin and Li Zai, and causes him to stand out among many Japanese landscapists of his time. In a diptych of *Spring and Winter Landscape* 春景/雪景山水图 (*Shunkei/Sekkei sansui zu*, Fig. 5-11 & 5-12) by Dai Jin, the artist insists on the concreteness and realism through precise and complete depiction of every pictorial element. Both of these seasonal scenes are set in the mundane world, where one can enter through either a delicate wooden bridge in the *Spring Landscape* or a path in the *Winter* one. Several carefully depicted figures, either decorous gentlemen or travellers riding on donkeys, are engaging in secular activities and conversation, implying that the scenes are set in a specific time and space. Instead of those light, acute peaks one can see in earlier paintings from Southern Song and Yuan dynasties, Dai Jin renders the major body of the

mountain in solid rectangular shape, creating a sense of virility and confrontation. The stylistic contrast between Li Zai's *Lofty Leisure at a Countryside Manor* (Fig. 4-9) and his Northern Song teacher Guo Xi also demonstrates the new conception of "realism" in Ming paintings. In *Early Spring* (Fig. 5-6), Guo Xi depicts tiny and abstract figures and buildings to set off the grandeur of the major mountain, while in *Loft Leisure at a Countryside Manor*, Li Zai zooms in the foreground scenes and pays special attention to human figures and their dwellings. The monumental mountains in the background, like those in *Early Spring*, are no longer the only visual center of the painting, and become more friendly and reachable from the foreground than that in *Early Spring*.

In many of his other works during or after his trip to China, Sesshū also expresses a new understanding of solidness and emptiness, humans and nature. A set of *Four Season Landscapes* executed during his travel in China shows a significant likeness between Sesshū's style and the most recent Chinese style in this theme. The inspiration for spatial arrangement of *Summer* 夏 (*Natsu*, Fig. 3-2) and *Winter* 冬 (*Fuyu*, Fig. 3-4) very likely are influences by specific works by Li Zai (Fig. 4-10) and Dai Jin (Fig. 5-12). All of these four hanging scrolls have concrete, fully developed foreground with giant boulders, figures, articulated trees, and buildings. Another set of *Four Season Landscapes* 四季山水图 (*Shiki sansui zu*, Fig, 5-8, 5-13~5-15) in Burijisudon museum, which were probably done after Sesshū's travel to China, retained such Ming influences. When examining the foreground of the *Autumn* 秋 (*Aki*, Fig. 5-15) in this set, the mature depiction of water surface, boulders, trees, and fish boat in the foreground shows high similitude to a masterpiece from top Chinese painters such as Dai Jin (Fig. 5-16).

## Adherence to Southern Song Brushstroke Techniques

Despite the clear similarities between Susshu's work and the works of Dai Jin and Li Zai, however, there are important distinguishing trends between Sesshū's works and Ming paintings. The texture strokes used in *Autumn and Winter Landscape* appear very conservative. Such long, fiber-like strokes can be traced back to the tradition in Southern Song dynasty, when painters Ma Yuan and Xia Gui used them to depict the masses of rocks and mountains by brushing quickly with a side of the brush. Because the surfaces of mountains and rocks executed in this manner seem as if they have been cut with hammers and chisels, this is termed the "ax-cut stroke." Even though Sesshū adds variety with different ink tones, the basic texture of surface remains consistent in both of these paintings. In the oeuvre of Sesshū, only a few display his familiarity with other techniques. A screen landscape painting attributed to Sesshū in Freer Gallery (Fig. 5-17), if proved authentic, could exemplify Sesshū's mastery in hemp-fiber stroke.<sup>4</sup> Some of his splashed-ink (破墨, *haboku* in Japanese, *pomo* in Chinese) paintings also show his advanced skill in this Zen-related freestyle. However, these examples could not change the strong attachment the artist holds for styles from Ma Yuan and Xia Gui.

In the early fifteenth century, the old Ma-Xia style also held a powerful attraction for many Ming painters. Dai Jin's *Fishing on the Shore of the Wei* 渭濱垂釣圖 (*Weibin chuidiao tu*, Fig. 5-18) and *Skiff Returning in Wind and Rain* 春遊晚歸圖 (*Chunyou wangui tu*, Fig. 5-19) show that he is a master of Southern Song norms. In these two paintings, Dai Jin uses the famous "large ax-cut strokes" to depict the surface of mountain and rocks, and applies diluted but clear ink washes to silhouette the distant mountains. Li Zai was also a genuine follower of Ma-Xia style. According to *Ming hualu*

明畫錄, Li Zai “follows the style of Guo Xi in his delicate, moist landscapes, and follows Ma Yuan and Xia Gui in his bold and unconstrained ones.”<sup>5</sup> In *Homecoming Ode of Tao Yuanming* 歸去來兮圖 (*Guiqulaixi tu*, Fig. 4-5, a collaborative work done by Li Zai and two other Ming painters, one can easily observe proficient usage of ax-cut strokes from the brush style of Ma Yuan and Xia Gui.

However, despite being a popular style among many painting masters, the Southern Song style was suppressed, even disdained, during the reign of Yongle 永樂 and Xuanzong 宣宗. According to a record by Ye Sheng 葉盛 (ca. 1420-1470), a high-ranking official in the early fifteenth century, the Yongle Emperor favored the landscape painting by Northern Song painter Guo Xi because “his landscape is arranged in a flourishing way 布置茂密”. The emperor also despised Ma-Xia Style as “left-over remnants 殘山剩水”, and not worth appreciation.<sup>6</sup> Emperor Xuanzong honored the view of his grandfather and preferred the fully articulated, monumental style of Northern Song painter Guo Xi.<sup>7</sup> A representative painting of Li Zai, one of Emperor Xuanzong’s court painters, is a Northern Song inspired landscape recalling Guo Xi.

It is also suspected by Richard Barnhart that Dai Jin’s mysterious failure in his trial for entering the court of Emperor Xuanzong could be blamed on his preference for the Ma-Xia style.<sup>8</sup> If this hypothesis is true, then it would help us understand why Dai Jin had developed diverse styles from different traditions after this setback. Both written records and visual evidence from Ming dynasty show that Dai Jin was proficient in a much richer and more diverse range of styles. This includes styles of Northern Song landscapists such as Yan Wengui 燕文貴 (967-1044) and Guo Xi; Southern Song masters including Li Tang 李唐 (1066-1150), Xia Gui, and Ma Yuan; influential Yuan

literati painters such as Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322), Huang Gongwang 黃公望 (1269-1354), and Wang Meng 王蒙 (1308-1385), etc.<sup>9</sup> Many of his later works have exceeded the realm of any single stylistic tradition, but reveal a more hybrid feature. In his *Vast Views of Rivers and Mountains* (Fig. 5-20), one can see layers of short horizontal lines called Mi Dots 米点皴 from the eleventh century, criss-crossed cord-like brushlines named hemp-fiber stroke 披麻皴 from the tradition of Dong Yuan, and cloud-head strokes 雲頭皴, curving strokes built up in the shapes like cumulus clouds associated with Guo Xi.

When Sesshū arrived at Beijing in the spring of 1468, he was probably immersed in a romantic imagination of a great capital of the powerful Ming Empire, which could provide him abundant opportunities for studying “Song Yuan Painting” 宋元画 (*Sōgen-ga*<sup>10</sup>), a canonized conception based on the Japanese reception of continental painting traditions. Obviously, his aspiration could not be satisfied with the accessible resources in the specific time and space. Although the transformation of art in the continent might have been transmitted slowly across the sea to Japan since the 1450s, a direct encounter to a whole new art milieu would still be stunning. The strong contrast between what he wanted to see and what he was able to see in China, plausibly, could help up to decode the undertone expressed in his disappointed comment on Beijing art circles in the preface to *Splashed-Ink Landscape*. The famous statement by Sesshū claiming that “there are no painting teachers in China” also can be seen to echo this issue:

Within the great Empire of Tang (Ming China), there are no painting teachers. This is not to say that there are no paintings, just that there are no painting teachers. They (the painting teachers) are the mountains such as Mt. Tai, Hua, Heng and Heng; rivers including Yangtze River, Yellow River, Huai River and Ji River; exotic plants and animals; various people and diverse customs that are the

essence of paintings of the Great Empire of Tang. Considering the rules of splashing ink, the methods of mastering brushes are both understood in my mind and responded with my hand, [I think the practice of painting] ultimately depends on myself rather than others. This is what I mean by saying that there are no painting teachers in the Great Empire of Tang.<sup>11</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> According to Kunigou Hideaki, even we do not have an exact conclusion on the date of these two paintings. However, it is reasonable to trace them back to the time span between the 1470 to Sesshū's last years in the early 16th century. Yamaguchi Kenritsu Bijutsuka Sesshū Kenkyūkai 山口県立美術館雪舟研究会, " *Sesshū Tōyō: Sesshū e no tabi'ten kenkyū zuroku* 雪舟等楊: 「雪舟への旅」展研究図録 (Tōkyō: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan 中央公論美術出版, 2006), 159.

<sup>2</sup> The two paintings in the diptych, which are independently mounted as hanging scrolls today, were probably cut from longer pieces with inscriptions or prefaces on top of the picture part. Considering the other paintings done in similar styles by Sesshū and his contemporary Muromachi painters, these two paintings exhibit great particularity because most of such kind of paintings would eventually been completed in a *shigajiku* format: with a long blank space available on top of the picture for poetic inscriptions. A very close example would be the *Landscape* (Fig. 51 in Junji Nakajima 中島純司, Sesshū. 雪舟 (Tōkyō: Shōgakkan 小学館, 1981)) by Sesshū, which is usually dated to the beginning of the sixteenth century. This painting, while demonstrating a strong stylistic similarity and sharing the approximate width (35.9 cm, equals 14.13 inches) with the *Autumn and Winter Landscapes*, measures much longer compared to the latter two paintings. The height of the entire hanging scroll is 119 cm (45.85 inches). However, the pictorial part takes only the bottom part of the whole scroll, while a long section from the top of the scroll is left for inscriptions. If we cut the painting part of the *Landscape* according to the relative spatial relationship between the top edge and Sesshū's signature, as we can see from *Winter Landscape*, this painting would be roughly 50 centimeters long. It is not hard to notice that then the sizes of the *Landscape* and the *Autumn and Winter Landscapes* are almost identical.

Additionally, if we place the *Autumn and Winter Landscapes* in the oeuvre of Sesshū's hanging scroll landscape paintings, it is not easy to reach the conclusion that these two paintings are most possibly in the same category of the *Landscape* we have just analyzed. The representative hanging scroll landscape paintings with no inscriptions by Sesshū, for example, the *Four Season Landscapes* 四季山水図 (*Shiki sansui zu*, Fig. 3-1~3-4), executed in 1468, are much larger in size (149 x 75.8 cm, or 58.66 x 29.84 inches). According to the research done by Shi Shouqian, this type of monumental landscape painting can be categorized into the prevailing form of early Ming court painters, and we can eventually trace its origin to the Northern Song large-scale hanging scroll landscape paintings. (Shi, *Yidong de taohuayuan*, 215) Therefore, a presumption



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would be that the *Autumn and Winter Landscape* were very likely two long hanging scrolls in the *Shikajiku* format: on top of the pictorial part, originally there should be a long blank space left in the scroll, and there might be some inscriptions, either poems or prose by other Gozan Zen-priests.

<sup>3</sup> Yoshiaki Shimizu, “Notes and a Reflection on the Freer Shubun Painting,” *Arts Orientalis* 28, (1998): 92.

<sup>4</sup> Hemp-fiber strokes, or *Pima cun* 披麻皴 in Chinese, are long overlapping lines like strands of raveled rope. This technique was pioneered by the tenth-century artist Dong Yuan 董源 (d. 962).

<sup>5</sup> The Chinese text reads: “细润者宗郭熙，豪放者宗马夏。” From Yiqin Mu 穆益勤, *Mingdai yuanti Zhepai shiliao* 明代院體浙派史料 [historical records of Zhe School painters working in the Ming Painting Academy] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanse, 1985). 32.

<sup>6</sup> Shouqian Shi 石守谦, “Zhepai huafeng yu guizu pinwei 浙派畫風與貴族品味 [The Relationship between Styles of the Zhe School and the Taste of the Aristocrats],” in *Daijin yu zhepai yanjiu* 戴进与浙派研究 [Research on Dai Jin and the Zhe School] ed. Lu, Fusheng, and Shijun Shu (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe. 2004), 31.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Barnhart, “Emperor Xuanzong and the Painting Masters,” in *Painters of the Great Ming: The Imperial Court and the Zhe School*, ed. Barnhart, Richard M., Mary Ann Rogers and Richard Stanley-Baker (Dallas, Tex: Dallas Museum of Art. 1993), 77.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Mary Ann Rogers, “Visions of Grandeur: The Life and Art of Dai Jin,” in Barnhart, Rogers and Richard Stanley-Baker, *Painters of the Great Ming: The Imperial Court and the Zhe School*, 144.

<sup>10</sup> Yukio Lippit, “The Birth of Japanese Painting History: Kano Artist, Authors, and Authenticators of the Seventeenth Century,” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2003), 91.

<sup>11</sup> 而曰大唐國裏無畫師，不道無畫，只是無師。蓋泰華衡恒之為山，江河淮濟之為水，草木鳥獸之異，人物風化之殊，是大唐國之有畫也，而其潑墨之法，運筆之術，得之心，而應之手，在我不在人，是大唐國之無師也。From Yuk Lan Ng, “Sesshū and Chinese Academic Painting,” (Master’s thesis, University of Hong Kong, 1997), 43-44.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

The questions raised by Sesshū's preface to *Splashed-Ink Landscape* are complex. First, what Sesshū said is not all consistent with what we can actually observe from his painting practice. Namely, rather than disdaining that there were no painting teachers or painting masters in Ming China, as we read in Sesshū's writing, Sesshū was in fact an active and successful learner of those styles proposed by Ming painting masters in the first half of the fifteenth century. Exploring to what extent Sesshū's painting practice was influenced by those Ming painters, and to what extent his resistance towards the Ming styles is displayed in his painting, has been the major task of my thesis, as stated in the introduction, and elaborated in Chapter V.

Sesshū's awareness and execution of new trends in Ming painting can be easily observed in his post-travel paintings such as the *Autumn and Winter Landscapes*. In this diptych of hanging scroll paintings, Sesshū departs from the norms of one-corner or triangular spatial arrangement, which were canonized by Josetsu and Shūbun, whom Sesshū claimed as his own predecessors. Instead, he introduces a more three-dimensional and dynamic composition by staggering triangular motifs one after another from the foreground to the background. Compared to works by the Ming painters Dai Jin and Li Zai, one can see that such a strategy was more likely a new fashion favored by Zhe School masters who endeavored to fuse those styles from the Northern and Southern Song court paintings and Yuan dynasty literati paintings to meet the taste of the new rulers of the country.

Also probably influenced by what he had observed in Ming Chinese paintings by masters such as Dai Jin and Li Zai, Sesshū tended to reduce the space of emptiness, or waterscape, in his own practice. Emphasis on emptiness, which originally came from the Southern Song styles, was passed down to Japanese masters, and culminated in those paintings included as Shūbun-style, had been through a declination in Japanese art circles during the 1450s and 1460s. However, probably influenced by what he had encountered in the mainland, Sesshū propelled this trend further and initiated a new epoch in the archipelago in his painting, which emphasizes a strong sense of directness, clarity, and accessibility.

Nevertheless, Sesshū's painting displays disparity as well as similarity with those Ming masters. A striking difference between his late works such as *Autumn and Winter Landscapes* and those works by Ming Zhe School painters is his consistent preference to those Southern Song style brushstrokes, exemplified by his favor of the so-called "ax-cut stroke." In the contemporary Ming painting circles, on the contrary, artists were engaging in the experimental process by mingling a variety way of mastering brushes. The Southern Song styles, even though regarded as the starting point of many Ming Zhe School masters, had been through a drastic transformation in the mainland.

Second, since the preface to the *Splashed-Ink Landscape* lies between two strongly connected yet divergent East Asian art traditions, it expands our observation beyond national borders to those issues concerning the art exchange between China and Japan in the span from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. Chapter II endeavored to provide a chronological as well as a stylistic analysis of this connection. Owing to the fact that the fashion of landscape painting in Japan was initiated under the collection of Chinese

painting since the twelfth century, the practice of landscapists in Muromachi, Japan, was highly influenced by the so-called Modal Paintings, and by the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, when Josetsu and Shūbun were active, it was common for top Japanese painters to master many canonized styles from Chinese Southern Song paintings. The popularity of landscape painting also facilitated the *Shigajiku* tradition, in which elite Gozan priests and Zen painters collaborated to create a combination of hanging scroll landscape paintings and inscribed poems and proses. The painting masters which Sesshū admired in the preface to *Splashed-Ink Landscape*, Josetsu and Shūbun, were exemplary figures in this milieu. Imaginably, it is also within this ambience that Sesshū's fundamental painting skills and aesthetic tastes were established.

Third, the transnational nature of the contradiction displayed between the preface and Sesshū's painting also involves a temporal dimension. As we have analyzed in Chapter II and Chapter IV, the painting traditions in fifteenth century China and Japan shared the same origin, which can be traced back to the Southern Song dynasty. As time went on, new styles emerged successively in China and shaped the art form of Chinese painting continuously. Meanwhile, they were also transmitted to Japan and transformed the look of Japanese painting in a subtle and gradual way. This fact adds more complexity on Sesshū's artistic background, which a Japanese tradition based on layers of Chinese influences from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. At the same time, it also reminds us to maintain a cautious, subdued attitude when analyzing to what degree Sesshū's one-time short stay in China had changed his artistic practice.

Last but not least, Chapter III, which focused on Sesshū's biography and particularly his travel experience in China, offered us a perspective to examine this question in a

micro dimension. On one hand, information, especially small episodes in this chapter, provided support to the contradiction and complexity demonstrated in Sesshū's art and words; on the other hand, this chapter also led our investigation to the internal (or intentional) dimension of this issue, which goes beyond the scope of this thesis, but is still worth mentioning in this conclusion. As has been put forward by art historians Shimaō Arata and Yukio Lippit, the image of Sesshū, as commonly recognized today, was deliberately crafted by the writing, painting, and social activities of the artist himself. As these two scholars have elaborated, Sesshū's career as a painter experienced a dramatic leap after his travel to China, from an insignificant painter in the Japanese painting circle to a more influential and widely respected painting master. This change could not be simply attributed to his advancement in painting practice, but should be considered within the social context in late fifteenth century Japan, and the social activities Sesshū had conducted through his interaction with Zen priest and many relevant writings.

As an example, take the frequent usage of the honorific title Sesshū had received in Tiantongsi, "First Seat of the Meditation Assembly at Tiantong [temple] in Mt. Siming 四明山天童第一座". Shimaō Arata points out that such a title, even though it might have sounded impressive literally, was not uncommon among those Zen priests who had made their trip to famous Chinese Zen temples. However, the turmoil caused by the Ōnin War devastated the Gozan system so severely that it is possible to imagine that the post-Ōnin War Japanese society, with many formerly informed Zen priests dissipated, would come to take such a title more seriously. Another example would be the two *Tenkai Togarō ki*, eulogistic articles for Sesshū's art studio by Hōfu Ryōshin and Keigo. Both of these articles, according to Shimaō Arata and Ng Yuk Lan's research, were composed under the

request and clear instruction from Sesshū's himself, in order to render the image of him as a highly popular and gifted painter. All such strategies, as Shimaō Arata implies, were quite normal in fifteenth century Japanese society. However, when we are decoding this information in modern research projects, such complexity should not be neglected.<sup>1</sup>

The points brought up by these scholars indicate more possible approaches to understand the major question of this thesis. When Sesshū claimed that he was more attached to Josetsu and Shūbun, two most influential Japanese painting master of his time, was he intentionally endeavoring to bridge himself to the orthodox painting lineage in Japan, so that he could justify his significant status within the Japanese art circle? How far could other writings and activities of him support this point? And if this hypothesis were true, how can we contextualize his intention in the artistic milieu in Japan? Furthermore, how would such a phenomenon fit into the larger scope of Sino-Japanese art interaction during the fifteenth century?

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Arata Shimaō 島尾新, "Watashi no sesshū zō 私の雪舟像" in *Sesshū e no tabi 雪舟への旅* ed. Yamaguchi Kenritsu Bijutsukan 山口県立美術館 (Yamaguchi-shi, Japan: "Sesshū e no Tabi" Ten Jikkō Iinkai「雪舟への旅」展実行委員会, 2006). 218-225. Yukio Lippit, "Of Modes and Manners in Japanese Ink Painting: Sesshū's Splashed Ink Landscape of 1495," *The Art Bulletin* 94 (2012): 50-77. Yuk Lan Ng, "Sesshū and Chinese Academic Painting," (Master's thesis, University of Hong Kong, 1997), 51.

# APPENDIX

## FIGURES

### Chapter I

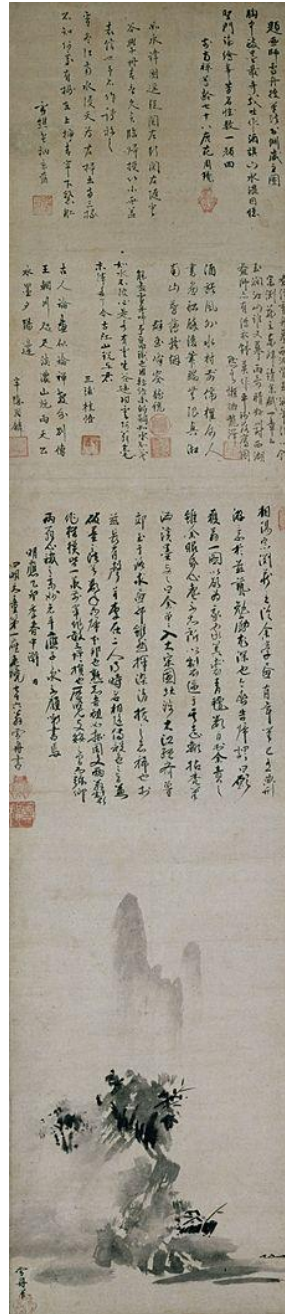


Fig. 1-1

Sesshū, *Splashed-Ink Landscape*,  
dated 1495. Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 147.9 x 32.7 cm.  
Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo, Japan.

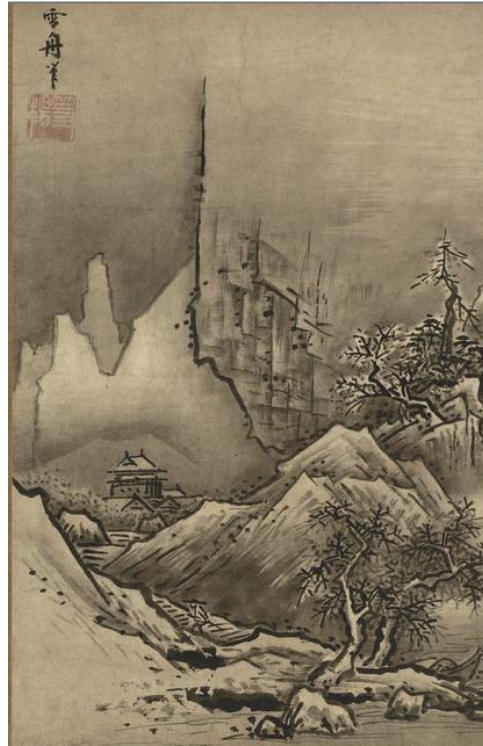
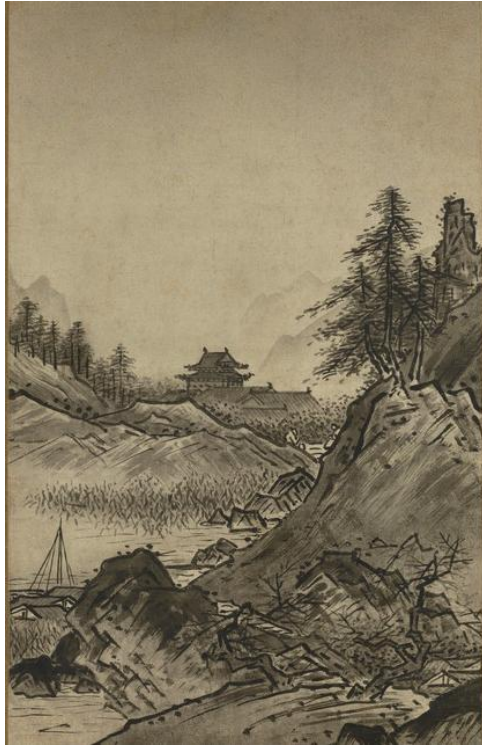


Fig. 1-2. *Autumn*  
 Sesshū, *Autumn and Winter Landscapes*,  
 Muromachi period/end of 15th century- start of 16th century.  
 2 Hanging scrolls, ink on paper, 47.7x30.2 cm each.  
 Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo, Japan.

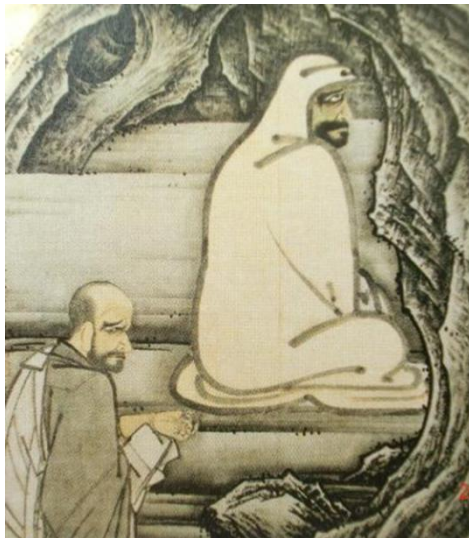


Fig. 1-4  
 Sesshū, *Eka Cutting Off His Arms*  
 15<sup>th</sup> century, hanging scroll,  
 Ink and light color on paper,  
 199.9 x 113.6 cm,  
 Sainenji Temple, Aichi, Japan.



Fig. 1-5  
 Dai Jin, *Six Patriarchs*  
 early 15<sup>th</sup> century, handscroll,  
 Ink and color on silk,  
 33.8 x 219.5 cm  
 Liaoning province museum, Shenyang, China.



## Chapter II



Fig. 2-1

Josetsu, *Catching a Catfish with a Gourd* (detail), ca. 1413.  
Hanging scroll, ink and colors on paper, 111.5 x 75.8 cm. *Myōshin-ji* temple, *Taizō-in*,  
Kyoto, Japan.



Fig. 2-2

Ma Yuan, *Walking on a Mountain Path in Spring*, 13<sup>th</sup> century.  
Handscroll, ink and light color on silk, 27.3 x 73 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei,  
Taiwan.



Fig. 2-3

Attributed to Ma Yuan, *Gentleman Viewing the Moon*, 13<sup>th</sup> century.  
Hanging scroll, ink and light color on silk, 57.3×26.5 cm.  
MOA Art Museum, Shizuoka, Japan.



Fig. 2-4

Attributed to Shūbun, *Reading in the Bamboo Study* (detail), c. 1446.  
 Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper, 136.5 x 33.5 cm. Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo,  
 Japan.

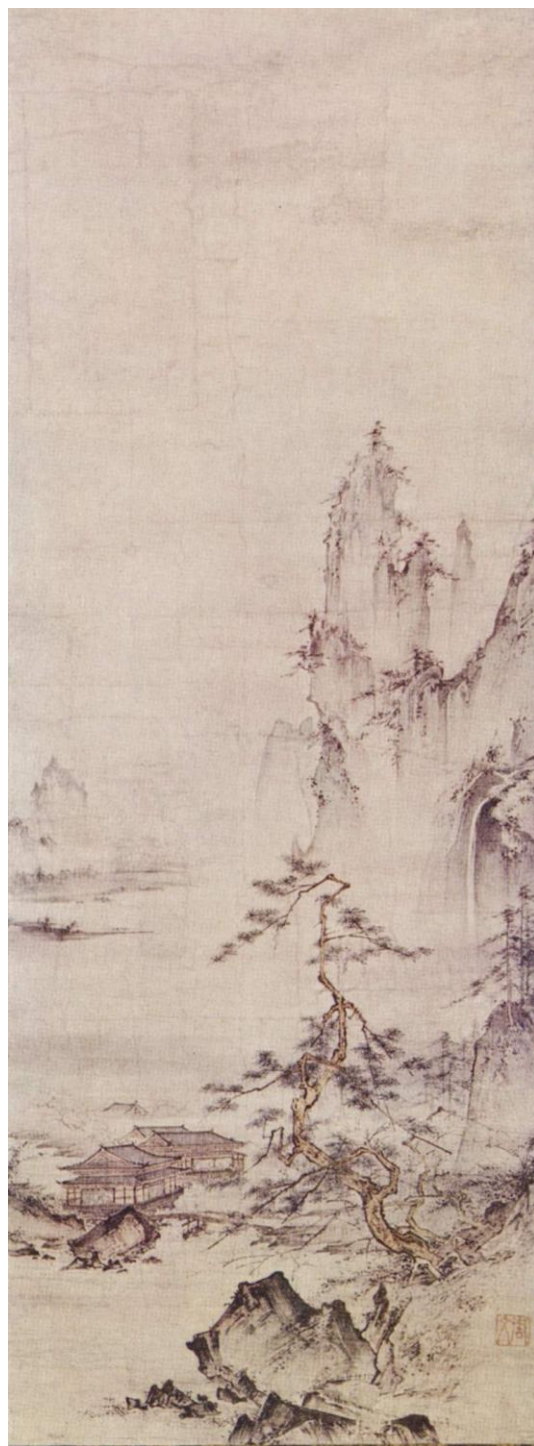


Fig. 2-5

Anonymous, *Landscape in Shūbun-Style*, late 15<sup>th</sup> century.  
Hanging scroll, ink and light colors on paper, 90.1 x 33.6 cm.  
Seattle Art Museum, *Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection*, Seattle.



Fig. 2-6

Ma Lin, *Lake View with a Palace Lady Riding a Deer*  
Late 12<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> century, Album leaf,  
ink and color on silk, 25.2 x 26.3 cm,  
The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Picture from Hui-shu Lee, *Exquisite Moments: West Lake & Southern Song Art* (New York: China Institute Gallery, 2001), 53.



21 ◎ 楼閣山水図 双幅 元 孫君沢筆 静嘉堂文库美術館蔵

Fig. 2-7

Sun Junze, *Pavilion and Landscapes*,

Seikado Bunko Art Museum 静嘉堂文库美術館, Tokyo.

Picture from Yamato Bunkakan 大和文華館, *Gen jidai no kaiga: Mongoru sekai teikoku no isseiki*

元時代の絵画: モンゴル世界帝國の一世紀 (Tōkyō: Yamato Bunkakan, 1998), Fig 21.



Fig. 2-8

Ma Lin, *Landscape with Great Pine*

13<sup>th</sup> century, Album leaf, ink and color on silk

25.1 x 26 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Picture from Hui-shu Lee, *Exquisite moments: West Lake & Southern Song Art* (New York: China Institute Gallery, 2001), Cat. 8.





Fig. 2-9

Attributed to Shūbun, *Color of Stream and Hue of Mountain*  
Early 15<sup>th</sup> century, hanging scroll,  
ink and light color on paper, 108 x 32.7 cm,  
Nara National Museum, Nara, Japan

### Chapter III



Fig. 3-1. *Spring*                      Fig. 3-2. *Summer*  
Sesshū, *Four Season Landscapes*,  
1468, Hanging scroll,  
ink and light color on silk,  
Spring: 149.5 x 75.6 cm, Summer: 149.1 x 75.5 cm,  
Autumn: 149.3 x 75.5 cm, Winter: 149.0 x 75.8 cm.  
Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo, Japan



Fig. 3-3. *Autumn*                      Fig. 3-4. *Winter*  
Sesshū, *Four Season Landscapes*,  
1468, Hanging scroll,  
ink and light color on silk,  
Spring: 149.5 x 75.6 cm, Summer: 149.1 x 75.5 cm,  
Autumn: 149.3 x 75.5 cm, Winter: 149.0 x 75.8 cm.  
Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo, Japan



Fig. 3-5  
Sesshū, *Oxherding after Li Tang*  
late 15<sup>th</sup> century, album leaf,  
ink and light color on paper, 29.9 x 30.5 cm,  
The Yamaguchi Prefecture Museum of Art, Yamaguchi, Japan



Fig. 3-6

Sesshū, *Summer Landscape after Xia Gui*

late 15<sup>th</sup> century, album leaf,

ink and light color on paper, 30.2 x 30.7 cm,

Private Collection, picture from

*Sesshū* 雪舟, ed. Junji Nakajima 中島純司 (Tōkyō : Shōgakkan 小学館, 1981), Fig. 14.



Fig. 3-7  
Sesshū, *Ama no Hashidate* (detail), 1502.  
Handscroll, ink and light colors on paper, 89.4 x 168.5 cm.  
Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo, Japan.

## Chapter IV



Fig. 4-1

Anonymous, *Scholar on a Lakeshore*, late 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Hanging scroll, ink and light colors on silk, 179.3 x 109.4 cm.

Courtesy of Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.



Fig. 4-2

Dai Jin, *The Hermit Xu You Resting by a Stream*, early 15<sup>th</sup> century.  
Hanging scroll, ink and light colors on silk. 138 x 75.5 cm.  
Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund, Cleveland, OH.





Fig. 4-3

Ma Yuan, *Scholar Viewing a Waterfall*, 13<sup>th</sup> century.  
Album leaf, ink and color on silk, 25.1 x 26 cm.  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Fig. 4-4

Ma Yuan. *Viewing Plum Blossoms by Moonlight*, 13<sup>th</sup> century.  
Fan mounted as an album leaf, ink and color on silk. 25.1 x 26.7 cm.  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Fig. 4-5  
 Li Zai, *Homecoming Ode of Tao Yuanming* (detail),  
 dated 1424. Section of a handscroll, ink on paper, 28 x 74 cm.  
 Liaoningsheng Museum, Changchun, China.



Fig. 4-6  
 Liang Kai, *Li Bai Strolling*  
 13<sup>th</sup> century Hanging scroll, ink on paper,  
 81.2 x 30.4 cm.  
 Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo, Japan.



Fig. 4-7  
 Liang Kai, *The Sixth Patriarch Cutting Bamboo*,  
 13<sup>th</sup> century. Hanging scroll, ink on paper,  
 73 x 31.8 cm.  
 Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo, Japan.



Fig. 4-8  
Sesshū *Kōjyoheizu* after *Ryōkai*, 15<sup>th</sup> century.  
Album leaf, ink on paper, 30.6 x 30 cm.  
Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo, Japan.

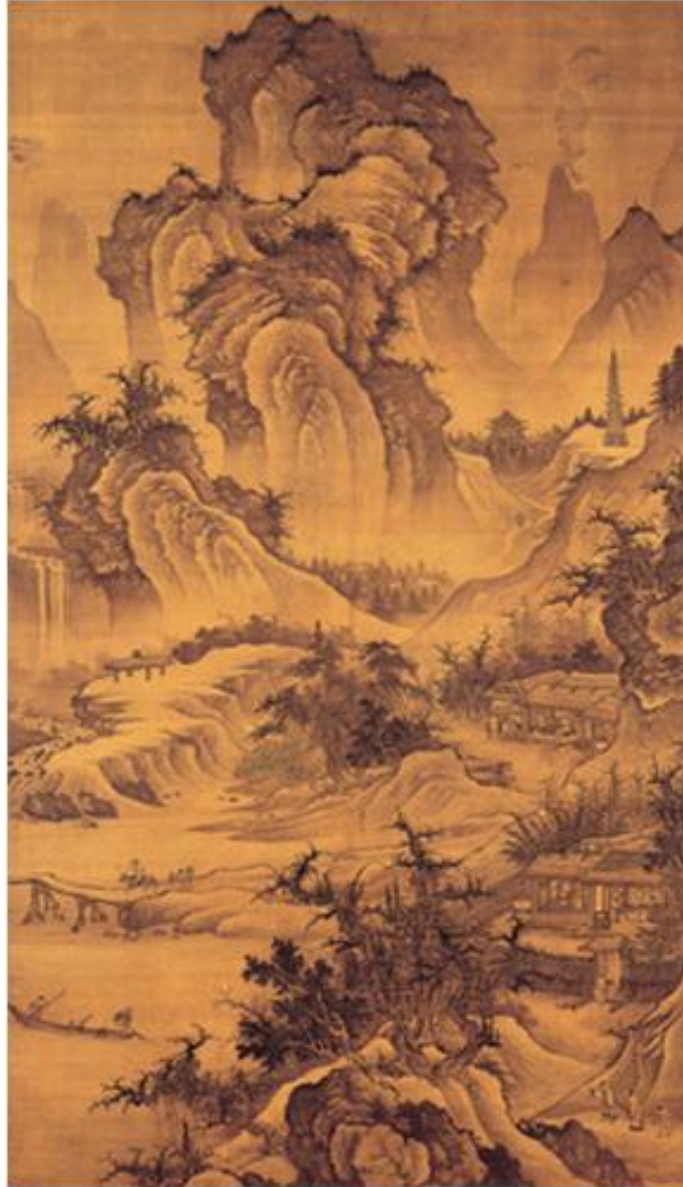


Fig. 4-9

Li Zai, *Loft Leisure at a Countryside Manor*  
Early 15<sup>th</sup> century, Hanging scrolls  
ink on paper, 188.8 x 109.1 cm.  
National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan



Fig. 4-10  
Li Zai, *Landscape*  
early 15<sup>th</sup> century,  
Hanging scroll, Ink and light color on silk,  
138.8 × 83.2 cm, Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo, Japan



Fig. 4-11

Dai Jin, *Men in a House over a Stream*, early 15<sup>th</sup> century.  
Hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk, 184.5 x 109.4 cm.  
National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.



Fig. 4-12

Shen Zhou, *Living in Retirement*, dated 1464.

Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 77 x 34 cm.

Osaka Municipal Museum of Fine Arts, Abe Collection. Osaka, Japan.

Chapter V



Fig. 5-1  
Dai Jin, *Seeking the Dao in the Mountains*  
First half of 15<sup>th</sup> century  
Hanging scrolls, ink and color on paper, 210.5 x 83 cm.  
Palace Museum, Beijing, China



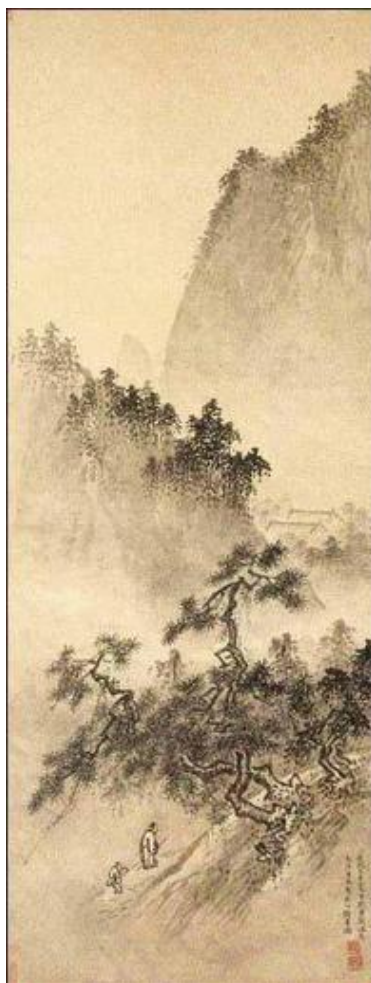


Fig. 5-2  
Dai Jin, *Spring Mountain in Rich Verdure*  
1449, Hanging scrolls  
ink on paper, 141 x 53.4 cm.  
Shanghai Museum, Shanghai, China

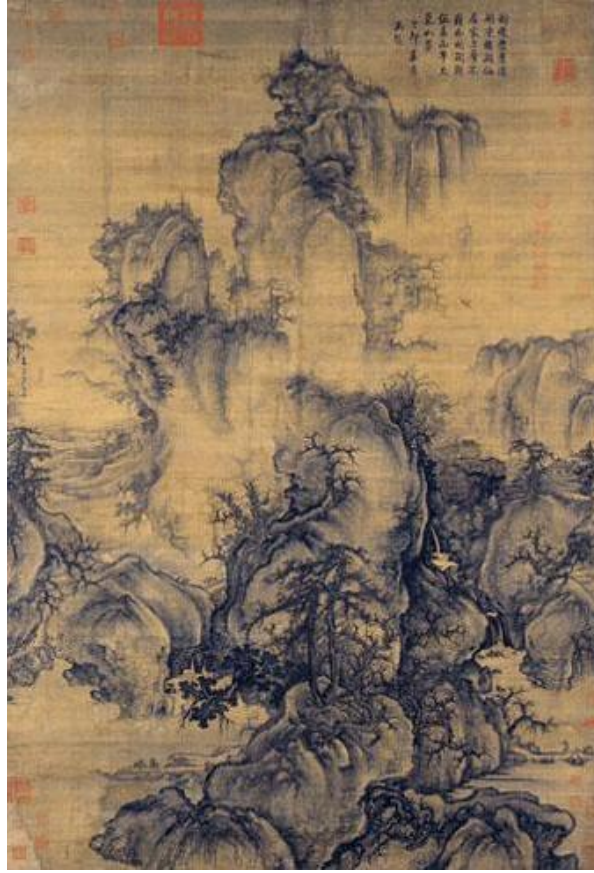


Fig. 5-3  
Guo Xi, *Early Spring*  
11<sup>th</sup> century, Hanging scrolls  
ink on paper, 158.3 x 108.1cm.  
National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan



Fig. 5-4  
*Tao Yuanming*

Fig. 5-5  
*Li Bai*

Chūan Shinkō, *Tao Yuanming and Li Bai*

Mid 15<sup>th</sup> century, two hanging scrolls  
ink on silk, 125 x 48 cm. Private Collection

Picture from *Japanese Ink Paintings from American Collections: The Muromachi Period*.  
ed. Yoshiaki Shimizu and Carolyn Wheelwright (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Press. 1976).  
73.



Fig. 5-6

Dai Jin, *Pavilion in the Summer Mountain*

Date and size unknown

Unknown collection

Picture from Richard M. Barnhart, Mary Ann Rogers, and Richard Stanley-Baker, *Painters of the great Ming: the Imperial Court and the Zhe School* (Dallas, TX: Dallas Museum of Art.1993). 136.

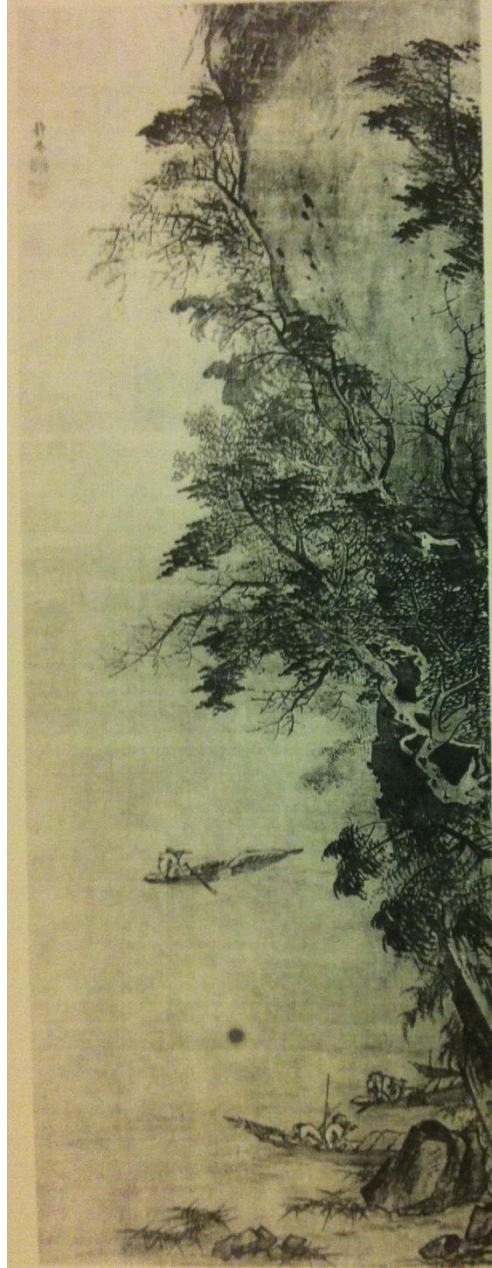


Fig. 5-7

Dai Jin, *Autumn*

Date and Size unknown,

Unknown collection

Picture from Richard M. Barnhart, Mary Ann Rogers, and Richard Stanley-Baker, *Painters of the great Ming: the Imperial Court and the Zhe School* (Dallas, TX: Dallas Museum of Art.1993). 172.



Fig. 5-8  
Sesshū, *Summer* (one in a set of *Four Season Landscapes*)  
15<sup>th</sup> century,  
Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk,  
44.2 x 71.2 cm,  
Burijisuton Museum, Tokyo, Japan

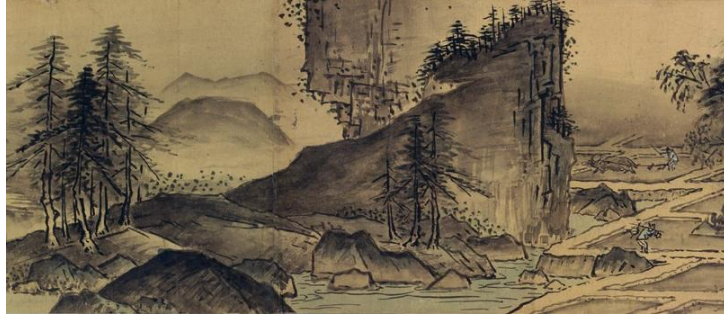


Fig. 5-9  
Sesshū, *Landscape of the Four Seasons* (detail)  
15<sup>th</sup> century,  
handscroll, ink and color on paper,  
21.5 x 1151.5 cm,  
Kyoto National Museum, Kyoto, Japan



Fig. 5-10  
Kenkō Shōkei, *Landscape*,  
late 15<sup>th</sup>–early 16<sup>th</sup> century,  
Hanging scroll, ink and light color on paper,  
51.2 x 30.6 cm  
Nezu Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan





Fig. 5-11. *Spring*

Fig. 5-12. *Winter*

Dai Jin, *Spring and Winter*,  
first half of 15<sup>th</sup> century,  
two hanging scrolls, ink and light color on silk,  
144.5 x 79.0 cm each, Kikuya Collection, Yamaguchi, Japan



Fig. 5-13. *Spring*



Fig. 5-14. *Winter*

Fig. 5-15. *Autumn*

Sesshū, *Spring, Winter and Autumn* in a set of *Four Season Landscapes*  
late 15<sup>th</sup> to early 16<sup>th</sup> century,  
Hanging scroll, Ink and light color on Silk, 71.2 x 44.2 cm,  
Burijisudon museum, Tokyo, Japan



Fig. 5-16  
Dai Jin, *Man Sleeping in a Boat by Moonlight*  
First half of 15<sup>th</sup> century, hanging scroll,  
ink and light color on silk, image: 59.5 x 42.5 cm,  
C. C. Wang Family Collection



Fig. 5-17  
Attributed to Sesshū, *Landscape Screen* (detail)  
Muromachi period, 6 hanging scroll paintings mounted on screen,  
ink and light color on paper, 352.3 x 161.5 cm,  
Freer Gallery, D.C..



Fig. 5-18

Dai Jin, *Fishing on the Shore of the Wei*  
first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Hanging scroll,  
ink and light color on silk, 139.6 x 75.4 cm  
National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.



Fig. 5-19

Dai Jin, *Skiff Returning in Wind and Rain*  
first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Hanging scroll,  
ink and light color on silk, 143 x 81.8 cm  
National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.

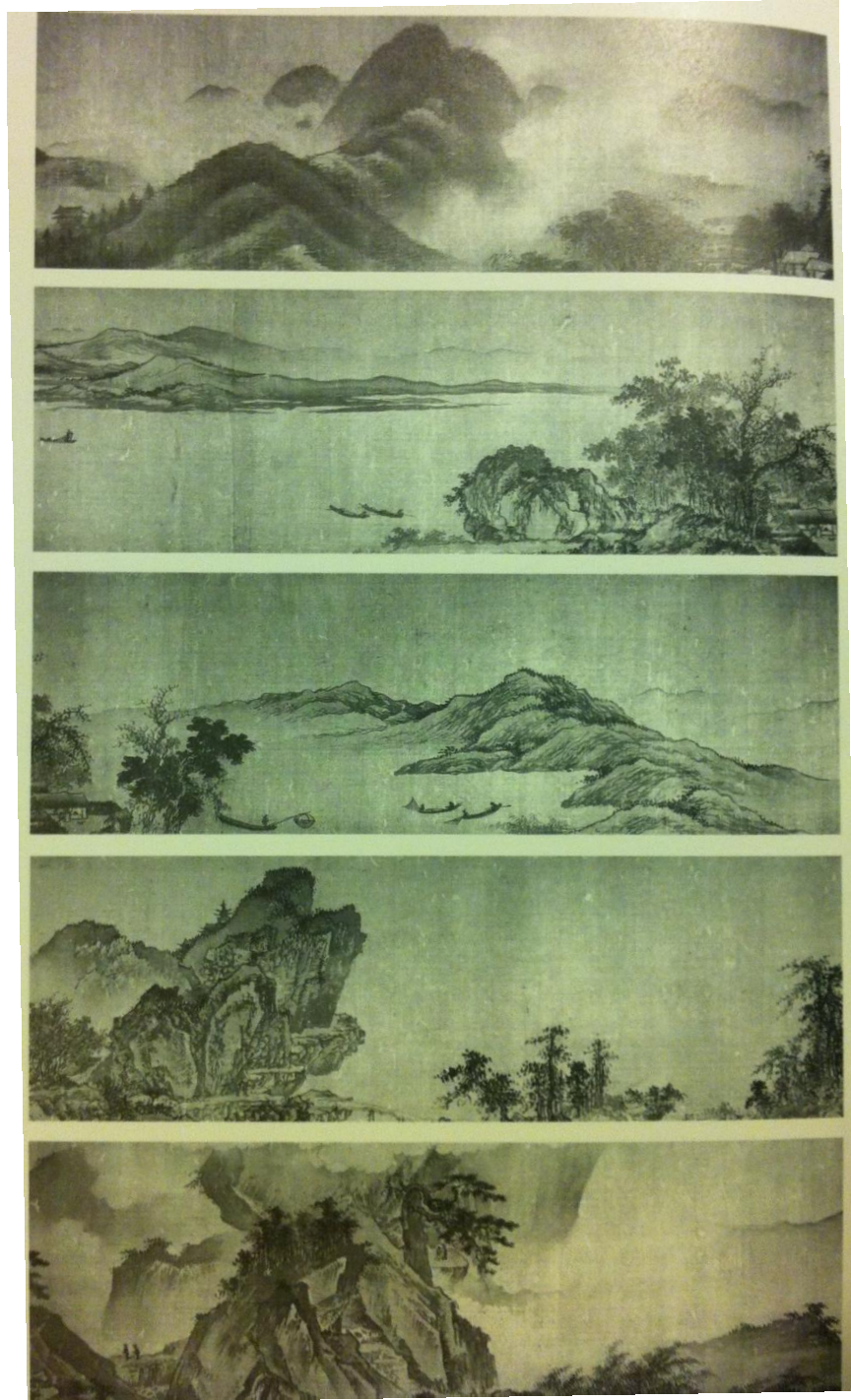


Fig. 5-20

Dai Jin, *Vast Views of Rivers and Mountains* (detail)  
First half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, handscroll, Size unknown,  
Cheng Te-k'un Collection,

Picture from Richard M. Barnhart, Mary Ann Rogers, and Richard Stanley-Baker,  
*Painters of the great Ming: the Imperial Court and the Zhe School* (Dallas, TX: Dallas  
Museum of Art.1993.) 162.

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