CHEN CHENGBO (1895-1947): A TAIWANESE PAINTER AT THE CROSSROADS OF MODERNITY

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

During the Japanese Occupation of Taiwan (1895-1945), the small island underwent great transition. Changes occurred in all aspects of Taiwanese life. These changes are reflected in the works of the Taiwanese oil painter Chen Chengbo (1895-1947). Although the Japanese occupation had a range of effects on the Taiwanese people, Chen took advantage of the opportunities afforded by the Japanese educational system to learn about artistic styles from Japan, China, and Europe. This variety of training and experience led to the creation of a style that incorporates features of all three regions in a unique fusion.

Chen Chengbo studied painting in Taiwan under Ishikawa Kinichiro who encouraged his further studies in Tokyo. Chen then became a student of Okada Saburosuke at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, completing the four-year program along with a three-year graduate education. In 1929, he moved from Tokyo to Shanghai. During his stay in China, Chen taught at Shanghai xinhua yizhuan among other schools and was actively involved with art groups such as the Storm Society. After a few years in China, Chen returned to his home in Jiayi, Taiwan in 1933. He remained active in the art circles in Taiwan as a member of the Taiyang Fine Arts Association and through exhibitions throughout the small Japanese Colony. On March 25, 1947, after Chinese Nationalists had taken over the island of Taiwan, Chen Chengbo was publicly shot in the aftereffects of the February 28, 1947 massacre that killed thousands of Taiwanese including a large proportion of the educated elite.
Because of Chen’s public and violent death in a politically charged incident, many Taiwanese art historians tend to define him by the tragic end to his life rather than his skill in painting. This tendency to portray Chen as a martyr has diverted attention from his many contributions to the artistic circles of China and Taiwan. Equally surprising is that no major studies have been completed in English on this major Taiwanese painter. The purpose of this thesis is to explore how Chen Chengbo's experiences as a successful artist in this crucial period of modernization may contribute to an understanding of the world of Taiwanese painting in the first half of the twentieth century and the artistic endeavors of its painters.
To the memories of my Ah-Ma Burke and Ah-Gong Lai

And to my Ah-Ma Lai
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To God be the Glory.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................... ii

Acknowledgments .................................................................................................. v

VITA ...................................................................................................................... vii

List of Figures ....................................................................................................... x

Nomenclature and Abbreviations .......................................................................... xiii

Chapter 1 Introduction .......................................................................................... 1

Chapter 2 State of the Field .................................................................................. 4

2.1 Taiwanese Scholars ....................................................................................... 5

2.2 Scholarship outside of Taiwan ....................................................................... 9

2.3 Personal Research ........................................................................................ 10

Chapter 3 Brief Taiwan history ............................................................................ 13

Chapter 4 1895-1924 Early Life ......................................................................... 16

Chapter 5 1924-1929 Tokyo School of Fine Arts ................................................ 19

Chapter 6 Travels to china .................................................................................. 24

6.1 1929-1933 Chen Ch’engpo in China ............................................................. 24

Chapter 7 1933-1947 Return to Taiwan ............................................................ 28

Chapter 8 Painting Style ....................................................................................... 31

8.1 Tokyo School of Fine Arts .......................................................................... 32

8.2 Influences of Mainland China ....................................................................... 32
8.3 Return to Taiwan ................................................................. 36
Chapter 9 Conclusion .................................................................. 40
Bibliography ............................................................................... 43
Appendix .................................................................................... 47
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Chen Chengbo, Horse, 1915. Charcoal on paper. 31x23 cm. Artist's Family Collection. From Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition 陳澄波百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994) ................................................................. 47

Figure 2. Ishikawa Kinichiro, Hampstead Heath, c. 1900. Watercolor on paper. 25.1x33.7 cm. Private Collection. From www.sobi2pallas.jp/e-wa3.html ...................... 48

Figure 3. Chen Chengbo, Loquat Trees, 1924. Gouache on Silk. 61x51 cm. Artist's Family Collection. From Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition 陳澄波百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994) ................................................................. 49

Figure 4. Chen Chengbo, Going Out, 1926. Gouache on Silk. 120x54 cm. Artist's Family Collection. From Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition 陳澄波百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994) ................................................................. 50

Figure 5. Chen Chengbo, Deep in Meditation, 1926. Gouache on Silk. 126x111 cm. Artist's Family Collection. From Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition 陳澄波百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994) ................................................................. 51

Figure 6. Chen Chengbo, Nude, 1926. Oil on Canvas. 80x53 cm. Artist's Family Collection. From Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition 陳澄波百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994) ................................................................. 52

Figure 7. Chen Chengbo, Jiayi Jiewai, 1927. Oil on Canvas. 64x53 cm. Collection of Chen Xuqing. From Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition 陳澄波百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994) ................................................................. 53


Figure 9. Chen Chengbo, Self-Portrait, 1927. Oil on Canvas. 41x31.5 cm. Artist's Family Collection. From Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition 陳澄波百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994) ................................................................. 55

Figure 11. Chen Chengbo, *Dyeing Fabric*, 1929. Oil on Canvas. 91x116.5 cm. Private Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)

Figure 12. Chen Chengbo, *Jiayi Downtown*, 1934. Oil on Canvas. 91x116.5 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)

Figure 13. Chen Chengbo, *Niju-bashi in Tokyo*, 1927. Oil on Canvas. 80x100 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)

Figure 14. Chen Chengbo, *Fresh Flow*, 1929. Oil on Canvas. 72.5x60.5 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)

Figure 15. Chen Chengbo, *Little Boy*, 1931. Oil on Canvas. 82x53 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)

Figure 16. Chen Chengbo, *My Family*, 1931. Oil on Canvas. 91x116.5 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)

Figure 17. Photograph of Chen Chengbo

Figure 18. Chen Chengbo, *Tunshui High School*, 1936. Oil on Canvas. 91x116.5 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)

Figure 19. Chen Chengbo, *Jiayi Park*, 1937. Oil on Canvas. 60.5x72.5 cm. Collection of the Taiwan Museum of Art. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)

Figure 20. Chen Chengbo, *Jiayi Outskirts*, 1935. Oil on Canvas. 49x64 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)
Figure 21. Li Zifan, Well at Nanya Village, 1937. Water color on paper. 51x68.2 cm. From http://wwwcca.gov.tw/tg13/startc.htm.

Figure 22. Chen Chengbo, Mt. Yu, 1947. Oil on Canvas. 24x33 cm. Artist's Family Collection. From Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition 陳澄波百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994).
NOMENCLATURE AND ABBREVIATIONS

TSFA                Tokyo School of Fine Arts
KMT                 Kuomintang
TFAM                Taipei Fine Arts Museum
陳澄波              Chen Chengbo
石川錦一郎          Ishikawa Kinichiro
黒田清辉            Kuroda Seiki
廖繼春              Liao Jichun
岡田三郎助          Okada Saburosuke
上海新華藝術專科學院 Shanghai New China Art College
田辺至              Tanabe Itaru
台北師範大學         Taipei Normal University
谢里法              Xie Lifa
楊三郎              Yang Sanlang
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

During the first half of the twentieth century, art in China, Japan and Taiwan went through great transitions in subject matter, style, and technique. Political change dramatically affected the life experiences of the artists, including the range of educational possibilities open to them, the artistic schools with which they might associate themselves, and even their fundamental ways of thought. In Taiwan the year 1895 brought on just such a transition, as the occupation of the island by the Japanese began. As the political environment changed on the small island, opportunities to study overseas broadened, allowing artists to travel and develop styles outside of the traditional tendencies in their own native land.

As the Japanese began their colonization, several decisive steps were taken in order to instill a complete assimilation of Japanese culture into the new colony of

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\[1\] Taiwan has had a complicated history over the past several centuries. In 1661 Zheng Chenggong (also known as Koxinga) besieged Taiwan and retook it from the Dutch. He then proceeded to model the government he set up in Taiwan to follow a pattern similar to that of Ming Dynasty China, where he was born. He negotiated with the newly established Qing government (1644-1911) to make Taiwan an autonomous tributary state of the Qing, but in 1683 the Qing descended on the island of Taiwan and by 1684 Taiwan had become a prefecture of Fujian Province. For two centuries until 1895, Taiwan remained a prefecture of Qing China, with repeated uprisings and rebellions throughout this time. As the first Sino-Japanese War hit China in 1894-95. In October 1895 Taiwan was ceded to Japan as a colony, but only after a brief declaration of independence to protest a Japanese takeover.

Taiwan. One of the major steps is referred to by John Clark as “a move towards direct cultural assimilation,” which was implemented through the Japanese Education Law, established in Taiwan in 1922.\textsuperscript{2} This program led to the establishment of a semi-Japanese state with which came the benefits and opportunities in education and travel that the country of Japan afforded to its peoples in the occupation period, from 1895-1945. In discussing the opportunities in the art world brought on by the Japanese occupation, one author notes that, “There was a greater possibility for the [Taiwanese] art to be exposed to various kinds of influence, thanks to improved traffic means and wider circulation of publications on art.”\textsuperscript{3}

It was into this political climate that the well-known Taiwanese painter, Chen Chengbo (Ch’en Ch’eng-po 陳澄波, 1895-1947), was born. Living only two years past the end of the Japanese occupation period, he was raised learning the Japanese language and educated by Japanese instructors. He took advantage of the opportunities this political situation afforded Taiwanese painters of the time by traveling to Japan and to China, educating himself both academically and through an active life in the art circles in both countries. As a pioneer in this area he is an important figure in Taiwanese art history, well documented and studied by art historians of his country. Yet, for a figure fairly active in the decades of great social change in East Asia, Chen Chengbo is not extensively discussed outside of Taiwan.

As a well-educated Taiwanese who lived and worked during the first half of the twentieth century, the life of Chen Chengbo provides an excellent case study of the history of art and culture in Taiwan during this period. As a result, his paintings work as visual testaments to the changes of this transitional period as well as to the convergence of influences that formed the Taiwanese art world in which he was active. This complicated history will be presented in the following stages. First, this thesis will summarize the previous scholarship on Chen. From there a brief history of Taiwan’s political situation and the results of the transition of power from China to Japan will provide a basis from which to address socio-political environment in which Chen lived and was educated. After examining chronologically Chen’s studies and education as well as his teaching and painting, we will turn to his travels abroad, his final return to Taiwan, and eventually his untimely death. His painting style will be touched upon in the chronological discussion of his life, but will also be the focus of the later part of this thesis. The conclusion, following the discussion of his education, travels, style and death, will define the ways in which Chen Chengbo may serve as an exemplar of Taiwanese painting during the first half of the twentieth century. Through this study I hope to convey how Chen Chengbo’s experiences as a successful artist in this crucial period of modernization may contribute to an understanding of the world of Taiwanese painting in the first half of the twentieth century and the artistic endeavors of its painters.
CHAPTER 2

STATE OF THE FIELD

The majority of scholarship on Chen Chengbo has been completed by Taiwanese art historians. Brief accounts on Chen may be found in sources authored by art historians from China, such as Chen Ruilin, Zhu Boxiong and Xu Zhihao, but even these are few in number. To my knowledge, no Western studies have been written specifically on Chen Chengbo. As is the case with Chinese and Hong Kong scholarship, Chen is broached briefly in Western accounts of twentieth century Taiwanese or Chinese art history, including Michael Sullivan’s Art and Artists of Twentieth Century China and several publishings by John Clark. However, the Taiwanese sources are numerous and may be divided into four types. First, come the biographical texts with images of Chen’s works. These are the most heavily documented resources. A second type of resource is recent exhibition catalogs, which focus more on the works of art than on providing a biography of Chen. Theses and dissertations from universities in Taiwan are another of the sources in the continually developing scholarship on the artist. The fourth type of research in the public domain on Chen is online sources, both scholarly and amateur, which have witnessed an increase in number within the past year. Although these are not entirely reliable, they serve as a means to expose Chen’s and other Taiwanese artists’ art, as well as to act as a contemporary record of how the artist is currently perceived and presented to the public.
Certainly, the most accurate source from which to examine Chen’s life would be his personal writings. Chen did leave records in a journal in which he wrote regularly. However, it unfortunately remains unpublished except for some excerpts found in the biographies, especially in the one by the Taiwanese art historian, Xie Lifá (Hsieh Li-fā 謝里法). The same few quotes found in Xie’s essay are reused in most published biographies on Chen.

2.1 Taiwanese Scholars

Two major art historians, Yan Juanying (Yen Chuan-ying) and Xie Lifá, have taken the lead in researching the life of Chen Chengbo, as well as other Taiwanese artists of that time. Other scholarship includes the Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition catalog published by the Taiwan Fine Arts Museum, commemorating the hundred-year anniversary of the birth of the Taiwanese artist. Two other studies useful in this summary of Chen Chengbo’s life and works are Chen Chengbo huaji,4 published by Xiongshi tushu gongsi (which includes an essay and timeline of Chen by his son Chen Zhongguang entitled, “My Father”) and Youcai reqing Chen Chengbo,5 by Lin Yuchun (Lin Yu-ch’un). One current Taiwanese periodical, Free China Review, contains a short article on the artist, providing some insight as to the exposure of his artwork in recent years. Chen is also a topic of several theses in universities in Taiwan and even within the past year, as I studied and researched his life and works, I have found a great increase of listings of him online.

4 Chen Chengbo huaji, (Taipei: Xiongshi tushu gongsi, 1979).
5 Lin, Yichun, Youcai, reqing, Chen Chengbo (Taipei: Xiongshi tushu gufen youxian gongsi, 1998).
Xie Lifa, one of Taiwan’s leading art historians, writes on Chen as one of ten artists in his book entitled *Taiwan chutu renwu shi*. In *Chutu renwu shi*, Xie Lifa writes single chapters on ten different Taiwanese artists. He devotes one of these sections to the life and works of Chen Chengbo. In this chapter he quotes excerpts from Chen’s journal writings, using them to frame the essay around the notion of Chen’s diligent and disciplined quest for success. Xie also parallels Chen with the post-impressionist Dutch painter, Vincent Van Gogh in both stylistic similarities and in their tragic and premature deaths. “Van Gogh as a mirror” is the title of one of the sections in the essay, noting that many think Van Gogh and Chen Chengbo were similar in many ways including their early deaths.  

Yen Juanying authors the biographical essay found in the Taiwan Fine Arts series collection. The book is organized as are others in the series, with a twenty-page essay on the artist supplemented by photographs of his life. It is followed by the most complete collection of his paintings and drawings published. Only a few sentences are written about the major works in this volume, and they come only at the end. Similar to the many other Taiwanese accounts of Chen, Yan’s book contains a timeline of the artist’s life.

The essay itself follows a chronological order beginning with Chen’s childhood and ending in his tragic death. It focuses on his most important achievements, naturally painting a triumphal picture of his success both in Taiwan and abroad. Using a few of the

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6 Xie, Lifa, *Chutu renwu shi* (Monterey Park: Taiwan chuban she, 1984).
7 Ibid., p. 215.
same quotes published in Xie Lif’s account, Yan touches more upon Chen’s life than his painting style.

*Chen Chengbo huaji* consists mostly of reproductions of the artist’s drawings and paintings, and concludes with a chronological essay on his life. Following the brief biographical article is an emotion-filled essay entitled “My Father, Chen Chengbo,” from a more personal perspective by Chen Chengbo’s son, Chen Zhongguang. This final essay is more reflective of Chen’s life as a father and family man, not just as a painter. Chen’s son records briefly his remembrance of his father and his father’s work and painting style.

One final source, the article entitled “Nostalgia in Oils” by Wang Feiyun, is the only published material solely focusing on Chen found in English. The essay comes from the Taiwanese monthly magazine published in Taipei and written in English, *Free China Review*. Distributed in the United States and Canada, this publication is directed towards an English speaking and non-native Taiwanese readership. Wang’s account provides a brief history of Chen’s career, drawing on the record given by Taiwanese art historians and artists to discuss his stylistic characteristics and influences. Similar to other Taiwanese sources, Chen is commended as an artist whose life story reveals a “fragment of Taiwan’s collective memory, evoking an idyllic rural life in the past that urban progress has made irretrievable.”\(^9\) Aside from a few minor errors, the article proves a useful source on Chen’s life and works.

In general, in Taiwanese works, Chen is portrayed as a national hero, partly as a result of his success as a Taiwanese artist abroad. Discussion of his tragic death in the

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slaughter of thousands of Taiwanese citizens by the Guomindang\(^{10}\) (Kuomintang) in the February 28 incident of 1947 heightens the portrayal of his heroic stance in some Taiwanese authors' writings. The title of the biographical essay by Yan Juanying in the Taiwan Fine Arts Series, (Taiwan meishu quanji, 台灣美術全集) "A Courageous Painter --Chen Ch'eng-po" exemplifies this position. Due to his fame in Taiwan and the fact that Taiwanese sources used in this paper focus solely on him in biographies, these sources tend to create a more emotional rendering of his life while also working on a stylistic study of his paintings. Some Taiwanese authors paint a desperate picture of him as a child, an orphan who started school at a late age, and then rose to become an influential artist. On the other hand, Chen is also described as coming from a literary family, becoming extremely active as a young artist in Japan and China, as well as a hero on his return to his home. Xie Lifa, in *Taiwan chutu renwu shi*, provides great detail of his life through interviews with Chen's colleagues as well as excerpts from the artist's journal writings. In another article by Yan Juanying, she recognizes Chen as a major figure in Taiwanese twentieth century art.\(^{11}\) Chen is noted for his painting style or the groups in Taiwan in which he was involved, and usually is regarded as a particularly prolific and active artist. Consequently, the research used in this paper is based, primarily, on Taiwanese sources.

While numerous Taiwanese studies on Chen Chengbo have been written, many of them have a hagiographic slant. Common to any country promoting its heroes, the Taiwanese authors add emphasis to his valiant personal characteristics and influence of

\(^{10}\) Hereafter, GMD

Chen’s life on others. As we will see in subsequent chapters, there are inconsistencies between the different Taiwanese studies and between the Taiwanese and Chinese studies.

2.2 Scholarship outside of Taiwan

For the most part, until recently the Mainland Chinese perspective on his career in the art world is that it had little effect. His name appears to be little known in Chinese art history, except in the context of Taiwanese artists in China. This apparent anonymity in Chinese art possibly corresponds with the fact that his stay consisted of only a few years in Shanghai and visits to other southern cities in China. It might also reflect his ongoing focus on Taiwan’s art circles and his continued effort in entering his works in exhibitions in Taiwan. His relations with such artists on the mainland as Wang Jiyuan, and other Storm Society (Juelanshe) members gave Chen much to take with him as he returned to Taiwan, but by Chinese scholars’ standards he did not leave much of an impression in the art circles in Shanghai.

The two most useful resources are Chen Rui lin and Zhu Boxiong’s book *Zhongguo xihua wushi nian* and a short essay by Chen Chengbo himself originally published in *Taiwan xinmin bao* in 1935 and most recently published in *Zhongguo youhua wenxian*. Chen and Zhu write a short biography of Chen Chengbo as well as other Taiwanese artists. The chapter begins with a brief account of the state of the art world of Taiwan and in the case of Chen Chengbo discusses his life with a particular focus on his career in China. In the artist’s article from January of 1935, he writes a personal perspective on painting technique.

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Chen Chengbo is not a topic of extensive research in Western art historical circles. Similar to twentieth century oil painting in China and Japan, research on Taiwanese art in general is still in preliminary stages for Western scholars. As a result of the lack of research on Chen by Chinese or Western scholars, Chen Chengbo is also rarely viewed in the context of his Chinese art circles. John Clark\textsuperscript{13} and Michael Sullivan,\textsuperscript{14} to mention two authors on art in modern Taiwan and China, address his importance in their look into Taiwanese painting and Chinese art circles, but like their Chinese and Hong Kong colleagues, and due to the nature of the essays and books in question, Chen is addressed as only one individual within the whole of Chinese or Taiwanese painting. Clark discusses Chen most extensively of the Western scholars, providing a very brief outline of his life and accomplishments in the end of his article, but further detailed studies are needed.

2.3 Personal Research

In the research for this paper I have relied predominantly on the Taiwanese studies of Chen Chengbo by Yen Chuan-ying and Xie Lifa for the factual information on Chen’s life. Although in this situation there is no other option, there is difficulty in relying solely on Taiwanese accounts for a biography on Chen Chengbo. While the Taiwanese sources confidently and appropriately describe Chen’s pioneering accomplishments as an early artist studying abroad, it is apparent that they seek to capture a sentimental rendering of the artist as a cultural hero for the Taiwanese people. The reliance on secondary literature is also a danger in this type of study, with limited

\textsuperscript{13} Clark, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{14} Michael Sullivan, \textit{Art and Artists of Twentieth Century China}, p. 315.
primary sources. Xie and Yan's articles as well as the essay written by Chen's son provide an excellent collection of information on Chen. However, a drawback for the research in this thesis is the lack of primary bibliographical citations in each of these accounts, along with the absence of access to a complete version of Chen's personal journal.

Because of his brief stay in China, among other things, Chen does not appear to have had much impact on the mainland. In the journal excerpts used in Xie's essay there seems to be a tendency to use the quotes to serve the purpose of his writing, which was to relate Chen's life to that of the famous artist Vincent Van Gogh, and also to create a more impressive picture of Chen. Xie's stylistic comparison to Van Gogh is somewhat correct, as we will see in examples below, but his correlation of their two lives creates a somewhat artificial presentation of Chen. Chen's similarities to Van Gogh only go as far as a few stylistic similarities in some of Chen's landscapes. While these Taiwanese writers are not incorrect in presenting Chen as a prolific painter, I do not think that he needs to be compared to great artists from the Western world or from China's past. He is an artist in his own right as his paintings show—an excellent Taiwanese painter full of the characteristics that came from his own life experiences as a Taiwanese from the first half of the twentieth century. Each facet of his style is a result of not just those painters who came before him, but of the education, teachers, travels and political environment in which he lived. Each period of his life, in Taiwan, Japan and China comes together as a whole, producing a continual development of his painting style with the artistic culture of

15 Liu Haisu was known to have a fondness for Van Gogh's painting style and did paint a few works in the style of Van Gogh. This could possibly have had an influence on Chen during his stay in China.
each location adding an aspect to his developing personal characteristics. His time in Taiwan, Japan, and China blend together so that his painting style encompasses and expands based upon the influences of the unique artistic culture of each country.
CHAPTER 3

BRIEF TAIWAN HISTORY

In Taiwanese scholarship, an introduction to Taiwanese history is somewhat unnecessary, however, it is essential in understanding the context in which Chen lived. In any study of art history, historical context is directly related to the influences of any artist in any given region or era and proves an integral portion of an accurate portrayal of the situation. Likewise, this period of great social change in Taiwan during his lifetime had its natural effects on Chen as a painter. Thus, a brief biographical study is provided here.

As noted in chapter one, in the first Sino-Japanese war (1894-1895), Japan seized the island of Taiwan after the small region had declared a brief independence from Qing Dynasty prefecture rule. Thus, in May of 1895, the period referred to as the “Japanese Occupation” began in Taiwan. While organized resistance persisted for the first seven years of the Occupation, Japan’s ruling power on the small island continued its slow progression towards transforming Taiwan into a Japanese state. The first step in Japan’s

16 It should be mentioned that the legal status of the Taiwanese people was different than in other Japanese occupied regions. “In the Treaty of Shimonoseki (Article 5) the Japanese government agreed to permit those who were unwilling to remain under Japanese rule to dispose of their properties and emigrate to China within two years after ratification of the treaty were exchanged.... The purpose of the provision to permit the unwilling Taiwanese to leave for China was to minimize the Taiwanese resistance to the Japanese occupation of their home island.” Thus, emigration of many Taiwanese did occur during this time, but rebellions persisted on the island.

rule was by military force, which ended in 1915 once the revolts ended. By 1919 a change in the resistance to the Japanese had occurred, shifting from forceful revolt to “resistance by social and political movements.”17 By 1935, Taiwanese petitions to the Japanese government had ceased and after 1935 “all political activity was effectively suppressed, and in the climate of war hysteria the Japanese policy of direct assimilation was accelerated: Chinese language pages were banned from newspapers in 1937.”18

In the education system of the period, a similar progression occurred. In 1898 the establishment of common schools began, and the founding of teacher-training colleges began the following year. Watercolor painting courses began to be offered by at least 1910 with Japanese instructors. With the directive of assimilation as a factor in every part of the takeover, in 1922 the Japanese Education Law came into effect. In the mid-thirties, as more and more Japanese came to reside in Taiwan and war anxiety increased, complete integration of Japanese society took place. This type of educational reform not only produced a Japanese education for the Taiwanese in their own country, but also encouraged more Taiwanese to study abroad in Japan.19

With tensions rising, the second Sino-Japanese war began in 1937. Although the grounds of attack were between the mainland and Japan, the Japanese Occupation of Taiwan rendered the small offshore island unavoidably a part of the war. Not only were Taiwanese recruits a part of the Japanese force, but the Taiwanese people were also subject to wartime scarcity. The prosperity of Japan did not sustain itself during this period of war and only the necessities of the daily society were available. In 1945 Japan

17 Clark, p.63-64.
18 Ibid. p.64.
19 Ibid. p.65-66
announced their surrender and accepted the terms of the Potsdam Declaration. On
October 25 the formal establishment of the Nationalist authority on the island of Taiwan
began. Chinese troops were sent to Taiwan to assist in the transition. On February 28,
1947, an uprising against the unjust treatment of the Taiwanese people by the
Guomindang government led to the massacre of thousands of Taiwanese people.20 The
days and weeks following were filled with continued violence as the new government on
Taiwan executed those suspected as possible perpetrators. By 1948 the Guomindang
government had fled to the small island in the face of Communist victories in the Chinese
civil war and Taiwan came under direct Chinese administration.

In 1949, the GMD was conclusively defeated on the mainland by the Chinese
Communist Party21 forces, and their retreat to Taiwan, to establish their government in
exile, became irrevocable.

This provides the history and environment in which Chen Chengbo was raised.
As will be discussed below, this period of social and political change in Taiwan had a
great deal of influence on Chen and the art he produced.

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20 During this period when the GMD continued to work to reintegrate Taiwan into China,
the same terror techniques adopted to eliminate political dissent on the mainland were
used as a means of control in Taiwan. It is also important to note here that the number of
individuals killed in the massacre is unknown. Depending on the source the number of
victims of the February 28, 1947 incident range from about a thousand to tens of
thousands.

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CHAPTER 4

1895-1924 EARLY LIFE

The most fitting manner by which to approach the scholarship on Chen Chengbo is to develop a brief biographical sketch, describing the research and findings on him by the predominantly Taiwanese scholars mentioned earlier. This and the following chapters will address his schooling in his early years, his travels abroad and his return to Taiwan, and aims to build a background for understanding his subject matter and his development of a "modernist" style.

Chen Chengbo was born just outside of Jiayi, Taiwan in 1895, the same year Japan began its colonial rule of Taiwan. His mother passed away soon after giving birth. After a few years, his father, an intellectual (xiucai), remarried and Chen was sent to live with his grandmother. Chen’s father passed away when he was fifteen, leaving him an orphan. He then lived with his uncle, who enrolled him in elementary school at a late age. As a result, Chen was always older than his classmates throughout the rest of his life. Graduating from high school, Chen gained entrance to the teaching department at Taipei Normal School\(^\text{22}\) in 1913 and graduated in 1917. As previously mentioned, under Japanese occupation much of the faculty in Taiwan’s schools were Japanese scholars. It was at the Taipei Normal School that Chen came under the teaching of Ishikawa Kinichiro 石川欽一郎. Ishikawa was a watercolorist from Japan, well known for his time

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\(^{22}\) Also referred to as Taipei Mandarin School (Taipei shifan daxue) 台北師範大學
spent in Taiwan teaching and painting and for his relations with artists outside of Japan. Following this, Chen taught for two years at the elementary school he attended as a child and then taught drawing, painting and other non-art courses at Shuijuetu Elementary School, a country school in Southern Taiwan. Yan Juanying’s essay records this period of teaching as a necessary detour in his painting career because of financial needs. However, Xie’s account of this six-year time is as a fulfillment of requirements after his education at the teaching college. In either case, during these years Chen spent his spare time painting and working on developing his own technique.

During this period of teaching, he remained active in his painting and became a member of the Seven Stars Group (Qixing huatan) established in 1924 in Taipei.23 However, desiring more academic training, and perhaps influenced by Ishikawa, or by the opportunity granted by the Japanese occupation, Chen applied to and was accepted to the Tokyo School of Fine Art,24 beginning a three year program in 1924.

Unfortunately, publications on Chen have examples of his painting only from after this period. I have found only one published example of his work from this time before his travels, a pencil drawing of a horse (fig. 1).25 The earliest drawings and paintings by Chen are dated to 1924, and as we will see, those works appear to be composed along the academic requirements taught at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts. The only other examples to suggest styles of this period may come from a brief look into the

23 Xu, Zhihac. Zhongguo meishu shetuan manlu, Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chuban she, 1994. The Seven Stars art group was a society of seven artists from Taiwan. Xu records it as disbanding in 1927 after four of the artists in the group, including Chen Chengbo, traveled to Japan.
24 Hereafter, TSFA. (Tokyo Bijutsu Gakko) Dongjing meishu xuexiao
25 Chen Cheng-Po Centennial Memorial Exhibition, Fig. 1, Horse, 1915, p 92.
works of his teacher, Kinichiro Ishikawa.\textsuperscript{26} This is not finished? What \textit{about} the style of these works? Move some text from note and elaborate further.

\textsuperscript{26} http://www.sobi2pallas.jp/e-wa3.html, Fig. 2, \textit{Hampstead Heath}, c. 1900. While a European influence that Chen also develops is clear in this watercolor by Ishikawa, it is not until Chen’s studies in Tokyo that the Western influences truly saturate his paintings.
CHAPTER 5
1924-1929 TOKYO SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS

In 1924, Chen traveled to Japan and took the entrance exam to TSFA with fellow Taiwanese painter, Liao Jichun (廖繼春, 1902-1976), who was seven years his junior. In documentation of the conditions of admission, it is clear that entrance to this school was taken very seriously, and was completed successfully only with great difficulty. Students were admitted into the school in April and required to take both an entrance exam and a preparatory course. It is recorded that Chen entered the Western Painting department at the school which required examinations in “English (Translation and Dictation), Japanese, Oriental and European History, Japanese Language (Dictation and Free Composition), Free-hand Drawing (Drawing from Nature and Designing), and Instrumental Drawing (Geometrical and Projection Drawing).” 27 Strict academic training was practiced, with lectures, outdoor sketching and copying works of the masters and professors. These first years of academic training are exemplified in some of his earlier works such as Loquat Trees (fig. 3), 28 no doubt falling under the “Painting from Nature” category of the painting education requirements. Other examples from this early academic period are Going Out (fig. 4), 29 and Deep in Meditation (fig. 5) 30 which fit in

27 Tokyo Bijutsu Gakko, p. 28.
28 Taipei Fine Arts Museum (Hereafter, TFAM), Chen Ch’engpo Centennial Exhibition, p. 18. Fig. 3, Loquat Trees, 1924.
29 Ibid., p. 24, Fig. 4, Going Out, 1926.
the category of figures in traditional attire. The Japanese painting tradition is clearly
evident in these works, as his academic training develops. Even a few of his paintings of
nudes (fig. 6)\textsuperscript{31} from these years portray similarities to the well known Chinese painters
also trained in Japan such as Ni Yide (1901-1970), a topic which will be explored in the
next section. (The Japanese school had regularized life drawing classes at the time Chen
studied there, whereas some schools in China still suffered from the controversy over use
of nude models).\textsuperscript{32} In 1925 Chen held one-man shows in both Taipei and Jiayi. In 1926,
his work \textit{Chia-yi Street} (Jiayi Jiewai) (fig. 7)\textsuperscript{33} was selected for the Seventh Imperial
Exhibition of Japan. With acceptance into this imperial exhibition, Chen became the first
Taiwanese to attain such an accomplishment.

It is at TSFA that Chen came under the tutelage of Tanabe Itaru (田邁至, 1886-
1968). Tanabe Itaru is recorded in the 1915 listing of school instructors as an assistant in
European painting who taught Chen oil painting. Another, perhaps more influential
instructor at the school with whom Chen had private 'life drawing' lessons was Okada
Saburosoke (岡田三郎助, 1869-1939)\textsuperscript{34} who is recorded under the Faculty and
Executive Staff listing as a professor of European painting and design at the time of Chen
Chengbo’s schooling at TSFA. Their teacher-student relationship was full of constant
learning and was a friendship that would continue even when Chen Chengbo returned to

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., p. 25, Fig. 5, \textit{Deep in Meditation}, 1926.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., p 23. Fig. 6, \textit{Nude}, 1926.
\textsuperscript{32} Andrews, Julia F. "'The Traitor to Art' and Chinese Modernity: Liu Haisu and the
Nude Model Controversy," in \textit{Images in Exchange}, Richard Vinograd, , ed. (Berkeley:
University of California Press), forthcoming.
\textsuperscript{33} TFAM, p 40. Fig. 7, \textit{Jiayi Jiewai}, 1927.
\textsuperscript{34} Okada is one of the more fashionable yōga or western style painters of the period.
Taiwan. Okada Saburosuke had studied in Paris with the painter Raphael Collin (1850-1916), introduced by one of Okada’s mentors, Kuroda Seiki (黑田清輝, 1866-1924). Okada’s paintings employ the naturalistic and Impressionistic training and influence he received in his education with his teachers in Paris and Japan (fig. 8). As an individual richly involved with the developing styles of the growing society, Okada entered his works in many exhibitions including the White Horse Society exhibitions, the Bunten, and once even in the Japanese art section of the 1904 St. Louis World Exposition. As a student of Okada’s Chen learned not only the painting techniques of his teacher but also observed the deep involvement in the art world. The atmosphere of Tokyo encompassed this as well. In this growing city, Chen was exposed to exhibitions of European paintings and works by Japanese artists returning from years of studying in Europe. In such an environment the impact of Western styles and ideology was inevitable, no matter how strong the assimilation with Asian traditions.

After completing this four-year education, Chen Chengbo continued on in his studies in the graduate program in Tokyo from 1927-1929 as a research student. During this time, he continued his involvement with the Taiwanese art circles, occasionally returning to Taiwan to enter his works in exhibitions there as well.

35 http://www.hiroshima-museum.jp/okada-02.htm. Fig. 8, Nude on the Shore, Okada Saburosuke, 1935, oil on canvas.
36 Okada’s wife was the well-respected novelist Okada Yachiyo and his brother-in-law, Osanai Kaoru “began the modern theater movement in Japan (Free Theater).” Takashina, Shuji. Japan in Paris, p. 109.
In a self-portrait from 1927 (fig. 9), the influence of post-impressionists such as Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890) is evident. A self-portrait of Van Gogh from 1887 demonstrates this likeness (fig. 10). His fondness for this artist and his works is recorded in his journals. Xie Lifa notes in his chapter on Chen Chengbo that the two books in the artist’s collection, published in 1929, were a biography of Van Gogh and a collection of Van Gogh’s letters, both of which Chen marked up in repeatedly reading them. Xie emphasizes this by stating that every look at Chen’s works is like looking at Van Gogh’s works. The influence of this Dutch painter on Chen and his works is manifested in this self-portrait as well as many landscapes and still-life paintings from this period of his study. Yet, as we will see, Chen carries these well-studied, post-impressionist elements learned through his time spent at the Tokyo School of Fine Art throughout the rest of his painting career.

In this three-year period of graduate school, he remained extremely active, gaining entrance into four exhibitions in both Japan and Taiwan. Chen also became one of thirteen members of the Red Island Club (Chidaoshe) formed in 1927 by Liao Jichun. Under Tanabe Itaru and Okada Saburosuke, Chen developed the yōga, or Western style, painting techniques taught in this department. The naturalistic setting mixed with impressionist brushstrokes is something clearly influenced by the styles of these two professors with whom Chen studied. This is best observed in examples of their

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38 TFAM, p. 26, Fig. 9. Self-Portrait, 1927.
39 Fig. 10, Vincent Van Gogh, Self-Portrait in a Grey Felt Hat, 1887, www.abcgallery.com/V/vangogh/vangogh84a.jpg
40 Xie Lifa, Tu Chu Ren Wu Shi, p. 223.
42 Xu, p. 87-88, According to Xu, the group was established in 1927 and restructured in 1933. Xie Lifa, however, records the Chidaoshe as beginning in 1928.
paintings which serve as documents of their style and therefore, as an influence to his developing painting style.
CHAPTER 6
TRAVELS TO CHINA

6.1 1929-1933 Chen Ch’engpo in China

In completing his graduate work at the Tokyo School of Fine Art, Chen Chengpo decided not to return to Taiwan, where finding a job as a Taiwanese artist was difficult, but traveled to mainland China instead. In 1929 he arrived in Shanghai where he was invited to teach at the Shanghai Xinhua yishu zhuankexuexiao (Shanghai New China Art College) by his friend and fellow artist, Wang Jiyuan (1893-1975). Here, Chen was the head of the western painting department. Clearly, his training in Tokyo as a Western-style painter proved beneficial to him. Wang, who frequently visited and exhibited in Tokyo, was a long-time teacher and administrator at the Shanghai School of Fine Arts until a 1927 dispute with the director over student dissent led the majority of faculty to resign and establish the New China Art College. An extremely influential teacher and art world figure, he was a core member of the Tianmahui, which flourished in Shanghai from 1919 to 1927 and became active in the modernist Storm Society when it was established in 1932.

43 上海新華藝術專科學院
44 Xie, Lifa, Chutu renwu shi, p. 214.
45 Reliable evidence of Wang Jiyuan’s formal education beyond his studies at Shanghai mei zhuang (上海美專) cannot be found.
46 Wang graduated from Jiangsu No. 2 Higher Normal School in 1912. Xu Zhihao, p. 93.
This is, no doubt, where Chen developed relations with other artists in Shanghai such as Ni Yide and Pang Xunqin, the leaders of the Storm Society, as well as gaining, I believe, a desire to follow the Society’s focus, namely to turn to Modernism and break from the academicism that had become standard in painting of the time.

In Xu Zhihao’s Zhongguo meishu shehui manlu, he lists Chen as a member of the Storm Society.47 No other studies discuss Chen in the context of the Storm Society. However, in a lecture given by Chen Ruilin, he stated that Chen Chengbo was an active member of the society. Although without a primary source it is unknown how involved he was with the Storm Society, the influence of the society and the artists involved is evident in his paintings and writings. In Chen’s short essay, “Rambling Thoughts on Painting” he discusses ideas similar to the Storm Society’s focus.48 In comparing Chen’s works with paintings of his colleagues and of the Storm Society members, similarities in style are clearly recognizable. This will be discussed further in the section on Chen’s style.

Besides his involvement with the artists in Shanghai and his teaching in Shanghai New China Art College as well as other schools, Chen traveled to different areas in Southern China and also participated as a judge in the National Art Exhibition of 1929. His painting Dyeing Fabric (fig. 11)49 was also entered as a landscape painting in the Western painting division of this same National Exhibition.50 Chen Ruilin and Zhu

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47 Ibid., p. 132.
48 Zhongguo youhua wenxian, p. 682.
49 Taipei Fine Arts Museum, p. 46, Fig. 11, Dyeing Fabric, 1929 (recorded as painted in 1932, see footnote 43).
50 Chen’s participation in this exhibition is incorrectly documented in most Taiwanese studies. All but Lin Yuchun’s book notes his participation in the National Art Exhibition 25
Boxiong record the active life Chen led while in China. Chen Chengbo was the chairman of the Shanghai yizhuan, the supervisor at Shanghai changming yizhuan and at Shanghai National Middle School. He became the head of Western painting at Shanghai New China Art College and in 1929 was sent by the Chinese government to Japan to inspect Japanese crafts. In 1931 Chen’s work was sent to represent the Republic of China at Chicago World’s Fair. [He was] selected as one of twelve representative modern Chinese artists and his work was [also] selected for [an] exhibition to commemorate Prince Shotoku. Chen remained active in Taiwan as well exhibiting in the Taiten in 1931 and 1932. His time spent in China proved beneficial in facilitating his knowledge of the modernist art movement, expanding his experience as a teacher, artist and art critic as well as creating new ties for him in the mainland.

One main reason for this modern development lies in the context Chen entered as he arrived in Shanghai. Stepping into this cosmopolitan city in 1929, Chen came into the after effects of the May Fourth Movement as well as an environment occupied with modernist trends in painting whether through influences from Japan and by Chinese artists returning from Europe. This wave of modern thinking, which was equated with Western style proved to be the next step for Chen’s developing styles as he moved from

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of 1931. Lin publishes it correctly as the 1929 exhibition, but along with all the other authors incorrectly records that it was Chen’s painting Fresh Flow that was admitted in the exhibition. In the exhibition catalog it has Dyeing Fabric as the representative work of Chen. However, all studies on Chen date this same painting to 1932 and entitle it “Suzhou.” Zhonghua minguo guanguo meishu zhanlan hui, Jiaoyu bu guanguo meishu zhanlan hui tekan (The National Fine Arts Exhibition of 1929), Shanghai: 1929.

51 J. Clark, p. 91.
52 Chen and Zhu, p. 464-465.
J. Clark, p. 91.
his yoga style academic training to an environment where this was accepted and explored.

With the constant artistic activity of bustling Shanghai, Chen Chengbo became familiar with the development of modernity in art circles both stylistically and ideologically. Influences of this growing environment along with the painters he came to know contributed to his artistic growth as demonstrated in his works from this period. Certainly his experience as an adjudicator and participant of the National Art Exhibition, his relations with Storm Society members and the modern ideology of the cosmopolitan environment of China all remained as influential experiences as he returned to Taiwan.
CHAPTER 7
1933-1947 RETURN TO TAIWAN

With the onset of the Sino-Japanese war in 1932, many of the Taiwanese artists in China, including Chen Chengbo, returned to their home country. Returning to Taiwan in 1933 Chen continued to teach and exhibit, and also met challenges within the Japanese controlled art world. No formal art school had been established under the Japanese colonial rule. However, “The first formal painting exhibition was founded by the Japanese colonial Government-General, and called the Taiwan Fine Art Exhibition [also known as Taiten],” in 1927.\textsuperscript{53} It was modeled after Teiten, Japan’s Imperial Art Academy Exhibition\textsuperscript{54} (for which Okada Saburosuke was a member of the original academy organizing committee), one in which Chen had exhibited in while studying in Tokyo.

Chen Chengbo and a fellow artist Yang Sanlang\textsuperscript{55} (1907-1995) chose to boycott the Taiten because of what they considered an inappropriately chosen screening member. In spite of this, through talks and negotiations, Chen and Yang decided not to boycott the exhibition and were exempt from the screening process.\textsuperscript{56} The year 1934 proved to be an eventful one for Chen. Chen and Yang, along with other Taiwanese oil painters

\textsuperscript{53} Yen. p. 49.
\textsuperscript{54} Okada Saburosuke was a member of the original Teiten academy organizing committee. Ozaki, Massaak, “The Imperial Academy of Fine Arts,” Nihonga, p 98.
\textsuperscript{55} 楊三郎
\textsuperscript{56} Yen., p. 52.
developed the Taiyang Art Association. While remaining active in the developments of art in Taiwan, Chen also managed to enter Jiayi Downtown (fig. 12)\textsuperscript{57} and have it chosen by the Fifteenth Imperial Exhibition of Japan.

For the next ten years (1935-45) Chen continued to paint, entering works into and attending exhibitions. However, as with many of the Taiwanese artists on the island, this decade reveals a decline in the production of Chen's paintings. In a very general assessment of artists in Taiwan during this period, fewer artworks were created during the second Sino-Japanese war\textsuperscript{58} (1937-45) than in the preceding decades during the Japanese Occupation. Yen Juanying mentions the rationing of paint towards the end of the Sino-Japanese War as well as a decline in interest in art in general as the basic staples of food and water were of greater concern.\textsuperscript{59}

In 1945 Chen became a representative in the city government and was involved in the transition of government as the Guomindang party began to leave Mainland China and entered Taiwan. Chen's years in Shanghai corresponded with the Guomindang's consolidation of governing power in China following the successful Northern Expedition and defeat of the warlords in the late 1920s. Familiar with the ongoing governmental transitions in China from his experience as a teacher on the mainland, Chen knew of the Guomindang party and its role on mainland China. He became involved in the party and became the first Taiwanese artist to belong to this political party. As this new government began to take its place in Taiwan, many painful transformations occurred, leading up to what is now known as the 228 Incident of 1947. Tragically, the party to

\textsuperscript{57} Taiwan Fine Arts Museum Catalog, p. 64. Fig. 12, Jiayi Downtown, 1934.
\textsuperscript{58} Also referred to as the War of Resistance.
\textsuperscript{59} Yan, p.3.
which he gave his allegiance violated his trust. Chen Chengbo’s son, Chen Zhongguang recalls seeing his father publicly executed by the GMD army. “After the [228] incident... Mr. Chen along with a few others were chosen to negotiate with the army for some peaceful resolution. ...[they] were all immediately detained. March 25 ...in front of thousands of witnesses, they were executed.”60 After years of painting in Jiayi, Taiwan, Japan and China, Chen Chengbo’s life came to a tragic end, leaving his country people the memory of a talented artist and what they translated as a cultural hero.

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60 http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Temple/3307/victims/victims.html
CHAPTER 8

PAINTING STYLE

Chen’s painting style reflects his travels, education, and external influences that were accessible to him because of the period in which he lived. It is comprised of the Impressionist values introduced through the Japanese education, the traditional styles of the Chinese heritage along with the modern influences in China as well as the Taiwanese “local” style, producing eclectic style spurred on towards modernism. The style of his paintings and drawings is best analyzed in four groupings; Chen’s time spent in Tokyo, the period in Shanghai, Suzhou and other places in mainland China, the years preceding the Sino-Japanese war in Taiwan, and lastly, the period during the Sino-Japanese war and the transition of power in Taiwan that lead to Chen’s death. The combination of Chen’s experiences and education in Taiwan, Japan and China is visibly present in his paintings.

The transitions in his painting style begin with his studies in Tokyo having a close resemblance in color and brushwork to French Impressionists such as Claude Monet (1840-1926) and Camille Pissarro (1830-1903). As Chen transitions from Tokyo to Shanghai, characteristics of Post-Impressionists such as Vincent Van Gogh or Fauvists such as Matisse (1869-1954) appear in his painting style. Other stylistic characteristics popular in Shanghai during Chen’s stay blend into his works as he participates in the artistic scenes on the Mainland. Chen’s fauvist tendencies merge into an intentionally naïve style absorbing local characteristics found in other Taiwanese works of the period.
8.1 Tokyo School of Fine Arts

It is the fundamental importance of Chen's extensive training under Japanese instructors that is most evident in his works. *Niju-bashi in Tokyo* (fig. 13)\(^6^1\) from 1927 presents an excellent example where loose, abbreviated brushstrokes and light pastels are reminiscent of major Impressionist painters such as Monet. Similar to the French Impressionist techniques, Chen does not blend the pigments in the painting but creates a deliberate lack of clarity of precise forms. A light reflection of the bridge in the blurred strokes of the water and the textured strokes of the trees and bridge lamps exhibit Chen's ability to imitate the painting style of Monet and Pissarro as taught in Tokyo.

*Jiayi jiewai* (fig. 7) presents another characteristic of Chen's developed during his period in Tokyo. In this painting he combines the textured brushstrokes with an organization of the composition through straight lines. This technique of using orthogonals to lead the eye towards the background and vertical lines, such as those of the telephone poles in this painting, is a common practice during this period among many Japanese painters.

8.2 Influences of Mainland China

Chen continues this textured brushstrokes as his style follows those of Post-Impressionist artists such as Van Gogh or Paul Gauguin (1848-1903). These characteristics are played out through a change in the expressive qualities of line and form. At first Chen blends the use of contrasted hues of the Impressionists with a flatness of line and form. An excellent example of this is his work, *Fresh Flow* (fig. 14)\(^6^2\) from 1929. In *Fresh Flow*, the mute brown and neutral color schemes as well as the painterly

\(^6^1\) Taipei Fine Arts Museum, p. 36, Fig. 13, *Niju-bashi in Tokyo*, 1927.
\(^6^2\) Ibid., p. 46, Fig. 14, *Fresh Flow* 1929.
style of brushwork follow those seen in Van Gogh's works. The trees in the left foreground flanking the entire left side of the image and the small one in the foreground on the right distinctly display the short, airy, wind-swept look. Even more convincing of the ties to post-impressionist works is what appears to be a mountain just behind the telephone poles on the right portion of the painting. Certainly intended to be a mountain, with Chen's choice of color and short brushstrokes, it has the looming golden presence of a haystack reminiscent of Van Gogh's and Monet's renowned paintings of the haystacks.

Chen's painting, Dyeing Fabric from 1929 (fig. 11), is an excellent example of his newly developed modernity in painting. Here is an image of a small road in Suzhou along one of the canals. It is typical in Chen's rendering thick figures, shops and buildings on either side of the division of water in the center and an archway bridge. However, dramatically different are the colorful lines that seem to drip down from the top center of the image. Authors explain these strips of color as ribbons often seen hanging in this area as noted by the sign of a fabric dyeing shop on the left. An unusual manner is used to depict these ribbons. These strips placed at the front of the plane demonstrate this modern vision of flattening the surface. Instead of placing the hanging fabric in a more realistic perspective, it is placed at the front of the image blocking out what lies behind it in a shockingly abstract fashion. While this work is more abrupt in its change of perspective than others, an abstract quality continues in his works after this in his return to Taiwan.
Chen’s portrait of a *Little Boy* (fig. 15)\(^{63}\) and a painting entitled *My Family* (fig. 16)\(^{64}\) have faint reminders of other European masters such as Matisse and Picasso as well. In the image of the little boy, thick lines outline the forms in the background. The boy has an awkward stance partially due to the frontal view of his upper body and angled view of his legs, but also to the flatness of the colors. This bright green and red coloring are commonly contrasted in later works by Van Gogh and paintings by Gauguin. The somewhat abstracted forms and a slight lack of depth in the painting is a quote from post-impressionist painters.

This same technique is applied to Chen’s painting of himself with his family (fig. 16). This style is portrayed most clearly in the flatness of the figures and the outlines around each of them. Even more compelling is in the different perspectives displayed in the mix of the frontal view of the family figures and the aerial view of the table, which almost appears as propped up perpendicular to the floor, facing the viewer.

While still in China, an intentional naivety in the rendering of the forms and composition began to take shape in Chen’s paintings. Quite possibly an influence from the Fauvist style found in both Tokyo and China, a blend of spontaneity in compositional organization and lack of depth begins in Chen’s works. These characteristics are common in Fauvist and Cubist images, all artistic schools favored by the Storm Society.

"The group aimed to change traditional ideology with a brand-new genre of art, fighting against imitation and literal visual explanation. The ultimate goal of art, they believed, is "to create a crisscrossing world of colors, lines, and form." Their works borrowed from almost everything

\(^{63}\) Ibid., p. 34, Fig. 15, *Little Boy*, 1931.
\(^{64}\) Ibid., p. 29, Fig. 16, *My Family*, 1931.
then popular in Europe: Fauvism, Cubism, Symbolism, Expressionism, Futurism, Abstractionism, and Surrealism." 65

Certainly, this western-style painting technique developed in Chen's years spent in the Tokyo School of Fine Art. The tremendous change in styles between his early works in the fragile Nihonga-style, such as Loquat Trees (fig. 3) and these last few paintings shows an artistic evolution based upon the education he received in Tokyo. The years immediately following his graduation were the most prolific time in Chen's career. Free from the academic restraints of producing copies of works, or what professors would deem correct, Chen taught and was involved in the art circles of Shanghai during a time when the concept of freeing oneself from academicism was most popular. As he migrated to China in 1929, Chen walked into a community where, as his friend Wang Jiyuan soon wrote, "the rotten art of contemporary China [would be] hit with a powerful wave." 66 Contrary to what some scholars consider to be an immature or naive style, which they relate to his inability to break away from his academic training, one can easily see that Chen Chengpo embraces a move away from academic training, and it is evident in his works from 1930 onward, where a freedom in brushwork and brightness in color prevails. The influences of the artists in the Storm Society prove influential as Chen returns to Taiwan, something that scholars do not particularly focus on. This influence seems to have flowed into his personal styles as well. A photograph

66 Croizier, Ralph, p. 140.
of him (fig. 17)\textsuperscript{67} shows Chen sporting a beret and jacket, similar to the Parisian style Pang Xunqin brought back from his times in Paris, as noted by Ni Yide.\textsuperscript{68}

8.3 Return to Taiwan

In most of Chen’s works there exists a type of simplicity or what scholars refer to as an “informal quality.” It refers to a quality in his painting style that is “immature,” or as I have understood it, a non-realistic rendering of images. Many Taiwanese art historians such as Yen Juanying, consider these characteristics part of the features of Chen’s style which stemmed from his late start in a painting career. However, instead of creating an “immature” style as some art historians view it, I believe it is a personal style which Chen chose to develop as a result of the individuals and the paintings he came into contact with, not merely a flaw or characteristic he could not control.

We can see these “informal” characteristics in an image entitled Danshui High School from 1936 (fig. 18).\textsuperscript{69} It appears to exhibit this “immature style,” a mixture of the flatness of Fauvist styles and the brushstrokes of Impressionism. Chen’s figures have very little detail to them and many curving lines and forms comprise the image producing a somewhat soft quality to them. Jiayi Park (fig. 19)\textsuperscript{70} is another example where the curving of tree limbs and branches cover the entire image, blocking an understanding of space and perspective that is more common in realistic renderings. No depth of space exists in either image. In Danshui High School (fig. 18), an aerial view of the fields contrasts with the profile of the high school in the background. The only sense of depth

\textsuperscript{67} Fig. 17, Photograph of Chen.
\textsuperscript{68} Croizier, p. 138.
\textsuperscript{69} TFAM, p. Fig. 18, Danshui High School, 1936.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., p. 73, Fig. 19, Jiayi Park, 1937.
is in the decreasing size of the telephone poles that are in the "distance." A type of confusion of perspectives creates a flatness of the picture plane. Similarly, *Jiayi Park* (fig. 19) has this confusion in perspectives and lack of depth and consists of the same color palette. Overall, this focused view of a landscape with birds contains a mass of branches covering the entire space. Not even the size of the clumps of green leaves helps in determining what is closer or more distant. This takes the intended break of the picture space seen earlier in *Dyeing Fabric* (fig. 11) even further. This general lack of naturalism goes beyond Fauvist tendencies to a local style see in stylistic characteristics of other Taiwanese artists of the period.

Based on Chen's ability in integrating learned styles from his studies and experiences abroad it is clear that this unrealistic rendering of forms is an intentional naïvety. This same naïve quality associated with a local Taiwanese style can be seen in a comparison between Chen Chengbo's painting *Jiayi Outskirts* (fig. 20)\(^{71}\) and Li Zifan's *Well at Nanya Village* (fig. 21).\(^{72}\) The shape of the forms and the rounding of the rooftops along with the stubbiness of the human figures all contain this naïve, local quality. Slight differences occur in the materials as Li paints watercolor on paper, but overall the thick lines and simplicity of the image contains characteristics of this Taiwanese local style.

This leads to the last years of Chen's life where the production of his paintings decreased. As mentioned above, this decrease in the number of works was possibly precipitated by the rationing of paints during the war time period. And in the last few

\(^{71}\) Ibid., p. 66, Fig. 20, Jiayi Outskirts, 1935.

\(^{72}\) http://www.cca.gov.tw/tdg/13/starte.htm, Fig. 21, Li Zifan, Well at Nanya Village, 1937.
years, the decrease may also have been a result of the changing political environment as the end of the occupation was nearing and the Nationalist Military came in to power. The last image Chen painted is from 1947, entitled *Mt. Yu* (fig. 22).\(^{73}\) It employs a lack of perspective that became a more predominant quality in his works. Depicted here, is a flat and somewhat abstract rendering of a mountain scene. The outlines of it coarsely brushed on, barely leaving the viewer with a concrete understanding of it as Mt. Yu. This coarseness may be due to a change in medium as this is an oil painting on wood, however, is not the sole cause. Scattered here and there are forms reminiscent of his earlier works—a small roof of a building in the foreground distinguished by its black outlines, tops of palm trees sprouting out. The brushstrokes are much less defined and gobs of dark paint are used creating a work with somewhat undistinguishable forms and abstract.

Xie along with Yen say that Chen’s style is not mature. Xie writes that in actuality Chen only studied painting for thirteen years and that he was mostly self-taught at the beginning.\(^{74}\) Xie argues that Chen did not enjoy the academic style that he learned but always reverted to an immature style. However, I think he preferred this so-called “immature” style and that in fact it was not immature at all. When entering works for competition in the Teiten, he followed very closely the academic style approved of by his TSFA teachers. The linear perspective including the distance markers of the telephone poles depicted as receding into the background as the street distances itself in *Jiayi jiewai* (fig. 7) is a perfect example of Chen’s ability to use his mastering of the academic

\(^{73}\) TFAM., p. 85, Fig. 22, *Mt. Yu*, 1947.
\(^{74}\) Xie, p. 207.
painting techniques taught by his Japanese teachers whose work reflects this linear style. While the "immature" style is praised as choosing something that was untraditional, they seem to allude to it as something that is not entirely conscious, but more a result of his late start in his painting education. However, I believe that it is not only a conscious style that Chen chooses, but that it too, comes from his background. As we can see through paintings by other Taiwanese artists, this type of "immature" style is a characteristic not just of low or late education, but perhaps a Taiwanese characteristic. It is not immature, but a local flavor. It is one more stylistic characteristic that constructs the whole of Chen Chengbo's eclectic style.

This eclectic style is best demonstrated by Chen himself who, in 1921 wrote in his journal that as an artist, one should expand his life circle, that one must encompass and tolerate everything. He believed that if an artist does not have this tolerance to encompass everything, he will be confused and will in turn confuse his artwork. Chen's paintings exemplify this thinking as he expanded his horizons and traveled to Japan and China, absorbing the different painting methods he encountered creating a clear style that demonstrated his experiences.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Born into the history of the Japanese occupation in Taiwan, Chen became a part of the western painting movement in East Asian art from the very beginning. He began this modern training in Taiwan under Japanese instructors and continued it in his academic studies in Tokyo developing a quality based on the Impressionists of Europe. This modern style matured further as he taught in Shanghai, socialized with individuals as those in the Storm Society, and worked with artists in the region. His modern tendencies came through both in theory as Chen returned to Taiwan to develop establishing and encouraging art associations in the Japanese controlled area, and in practice in his own works. Integrating the “local” flavor of Taiwanese painting with the elements learned and practiced from his time abroad, is an eclectic style that serves as a representation of the history of Taiwan in the first half of the 20th century.

While the Japanese Occupation had its negative aspects for the Taiwanese people, it also managed to afford this small country and its citizens access to the exposure of different educational and travel enterprises. Chen took hold of the opportunities of the Japanese Occupation by educating himself in the Japanese-run school system in Taiwan and continuing this in Tokyo. Gaining the academic training necessary to continue on in a painting career, he moved himself to mainland China observing and integrating the practices and styles he encountered in each new experience. Absorbing not only the
stylistic characteristics of the artists and art he surrounded himself with but also the ideologies, he returned to his homeland of Taiwan. In his paintings Chen combined these styles, ideas and experiences producing a visual map of the history of Taiwan during his time.

Taiwanese art historians paint a picture of a heroic painter who died prematurely. Focusing on his life as a Taiwanese painter, an individual with a strong spirit and a love for his country, they neglect some aspects of his career that accent his skill as a painter. Unfortunately, the scholarship outside of Taiwan lacks the completeness that a study on a major figure in Taiwanese painting such as Chen Chengbo requires. What I hope this study provides is a step towards a more accurate understanding of Chen Chengbo’s artistic career while addressing the influences upon him and his addition to the art world in Taiwan, Japan and China. Through such a study we can learn of his progress as an artist with his academic training by Japanese instructors, the schools he was involved with and his spheres of influence in China and the growing art world of Taiwan in which he was active.

The different artistic atmospheres of these three different geographical regions in East Asia transmitted the latest stylistic tendencies of the first half of the twentieth century, particularly Western influences, in a variety of ways. Just as his essay “Rambling Thoughts on Painting” suggests, Chen opened himself to the varying artistic styles he encountered and absorbed them into his personal painting style. In his art work one can see the characteristics of Taiwanese painting during this period as described by John Clark as “marked by an eclecticism in which aspects of both Impressionism and Fauvism and the Taiwanese artists’ understanding of the Japanese
assimilation of it] were drawn upon." It is this eclecticism and innovation that is fully embodied in Chen Chengbo's paintings, providing a visual history of the culture of Taiwanese painting during the first half of the twentieth century.

76 Clark, p. 88.
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43


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Appendix
Figures

Fig. 1, Chen Chengbo, *Horse*, 1915. Charcoal on paper. 31x23 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)
Fig. 2, Ishikawa Kinichiro, *Hampstead Heath*, c. 1900. Watercolor on paper. 25.1x33.7 cm. Private Collection. From www.sobi2pallas.jp/e-wa3.html
Fig. 3, Chen Chengbo, *Loquat Trees*, 1924. Gouache on Silk. 61x51 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)
Fig. 4, Chen Chengbo, *Going Out*, 1926. Gouache on Silk. 120x54 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陈澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)
Fig. 5, Chen Chengbo, *Deep in Meditation*, 1926. Gouache on Silk. 126x111 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)
Fig. 6, Chen Chengbo, *Nude*, 1926. Oil on Canvas. 80x53 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)
Fig. 7, Chen Chengbo, Jiayi Jiewai, 1927. Oil on Canvas. 64x53 cm. Collection of Chen Xuqing. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)
Fig. 8, Okada Saburosuke, *Nude on the Shore*, 1935. Oil on Canvas. Collection of the Hiroshima Museum of Art. www.hiroshima-museum.jp/okada-02s.jpg
Fig. 9, Chen Chengbo, *Self-Portrait*, 1927. Oil on Canvas. 41 x 31.5 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)
Fig. 11, Chen Chengbo, *Dyeing Fabric*, 1929. Oil on Canvas. 91x116.5 cm. Private Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)
Fig. 12, Chen Chengbo, *Jiayi Downtown*, 1934. Oil on Canvas. 91x116.5 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)
Fig. 13, Chen Chengbo, *Niju-bashi in Tokyo*, 1927. Oil on Canvas. 80x100 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)
Fig. 14, Chen Chengbo, *Fresh Flow*, 1929. Oil on Canvas. 72.5x60.5 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)
Fig. 15, Chen Chengbo, *Little Boy*, 1931. Oil on Canvas. 82x53 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taibei: Taibei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)
Fig. 16, Chen Chengbo, *My Family*, 1931. Oil on Canvas. 91 x 116.5 cm. Artist's Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)
Fig. 17, Photograph of Chen Chengbo
Fig. 18, Chen Chengbo, *Tanshui High School*, 1936. Oil on Canvas. 91x116.5 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* 陳澄波百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)
Fig. 19, Chen Chengbo, *Jiayi Park*, 1937. Oil on Canvas. 60.5x72.5 cm. Collection of the Taiwan Museum of Art. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)
Figure 20. Chen Chengbo, Jiayi Outskirts, 1935. Oil on Canvas. 49x64 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition 陳澄波 百年紀念展 (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)
Figure 21. Li Zifan, Well at Nanya Village, 1937. Water color on paper. 51x68.2 cm.
From http://www.cea.gov.tw/tdg/13/starte.htm
Fig. 22, Chen Chengbo, *Mt. Yu*, 1947. Oil on Canvas. 24x33 cm. Artist’s Family Collection. From *Chen Chengbo Centennial Memorial Exhibition* (Taipei: Taipei Museum of Fine Arts, 1994)