FROM XINGGUOHUA (NEW NATIONAL PAINTING) TO THE FOUNDER OF THE LINGNAN SCHOOL: TRANSFORMATION OF THE REPRESENTATIONS OF GAO JIANFU AND HIS ART BY A REGIONAL DISCOURSE

A Thesis

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By

Eliza Ho, B.A.

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The Ohio State University

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Master’s Examination Committee:
Professor Julia F. Andrews, Adviser
Professor Myroslava Mudrak

Approved by

Adviser
Department of History of Art
ABSTRACT

Gao Jianfu (1879-1951) has been honored as a revolutionary painter and the founder of the Lingnan School in the Twentieth Century Chinese art. The origins of these labels can be traced back to the magazines’ essays in the late 1920s, and these identifications were consolidated by the pioneering scholarship on Gao Jianfu's art by the artist's close friend, Jian Youwen (1896-1979) in 1972. These labels passed down for generations, and they have become the standard representations of Gao Jianfu that their original contexts are largely neglected.

Discrepancies between these labels and Gao Jianfu's New National Painting (xin guohua) principles are re-examined in this thesis. I also delve into the reasons for these incongruities, which were motivated by art critics and art historians. The subsequent labeling of Gao Jianfu as the patriarch of the Lingnan School is a result of historical evaluations, from which a regional discourse of the Lingnan culture was erected.

Gao Jianfu's artistic aspirations, art theories, and stylistic sources testified to that Gao Jianfu was never interested in establishing a regional school. By re-visiting previous scholarship on Gao Jianfu's art and exploring their assumptions and arguments, we obtain a fuller picture and a chronology of how the representations of Gao Jianfu's art evolved over time. The social connections and the media coverage of the artist are two otherwise overlooked aspects that I attended for reconstructing the original contexts of Gao Jianfu's art and his xin guohua principles. The relationship between Gao Jianfu and
Jian Youwen shows us the determining role of Jian's scholarship on our present understandings of the artist. With a further exploration of Jian Youwen's background, writings and social aspirations, we find how the reputations of Gao Jianfu as a revolutionary painter and a representative painter of the Lignan culture are submerged into parts of a larger regional discourse that was expounded by Jian Youwen.
To my parents and Tim
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VITA

March 10, 1976 .................................. Born in Hong Kong

1988........................................... B.A., Department of Fine Arts, University of Hong Kong

2000-present.................................. Graduate Teaching Associate, Department of History of Art, The Ohio State University

2002........................................... Organizing committee, The Midwest Conference on Asian History and Culture

PUBLICATIONS

1. Ho Wing Sze, Eliza, "Dealing with Local History: "The Story of Hong Kong" and "The Hong Kong Sixties," in Besides, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Art History Research Society, 1999, pp. 239-256.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Conceptions of art and being an artist underwent drastic changes in China at the beginning of the twentieth century. With the overarching issue being to modernize in order to save China from foreign humiliations since the late Qing Dynasty, art assumed a new role as a tool of social progress with which artists engaged in social and political activities. China was considered to be falling apart in all aspects; many Chinese artists regarded Chinese painting to be at a dead end and believed that it would die if no new artistic force came to the rescue. The cry to revitalize the lifeless Chinese painting had never been so intense, and it was crystallized in Chen Duxiu’s 陈独秀 (1879-1942) article published in the monthly journal, *Xin qingnian* 新青年 (New Youth), in 1919, in which he called for a thorough art revolution by eradicating the orthodox tradition championed by the Four Wangs since the early Qing Dynasty.  

Chen also advocated the application of Western realism to reform Chinese art. Although the Chinese art community was united

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1 See Chen Duxiu’s letter to Lu Cheng, *Xin qingnian* vol. 6, no. 1 (1919): 85-86. The Four Wangs are Wang Shimin (1592-1680), Wang Jian (1598-1677), Wang Hui (1632-1717) and Wang Yuanqi (1642-1715). They were early Qing Dynasty artists whose art emphasized carrying down literati art traditions by emulating paintings from ancient masters. Their style won imperial support and their great popularity throughout the Qing Dynasty made them the representatives of the orthodoxy in the art world.

in seeing the necessity of reform, artists diverged over how to reform Chinese painting. In simplest terms, artists could be divided into two camps: traditionalists and reformers. They offered different solutions, ranging from undertaking reform within the tradition to adopting supplements and stimulants from other cultures, primarily the West.³

Gao Lun 高崙 (1879-1951), better known by his style name, Jianfu 劍父 (figure 1), identified himself as a revolutionary in both political and artistic spheres and emerged as a reformer. He was the first artist to propose the formula xin guohua 新國畫, or "New National Painting," to reform Chinese painting in the first decade of the twentieth century. In essence, New National Painting sought to synthesize the best elements of the Western and Chinese painting traditions, from the past to the present, to cure the stagnant Chinese painting in the early twentieth century. Gao Jianfu was also known as one of the founders of the Lingnan School (Lingnan huapai 嶺南畫派) along with his younger brother, Gao Qifeng 高奇峰 (1889-1933) and Chen Shuren 陳樹人 (1883-1948). All three were born in Panyu 潘禺, Guangdong and they studied with Ju

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³Concrete examples representing these two strands of thought were Chen Hengque 陳衡恪 (1876-1924) and Xu Beihong 徐悲鴻 (1895-1953). The former was an ardent proponent of preserving Chinese painting traditions. He and his like-minded friends were known as the National Essence School or Guocui pai 國粹派. Chen went against the iconoclastic tide, which peaked in the early 1920s, to support the sustainability of literati painting in modern times by emphasizing its abstractness and expressiveness. He likened Chinese literati paintings to contemporary western art styles for their commonality in looking beyond formal likeness. To Chen, the expressive quality of both arts was superior to representational art. Xu Beihong, contrastingly, held the literati painting traditions culpable for leading art into alienation from reality and the masses. He believed that modern Chinese painting should revive realism, which had been achieved in the Song Dynasty, and the populism of the art of the Tang and Han dynasties. For detailed discussions of the debates between the reformists and the traditionalists at the early twentieth century, see Kuixi Shen, "A Debate on the Reform of Chinese Painting in Early Republican Period China," pp. 447-469, and his "Enter a New Era: Transformation and Innovation in Chinese Painting, 1895-1930, in Between the Thunder and the Rain" (San Francisco: Echo Rock Ventures, 2000): 25-96. Another source is Wen Fong, Between Two Cultures: Late 19th and 20th century Chinese Paintings from the Robert H. Ellesworth Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York: Yale University Press, 2001), in which the author discusses the Westernizers (reformists) and the great traditionalists in separate chapters.
Lian 居廉 (1827-1904), then the most popular bird and flower painter in the region, Gao Jianfu, Gao Qifeng, and Chen Shuren are collectively known as the Lingnan sanjie 嶺南三家, “the outstanding three from Lingnan.”

“Lingnan”, which is the geographical name of their native region and is equivalent to modern Guangdong province, is used to identify their artistic style. The two different labels “New National Painting” and the “Lingnan school” are contradictory because of their conflicting connotations: the former connotes the national, whereas the latter connotes the regional.

The tension between nation and region in representations of the art of Gao Jianfu will be the entry point of my analysis. This tension unfolded itself in the evolution of the names from xin pai 新派 or “new school,” to zhezhong pai 折衷派 or “eclectic school,” to xin guohua or “New National Painting” to the Lingnan school. The timeframe for this evolution opens with the inception of Gao Jianfu’s New National Painting in the beginning of the Republican period, and it closes long after his death in the 1980s. My second task will be to examine the scholarship on Gao Jianfu’s art that was responsible for the construction of the regional school discourse that made Gao Jianfu the founder of the regional school. Third, I will revisit some of the claims of art historical studies of Gao Jianfu’s art in order to clarify their ambiguities. To achieve these goals, I will draw primary evidence from Gao Jianfu’s paintings, his life events, and his theoretical writings. Secondary sources, including articles about Gao Jianfu in various magazines and journals of his own time and inscriptions on Gao Jianfu’s paintings, will offer me a

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5 Lingnan, which designates the region south of the Nanling Mountains on the border of northern Guangdong, is a name known to be used since the Tang Dynasty.
window through which to look at the relationship between Gao’s social connections and his subsequent representations.
CHAPTER 2

STATE OF THE FIELD

General background

Scholarly studies on Gao Jianfu and the Lingnan school can be generally divided into two categories: monographic studies on the artist and topical discussions of the regional nature of the Lingnan school. Some works combine these two approaches. Monographs on Gao Jianfu emphasize his reputation as a revolutionary painter, a reformer of Chinese painting, and the founder of the Lingnan school. Publications on the topic of the Lingnan school discuss the emergence and development of the regional school, highlighting its regional characteristics, its master-disciple relationship, and its generational continuity. The issue of naming the Lingnan school is a topic shared by these studies, which are primarily written in Chinese by Chinese scholars. Such scholars have extensively discussed the genesis of the name, “Lingnan school,” and they have settled on no conclusion.\(^6\) Western scholars do not dispute the name of the Lingnan school as their Chinese counterparts do. In English-language writings on this subject,

\(^6\) More details about different opinions on the emergence of the name of Lingnan school are found in Huang Dade 黃大德 (1944-), “'Lingnan huapai' ming kao” (Investigation of the names of the Lingnan school) (Guangzhou: huacheng chuabanshe, 1995): 230-252. Some of the articles analyzed by Huang can be found in the two-volume Lingnan huapai yanjiu, 1986. Also see Li Weiming, “Cong zhezhong pai dao Lingnan pai” (From Eclectic School to Lingnan School), Doyun 2 (1991): 85-100.
“Lingnan school” is a common name indicating the artistic style(s) of Gao Jianfu, Gao Qifeng, Chen Shuren and their students.

Gao Jianfu and the name “Lingnan school” are not connected in their original contexts. The name “Lingnan school,” not self-proclaimed by any of the Lingnan sanjie but overlaid by later critics and art historians, was not approved by Gao Jianfu. He found the regional name too restrictive\(^7\) that he named his style instead the “\textit{zhezhong pai}” or the “eclectic school”, for its pragmatic attitude towards the modernization of the Chinese painting. The ultimate goal of his painting revolution was to establish New National Painting.

\textbf{Individual Scholars’ Perspectives}

\textbf{Jian Youwen and Kao Mayching}

Gao Jianfu and his art have been the subjects of scholarly studies for more than forty years, beginning with Jian Youwen’s 簡又文 (1896–1979) publication of Gao Jianfu’s chronological biography in \textit{Zhuangji wenxue} 傳記文學 in 1972 (abbreviated as 1972 chronology hereafter).\(^8\) This publication has since become the authoritative source of biographical information on Gao Jianfu. Jian Youwen was a generation younger than Gao Jianfu, and their relationship began in Jian’s childhood.\(^9\) Their relation broadened

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\(^7\) Guan Shanyue, “Shilun Lingnan huapai he zhongguo hua chuangerxian,” 31.

\(^8\) Jian Youwen, “Geming huajia Gao Jianfu: gailun qi nianbiao” (Revolutionary artists Gao Jianfu: Discussion and chronological biography), Zhuangji wenxue, 21, no. 6; 22, nos. 2, 3 (1972-1973).

\(^9\) According to Jian Youwen, Gao Jianfu taught him in the Guangzhou Xiguan Shushan Primary School 西關蟾蜍小學. Jian Youwen recalls that his revolutionary spirit was fired by Gao’s teachings of the sufferings that the Manchus had imposed on the Han people in the events of the Jiading Massacre and the Conquest of Yangzhou. These left Jian Youwen great impression and made him involve in social and political activities in his remaining life. See “Geming huajia Gao Jianfu,” 25. Jian Youwen became an official in the Nationalist Party, joined the Northern Expedition, but shifted his focus from politics to
and their friendship deepened most significantly in the 1930s after which Jian became Gao Jianfu’s major patron and promoter, and they continued to be on good terms afterwards. He championed Gao Jianfu and Gao’s principles of New National Painting mainly through his writings, which began to appear from 1936 to his death in 1979. His 1972 chronology is invaluable as a first hand account of the life and stylistic development of Gao Jianfu. Jian Youwen’s study is particularly useful in reconstructing the social networks and culture activities in which Gao Jianfu participated during the 1930s and 1940s. As a close friend of Gao Jianfu and a historian himself, Jian Youwen became the natural authority in the study of the artist.

Jian Youwen’s influence also came from the fact that he was the major collector, collecting more than a hundred of Gao Jianfu’s paintings, which ranged in style from the artist’s earliest to his late periods. This collection, named Bai jian lou 百剑楼, which literally means a pavilion of a hundred swords, provided Jian Youwen with the most reliable objects of study for his 1972 chronology and his analysis of Gao Jianfu’s art. The whole collection then changed hands because of Jian’s own financial crisis in the 1970s and it now belongs to the Art Museum of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

cultural activities since the 1930s. For Jian Youwen’s biography, his own book Xibe congjun ji, is the only rare source I found most information of his life. See Jian Youwen, Xibe cong jun ji (Record of my days in the military in the Northwest) (Taipei: Zhanji wenxue, 1982). This book is about the author’s experience from joining the Nationalist Party’s Northern Expedition in October 10, 1926 to being active in the culture scene and publishing business in the 1930s through 1949 when the Communist Party took power in China.

10 They are “Geming huashi Gao Jianfu” Zhuangji wenxue 21, 22 (1972-1973); Renjianshi, no.22 (1936) and “Gao Jianfu huashi xuexue chengmingji” (A record of painting master Gao Jian’s bitter struggle to achieve fame), Yijing, no.6 (1936): 275-281.
The 1972 chronology epitomizes the perspective and evaluation of Gao Jianfu and his art that Jian Youwen had formulated in 1936.\textsuperscript{11} He represents Gao Jianfu as a revolutionary artist, and as a leader of the Lingnan region, as an artist whose art best reflects the “Guangdongese / Cantonese character.” Throughout the 1972 chronology, Jian Youwen accentuates characteristics of the Guangdong culture, arguing that people of Guangdong had long nurtured a kind of revolutionary culture or \textit{Gemings wenhua} 革命文化.\textsuperscript{12} According to this logic, Gao Jianfu, who was raised in this culture and was able to live up to this Guangdong spirit, naturally became a “revolutionary painter” or \textit{Gemings huajia}.\textsuperscript{13} By extension, Gao Jianfu’s art was an integral part of his region’s heritage.

Kao Mayching 高美慶, who is a generation younger than Jian, is an art historian whose scholarship builds upon that of Jian Youwen. Kao was the director of the Art Museum of Chinese University when it acquired Jian Youwen’s \textit{Bai jian lou} collection. This change of ownership proved to be a blessing. In-depth research on the collection was conducted under the leadership of Kao Mayching, who has become an expert in the field. Her studies include a 1991 overview of Gao Jianfu’s stylistic evolution based on the \textit{Bai jian lou} collection, an exhibition catalogue of the three Gao Brothers (Gao Jianfu, Gao Qifeng and Gao Jianzeng 高劍曾) in 1995, and a recent analysis of a lesser known

\textsuperscript{11} The only difference between the 1936 \textit{Yijing} article, “Gemings huashi Gao Jianfu” and the 1972 chronology is the former presents a three-stage periodization of Gao Jianfu’s artistic evolution whereas the latter emphasizes the regional naming of Gao Jianfu as the founder of the Lingnan school.


\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p.25.
aspect of Gao Jianfu. The latter examines the artist’s involvement in the ceramic industry as a means to boost China’s economy by exporting the gem of Chinese art.¹⁴

Basically following Jian Youwen’s representations of Gao Jianfu as a revolutionary painter and the leader of a regional school, Kao Maychung offers in her 1991 essay an objective stylistic analysis of Gao Jianfu’s art. Focusing upon style, she argues convincingly for a five-stage periodization of Gao’s art, and she brings out the distinctiveness of each period. Her analysis is also strong at giving detailed descriptions of the paintings’ subjects. She considers, for example, the symbolism of a type of pedigree horse, the huali 驍騄, and the meaning of the carp fish in Chinese conventions. In addition, she identifies the Chinese antecedent artists to when Gao Jianfu made references in his own inscriptions.¹⁵ She also indicates Gao Jianfu’s indebtedness to some specific Japanese artists. According to Kao Maychung, Gao Jianfu’s borrowings from Japan included the “ready-made formula” of the successful Meiji modernization.¹⁶

Among other things, Kao Maychung’s awareness of the dominating popularity of the Lingnan school artists over some traditionalist artists in Guangdong in the academic field distinguishes her from other scholars in the studies of Gao Jianfu. In an exhibition catalogue of a traditionalist artist, Wong Po-yeh (Huang Banruo) 黃般若 (1901-1968),


¹⁶ Kao Maychung implies that Gao Jianfu’s New National Painting, which seeks an integration of western painting techniques with Chinese painting medium, was derived from the westernization that Japanese art underwent during the Meiji Restoration. See “The Artistic Development of Gao Jianfu,” 583.
who was an opponent of Gao Jianfu, Kao Mayching says "...the Lingnan school came to be identified with Guangdong painting, to the exclusion of other developments."\(^{17}\) A lack of research and exhibitions featuring the Guangdong traditionalist artists bears out the unbalanced situation and the selectivity of history pointed out by Kao Mayching.\(^{18}\)

**Ralph Croizer and Christina Chu**

Gao Jianfu and the Lingnan school have attracted relatively less attention from Western art historians. Ralph Croizer stands out because of his pioneering book, *Art and Revolution: The Lingnan (Cantonese) School of Painting, 1906-1951*, published in 1988, which remains by far the most comprehensive and extensive source book on the subject available in English.\(^{19}\) Croizer, originally a history professor, strives to (re)connect the now isolated disciplines of art history and history in this book. His background as an historian equipped him with some unique angles from which to look at art as viable documents for historical studies of social and political issues. To him, the Lingnan school is particularly significant because politics played a direct and determining role in its art, which is a characteristic phenomenon of Modern China in the twentieth century. One major contribution of this book is Croizer's argument that the Lingnan school's painting

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\(^{18}\) Fu Li-tsui compiles a list of art exhibitions of the artists of the Lingnan School, which includes those about Gao Jianfu, held by various institutions in Hong Kong since the 1970s. The list gives a good sense of the constant interest in the study of the Lingnan School in Hong Kong throughout the last two decades. See Fu Li-tsui, "Network and Identity: The Spread and Perpetuation of the Lingnan School," in *jin chienian lai zhongguo meishu yanjiu guoji zazhi yantaohui wenji* (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan daxue yishushi yanjiusuo, 2000): 702.

revolution epitomizes the tension between region and nation in modern China. By tracing the development of the artistic and political activities of Gao Jianfu, and, to a lesser extent, others, Crozier contends that the Lingnan school represents an unprecedented challenge launched by the art of the south (Guangdong) to the mainstream aesthetics defined by the North in Chinese art history. Crozier’s idea may have been inspired by Fu Baoshi’s 傅抱石 (1904-1965) point of view, in which the latter commented that Gao Jianfu had brought the ‘Lingnan style” from the Pearl River to the Yangzi River where he made an impact on the art scene.\(^{20}\) A historical evaluation based upon regional rivalry was nothing new to the intellectuals in early twentieth century China. As early as 1902, Liang Qichao 梁啓超 (1873-1929) had proposed that the north of China around the Yellow River had declined when the Jiangnan region around the Yangzi River took over the leading position. Liang further predicted that the Pearl River region at the far south of China, which is primarily Guangdong, would rise to be the center in the future.\(^{21}\) It was very possible that Fu Baoshi adopted this regional perspective in his analysis of the art trends of his time. In this light, Crozier’s evaluation of the Lingnan sanjie’s achievement in making an impact on the cultural center in the Jiangnan region from the otherwise

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\(^{20}\) See Fu Baoshi, “Minguo yilai guohua zhi shi de guancha” (An examination of the history of national painting since the beginning of the Republic), Yijing no. 34 (1937): 645. Fu Baoshi’s opinion signifies that by the time of 1935, Gao’s New National Painting had already gained a considerable amount of national attention. More importantly, Fu saw Gao Jianfu’s influence had gone beyond regional confines and had become a national representative (as the Yangzi River symbolizes the center of Chinese civilization). Fu’s idea was related to Gao Jianfu’s move from Guangdong to Nanjing where he taught at Central University in 1936 (supposedly 1935). Prior to 1935, scholar Pan Tianshou did not see that the Lingnan sanjie had made a mark to the central heartland of China although Pan also viewed the Lingnan sanjie as competitive new force in modernizing Chinese art. See Pan Tianshou, Zhongguo huahua shi (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1928; reprint Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1983)

“underdeveloped” Guangdong is a reiteration of Liang Qichao’s discourse on regional rivalry.

Christina Chu’s article on the Lingnan school is an entry piece for a 1998 exhibition catalogue, *A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth Century China*. Her major argument falls along the same lines as Crozier’s in honoring the Lingnan school as a competitive rival to the art in the North. Crozier’s emphasis lies on the foreign experience, mainly Japanese, upon which these Guangdong artists capitalized as their solution for reforming Chinese painting. Chu, however, concentrates on the Chinese art heritage that the *Lingnan sanjie* inherited from their Guangdong teacher in formulating their New National Painting principles. Nonetheless, both Crozier and Chu emphasize the continuation of Gao Jianfu’s legacy by the artists’ students, whose master-disciple relationships constitute the regional school, the Lingnan school.

**Li Weiming and other Chinese scholars**

Li Weiming 李偉銘 emerged as a Chinese art historian of a younger generation based in Guangdong. Since his first article on Gao Jianfu and Li Xiongcai, which was published in 1988, he has continued to be the most outstanding expert on Gao Jianfu in China. His analysis covers a broad scope, ranging from a general discussion of the

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naming of the Lingnan school to a detailed comparison of Gao Jianfu’s ideology in his political and artistic revolutions. Li’s 1994 article reexamines Gao Jianfu’s early sojourn in Japan and refutes Jian Youwen’s 1972 chronology of Gao Jianfu, which dates his departure for Japan to 1906. More importantly, Li Weiming points out that what we know about Gao Jianfu’s experience in Japan, including Jian Youwen’s information, comes largely from information supplied by the artist himself to various magazines. The published information, therefore, is highly tailored, if not all fabricated. Li Weiming continues to demystify the veneration of Gao Jianfu as a revolutionary artist. His 1999 article clarifies Gao Jianfu’s actual role in the 1911 Revolution and his subsequent political involvement until the early 1920s before he shifted his focus to his art. Li Weiming points out specific events to debunk the accounts of the biographies of Gao Jianfu which represented him as a high-minded artist who abandoned the political field for higher life goal. Li Weiming also took part in a number of catalogues on Gao Jianfu’s paintings, which include a 1999 publication, Jianfu Huaji 劍父繪集 in which his entry article analyses Japanese painting styles in Gao Jianfu’s paintings. Li Weiming

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26 According to Li Weiming, the earliest appearance of Gao Jianfu’s biographical information was in the Guomin xinwen (National News), published in Guangzhou 1927. The same article later appeared in Liangyou huabao (April 30, 1927) in which the early life of Gao from his childhood to his experience in Japan to his political activities were recounted in a very brief fashion. See Li Weiming, “Gao Jianfu liuxue riben kao,” 472-478.

27 Li Weiming’s latest research subject is Chen Shuren whom he has had several publications already. The latest one is Chen Shuren, (Beijing: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2002).
edited *Gao Jianfu shiwen chubian* 高劍父詩文初編, also published in 1999, in which published and unpublished short essays, random thoughts and speeches of Gao Jianfu are collected. This research, based on first-hand materials, represents a revisionist trend in the study on Gao Jianfu and it has contributed to the clarification of some unclear claims of the artist. It is worth noting that Li Weiming became the director of the *Lingnan huapai yanjiu suo* 嶺南畫派研究所 (Research Institute of the Lingnan School), which has been acclaimed as the landmark of the consolidation of the popularity of the Lingnan school in Guangdong since the institute’s founding in the 1980s.29

Huang Dade 黃大德, the second son of the Guangdong traditionalist artist, Wong Po-yeh (Huang Banruo), represents a radical voice in the field of Gao Jianfu studies. He argues in his research on the genesis of the regional name “Lingnan school” that it was only in the 1980s that the name became widely accepted and used. Huang Dade dedicates his research to the debates between the reformists and traditionalist artists during the 1920s in Guangdong and the ascendance of the Lingnan school in more recent years. It is most important to note that Huang Dade’s research has captured much less attention from other scholars and has rarely been quoted. I suspect that thus has to do more with protection of the fame of Gao Jianfu primarily by his students. Huang Dade’s article, published in 1991, entitled “Lingnan huapai ming kao” 嶺南畫派名考 (An Investigation of the names of the Lingnan School) is a solidly grounded study, whereas “Lingna huapai

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29 Huang Dade points out, according to his interviews with Fang Rending 方人定 and other relevant figures, that Guan Shanyue 賴山月, Li Xiongcai 劉雄才, He Lei 何磊, Su Wonong 蘇臘農, Zhao Chongzheng 趙崇正 were responsible for coining the name of the Lingnan school and its subsequent promotions. See Huang Dade, “Lingnan huapai mingkao,” 248.
"tiaocha cialiao," 嵩南畫派調查材料 (Findings on the Lingnan School) of 1995 comprises records of Huang’s interviews with some relatives and friends of the participants of the debate between the reformers and the traditionalist artists. This orally transmitted information from the interviews, however, needs to be verified.

Other important scholarly studies include He Jincan’s 何錦燦 dissertation (Zhuhai University, Hong Kong, 1979) and Chen Hsian-p’u (Chen Xianpu) 陳錦善 monographic study in 1991. The former is from Hong Kong, and the latter from Taiwan. However, neither is known to be further pursuing this specific of Gao Jianfu. Publications on Gao Jianfu and the Lingnan School from Mainland China have been abundant, but their quality has varied. Cai Xinyi’s 蔡星儀 monograph on Gao Jianfu is the most recent publication, which came out in 2002. Huang Hongyi’s 黃鴻儀 publication on the Lingnan School in 2003 belongs to a larger compendium entitled Zhongguo huapai yanjiu congshu 中國畫派研究叢書, in which the research subjects are different regional schools in the history of Chinese art.

My Position

Building upon these solid studies on Gao Jianfu, my thesis will re-examine one of Croizier’s major arguments-- the tension between region and nation-- putting it under a different light. I will look at the contradictions of Gao Jianfu’s original intent to invent a

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32 Cai Xinyi, Gao Jianfu (Beijing: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2002).
new kind of national painting and the subsequent regional labeling of him as the founder of the regional school. While Croizier argues his position by looking at the trajectory of Gao Jianfu’s career life, which started out in the south and strived to become national, I will argue that the establishment of the regional school discourse is a contemporary construct that partly originated in Jian Youwen’s larger regional discourse of the progressive, hybridized, and most importantly, revolutionary Guangdong culture.

Having mentioned above the evolution of the names of the Lingnan school over time, I will now look at original contexts to determine how different names arose. We will, therefore, see a fuller picture of how Gao Jianfu’s art developed and how his proposal of the New National Painting was received and represented at different times. The common usage of the name Lingnan school in the present day gives a strong impression of a local school. This name has obscured Gao Jianfu’s original intention of creating a new national painting style.

The name Lingnan school is a result of historical evaluation by historians and art historians based on regional subject matter, institutional ties, and the locality where the teachers and disciples gathered and worked.\(^{33}\) It was, however, never the original intent of Gao Jianfu to establish a regional school. Gao Jianfu never proclaimed a regional revolution. He aimed at revolutionizing Chinese painting via a synthesis of Chinese and Western art, but not via the artistic tradition of his native place. As we will see when the paper unfolds, Gao Jianfu was never known as promoter of his regional identity, nor did he reveal his intention in painting regional characteristics in his New National Painting.

\(^{33}\) Both Ralph Croizier and Mayching Kao define the Lingnan School as a school because of the body of students that Gao Jianfu produced. These students were largely Guangdongnese, associating to the same institution, the Spring Slumber Studio and sharing similar artistic ideas. See Croizier, *Art and Revolution*, 1; Mayching Kao, “The Artistic Development of Gao Jianfu,” 572-573
revolution. By chronologically tracing Gao Jianfu’s artistic development with an eye toward his cultural identity as a Guangdongnese, I hope to prove that the tension between region and nation in Gao Jianfu’s art lies in the scholarship on the artist and not in Gao Jianfu’s work.
CHAPTER 3

REPRESENTATION OF THE ART AND CULTURE OF GUANGDONG

It is useful to look at the conventional representation of the historical development of Guangdong before we proceed with our investigation of Gao Jianfu’s relationship with the artistic traditions of Guangdong. Some scholars describe Guangdong’s geography as the major factor to shape Guangdong culture. Guangdong, the southernmost province of China, has never been considered a powerhouse in the history of China until the late nineteenth century. Its coastal location and the mountain ranges at the northern border of Guangdong province separate it from the political, economic and cultural centers of China, mainly the cities around the Yellow River and the Yangzi River, and this partly explains why Guangdong has been marginalized in the history of China. Nevertheless, Guangdong’s coastal location makes the region more susceptible than other Chinese cities to foreign influences through maritime trade. Some scholars hold a Marxist view, claiming that the economic environment is responsible for giving characteristics to the

34 The history of the emergence of these regional stereotypes is nicely sketched out by Sun Lung-kee in “North and South,” chapter 5 of The Chinese National Character (New York: M.E Sharpe, 2002); 145-189. Also from Sun, we learn that beginning from Liang Qichao, intellectuals started to link geography with national character, and some elaborated this linkage onto a regional level, differentiating Chinese people into regional groups according to the geology of the regions. See also Liang Qichao, “Dili yu wenming zhi guanxi” (The relation between geography and civilization, in Haiji, vol.1, “Wenji,” part 10, 106-116.
Guangdong culture. Canton, the present day Guangzhou, was the earliest treaty port opened to foreign trade. It had been enjoying the benefits of being the sole treaty port from the Qianlong reign 乾隆 (1736-1795) to the time of the Nanjing treaty in 1842 when four other places, Shanghai, Ningbo 宁波, Fuzhou 福州, and Xiamen 夏门, were forced to become the treaty ports. These factors are regarded as the molding forces of Cantonese culture and catalysis of the emergence of Cantonese cultural identity, which is a unique mixture of Chinese traditions and Western influences. This representation of the hybrid Guangdong anticipates the province’s crucial role played in the sweeping modernization of China that began at the late Qing period.

Jian Youwen accepted this view of the historical development of Guangdong, and from it he further elaborated Guangdong as having a revolutionary tradition. Jian Youwen, as an historian, had an intense interest in analyzing the Taiping Rebellion, whose leader, Hung Xiuquan 洪秀全, was also a Guangdongnese. In addition, modern Guangdong has been known as the cradle of progressive reformers and revolutionaries, most notably Sun Yat-sen 孙中山 (1866-1925), Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927) and Liang Qichao, to mention only a few. Jian Youwen refers to Guangdong as the “origin of

35 According to Sun Lung-kee, the Marxist theory of the shifts of the agricultural centers of production first appeared in Karl A. Wittfogel’s The Economy and Society of China, 1931. It was later adopted by Ji Chaoding, who held the same principle in explaining the shifting of the key economic area from the North to the Yangzi River. See Chi Ch’ao-ting (Ji Chaoding), Key Economic Areas in Chinese History, As Revealed in the Development of Public Works for Water Control (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1956).

36 Croizier, Art and Revolution, 6.

revolution” or *geming ceyuandi* 革命策源地, and this reflects clearly Jian Youwen’s unique sense of cultural identity.38

We should be cautious about Jian Youwen’s representation of Guangdong, however, because the revolutionary or the more progressive side of Guangdong is only part of the Guangdong culture that Jian Youwen selectively stresses for his own purpose. Ralph Croizier, with a consideration of Guangdong’s historical development, presents a more complete picture of Guangdong culture. Being physically distant from the cultural centers in the North generated Guangdong people’s fear of not being Chinese, of not being cultivated enough. Art and culture in Guangdong emulated the mainstream style developed in the “more cultured” Jiangnan region and the North. Emphasizing the dual sides of Guangdong culture --both conservative and progressive-- Croizier points out that it is exactly the former that shaped the art scene of Guangdong up to the late Qing period.

It is generally believed that art in Guangdong lagged behind other more developed regions in China, and it did not show its own characteristics until the late nineteenth century. Although scholars commonly agree that Guangdong art began with Lin Liang 林良 (ca. 1428-1488), a court painter who served at the early Ming Dynasty court, specialized in painting birds, and gained national recognition for his artistic excellence, this artist did not necessarily open up a new space for Guangdong art to grow as a distinctive regional school. Guangdong art did begin to flourish in the Ming Dynasty when maritime trade brought Guangdong prosperity and gave rise to the merchant class that became important in supporting the art market. Such a circumstance, however, did not produce patrons who cultivated their own artistic taste, such as the Yangzhou

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merchants in the eighteenth century who nourished alternative art styles and a group of individualist artists collectively known as the Eight Eccentrics. Among other things, artists in Guangdong in the Ming and Qing dynasties remained largely followers of the styles popular in the Jiangnan region.

Similarly, Guangdong people fell behind in collecting art and antiquities. The establishment of private art collections did not exist in Guangdong until the Qing Dynasty. It was not until the latter part of the eighteenth century that Guangdong art collectors grew to be noticeable. The five major art collectors who had publications on their collections since the Jiaqing reign (1796-1820) include Wu Rongguan 吳榮光 (1773-1843), Pan Zhenwei 潘正雋 (1791-1850), Ye Menglong 葉夢龍 (1775-1832), Liang Tingdan 梁庭丹 (1796-1861) and Kong Guangtao 孔廣陶 (1832-1890).

Unfortunately, the field of art collecting paralleled that of art creation in Guangdong, where the art collectors’ tastes were shaped by the mainstream currents defined by the Jiangnan region and the North. A minimal amount of paintings by Guangdong artists were found in these documented Guangdong art collections, and thus we could say that the Guangdong people lacked a sense of local pride in art before the Republican period.

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39 Zhuang Shen, Cong baizhi dao baiyin qingmo Guangdong shuhua chuangaoyu shuacang (From paper to silver: History of Guangdong’s creation of painting and calligraphy and collecting at the end of the Qing Dynasty) vol.1 (Taipei: Dongda tushu gongshi, 1997): 522.

40 It is not possible for me to summarize Zhuang Shen’s comprehensive analysis of art collecting during the Qing Dynasty in this thesis. Zhuang Shen’s two-volume publication, Cong baizhi dao baiyin, remains the best and most in-depth analysis of the history of art collecting activity in Guangdong. For a general discussion of the development of Guangdong art from ancient times to the early twentieth century, see Li Gongming 李公明, Guangdong yishishi (Art History of Guangdong) (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1993).

41 The issues of local pride and regional style are very interesting topics in Chinese art history. In the case of Guangdong, from Wang Zhaoyong’s publication, Lingnan hua zhen lue, 1927, we can see an emergence of the regional identity in Guangdong art in which the author’s sense of local pride can be discerned. In
The development of art in Guangdong began to capture more attention only in the late Qing Dynasty and the following Republican period. This was partly because of the ripple effect of Guangdong’s fame as the “origin of revolution,” which has been explained above. The publication of Lingnan hua zhen lue 崁南畫徵略 in 1927 compiled by Wang Zhaoyong 汪兆鏞 is the first indicator of the emergence of a sense of distinctiveness of Guangdong art. It is a comprehensive collection of biographies of Guangdong painters since the Tang Dynasty and the earliest of its kind. This unprecedented publication was part of the author’s effort to construct the history of Guangdong painters and painting, and it marked the birth of a unique Guangdong artistic and cultural identity.

Ralph Crozier’s description of a bifurcated Guangdong culture continues to be true in the Republican period in the cultural scene of Guangdong. The Lingnan sanjie, Gao Jianfu, Gao Qifeng and Chen Shuren, were originally known as the xin pai, the new school, in relation to the traditional artists in Guangdong who sought to preserve the essence of Chinese painting traditions. These artists were said to work in the old style, and they were labeled as the “jiu pai,” the “old school.” This xin-jiu 新舊 dichotomy is another way to indicate the disparate attitudes between the traditionalists and the reformers toward the modernization of Chinese painting. The debates between the traditionalists and the reformers in Guangdong, which began in the 1920s and intensified

contrast to the art scene in the Jiangnan region, the sense of local pride was recorded in local texts, for instance, the documents about the competition between the Suzhou and the Songjiang schools in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties.

42 Xin pai or new style was the earliest label used in the Zhenxiang huabao 真相畫報 (The True Record) to indicate the Gao brothers and Chen Shuren and their advocacy of integrating Western painting techniques to reform Chinese painting. See Huang Dade, “Lingnan huapai ming kao,” 233. Zhenxiang huabao was run
during 1926-28, were known nationally to the people of the time. In the eyes of the native 
Guangdong people then, the competition between the jiu pai and the xin pai artists was 
quite even-handed. The conflicts between them, intriguingly, seemed to fade out, only to 
be mentioned in more specialized regional historical studies.43 The jiu pai artists in 
Guangdong have disappeared altogether in the majority of the current art history books 
on modern China.44 What has been left behind is exclusively the xin pai, the Lingnan 
sanjie, who are represented as the founders of the Lingnan school.

by the Gao brothers in Shanghai during 1912 and 1913, and it became the primary forum for dissemination and promotion of their New National Painting principles.

43 Huang Xiaogen and Wu Jin’s Guangdong xiandai huatan shilu records the details of the debates between the xin and jiu pai artists in Guangdong in the 1920s. Unfortunately, I was unable to get a copy. Huang Xiaogen and Wu Jin (eds.) Guangdong xiandai huatan shilu (Veritable records of the history of the modern Cantonese art world) (Guangzhou: Lingnan meishu chubanshe,1991).

44 There are two exceptions. One is Lang Shaojun’s entry, “Traditional Chinese Painting in Twentieth Century,” in Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting (Hong Kong: Yale University Press and Foreign Languages Press, 1997): 304-308. Lang’s article is by far the most informative record available in English, which documents the writing battle between the xin pai and jiu pai artists in Guangdong in the middle of 1920s. The other is Li Chu-isng, and Wan Qingli, Zhongguo xiandai huafen xi: minchu ji bu ( A History of Contemporary Chinese Painting) (Taipei: Shitou chuban gufen youxian gongsi, 1998):112-117. This book is distinctive from other general survey books on modern Chinese paintings because of its coverage four traditional artists, or jiu pai artists in Guangdong, including Li Yinshan 李研山 (1893-1961), Deng Feng 鄧芬 (1894-1864), Huang Bannuo 黃般若 (1901-1968) and Huang Junbei 黃君壁 (1899-1991) besides the standard coverage of the Lingnan sanjie.
CHAPTER 4

THE EMERGENCE OF "THE LINGNAN SCHOOL" AND ITS ASCENDANCE

According to Huang Dade’s 黃大德 comprehensive research on the evolution of the names of the Lingnan school, “xin pai” and “xin guohua” were the earlier labels used to name the two Gaos, Chen, and their artistic aspirations.45 “Lingnan sanjia” appeared later in Liangyou huabao in the April issue of 1928. The first appearance of the term Lingnan huapai was in the inaugural issue of Feifei huabao 非非畫報 in 1928. Luo Luohua 羅落花, the chief editor then, wrote an article entitled, “Jindai Lingnan huapai zhi yi” 近代嶺南畫派之一 (Contemporary Lingnan school number one) in which he referred generally to artists from the Lingnan area.46 He names no specific group of artists as the Lingnan huapai.

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45 Huang Dade 黃大德 is the son of Huang Banruo 黃般若 who was the key figure representing the National Painting Research Society, previously the Guihai yanjiu hui 廣亥研究會 (Guihai Research Society), which launched a series of articles in criticizing Cao Jianfu, Gao Qifeng, Chen Shuren and their students’ paintings for plagiarizing Japanese paintings.

46 Luo studied painting with Pan Dawei 潘達微, who participated in the heated debate between the xin and jiu pai in 1926. Pan, along with Huang Banruo and other jiu pai painters argued that the xin pai artists simply “imported Japanese paintings” in the name of renewed Chinese paintings. To the jiu pai artists, the importation of foreign paintings techniques to modernize traditional Chinese paintings would drain the national essence. From this context, Luo Luohua, the author of the 1928 article would not have named his opponents, xin pai artists, as the Lingnan school, which carried an undertone, honoring the artists being the representatives of Guangdong.
Lingnan hua zheng lue 嵊南畫徵略 (Compendium of Lingnan Painting), first compiled in 1927 by Wang Zhaoyong 汪兆鏞, as mentioned above, is a conscious attempt on the author’s part to write a history of painters and painting of the Lingnan region from the Tang to the Qing Dynasty. There is no such label of the Lingnan huapai. Even in its supplementary version, which came out in 1961, published in Hong Kong, the author does not label specific artists as the Lingnan huapai.\(^7\) In Guangdong xiandai huaren zhuan 廣東現代畫人傳 (Biographies of modern Guangdong painters), published in 1941, the author, Li Jianer 李健兒 does not name the two Gaos and Chen with their students as the Lingnan huapai. He gives the xin pai and the jiu pai painters equal attention. This indicates that the jiu pai painters were competent rivals of the xin pai. In the more recent 1985 publication, Lingnan jindai huaren zhuan lue 嵊南近代畫人傳略 (Biographies of contemporary Lingnan pinaters,) the author, Zheng Chunting 鄭春霆 is slightly ambiguous because he honors Gao Jianfu with a number of titles, including the leader of the zhenghong pai, the Lingnan pai and the founder of xin guohua.\(^8\) In short, there is no definite labeling of the Lingnan school. This shows that the name Lingnan huapai was not established as a convention until the past two decades.\(^9\)

\(^7\) Zhuang Shen discussed briefly Wang Zhaoyong’s first edition and supplement version of Lingnan hua zheng lue. Zhuang’s major contribution is his methodical statistics on the geographical distributions of the Guangdong artists in the Ming and Qing dynasties from which he defined the delta region, which includes Panyu 潘禺, Shunde 順德 and Nanhai 南海, as the area producing most artists. This is fundamental work for further research on the interactions and exchanges among the Guangdong artists. See Zhuang Shen, Cong baizhi dao baiyin, vol. 1, 3-6.

\(^8\) Zheng Chunting, Lingnan jindai huaren zhuan lue (Hong Kong: Guangya she, 1987):109.

\(^9\) This chronology of publications on the Lingnan artists, all published during and after the Republican period, reflects continuing efforts at establishing and strengthening the regional identity of Guangdong art and Guangdong artists. Since there were no such publications appeared before the Republican period, we may conclude that Guangdong art identity was not well-developed before the twentieth century.
Gao Jianfu’s art is undoubtedly well-recognized as is indicated by his inclusion in all of these biographies of modern Guangdong artists. Jian Youwen is unmistakably the representative author who championed most enthusiastically Gao Jianfu’s leading position in the Lingnan region. In the following sections, I will look into the details of the representations of Gao Jianfu constructed by the scholars mentioned in the State of the Field section. I will focus mostly on the claims of Jian Youwen because of his authoritative voice in this field. Obscurities on Gao Jianfu’s life and his artistic aspirations have been passed down and I hope in the course of my analysis to bring those out and clarify them. A method of periodization based on Gao Jianfu’s painting style, important life events, and his social connections will be used. This organization also makes the comparison of the uneven scholarship on Gao Jianfu’s art easier to be sorted out and more meaningful.
CHAPTER 5

GAO JIANFU’S STYLISTIC EVOLUTION AND REGIONAL IDENTITY:

Re-examination of the Formative Period 1892-1905

Scholars generally agree that the formative period of Gao Jianfu’s art begins in 1892, when he was 14 years of age and started to study with Ju Lian, and extends to the year prior to his sojourn in Japan. Scholars diverge in their opinions on when Gao Jianfu went to Japan to study art. Some questions have remained unanswered because of the lack of reliable documentation.\(^{50}\) There is, however, an agreement that in this formative period Gao Jianfu mastered Ju’s style, which was characterized by realistic rendering and decorative coloration.\(^{51}\) Ju Lian was an accomplished professional artist in Guangdong who specialized in the flower-and-bird genre that evolved out of Meng Jinyi’s 孟觐乙 and Song Guangbao’s 宋光寶 traditions during the Daoguang 道光 reign period (1821-1851). Their styles were associated with Yun Shouping 車 Seller (1633-1690) in the early Qing Dynasty. Sprinkling of powder on ink washes (zhuangfen 搗粉) and splashing water on

\(^{50}\) Jian Youwen’s 1972 chronology remains the most widely accepted source that most scholars, including Kao Mayching, Ralph Crozier and Christina Chu adopted. It gives 1906 as the year of Gao Jianfu’s first departure for Japan. He Jincan and Chen Xiangpu proposed 1903, and Li Weiming provided thorough data to testify to 1903 as the actual time. See Jian Youwen, “Geming huajia Gao Jianfu,” vol. 22 no. 2 (1972): 85-86 for original sources. Also see Chen Xianpu, Gao Jianfu de huihua yishu and Li Weiming, “Gao Jianfu liuxue riben kao,” 472-495.

wet ink (zhuanshu 擦水) are the techniques that were perfected by Ju Lian, making his flower and bird paintings look lively and decorative (figure 2). These techniques were to be passed down to Gao Jianfu and continued to be distinctive elements which cropped up even in some of his late period paintings.

Apart from Ju Lian’s style, all previous studies agree on Jian Youwen’s claim that the young Jianfu found supplements to Ju Lian’s style through Wu Deyi 伍德彝, a senior pupil in Ju Lian’s studio (figure 3). Wu Deyi’s family passed down to him an impressive art collection that he opened up to Gao for viewing and copying. We are told by Jian Youwen that Gao Jianfu gained access to view such Guangdong art collections as those of Wu Rongguang 潘士成, Zhang Yinhuan 张廍桓 and Kong Guangtao because of Wu Deyi’s family connections and Wu’s penchant for hosting painting viewing gatherings. Because of this exposure, it is claimed, Gao Jianfu acquired a wide range of knowledge about the styles associated with ancient Chinese paintings from the Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties amassed in these collections.

No scholar explains which specific masters’ techniques or styles were the ones that Gao Jianfu learned from these collections. In fact, there is no physical evidence to

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support that Gao Jianfu mastered the ancient painting styles. From the extant paintings in this formative period, we do not see any specific traces of copying from the old masters in the extant paintings in this formative period. The only exceptions are found in Gao Jianfu’s inscriptions on Feeding the Bird After Luo Ping (figure 4) from 1899, and Cocks, Peonies and Rock (figure 5), dated 1902, where he acknowledged copying from or modeling his work after Luo Ping 羅聘 (1733-1799) and Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521-1593).

It is important to make clear the basis of Gao Jianfu’s knowledge of Chinese painting traditions during this formative period. In the following decades he was going to make this knowledge the cornerstone of his proposal for New National Painting. Flowers, Melon, Fish and Insects (figure 6), dated 1905, a set of four hanging scrolls, is a work representative of this formative year. In it Gao Jianfu achieved Ju Lian’s realism, as is shown in the meticulous rendering with fine outlines. The work even surpassed Ju Lian’s decorative mode. Gao’s composition is even better thought out, as his aesthetic purpose and sense of lyricism are conveyed in the lightly colored background and reflection of the moon. His personal style, which leans toward the expressive mode, has yet to emerge. There is simply no indication of any ancient Chinese painting vocabulary, such as dotting or axe-cut strokes, in the paintings of this period. If Gao Jianfu had ever seen and copied ancient paintings, there would have been such traces in his paintings.

Chinese painting motifs and brushstrokes appeared only in paintings that Gao produced after his study in Japan. It is likely that Gao Jianfu indeed saw and learned these aspects of Chinese painting in Japan, or simply learned Chinese techniques from

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54 Chen Xiangpu makes this observation, and she claims that, conflicting with other studies, Gao Jianfu did not seem to have acquired the painting techniques from ancient masters of the Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties. See Chen Xiangpu, *Gao Jianfu de huahua yishu*, 73
some Japanese paintings. Japanese artists had a long history of emulating Chinese painting that began as early as the Tang Dynasty. The Southern Song academic painting style and motifs which would appear in Gao Jianfu's paintings later --especially the elongated, monumental mountain, Li Tang's 李唐 small ax-cut texture strokes and Ma Yuan’s 馬遠 angular strokes, the overtly romanticized atmospheric effects --were all transmitted to Japan and became popular among Japanese artists. It is also known that Li Tang, Ma Yuan, and Xia Gui’s 夏圭 works were present in Japanese collections. In contrast, only a handful of ancient Chinese paintings are noted in the Guangdong art collections, and because we are uncertain whether Gao Jianfu would have been allowed to see these highly-priced ancient paintings, we have good reason to cast doubt on Jian Youwen's claim. Gao Jianfu's knowledge of Chinese painting traditions and his understanding of the essence of Chinese painting could also be like his knowledge of western perspective and realism, which were filtered through Japanese versions of Western paintings.

55 The question about whether Gao Jianfu viewed any Chinese paintings in Japan remains an unresolved question because of the scarcity of documentation of Gao’s activity in Japan. But it is possible that Gao saw paintings in the style of the Southern Song academic style, including the Zhe school paintings in the Ming Dynasty, in Japan because of the long history of Japanese collecting of these Chinese paintings as early as the time of Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (d. 1408). Japanese favoritism for the Ma-Xia style extended to the Zhe School style, which was a continuation of the former. For detailed information on Japanese collections of Ma-Xia and Zhe school styles, see Richard Stanley-Baker, “Marching in Time: Muromachi ink painting and the Zhe School,” in Richard Barnhart, Painters of the Great Ming, the imperial court and the Zhe School (Dallas, Taxes: Dallas Museum of Art, 1993): 333-348.

56 Zhuang Shen’s statistics on Guangdong’s collections of ancient paintings of the Song, Yuan and Ming paintings show that Guangdong art collectors favored the Southern School artists, for instance, Zhao Mengfu and the Wu School. Guangdong collectors were much less interested in Northern school artists, such as the Zhe School. See Cong bai zhi dao hai yin, vol.1, 160-221.

57 Gao Jianfu was never known to have traveled to any European countries or North America, and according to Jian Youwen, Gao Jianfu learned western painting techniques from a French painting teacher whom: we know only by his Chinese name, Mai La, when Gao Jianfu was studying in Guangzhou during 1903 and 1905. This piece of information was also adopted by Crozier. See Crozier, Art and Revolution, 23. But Gao Jianfu’s knowledge of western painting techniques broadened while he was in Japan, where he
Another claim made by Jian Youwen about Gao Jianfu’s knowledge of Guangdong art traditions should be considered carefully. Jian Youwen claims that Gao Jianfu studied diligently not only ancient Chinese paintings but also works of some Guangdong artists of the Qing Dynasty including, Zheng Mu 張穆, Li Jian 黎簡, Gao Yan 高嚴 and Xie Lansheng 謝蘭生. This claim suggests that Gao Jianfu treasured the art of his native place. Jian Youwen, indeed, does not make clear when Gao studied the paintings of these Guangdong artists. Jian probably is recalling Gao Jianfu in the 1940s when they were working together for the promotion of the Guangdong culture. Only by then might Gao Jianfu have been familiar with Guangdong subjects. In any case, it is very unlikely that Gao Jianfu would have known much of his Guangdong artistic predecessors. In addition, none of Gao Jianfu’s writings or inscriptions on the paintings indicates his admiration or knowledge of the artists or art in Guangdong in the past.

Gao Jianfu’s ideas about how to modernize Chinese painting never showed either knowledge of or interest in Guangdong art. Gao Jianfu’s most organized ideas on xin guohua came in 1941 as a lecture entitled Wo de xiong dai huihuan guan (My views of modern painting). In the speech, Gao Jianfu situates his xin guohua in the dynastic development of Chinese art and the development of western paintings through the ages.

joined western painting orientated art clubs. It is certain that Gao Jianfu’s knowledge of western painting techniques was transmitted through Japanese painters and their work.


59 Gao Jianfu wrote about his teacher, Ju Lian, on one occasion, and this was his only reference to Guangdong art. See “Ju Lian’s Painting,” in Gao Jianfu shiwen chubian, ed. Li Weiming, 204-211. It was first published in Guangdong wenwu (Guangdong Cultural Relics) vol.8 (1941). This is unlike Gao’s contemporary and rival, Wong Bo-yeh (Huang Baoru) who was known for his enthusiasm in analyzing and promoting Guangdong art heritage. See the chart compiled by Huang Dade about his father’s writings on Guangdong art in the The World of Wong Bo-yeh, appendix 1, 192-195. Gao Jianfu was never recognized as an expert on Guangdong art.
and he characterizes *xin guohua* as being at the juncture of revolt against trends of the previous period. *Xin guohua*’s principle was distinguished by Gao’s perception of a cyclical evolution in the development of art. He believed that the tendency toward abstraction in modern western painting was a reaction to its precedents. Similarly, the emergence of the self-expressive Yuan literati painting was a break from the realism of the Song’s academic style. According to this logic, modern Chinese painting should strive for an overthrow of the dominance of literati traditions and a revival of the concern for realism in art of the Song Dynasty.⁶¹

Gao Jianfu’s view on the development of art was always set at a national and an international level. He mobilized a phenomenon in the development of western art to justify his New National Painting revolution. Jian Youwen’s claim for Gao’s sense of regional identity reflects nothing more than Jian’s own intention to promote Gao as a Guangdongnese who is filled with local pride and therefore, is a natural representative of the local school.

Gao Jianfu, during this foundation period, was capable of painting well in the style of Ju Lian, but contrary to what different scholars have claimed, he was not necessarily well-versed the painting techniques of the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasty masters. Gao Jianfu would only have had a very vague idea of Guangdong art traditions. It was never his thought to elevate his native art early in his career life. Even when his New National Painting principles were solidly formulated in 1941, the Guangdong art tradition did not have a place in his rhetoric. Before he went to Japan, his repertory of

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⁶¹ This lecture was for an activity called Lecture on Culture, which was held in Hong Kong, and was organized by the Zhongguo wenhua xiejinhui. More details will be discussed in p. 66-68 of this thesis.  
painting genres, techniques and styles was confined to a few sources: Ju Lian and dubiously, the Guangdong art collections. We will see that it was only after his numerous trips to Japan in the following decades that a traditional Chinese painting vocabulary appeared in his work. Gao Jianfu’s understanding of Chinese painting techniques and styles was received from the Japanese.

Period of Transformations 1906-1924

The beginning of this period is marked by a “transformed” Gao Jianfu who came home from Japan armed with foreign experience. The transformation began with his joining of the Tongmeng hui 同盟會, or Alliance Society, in the summer of 1906 while he was in Japan. This led Gao Jianfu to take part in the 1911 Revolution.62 His formulation of the New National painting and his stay in Shanghai during 1912-1918 to promote his New National Painting manifested another aspect of his transformation. In the course of time, we would also witness a complete channeling of his energy from politics to the painting revolution in the early 1920s. Concurrently, when Gao Jianfu resettled in Guangdong, his New National Painting began to draw severe criticism from the jiu pai artists in Guangdong. These events were active factors in determining Gao Jianfu’s painting styles, as we see him strategically switching from one style to another when targeting different audiences in Shanghai and in Guangdong. His choice of what and how to paint reflect his responses to changing environments. To Gao Jianfu, style was thus a

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statement of public identity. Modern, national and cosmopolitan were the qualities he strove to achieve.

Rarely do any extant paintings indicate clearly what styles Gao Jianfu was practicing during his study in Japan. It is only through his semi-autobiographical accounts in various newspapers and magazines of the time, which were later adopted by Jian Youwen, that we know Gao Jianfu claimed to have joined the stylistically western art clubs: White Horse Society, Pacific Painting Society and Watercolor Study Society.\textsuperscript{63} There are no other documents which testify to Gao’s own claim.

Gao Jianfu seems to have recognized quite early the importance of utilizing mass media to disseminate ideas and to promote himself. He, with his younger brother, Gao Qifeng, ran the Shenmei shuguan 審美書館 (Esthetic Bookstore).\textsuperscript{64} They also published the Zhenxiang huabao 真相畫報 (The True Record) with the support of the Nationalist Government when they returned from Japan and ventured to Shanghai from 1912 to 1918. Zhenxiang huabao was short-lived; only seventeen issues were published in less than a year’s time, from May 6, 1912 to March 6, 1913.\textsuperscript{65} The Gao Brothers and Chen Shuren began to capture the media’s attention in the middle of the 1920s. Liangyou huabao 良有畫報 (The Young Companion), one of the best-selling popular magazines in China, had been devoting a considerable amount of attention to these Lingnan artists in its art

\textsuperscript{63} Li Weiming has listed out different newspapers and magazines, which published Gao Jianfu’s biographical information, for example, Liangyou huabao (Young Companion), Beiyang huabao (Beiyang Pictorial), Guangzhou ribao (Guangzhou Daily) and etc. See “Gao Jianfu liuxie riben kao,” 473-373.

\textsuperscript{64} There is not much material found on the nature of the Shenmei shuguan (Esthetic Bookstore), but Croizier believes that it was part of Gao Jianfu’s bookstore-publishing house business, which primarily was the artist’s means of livelihood. See Croizier, Art and Revolution, 67-68.

\textsuperscript{65} I was unable to get access to the copies of the original Zhenxiang huabao, which is known to be collected by very few collectors and libraries. Croizier certainly read the original copies, in which he quotes the mission statement of Zhenxiang huabao (May 30 1912) issue. See Croizier, Art and Revolution, 68.
section. Published in Shanghai and circulated throughout the country and overseas, *Liangyou huabao* was a pioneer in naming the Gao Brothers and Chen Shuren as the *Lingnan sanjie* in its April issue 1928. It accentuated both the native origin of the artists and the newness of their painting styles. This favoritism had dual reasons: the magazine was owned by a “progressive” Guangdong young man, Wu Liande 伍聯德 (1900-1972), and the magazine adopted a supportive stance toward the Nationalist government. Although Gao Jianfu was not involved closely in the publishing business after the *Zhengxiang huabao*, he knew well the importance of staying in the limelight. Rather than being a publisher himself, he became a constant subject of reports in various magazines for the rest of his life.

Perhaps because Gao Jianfu wanted to impress his countrymen with a cosmopolitan image; the paintings he produced during his time in Shanghai were particularly Japanese in flavor in terms of subject matter and style. The broadening of his subjects to include animal and landscape genres can be seen as a direct result of Gao’s exposure to the Japanese art world. *Fox under the Moon* (figure 7), dated 1912, is a prime example of Gao painting with a Japanese theme and in a Japanese style. The fox, as a painting subject, is an important figure in Japanese folklore. The application of light ink washes to tint the background is typical of *Nihonga* painting in representing fogginess for

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66 I am grateful for Mayumi Kamata’s generous offer of this piece of information.

67 See Appendix I. The issue of the media coverage will be further explored in below.

68 According to Kao Mayching, this is the earliest known animal painting by Gao Jianfu. See Mayching Kao, “An Artistic Development of Gao Jianfu,” 571.
a poetic feeling. The fox is rendered in a boneless technique; its natural posture and the moon lit environment achieve both a realistic and lyrical feeling.

The tiger is another type of wild beast that became a subject in Gao Jianfu's paintings after his sojourn in Japan. Tiger painting developed into an independent genre in Chinese art history in the Song Dynasty. Tigers shown in different postures are used to represent the animal's different emotions, and representations of tigers evolved and became conventionalized through the centuries. Although Gao Jianfu claimed to have copied ancient tiger paintings of the Song Dynasty when he was sixteen in 1895, no corresponding painting has been found. The earliest extant tiger painting of Gao Jianfu appeared only in 1915 and was entitled *Spirit of Kingship* (figure 8). In it the realistic rendering of the tiger defies Gao's claim of modeling his beast after a Song tiger, which is far more stylized. In addition, records indicate that no tiger painting was ever collected in the documented Guangdong art collections. Gao Jianfu, as Crozier posits, most likely modeled his animal after contemporary Japanese tiger paintings because of the commonalties in the moonlit setting and snowy landscape and the realistic rendering of the beast. Tiger paintings and tiger painters were so numerous by that time in Japan that one cannot possibly identify any specific source that Gao Jianfu emulated. Gao

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70 Tiger paintings by a Song Dynasty Chan Buddhist monk, Muqi in the South Song period are very rare extant paintings of tiger in such an early date. Comparing Muqi's to Gao Jianfu's tiger paintings, we are not convinced that there was any kind of emulation of an ancient model on Gao Jianfu's part. Crozier compares Gao Jianfu's and Gao Qifeng's tiger paintings in which he believes that the latter showed emotions in their faces, which made them closer to typical Chinese tiger paintings. See Crozier, *Art and Revolution*, 40.


72 Ibid., 175.
Jianfu’s claim, made much later than his several tiger paintings, is more of a rhetoric that alludes to his indebtedness to Chinese painting traditions. He was probably responding to the increasingly hostile attitude towards the Japanese because of their invasions of China were advancing in the 1930s.

It was quite common for Chinese artists who studied art in Japan to believe that to learn from Japanese paintings was a means of retrieving lost Chinese painting traditions. Gao Jianfu’s article, “Ribenhua jishi zhongguo hua” 日本畫即是中國畫 testifies to this phenomenon. He argues that the Japanese painting that succeeded in its modernization by learning from the western techniques, namely realism, had indeed originated from Chinese art in the Ming Dynasty. Jian Youwen is also very conscious of Gao’s indebtedness to Japanese painting, and he handles this aspect with great caution in his 1972 chronology. To support Gao Jianfu’s justification that learning from Japanese paintings was indeed a way to glean the best traditions of Chinese painting, Jian Youwen quotes Bao Shaoyou 鮑少游 (1892-1985) and Fu Baoshi’s articles. These writers acknowledge Chinese paintings as the original inspirations for Japanese paintings, and they echoed Gao Jianfu’s positive attitude about modeling Chinese painting upon contemporary Japanese paintings. This idea has been resurrected by Jian Youwen and

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73 From the contents and the dates Gao Jianfu mentioned in his “Huahu buji,” in which he was recalling his experience in painting tigers in the Republican year 18, which is 1930, and his mentioning of the trip to India and Burma, which was in 1931, we can deduce that the article was written after 1930. Also because he classified his tiger paintings into different stages’ productions based on their different purposes, a later date at around the late 1930s or the early 1940s would have to be allowed for his classification. See “Huahu buji,” in Gao Jianfu shiwen chubian, ed. Li Weiming, 164-165.


Li Weiming in their studies of the relationship between Gao Jianfu’s art and Japanese paintings. The latter argues that people’s (probably the jiu pai artists’) accusation about Gao Jianfu’s emulation of Japanese paintings was based upon their sense of cultural inferiority, and their egotism for the superiority of Chinese culture blinded them from seeing the benefits of learning from other cultures.

Gao Jianfu’s emulation of Japanese style preserves some Chinese elements. A case in point is Tiger (figure 10), 1918, in which the posture of the fierce beast accords with one of the conventionalized attitudes of tigers in the Chinese painting tradition, gaoshi 高視 (watching from the cliff). The asymmetrical composition is a reference to the Ma-Xia tradition of one corner composition. We should note, however, that the conventional posture and composition were transmitted to Japan, where they were favorably adopted by the Kano school in particular. In any case, the “Chineseness” stops and the overall effects are more evidently Japanese in the meticulous and scientific rendering of the beast within a simplified composition and a minimally depicted landscape. Landscape depicted with a few quick and bold axe-cut strokes became a common feature in Gao Jianfu’s landscape paintings in this period. The same kind of heavily-loaded brushstrokes, which give an expressive and explosive quality, are also found in the shading of the angular rocks in Monastery in Autumn Mountain (figure10) dated 1918.

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77 This 1918 Tiger painting was first published in Liangyou huabao (April 30 1927). I am indebted to Dr. Song Hou-mei, who is now working at the Cincinnati Museum of Art, Ohio, for my discussion on the conventions of Chinese Tiger painting. She came to the Ohio State University to deliver a talk on the development of tiger and carp paintings in Chinese history in February 2003.
In Gao’s formative period, he did not paint landscapes; however, after his study in Japan, he became increasingly willing to experiment with the landscape genre. Ironically, landscape paintings painted in the literati tradition, especially those in the Qing Dynasty, became the subject of much criticism at the time because of their increasingly schematized compositions and repetitious vocabulary. Chen Duxiu’s declaration of the art revolution in 1919, which I mentioned in the beginning paragraph of this paper, summarizes the iconoclastic atmosphere in which the Orthodox School of the Four Wangs, who painted landscapes in literati tradition, was castigated most severely. To abandon the literati tradition became a popular thought among reformist artists like Gao Jianfu.

At first glance, the 1918 landscape painting, *Monastery in Autumn Mountain*, seems to be a bold attempt in stylistic terms. The ax-cut strokes create a cross-hatched pattern that represents volume; the angularity of the rock formation resembles elements of some Japanese *Nanga* paintings, especially those done by Tomioka Tessai (1836-1924) (figure 11). The expressive brushwork of the renowned Tessai must have attracted Gao most, because we see in this 1918 painting the same kind of bold mixture of ink washes and calligraphic dry brushstrokes. The mixed use of ax-cut strokes and ink washes results in an awkward effect that is further accentuated by the strange rendering of the temple in the far distance and the somewhat illogical ink washes in the foreground.

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78 Kao Mayching generally notes that the bold and expressive quality of Gao’s art might have been influenced by Tomioka Tessai, a late literati painter who was known for his emotionally charged application of ink and brush. See Kao Mayching, “An Artistic Development of Gao Jianfu,” 562. Tessai’s *The Red Cliff*, in 1922 (figure 11) reproduced in Nihonga: Transcending the Past: Japanese-style painting 1868-1968, ed. Ellen Conant et.al. (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1995): 175 displays the same kind of expressive brushstrokes that could have been a model for Gao Jianfu. Although Tessai’s *The Red Cliff* was painted four years later than Gao’s 1918 landscape, the then 79 year-old artist had long fully developed his almost chaotic brushstrokes. Tessai’s personal could have been an indirect influence on Gao Jianfu’s art.
These “experiments” made the painting more akin to a formal exercise, testing the potentiality of different combinations of painting vocabularies, but to no avail. The resulting scene, strangely dominated by the rock formation in the middle ground textured heavily in ax-cut strokes and the ink washes in different tonalities applied arbitrarily do not correspond to the realism to which the New National Painting aspired.

It is not necessary to discredit Gao Jianfu for a lack of originality solely because of his emulation of Japanese paintings. Although his paintings of this period did not live out fully the spirit of the New National Painting, which sought to integrate the essence of Chinese painting and Western painting techniques, we cannot dismiss Gao’s selective emulation, particularly that of the expressive mode of Nanga paintings, which anticipates his more creative and personal styles later.

One representative work that Gao Jianfu developed out of the expressive quality of Nanga painting is *Autumn Wind* (figure 12), dated 1923. The rendering of the weeds and flowers moving in the strong gust allude to cursive script. The extremely dry and angular brushwork is still reminiscent of Tessai’s style (figure 13). Nevertheless, Gao Jianfu cares equally for the realistic quality as shown in his modeling, which is to give volume to the tree trunk. Gao Jianfu must have regarded *Autumn Wind* as a satisfactory work because it was one of the twenty-five paintings he published in 1935 in *Jianfu huajia*. Yi Daan 易大庵 (1872-1941) later inscribed in the left edge of this painting in

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79 Again, Tessai’s *Red Plums* (figure 13), dated 1923, reproduced in *Nihonga: Transcending the Past: Japanese-style Painting 1868-1968*, 174, looks very similar to Gao Jianfu’s *Autumn Wind*.

80 *Jianfu huajia* (Collection of Gao Jianfu’s paintings), (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1935).
1936, praising the painting highly. Perhaps more significant than the praise itself is the information the inscription provides about the cultural events and the social connections of Gao Jianfu, which I will discuss later.

Two other Japanese-style landscape paintings painted when Gao Jianfu was in Shanghai are of interest, because they stand in contrast to those painted when he moved back to Guangdong in 1918, which leaned towards Chinese landscape traditions. The paintings produced in Shanghai are Morning Rain in Mountain Village, 1914 (figure 14) and Snow Landscape (figure 15), undated but attributed to the middle of the teens based upon its unmistakable Japanese flavor. Both paintings depict scenery not native to China, such as the thatched-roof architecture. It might have been Gao Jianfu’s intention to test the water in Shanghai to see how a Chinese audience would accept his Japanese-style paintings. Kunlan Moutain after Rain, dated 1916 (figure 16) also testifies to Gao Jianfu’s indebtedness to Japanese painting. Although the title denotes a Chinese place, the representation of the scenery mirrors that in Landscape (figure 17) painted by Yamamoto Shunkyo. These Japanese-style paintings later became the main target of the major opponents of Gao Jianfu, mostly the jiu pai artists from the Chinese Painting Research Association in Guangdong, who criticized him for plagiarizing Japanese

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81 Yi Daan, whose style-name was Dayi jushi 大易居士, was a calligrapher from Heshan, Guangdong. He first learned from Zhao Zhiqian’s calligraphy, and later from the steles of the Northern Wei. He also befriended some jiu pai or traditional artist in Guangdong, such as Pan Dawei. See Li Jian’er, Guangdong xiandai huaren zhuan (Biographies of Contemporary Guangdong Painter) (China: Guangwen shuju. 1941). 33-34. Yi Daan praised Autumn Wind as a champion; the inscription reads, “...jdi ci qifeng...”及第此秋風. Translation of the whole inscription in Chinese can be found in The Art of the Gao Brothers of the Lingnan School, 96.

82 Croizier, Art and Revolution, 54-58.
paintings. At any rate, Gao Jianfu’s New National Painting principles had yet to materialize, and his first shot at promoting his painting revolution did not have any significant success in China, even in the cosmopolitan Shanghai.

Gao Jianfu is noted to have always wanted to move away from Japanese influences and, as will be seen, Gao Jianfu changed his style from Japanese to Chinese when left Shanghai for Guangdong. An overt reference to the Chinese painting tradition is Model on Song Landscape, dated 1924 (figure 18). The angular tree branches and the one-corner composition are straight out of the Ma-Xia tradition of the Southern Song Academy tradition. The allusion to Chinese painting is also apparent in Rushing Water Trough Myriad Ravines painted in 1927 (fig. 19). It appears to be a typical Northern Song monumental landscape. The choice of using axe-cut texture strokes also shows Gao Jianfu’s attempt to refer to the Northern School tradition. Gao Jianfu sought to redeem the Northern school tradition by reviving the blue and green landscape and using axe-cut texture strokes, which were not the usual practice in the painting of Guangdong where the Southern school traditions had always been favored. Guangdong painting’s tradition was exemplified in the landscape paintings of the Qing Dynasty artists, Li Jian (1747-1799) (figure 20) and Xie Lanzheng (1760-1831) (figure 21). Gao Jianfu’s painting deviated from the Guangdong painting traditions,


85 Gao Jianfu, “Zaiji duanyu” (Short notes on random things), in Gao Jianfu shiwen chubian, ed. Li Weiming, 365-367.

86 Li Chu-ting and Wan Qingli identify three artistic trends in Guangdong during the late Qing Dynasty. First was represented by Li Jian and Xie Lanzheng whose art followed the Jiangnan’s literati tradition. Second trend was represented by Su Renhuan and Su Lipeng whose individualistic styles were
which were shaped by the Southern school aesthetics. The New National Painting aspired to eliminate the long-held prejudice against the Northern school traditions by reinstating its realistic rendering and forceful execution.

Given the striking difference between Gao Jianfu’s Japanese-style paintings while he was in Shanghai and his return to the Chinese landscape tradition when he was criticized by the jiū pai artists in Guangdong, it seems that Gao Jianfu’s painting style was kind of a fairweather fashion that would change according to his environments. The more persistent element that can be traced through his artistic career was his striving for the New National Painting, his aspiration to establish a new orthodoxy of modern Chinese painting. This is also reflected and driven by his political ideology.

Gao Jianfu remained active in the political realm until the early 1920s. His return to Guangdong from Shanghai in 1918 to assist Chen Jiongming 陈炯明 (1878-1933), whom Sun Yat-sen had entrusted to fight against the Guangxi warlord, marks an important juncture and key issue in my analysis of Gao Jianfu’s regional identity. It should be noted that Gao Jianfu’s xin guohua revolution parallels Sun Yat Sen’s political project to build a centralized republic in China. Gao Jianfu proclaimed, “after following the President (Sun Yat-sen) for the political revolution, I feel the urge to revolutionize

characterized by a strong local flavor, and the third was represented by Ju Lian 茱lian who gave new interpretations to the conventional bird and flower genre. See Li Chu-ting and Wan Qingli, Zhongguo xiandai huahua shi, 112. Although Gao Jianfu was a student of Ju Lian, whose style belonged to part of the prevailing trends of Guangdong art, Gao’s New National Painting departed from Ju’s original decorative and realistic style. Most importantly, Gao saw art as a social tool rather than a means of livelihood or a kind of self-amusement, he departed from the traditions of Guangdong art and his immediate teacher.

87 Concerning this political event, Crozier’s discussion is very brief, and it does not suggest any specific relationship between Gao Jianfu and Chen Jiongming. See Crozier Art and Revolution, 85-87. For details, see Li Weiming, “Yishu yu zhenzhi erwei yiti de jija moshi,” 410-416.
Chinese painting.”

He also claimed, “…being a revolutionary, I prioritize my responsibility to serve the world (tianxia), leaving behind the concern for my own family. I, therefore, dropped my family name, leaving only my first name, Jianfu 剣父 or Lun 瞱, when I signed my paintings.” It is unmistakable that Gao Jianfu’s scope was fixed on a national level, and he downplayed his regional concerns or personal matters in his proposal of the New National Painting. Gao Jianfu demonstrated in his artistic pursuits the same philosophy that appeared in his political aspirations. Gao Jianfu envisioned a new, centralized and unified China, and by extension, he saw a united Chinese painting in his xin guohua revolution. In other words, xin guohua did not embrace regional differences.

Nevertheless, Gao Jianfu’s once close relationship with Chen Jiongming may have obscured our understanding of Gao Jianfu’s political stance because of Chen’s aspiration for a federal instead of a centralized China. Chen Jiongming had been in Sun Yat-sen’s camp in the 1911 Revolution until his split with Sun in 1922. According to records, Gao Jianfu was called back to Guangdong in 1918 to assist Chen in his confrontation with the Guangxi warlord. Chen helped Sun Yat-sen in the “Second Revolution” to regain the sovereignty of Guangdong where Sun Yat-sen reestablished the headquarters of the Nationalist government. However, Chen expressed his own aspiration that deviated from Sun Yat-sen’s plan for the Northern Expedition in 1922, which was a step to realize a unification of China. Chen became the leader of the Guangdong

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88 Gao Jianfu, Wo de xiandai guohua guan (My view on Modern Chinese painting) (Hong Kong: Yuan quan chu ban she, 1955): 22.

autonomous movement, in which practitioners desired that "Guangdong people rule Guangdong." It was this vision that the federalists saw as the ideal for the new nation.\textsuperscript{90}

Gao Jianfu once maintained a very good relationship with Chen Jiongming, and through Chen's recommendation Gao Jianfu held the post of the director of the Guangdong Industrial Arts Commission and the president of the Provincial Institute of Technology in 1920. Also through Chen, Gao became the key organizer in the Guangdong Provincial Art Exhibition held in 1921, the first large-scale exhibition of its kind.\textsuperscript{91} Although Gao was not known, in any significant way, for helping Chen pursue "federal self-government" (liansheng zizhi) 聯省自治,\textsuperscript{92} their close relationship suggests that Gao knew of his friend's vision of a federal government.

At first sight, it seems that Gao Jianfu reoriented himself to a local base in Guangdong after his relatively unsuccessful efforts in Shanghai from 1912 to 1918 when he was promoting his xin guoha to a national audience.\textsuperscript{93} It is true that when he went back to Guangdong in 1918, he was developing his artistic career more or less in his own province of Guangdong with the establishment of the Spring Slumber Studio (Chun shui hua yuan 春睡畫院) in 1923, where students came mostly from his native Guangdong. This naturally gave a strong impression of a regional school. However, the goal of establishing the New National Painting never left Gao Jianfu, and his means of achieving


\textsuperscript{91} Li Weiming describes in great detail Chen's essential role in bringing Gao Jianfu's official positions in various institutions. See "Yishu yu zhenzhi erwei yì de jiazi moshì," 412-417.

\textsuperscript{92} Durar, \textit{Rescuing History from the Nation}, 147-204; Xiaquan Ma, "Local Self-government: Citizenship Consciousness and the Political Participation of the New Gentry-merchants in the Late Qing," in \textit{Imaging the People}, eds. Joshua Fogel and Peter Zarrow (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1997): 183-211.

\textsuperscript{93} Croizier, \textit{Art and Revolution}, 84-85.
so was never by elevating the traditions and heritage of a region. If what a federalist 
aspires for is independence and autonomy of a region, Gao Jianfu definitely does not 
belong to this camp. Chen Jingming’s alternative vision of a federalist nation did not 
attract Gao Jianfu. Gao Jianfu’s political vision was not of a federalist new China with 
independent regions, but of a centrally unified nation. His vision came from the orthodox 
notion of unification in Chinese history. Parallel to Sun Yat-sen’s political aspiration, 
Gao aligned with the centralizers’ position to create a new, unified republican China. Gao 
reiterated his loyalty to Sun Yat-sen’s revolution in his later writings and speeches on 
public occasions\(^\text{94}\) but he never revealed his support for Chen Jingming. This was 
understandable because Chen’s aspiration toward a federal nation was seen as 
“heterodox” when measured by the yardstick of China’s long history as a unified nation. 
“Heterodoxy” would not have been desired by Gao Jianfu.

Instead, Gao Jianfu’s aspiration for the New National Painting was built upon the 
orthodoxy of Chinese painting, essentially the Southern and the Northern schools’ 
traditions defined by Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555-1636), whose favoritism of literati art 
(Southern School) over professional art (Northern School) dominated the art world 
throughout the entire Qing Dynasty.\(^\text{95}\) Gao Jianfu’s New National Painting aimed at 
overturning the conventional favor toward the literati art by reviving professional 
traditions. Gao’s painting revolution abided by the long established cannons erected by


\(^{95}\) Huang Shaochan remains a rare scholar who analyzed thoroughly Gao Jianfu’s New National Painting by 
looking at Gao’s art theory expounded in *Wo de xiandai guohua guan* (My view on Modern Chinese 
painting). Huang’s analysis is by far the most comprehensive research in which he studied line after line of 
Gao’s theory. Huang is the first scholar to point out that Gao Jianfu adopted the Northern and Southern 
Schools Theory of Dong Qichang in the late Ming Dynasty. See *Gao Jianfu hualun shupin* (Hong Kong: 
Center of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1972): 8-10
Dong Qichang without challenging the assumptions of Dong's biased theory in the first place. Gao Jianfu's strategy was by subverting the hierarchy of literati and professional art. Gao Jianfu therefore identified himself as part of a centrally unified Chinese culture, not a regional one. To Gao, the regional identity of Guangdong needed to be transcended for the creation of a new modern national identity. The proposed *xin guohua* was not to be achieved by means of promoting any provincial or regional artistic style. Rather, Li Weiming has insightfully termed Gao Jianfu's proposal of *xin guohua* an attempt to establish a new orthodoxy for Chinese painting.96

Regional cultures, however, were not invisible at that time. On the contrary, the late nineteenth century was marked by a sharp increase in the consciousness of regional identity, as is indicated by the boom in the establishment of native-province associations or *tongxianghui* 同鄉會 all over China.97 Sojourners who left their home-provinces to seek luck in other more prosperous parts of China founded these associations. They did so, particularly in Shanghai, the metropolis of the country, which was packed with provincial transients. *Tongxianghui* were everywhere. Cantonese associations were second in number only to those from Ningbo.98 Gao Jianfu did come to Shanghai a number of times, above and beyond his longest stay spanning from 1912 to 1918. Based on my research to date, there is no record of Gao's membership in any Guangdong *tongxianghui*. What we know is that Gao Jianfu made connections with some already

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96 Li Weiming, "Gao Jianfu liuxue riben kao," 474.


98 Goodman, ibid., 226-227.
influential artistic figures, for instance, Huang Binghong 黃賓虹 (1865-1955).\textsuperscript{99} We also know that Gao was active in art circles in Shanghai, as is indicated by his involvement in the Art Appreciation Society, in which members, such as Huang Binghong, Kang Youwei and Deng Shi 鄧實, gathered monthly at the Hartoon Garden to view art and share their opinions.\textsuperscript{100} It seems that Gao Jianfu was more interested in reaching out to elite circles in a westernized Shanghai than clustering with his naive fellows.

**Period of Realization of the New National Painting 1925-1938**

Gao Jianfu’s paintings of this period began to embody the principles of the New National Painting in synthesizing the strengths of Chinese and Western painting traditions and in engaging contemporary society. Although Gao Jianfu’s understanding of Chinese and Western paintings was filtered through a Japanese lens, as demonstrated above, his paintings in this period were refreshing to his compatriots. His career also reached its highest point at this time, as is indicated by the large amount of media coverage he received (Appendix 1), in addition to his frequent participation in art exhibitions, and his teaching position at the premier Nanjing Central University in 1936.

He worked there under the invitation of Xu Beihong, who became the director of the Fine

\textsuperscript{99} Kao Mayching notes that Huang Binghong’s articles and traditional paintings were published in Gao Jianfu’s Zhengxiang huabao. These two artists knew each other probably because they were in Shanghai in 1913 and both participated in publishing business. Huang Binghong was the editor of Zhengzhou guoguang ji 神州國光記. He also collaborated with Deng Shi in editing Meishu congshu 美術叢書. See Mayching Kao, “The Artistic Development of Gao Jianfu,” 567. Kao Mayching, however, points out that, Huang might not have been agreeable to Gao Jianfu’s New National Painting, because Huang, as a traditionalist artist, wrote an article, “meizhan guohua tan (A discussion of the traditional painting in the National Art Exhibition), to criticize Gao Jianfu’s painting techniques. Since I do not have access to the original article of Huang, which was published on Yiguang (Art view) no.3 (15 May 1929), I was not able to comment on Kao’s opinion. See Mayching Kao, “The Artistic Development of Gao Jianfu,” 578.

Arts Department of the University. Gao’s social networking during this period was particularly influential on his career development and subsequent representations of his art.

*Steed Huiliu in Wind and Rain* (figure 22), dated 1925, marks the beginning of this triumphal period. The representation of the galloping horse speeding through nature is quite extraordinary in the history of Chinese painting. The rendering of the horse deviates from the *baimiao* (白描) or line-drawing tradition that originated with Li Gonglin 李公麟 in the Song Dynasty, whose style sought after physical likeness. Gao, instead, reveals the animal’s agitated emotion by painting the horse in action with its eyes wide open. The strong gusts are represented by some parallel diagonal light washes, a device reminiscent of a typical Ming Dynasty Academy painting by Lu Wenying 吕文英 (figure 23) in which the storm-stricken atmosphere is highly dramatized.\(^1\) Jian Youwen interprets the horse as a symbol of movement and life energy.\(^2\) He believes that the painting is filled with “an expression of revolutionary philosophy,” because it was painted when Gao Jianfu was fully infused with “revolutionary sentiment.”\(^3\) Croizier confirms Jian’s interpretation and identifies the rearing horse in a turbulent environment

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\(^1\) Lu Wenying’s painting is reproduced in James Cahill, *Parting at the Shore* (New York and Tokyo: Weather Hill, 1978), figure 51. It is known that Ming Dynasty academic artists revived the style of Ma Yuan and Xia Gui of the Southern Song Dynasty, in which a misty and a gusty atmospheric scene was a common feature. As I have mentioned in footnote no. 47 that Japanese collectors favored Southern Song’s styles and the Zhe School style, the affinities of Gao Jianfu’s paintings with this academic style was not mere accident but related to his exposure to these Chinese paintings in Japanese collections while Gao was in Japan.


\(^3\) Ibid., translated by Mayching Kao in “The Artistic Development of Gao Jianfu,” 575.
as a symbol that conveys nationalistic messages.\textsuperscript{104} If it is possible for the painting to stand as a national allegory, we can never confirm its original meanings, because no inscription was originally inscribed when the painting was produced in 1925 (figure 24).\textsuperscript{105} According to Gao Jianfu’s own inscription, we know that the title, \textit{fengyu huali} 風雨驥驥 (The Steed Huali in Wind and Rain), and the inscriptions itself at the lower left hand corner were added ten years after the work’s completion in 1935.

A colophon attached to the painting written by Jian Qinzhai 简琴齋 (1888-1950)\textsuperscript{106} (figure 25) in 1936 documents exactly what Jian Youwen thought of this \textit{huali}, which is a pedigreed horse of the ancient emperor Muwang 穆王 (reigned 100-94 B.C.) of the Zhou Dynasty.\textsuperscript{107} Jian Qingzhai recorded Jian Youwen’s poem inspired by this painting in which Jian Youwen faintly suggested that Gao Jianfu had painted the \textit{huali} in response to the depressing world where lives were threatened.\textsuperscript{108} The poem says that the \textit{huali} needs to go forward for a chance of survival. Jian Youwen warns that the \textit{huali} needs to count on itself, hoping that it will one day be free to speed across the whole country. The \textit{huali} is personified as a free spirit, but Jian Youwen did not give a definite answer to this metaphor. Does the horse stand for China as a country under

\textsuperscript{104} Crozier, \textit{Art and Revolution}, 96.

\textsuperscript{105} The painting was first published in \textit{Jianfu huaaji}, 1935, where the painting was not inscribed as the reproduction shown.

\textsuperscript{106} Jian Jinlun, whose style name was Qinzhai, was also from Panyu, Guangdong. He was a famous calligrapher, well known for his seal script and cursive scripts. He served as an official for the Nationalist Party. See \textit{Mingguo renwu dacidian} (Shijiazhua shi: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 1991):1615.

\textsuperscript{107} Kao Mayching has discussed the criticism of the traditionalists, who accused Gao of imitating the Japanese painter Hashimoto Kansetsu. Kao argues that there are differences between Gao Jianfu’s horse, which referred to a type in ancient China, and the Japanese artist’s horse, which is an embodiment of a Buddhist message. See Mayching Kao, "The Artistic Development of Gao Jianfu," 575.

\textsuperscript{108} Refer to figure 12. The Chinese translation of the inscription can be found in \textit{The Art of the Gao Brothers of the Lingnan School}, p. 97.
attack? Or is the horse a general reference to the Chinese people who need to strengthen themselves and be as alive as the horse in order to overcome their adverse situation? These possibilities, however, deviate from Gao Jianfu’s original meanings, because when he had painted it in 1925, the situation of China was as bad as that in 1936 when the Japanese invasions were soon to be full-scale. We do not know for sure what was Gao Jianfu’s original intent behind this horse painting. We do know that it is Gao Jianfu himself who gave a new meaning to his old painting because the title, *fengyu hualiu*, was given only in 1935, ten years after it was finished in 1925. Jian Youwen’s interpretation of the horse as a heroic symbol, illustrated in Jian Qinzhai’s inscriptions, is an elaboration on the newly given title. In his 1936 article in *Yijing*, Jian Youwen considered the horse as a reflection of Gao Jianfu’s “expression of revolutionary philosophy.” This is a projection of Jin’s own image of Gao Jianfu as a “*geming huaqia* 革命畫家 or revolutionary painter. After considering this complicated process of meaning giving, it is worth noting that Jian’s interpretation has became the standard reading of this horse in which the arguable political sentiment attached to it is now assumed as the inherent message of this painting.

Jian Qinzhai’s colophon was also significant because the inscriber praised Gao Jianfu as the representative artist from the Lingnan region stating that the artist’s fame is known to both Chinese and Westerners. The colophon doubly praises Gao Jianfu’s painting and Jian Youwen’s poem, saying, “…the painting within the poem and the poem within the painting are both enriching, and they are elegant and appropriate.”

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The allegorical content of Gao’s painting, *Eagle* (figure 26), a realistic depiction of a predatory bird painted in 1929, is also ambiguous. The meticulous rendering of the bird alone could have made it a scientific study. The powerful subject executed in boneless manner might remind us of the Guangdong art tradition initiated by the Guangdong painter mentioned above, Lin Liang, who served in the Ming court (figure 27). This association was made by Lawrence Tam in the catalogue of an exhibition held in Hong Kong in 1973, which was entitled, *Kwangtung Painting (Guangdong lidai mingjia huahua)* 廣東歷代名家繪畫. It was a retrospective exhibition, and it was the first of its kind, featuring famous painters from Guangdong over the dynasties. The Assistant Curator, Tam, specifically correlated Lin Liang and Gao Jianfu by the common ways they painted predatory birds, their application of a boneless style, and their achievement of a national recognition in their own times.111

Let us evaluate this claim. Gao Jianfu went nowhere beyond metropolitan Canton before his departure for Japan in 1906, and he painted predatory birds only after his return from Japan. Therefore, it is clear that this specific genre of powerful raptors was adopted by Gao Jianfu in Japan. In addition, there is no record that Gao Jianfu viewed any of Lin Liang’s paintings. As was mentioned above with regard to the uninterested attitudes of the Guangdong collectors toward paintings by painters from their own province, it is not surprising to see that only one of Lin Liang’s paintings was ever collected by the five major Guangdong art collectors.112 Although there are Lin Liang’s


paintings in Guangdong's museums nowadays, and my research did not cover other undocumented Guangdong art collections.\footnote{I am grateful to my advisor, Judy Andrews' comments, which alerted me not to overlook the undocumented art collections in Guangdong where there might be some Lin Liang's paintings collected. Professor Andrews’ also provided me the information that the Guangdong Provincial Museum and Guangzhou Art Museum do carry considerable amount of Lin Liang’s paintings. These are important issues need to be addressed in future research.} Gao Jianfu had most likely not seen Lin Liang’s paintings of birds of prey when he was in Guangdong because he had never mention Lin Liang in his writings. Gao Jianfu was probably not aware of Lin Liang’s reputation as an acclaimed bird painter of the region of Guangdong. If Gao Jianfu had ever been aware of the significance of Lin Liang, he would have expressed his admiration just as he praised Cezanne, Picasso and Matisse in his writings.\footnote{} Again, Gao’s mentioning of his admiration to these Western vanguard artists were to help building his cosmopolitan image. In his writings, Gao Jianfu did not show any specialized knowledge of Guangdong paintings and their traditions. Nor did he emphasize his regional pride in his rhetoric of the New National Painting.

Lawrence Tam’s claim represents a construction of a regional discourse in which a cultural heritage and its continuity are purposefully highlighted. Tam’s association of Lin Liang with Gao Jianfu, however, can be a coincident that their paintings are stylistically similar with regard to their application of a boneless manner in rendering the birds’ bodies and their use of ax-cut strokes in texturing. A regional association is more convincing if an artist shows his sense of local pride through what and how he paints. Huang Binhong’s paintings of Mt. Huang in Anhui province and his choice of a “sparse” style, which is characterized by the use of dry outline mode, made a direct reference to his place of origin and the signature styles of his native predecessors, Hongren 弘仁.
Unlike Huang Binhong, Gao Jianfu did not paint in a style associating with any preceding Guangdong artists. The claim that Lin Liang’s art is the predecessor of Gao Jianfu’s eagle painting is thin. The correlation of Lin Liang and Gao Jianfu based upon their common native province is part of the modern representation of a continuous Guangdong artistic heritage. Ralph Croizier offers a fair claim in which he comments that Gao Jianfu’s fierce birds are ones who “might have been latent in their Cantonese heritage but whose resurrection clearly came from Japanese examples.”

Jian Youwen’s interpretation of Gao’s eagle is, again, prescriptive. Symbolically similar to the horse,  

It is not difficult to understand Jian Youwen’s interpretation that human temperaments are imparted to the beast, with its dilated pupils and fierce gaze. The eagle stretches its wings wide and tenses up its muscles for an immediate takeoff. It seems that the eagle is about to prey on another animal at the bottom of the steep cliff. Gao Jianfu brings the whole scene to the foreground in order to give a strong sense of immediacy. The bold, ax-cut strokes and the simplified composition accentuate the strength of the eagle and heighten the sense of drama of the impending hunt. Jian Youwen’s interpretation of the eagle as a symbol of strength must be directed by the emotional sensibility created in the beast. Ironically, we see an opposite message

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115 James Cahill has defined clearly the criterion of a regional school. See James Cahill, Introduction to Shadows of Mount Huang, 7-15.
116 Croizier, Art and Revolution, 48.
conveyed in Gao Jianfu’s own inscription, in which he laments the dissipation of his ambition in the present. Gao Jianfu’s self-referential inscription contradicts the seemingly heroic image of the eagle, and Jian Youwen selectively reads only the daring aspect, not Gao Jianfu’s rather pessimistic outlook. This is evidence of Jian Youwen’s determination to represent Gao Jianfu as a “revolutionary painter.”

The process of adding meanings to Gao Jianfu’s paintings is an essential aspect that otherwise being overlooked. The case in point is Gao Jianfu’s Five-story Pavilion (figure 28), dated 1926. Gao Jianfu turned away from painting generic scenery into painting native Chinese topography. *Five-story Pavilion* depicts the destroyed official building of Sun Yat-sen’s government headquarters in Guangdong. The damaged building was later reinforced with steel and iron, and now it houses the Guangdong Provincial Museum, which is located at today’s Yuexiu Garden (越秀公园). The history of the Five-story Pavilion explain partially Yu Youren’s (1879-1964) four-character inscription, “Qiankuan zhaizao” 乾坤再造 (To rebuild the Nation,) on the left. It is noteworthy that the inscriber, Yu Youren, was not only a famous calligrapher, but also a high ranking official in the Nationalist Party throughout his life. In the face of the destruction of the Nationalist Party headquarters in Guangzhou, Yu certainly wanted to

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118 For translation of the inscription in Chinese, see The Art of the Gao Brothers of the Lingnan School, 98.


120 Yu Youren joined the Alliance Society in Japan in 1906 and he continued to serve the Nationalist Party as a high official including in its later Nationalist Government in Taiwan after 1949. See Mingguo renwu dacidian, 15-16. Yu was also a renowned calligrapher whose standard and cursive scripts show the influence of the ancient stele style. His contribution comes in his proposal of combining standard and cursive scripts in order to simplify characters and facilitate the writing process in order to combat the issue of illiteracy. See Xue Yongnian, “Chinese Calligraphy in the Modern Era,” in A Century in Crisis Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth Century China, by Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1998): 135-136.
help recuperate the damages made to the morale of the Party. This painting, which was originally a commemorative depiction of a lost building, was now transformed into a vehicle for Yu Youren to convey a nationalist message because of the four-character inscription.121

Discussing the style of this painting, Kao Mayching identifies its stylistic source as Takeuchi Seihō’s screen paintings of European landscapes in the early 1900s, which include a “combination of realistic and romantic appeal.”122 Although Kao Mayching evaluates this painting as a successful realization of the New National Painting principle owing to a “harmonious blending of Chinese and Western techniques,”1 however, he emphasize its lingering Japanese flavor seen in the use of fuzzy ink washes in the foreground. This is a common technique that Nihonga painters commonly used to describe a foggy and misty atmosphere, and it has already been seen in Gao Jianfu’s 1916 painting Kunlun Mountain after Rain.

A more original interpretation of the principle of the New National Painting appeared in Evening Toll at the Misty Temple (figure 29), painted in 1930. The scene was rendered with a fixed perspective, but Gao Jianfu surprisingly reversed the normal relationship between distance clarity, making the closest distance now looked most blurry while the temple at the top of the stairs appeared the clearest to viewers. The ink brushstrokes are reduced to mere descriptive tools in the service of a nearly photographic rendering of the scene. Gao Jianfu painted Chinese topography; the scene depicted is the

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121 Christina Chu also discusses Yu Youren’s inscriptions, but she has pointed out only the general meanings of this Chinese phrase, qiankuan zatiao, which denotes rebuilding the national spirit. She has not, however, considered Yu’s political identity as a member of the Nationalist Party and his membership might have affected the meanings of the painting. See Chu, “The Lingnan school and Its Followers: Radical Innovation in Southern China,” 76.
Qingyun Temple 慶雲寺 at Dinghu Mountain 鼎湖山, Guangdong. This painting is one of Gao’s most realistic works, and a viewer may suspect the use of a photograph was an aid in the creation process.

Gao Jianfu was interested in experimenting with different perspectives in this period. His paintings completed after his 1931 trip to India, Burma, and Buddhist sites in Southeast Asia demonstrate bold attempts to experiment with new compositions as seen in The Himalayas (figure 30), dated 1934. Despite the fact that the angular mountain is a recurring motif in his previous paintings, the combination of different viewing positions in this painting is very unusual in Chinese painting conventions. Comparing this painting to the 1910s snow scene heavily painted in a Japanese style, we see a dramatic transformation of style. Gao Jianfu achieved his aim of shaking off the Japanese flavor by creating a new type of landscape painting according to the principles of the New National Paintings; the result was unprecedented in the Chinese painting tradition. The mountain made up of angular rock formations in which the shaped facets were rendered in ax-cut strokes resembled Ma Yuan and Xia Gui’s Southern Song Academic style, which was once widely emulated by Japanese artists. Through Japanese paintings, Gao Jianfu reconnected to the Chinese painting tradition. The Himalayas was also distinctive in its play of different viewpoints, which might have grown out of his interest in Cezanne. Gao Jianfu’s knowledge of Cezanne was probably acquired through his experience in publishing the Zhenxiang huabao, and there were abundant sources of reproductions in catalogues and foreign magazines in Shanghai and Guangdong.


Allusions to Western painting principles and techniques can also be seen in Gao Jianfu’s interest in visually capturing motion. We have already seen his depiction of a galloping horse running through a stormy nature scene; another undated painting, *Pine in Wind and Moon in Water* (figure 31), undated, similarly captures a fleeting moment. The painting of nine reflections of the moon on the water is not a surreal image but a realistic scene of a transitory reality when the multiple reflections result from ripples in water under light breezes. Painting an instantaneous moment is quite unusual in Chinese painting. Gao Jianfu intends to visualize the “energy of strength and movement,” which have been neglected by Chinese viewers but appreciated by their Western counterparts.\(^{124}\) Jian Youwen also points out that this painting won high acclaim from Western viewers when it was exhibited in Berlin in the *Chinese Painting Exhibition* in 1935.\(^{125}\) Such a discrepancy between Chinese and Western viewers may have to do with Gao Jianfu’s semi-Chinese and semi-western, which was no longer a shock to the former who, by the 1930s, had already seen more radical innovations painted in Western avant-garde styles.

Gao Jianfu, unlike some Chinese artists who were followers of the post-impressionists and whose focus was mainly on formal innovations in painting, chose to engage his art with the social environment of his time. To him, painting was never simply a formal exercise, but an informative tool to educate the masses about the dark sides of reality. He encouraged others to paint more subjects that might dealt with the suffering of the people in order to arouse sympathy from society and to target the hedonistic


bourgeoisie. A 1932 painting, *Fire on the Eastern Battlefield* (figure 32), shows both social concerns and formal innovations. It is a depiction of the destroyed Shanghai Library, which was bombed by the Japanese in 1932. Ruin itself is an uncommon subject in Chinese painting. The devastating scene was somehow romanticized by the orange-red background, which suggests burning flames. The depiction of the debris in the foreground is just like a realistic sketch using western techniques of foreshortening and a fixed viewpoint. The spatial relationship is obscured by a sweep of fog, which diagonally bisects the composition. The major scene is brought to the foreground, leaving little space for a penetration into depth. Part of the destroyed building in the second half of the composition looks particularly two-dimensional because of the domination of linear values and a lack of modeling for the building. Despite the use of a Chinese medium, the remaining features, such as the subject of a ruin, the texturing techniques, the use of straight diagonal lines, and the tinted background, belong to the Western art repertory. This painting realized a synthesis according to the New National Painting principles.

We have been evaluating Gao Jianfu’s painting alongside with Jian Youwen’s depiction of the artist, taking into account other scholars’ representations of Gao Jianfu’s stylistic development. It should be noted that by the middle of the 1930s, Jian Youwen became an important figure in Gao Jianfu’s social circle and even in Gao’s creation of art. This implies that Jian Youwen’s first-hand experience with Gao Jianfu since the middle of 1930s makes his 1972 chronology on the events from that time and afterwards more reliable than his recounting of Gao Jianfu’s earlier life. In addition, Jian Youwen

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knew Gao Jianfu well only after this time. His understanding of Gao Jianfu was largely influenced by this time factor.

Jian Youwen began to be Gao Jianfu’s major patron at the beginning of this period. Gao Jianfu’s earliest dedicatory notes to Yang Yuexian 楊玉仙, Jian’s wife, appeared in Willow and Cicada (figure 33), dated 1935, which the artist painted when he was at the Nanjing Pihu Temple 昆盧寺 in the autumn of that year.\(^{127}\) By March 1934, Jian Youwen was married to Yang and had bought his residence in Shanghai, which he named Ban Yuan 班園, or Ban Pavilion.\(^{128}\) When Gao Jianfu headed to Nanjing for the teaching position in the Central University, he stayed in the Ban Pavilion as though he was an artist-in-residence for the Jian couple.\(^{129}\) From that point on, Gao Jianfu made them the most frequent recipients of his paintings.

Jian and Gao’s friendship is also reflected in the articles Jian published in various journals and magazines in 1936 and 1937. Media coverage of Gao Jianfu boomed during 1935 and 1937, as is indicated by the number of articles discussing Gao Jianfu in various magazines (Appendix 1). This marks the highest point of Gao Jianfu’s artistic career. The content of these articles tell us how the artist’s ideas and paintings were received by the public. During his time in Guangdong in the 1920s when he was involved mainly in the “writing battles” with the local jiu pai artists,\(^{130}\) Gao Jianfu did not attract much attention

\(^{127}\) According to the 1972 chronology, Gao was supposed to start his teaching appointment at the Nanjing Central University in 1935, but he went back to Guangdong shortly after because of his illness. He resumed his teaching at the same university in the spring of 1936.

\(^{128}\) Jian Youwen, Xibei congjun ji, 190.


\(^{130}\) When accusing Gao Jianfu of plagiarizing Japanese paintings, o make their criticism to Gao public, the jiu pai artists assigned some of their members to write articles for magazines and journals. See Huang Xiaogeng and Wu Jin eds. Guangdong huanan shilu, 1991.
from the broader art world. It was only in 1935 that Gao Jianfu’s New National Painting
drew wide media attention, and his fame continued to surge until the outbreak of the War
of Resistance in 1938. In this period, his New National Painting was approved by critics,
artists, and art theorists. Yijing 逸經, a Shanghai journal which focused on history,
literature and art, began to be one of the major venues promoting Gao Jianfu’s New
National Painting. The person responsible for this promotion was Jian Youwen, who co-
edited Yijing with Lu Danlin 陸丹林, an active participant in publishing art journals and
magazines. Unlike Liangyou huabao’s fashionable style and picture-orientated approach,
Yijing’s articles on Gao Jianfu were more analytical, and the authors were eminent
cultural figures at the time, such as Lu Danlin and Wen Yuanning 溫源寧, a history
professor at Beijing University. Their analysis must have made a stronger impact on
intellectuals and strengthened the theoretical basis of Gao Jianfu’s New National
Painting. Gao Jianfu’s New National Painting and its principles and Gao’s disciples from
the Spring Slumber Studio became the frequent subjects of Yijing. ¹³¹

Circumstances changed dramatically during the War of Resistance; the biweekly
Yijing survived for only one and a half years, lasting from March 5 1936 to November
1937. Articles concerning Gao Jianfu and his paintings appeared at least six times in its
thirty-five issue run (Appendix 1). ¹³² For a journal not solely dedicated to visual art, this
amount of coverage reveals its supportive attitude towards Gao Jianfu and its strong
advocacy of his New National Painting.

¹³¹ In addition to writing about Gao Jianfu, Jian Youwen constantly wrote articles about the New National
Painting principles and Gao’s disciples. For example, “Jieshou huajia Fang Rending jin tan tan xin
guohua,” Yijing, no. 30 (May 1937): 1299-1304, and no.43 (August 1939): 1365-68.

¹³² These articles are published in Yijing no. 6, 21, 28, 29(2 articles) and 34.
Given the close relationship between Gao Jianfu and Jian Youwen, we should look at their extended social circle to make a further claim to prove the importance of Jian Youwen's role. The inscription written by Yi Daan in 1936 on Gao Jianfu's painting, *Autumn Wind* (figure 12) documents the social connections of Gao Jianfu.\(^{133}\) From the inscription we know that Lu Danlin and Jian Youwen were good friends and that they were excited to announce the inauguration of *Yijing* on the occasion of an artists' gathering held in the *Ban Yuan* in 1936.\(^{134}\) The same event is also recounted in Jian Youwen's 1972 chronology, in which he recalls that other prominent figures, such as Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培, Feng Zhiyou 馮自由 and Liu Haisu 劉海粟, were attendants at the *Ban Yuan* gathering to welcome Gao Jianfu's arrival for the teaching appointment at the Nanjing Central University.\(^{135}\) Once again, we can see that Gao Jianfu was more keen on social networking with the national reformists than on confining himself to the more hostile local Guangdong art scene.

To maintain a national reputation, Gao Jianfu continued to be involved in publishing art magazines and journals after his experience with the *Zhenxiang huabao*. The Gao brothers were art editors for *Feifei huabao*,\(^{136}\) a magazine whose cover Gao

\(^{133}\) For translation of Yi Daan's inscription in Chinese, see *The Art of the Gao Brothers of the Lingnan School*, p. 96-97.

\(^{134}\) Lu Danlin discussed Gao Jianfu’s New National Painting earlier in 1926 the *Guohua yuekan* (National Painting Monthly) National Painting Monthly. See Appendix I.


Jianfu once inscribed with his unique calligraphy (figure 34). It is also noted that Gao inscribed the cover of another art journal, *Yifeng*, which affiliated with the Hangzhou *Yifengshe* or the Art Wind Society. The organization was established on January 1, 1933, growing rapidly to reach a membership of over 600.

Gao Jianfu's national reputation also came from his participation in art exhibitions. Gao Jianfu took part in a number of art exhibitions held in Nanjing during this period, including a solo exhibition in May, 1935, a group exhibition of the Spring Slumber Studio in July 1936, and "The Second National Art Exhibition" in 1937. These events captured the media's attention, which increased Gao Jianfu's fame. Some famous cultural figures wrote favorably about Gao Jianfu and his paintings: they included, for example, Ding Yanyong, Xu Beihong, Cai Yuanpei, Wen Yunning, Fu Baoshi, and of course, Jian Youwen (Appendix 1). Gao Jianfu's position as a reformer gained him general support from a variety of influential cultural figures who were themselves reformers characterized by their common attitude in seeking Western technology to resolve Chinese problems related to poverty, backwardness, and a lack of scientific knowledge. Interestingly, these figures were not Guangdongese. For instance, Cai

137 Figure 30 is taken from *Feifei huabao* no. 2 (June 26 1928), reproduced in Zhang Huiyi, *Xianggang shuhua tuanti yanqijiu* (An analysis of Hong Kong painting and calligraphy societies) (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Fine Arts Department, 1999): 23.

138 The journal stands out among various art magazines and journals because of its relatively long life from 1933 to December 1936 and the high quality articles. See Xu Zhiaoh, *1911-1949 Zhongguo meishu qikan guoyanlu*, 90. According Li Weiming, *Yifeng* documented in great detail Gao Jianfu's activities during his time in Nanjing, teaching at the Central University from 1936 to 1937. I do not have access to this otherwise very valuable magazine. It would be a great source for further studies. See Li Weiming, "Qianyan: Gao Jianfu yu qi xin guohua lilun," to *Gao Jianfu shiwen chubian*, 10.

139 Xu Beihong, Chen Shuren, Zheng Shuqi, Fang Rending, and Ni Yide were key members. See Xu Zhiaoh, *1911-1949 Zhongguo meishu qikan guoyanlu*, 90-92. Although membership and collaboration in an art society or in an art magazine does not necessarily imply total agreement among these
Yuanpei was from Beijing, Xu Beihong from Zhejiang, and Fu Baoshi from Shanghai. This was quite the opposite to that of local Guangdong, where Gao Jianfu was criticized by the jiu pai artists.

Period of Introspection 1938-1951

The beginning of the War of Resistance led many of the intelligentsia and many cultural figures to flee to the South. Gao Jianfu first went back to Guangdong from Nanjing and then moved further south to Hong Kong and Macau when war became widespread. Gao Jianfu resettled in these new places and continued to be active as a painter and an art educator. Owing to his close relationship with Jian Youwen, he was involved in activities promoting Guangdong culture in the last phase of his life, which was something that he might not have expected. His choices of painting style and subject matter in this period show a more personal and introspective tendency. Kao Mayching labeled this last phase of Gao Jianfu's life as a "reorientation period" based upon the fact that the majority of Gao's paintings retreated to being scenes of mundane life. These paintings aspired to the beauty of simplicity by avoiding being allegorical like paintings of his earlier periods.140

Although it is a fact that Gao Jianfu had strong institutional ties to Guangdong,141 it is also true that his ambition of promoting the New National Painting to

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141 In addition to Gao Jianfu's establishment of the Spring Slumber Studio in Guangzhou in 1923, he held teaching positions in several Guangdong educational institutions, for example, Gao taught at Foshan College of Fine Art in 1924 and Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou in 1933 before he went to teach at the Central University in Nanjing in 1936.
the national and international level never died out. Writings and speeches he gave during this period to local audiences in Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Macau remained largely on the subject of the New National Painting. Gao Jianfu was not known to have promoted Guangdong art and its traditions on any public occasion.\textsuperscript{142} Therefore, it is fair to say that he set his feet in Guangdong, but he always kept his eyes on the whole nation and the international arena.

By looking at Gao’s paintings of this period, we notice dual tendencies: a mixture of regional characteristics and features from the mainstream of the literati art tradition. On the one hand, regional references appeared in the subject matter; Gao Jianfu returned to his earliest motifs—the genres of bird-and-flower and stilllife. His style was increasingly expressive, showing his personal character and his training in calligraphy. On the other hand, Gao Jianfu harkened back to the mainstream literati art tradition, proposing the “New Song Academy Painting” and the “New Literati Painting.” Calligraphy and short verse or poems were increasingly significant in the composition of the painting. The integration of these three arts is the gem of literati art. This should be seen as a leaning towards the mainstream of Chinese painting. Abiding by the literati tradition’s ideal of a transcendental quality, Gao Jianfu emphasized spirituality as the ultimate goal of painting.

We can further categorize Gao Jianfu’s bird-and-flower and stilllife painting in this period as comprising two modes. One is exemplified by his continuation of the New National Painting principles, in which Western realism is to be expressed through

\textsuperscript{142} In contrast to Huang Banruo who was known as the “Guangdong yitan huocidan” 廣東藝壇活詞典 (A living dictionary in the Guangdong art circle). Huang also wrote regularly on the art of Guangdong. For these published articles, see The World of Wong Po-yeh (Huang Banruo), Appendix 1.
Chinese painting media and techniques. An equivalent expression in Chinese would be the combination of *xiesheng*, “sketching from nature,” and *xieyi* 創意, “writing ideas.” *Bird and Jackfruit*, 1939, (figure 35) manifests the spirit of the marriage of *xiesheng* and *xieyi*. The shapes and the ropes are realistically painted and modeled. The *zhuangfen* and *zhuangshui* techniques that he learned from Ju Lian were perfected; the result is evident in the texturing of the fruits’ surfaces, which achieves both naturalistic and decorative feelings. The sense of liveliness is unmistakably seen in the rendering of the pet bird in a boneless manner. Gao Jianfu is able to capture the shape, posture, and the essence of the bird with only a few abbreviated brushstrokes.

The second mode is characterized by a more personal and expressive style that reminds us of the notion of “ink play” or *moxi* 墨戲, in the repertory of the literati tradition that began in the Song Dynasty. *Chrysanthemums* (figure 36), painted in 1940, represents Gao Jianfu’s more expressive mode in terms of the application of color, ink, and brushstrokes. This flower painting is no less formally composed than previous ones, but there is extra room for calligraphic brushwork to enliven the composition. The whole scene is then filled with staccato rhythms. This quality testifies to Jian Youwen’s recollection of an anecdote about how Gao Jianfu turned an improvised line drawing by Jian Qinzhai into the painting of *Purple Wisteria.*

The tree branches Gao painted in this period, *Prosperous Growth in the Spring Wind* (figure 37), 1944, and *Autumn Flowers and Wild Grapes* (figure 38), in 1949, strongly allude to cursive script. Gao Jianfu seemed to be particularly keen on painting complex structures in which smaller branches

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curl around larger ones in a chaotic manner. The results are both decorative and expressiv.

In this period, Gao Jianfu’s paintings did not lack new elements. He depicted some unusual subjects, for instance, he painted a Christian cross as a direct social critique, lamenting the tragedy of humanity during the war years. Gao Jianfu’s paintings draw inspiration from various sources, such as Chinese idioms, Daoism, Buddhism, and even mundane life. In contrast to the allegedly allegorical animal paintings and the direct representation of war-torn scenes in his earlier periods, Gao Jianfu’s paintings became more introspective in appearance, although he was still commenting on current situations. One prime example, Lamp and Moths, 1940 (figure 39) is an allegory that appeared to be a scene from daily life. It is based on a well-known Chinese idiom, "denger pohuo" 燈蛾扑火, which means that the moths would kill themselves if they try to crush the flame. Scholars, however, have multiple readings of the meanings of this allegorical painting. Croizier interprets the twelve-point star pattern in the basin of the oil lamp as the symbol of the Nationalist party, and he views the flying moths as the Japanese, who would eventually be exhausted by the flame.144 Christina Chu reads the imagery as illustrating metaphysical elements found in Buddhism and Daoism. She argues that the message is concerned with the illusionary nature of reality. She bases her argument on the inscriptions composed by Zhao Ziyong 招子庸 (1789-1846), a Guangdong scholar who tried to popularize the local vernacular language in Guangdong in the nineteenth

144 Croizier claims that the symbolic meanings are made clear in the inscription, but I do not see any wordings spelling out the meanings of the twelve-point star and the moths. See Croizier, Art and Revolution, p.148. Translations of the inscriptions, which quote from Zhao Ziyong’s ballad, can be found in Christina Chu, The Lingnan School and Its Followers: Radical Innovation in Southern China, p.74.
century.\textsuperscript{145} The real implications of the imagery might not be clear, but it is interesting that the inscriptions are written in Cantonese or yueyu 粵語, a dialect that would be understood primarily by Cantonese. Gao Jianfu, a native Guangdongese, seems to have an inclination to refer to his native identity through writing the inscription in yueyu. Christina Chu points out that the use of yueyu in this painting is parallel to the 1917 vernacular movement whose principle was to promote the use of daily language in writing. Under this light, Gao Jianfu deployed a two-pronged tactic, using “refined” art and “vulgar” language to express himself. This can also be seen as Gao Jianfu’s redirection toward a local level at the time when his ambition of realizing his painting revolution of xin guohua had been curtailed considerably because of the war.\textsuperscript{146} Had the war not begun in 1938, Gao Jianfu might have been able to ride his surging popularity in Nanjing and push his New National Painting revolution to new heights.

Jian Youwen is the most important figure behind Gao Jianfu’s involvement in promoting Guangdong art and culture. Jian Youwen re-settled in Hong Kong in early 1938, where he bought another residence named Yin Pu 寰圃 and launched another art and literature magazine, Dafeng 大風, or Typhoon Magazine. Yin Pu, carried on the legacy of Ban Yuan in Shanghai, for it continued to be a place for artists to gather. Jian Youwen, a Christian activist and a man educated in America,\textsuperscript{147} acted like a traditional

\textsuperscript{145} Christina Chu contributed the English translation of the self inscription by Gao Jianfu written in running scripts. Chu points out that the inscription referred to a well-known Daoist parable, Zhuangzi’s dreaming of himself as a butterfly. Meanwhile, the allusion to Buddhism is found in the the reference to a flower in the inscription. Chu explains that the phrase ‘Comprehending the riddle of the flower’ refers to a moment when the Buddha held a flower while he was teaching. See Chu, "The Lingnan School and Its Followers : Radical Innovation in Southern China," 74.

\textsuperscript{146} Crozier, \textit{Art and Revolution}, 148-152.

\textsuperscript{147} Jian Youwen obtained his bachelor degree at Oberlin College in 1917 and his Master degree at the University of Chicago in 1920. He then went to New York where he attended the Union Theological
Chinese artist’s patron, who would offer lodging to an artist and host literary gatherings. Jian’s eclectic style is epitomized in a colophon that he inscribed on an earlier painting of Gao Jianfu whose original title was “Wintry Insects Mourn under the Dim Moonlight.” (figure 40) Jian recalled that the painting was renamed Autumn Memories in the Spring Slumber Studio Group Exhibition held in Nanjing in July 1936. Although Jian Youwen was never known as an art connoisseur, he employed a specialized art term “untrammeled work,” or yipin 逸品 (figure 41) to praise the painting’s extraordinary quality and to express his admiration for the painting. The inclusion of the English title, “Autumn Memories,” in the colophon executed in ink and brush must have shocked traditional eyes. However, Jian Youwen, who was known for his eclectic writing style, which included the use of English words for some Chinese terms,¹⁴⁸ must have found it appropriate to inscribe an English title on the colophon to compliment the New National Painting invented by his beloved modern artist, Gao Jianfu.

Jian Youwen had always been proud of his identity as a Cantonese, and he was responsible for promoting and preserving Guangdong heritage and culture through the collective efforts of a number of organizations in which he was involved. Concurrent with Jian’s publishing of Dafen Magazine was his establishment of the Society to Promote Chinese Culture, or Zhongguo wenhua xiejinhui 中國文化協進會 in Hong Kong in September 1939.¹⁴⁹ As mentioned above, the War of Resistance had brought an influx of intelligentsia to the South, and Jian was able to assemble an impressive group of

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¹⁴⁸ Abundance of examples can be found in Jian Youwen’s articles published in Yijing.

¹⁴⁹ Jian Youwen, Xibei cong jun ji, 211.
cultural figures including Xu Dishan 許第山, Li Yinglin 李應林, Chen Bingquan 陳炳權, Wen Yunning, Bao Shaoyou, and Lu Danlin as the organizing members of the association. 150 It has been claimed that Gao Jianfu served as a consultant to the organization, but somehow this was not mentioned in Jian Youwen’s account. 151 In any case, Gao Jianfu did take part in some of the cultural events organized by this Society. According to various records, Gao was responsible for a lecture for Cultural Talk, one of the many categories of activities organized by the Society; in 1941, Gao gave a speech in Hong Kong on modern guohua (national painting), which became the article, Wo de xiandai huihua guan (My views on modern painting). 152 In 1940, the Society also held a large scale exhibition of antiques, relics, and art of Guangdong, entitled, Guangdong wenwu jianlanhui 廣東文物展覽會, for which Ye Gongchuo 葉恭绰 (1881-1968) served as the chairperson of the organizing committee. 153 By the end of 1941, however, all of China was fully disrupted by the Japanese invasion, including Hong Kong. Dafeng Magazine and the Society were forced to stop their operations.

150 Ibid., 212.

151 According to Chen Xiaofeng’s chronology of Gao Jianfu, Gao was chosen to serve as a consultant for the organization. See Chen Xiaofeng, nianbao (chronology), Jianfu huaji, 1991, 118. Gao’s supposedly consultant role is not mentioned in Jian Youwen’s Xibe cong junji, which indeed contains no mentioning of Gao Jianfu at all.

152 Li Weiming points out the confusion between “Wo de xiandai huihua guan” and “Wo de xiandai guohua guan,” in which the latter was mistaken by most scholars as the lecture that Gao gave when he was teaching at the Nanjing Central University in 1936. The latter was modified from the former, which was the lecture Gao gave in Hong Kong on the occasion of the Culture Talk organized by the Society to Promote Chinese Culture. See Li Weiming, “Qianyan: Gao Jianfu qi xin guohua lilun” (Forward: Gao Jianfu and his New National Painting Principle) to Gao Jianfu shiwen chubian, 9-12.

153 Ye Gongchao was also born in Panyu, Guangdong. He was the founder of the Jiaotong University 交通大學 in Shanghai, and he held various positions in the Nationalist Party. He became active in the cultural scene around the 1930s and he, along with Jian Youwen, was also responsible for the establishment of the Zhongguo wenhua xiejinhui (Society to Promote Chinese Culture) in 1939. See Guoming renwe daqidian, p.1256; Jian Youwen, Xibe cong junji, 214.
Despite this setback, Jian Youwen’s enthusiasm carried on, and he renewed his mission to “analyze native culture for the development of racial spirit” by establishing the Institute of History and Culture of Guangdong (Guangdong wenxian guan) 廣東文獻館 in September 1946.\(^{154}\) Jian believed that through the collective efforts of each province to preserve and document its people’s own history and culture, it would be easier for the whole nation to realize its project of preserving Chinese culture and tradition.\(^{155}\) Jian Youwen served as the chief person in this institute, and Gao Jianfu was one of its administrators (figure 42). According to Jian, this semi-official organization did not achieve as much as the previous Society had due to a lack of resources from its inception.\(^{156}\) Jian left for Hong Kong when the Communist Party took power in China in October 1949, and he continued to be active in promoting Guangdong art and culture in his remaining years.\(^{157}\)

Gao Jianfu settled in Macau in 1949 and spent his last years there. With the reestablishment of the Spring Slumber Studio in Macau in 1938, Gao Jianfu left behind many students who would later continue the legacy of their teacher in organizing art societies and group exhibitions. The regional name “Lingnan School” thus assumed a generational continuity.

\(^{154}\) Ibid., pp. 213, 282.

\(^{155}\) Ibid., p. 282.

\(^{156}\) Ibid., p 285.

\(^{157}\) Jian Youwen was especially drawn to the unique social environment in which Guangdong culture started to take shape after the nineteenth century. His academic specialty of researching the Taiping Rebellion won him a distinctive voice in the field. His constant interest in pursuing Guangdong art and culture produced a groundbreaking research that uncovered an otherwise neglected Guangdong artist, Su Renshan 蘇仁山 (1814-1849).
Jian Youwen’s important influence on Gao Jianfu’s art extended to the years after Gao Jianfu died in 1951. This can be seen in an inscription by Liang Hancao 梁寒操 (1899-1975) on Gao Jianfu’s *Flying in the Rain*, 1932 (figure 43).\(^{158}\) Liang’s inscription was written in 1952, a year after Gao’s death. The inscriptions celebrate Gao Jianfu’s art, including his calligraphy and painting. It reads as follows (figure 44):

(Gao Jianfu’s) calligraphy is like heavenly wisteria, and it is so rare that its quality is not going to be surpassed. (Gao Jianfu) is excellent at depicting misty and rainy atmosphere that is filled with an intriguingly unclerness. His talent is a rarity but with a kind of plain and tranquil quality; he is an eccentric pen residing in the Lingnan region. This inscription is instructed by (Jian) Youwen....\(^{159}\)

This inscription (figure 44) definitely points out what Gao Jianfu is famous for: writing in expressive cursive script and painting ink washes to tint an atmosphere. Most importantly, Gao Jianfu’s locality, the Lingnan region, is prominently identified. This is related to Liang Hancao’s sense of cultural identity, for he, like Jian Youwen, was an activist in promoting Guangdong culture. Liang Hancao later became the organizer of the publication of *Guangdong wenxian jikan* 廣東文獻季刊, or *Guangdong Literary and History Monthly*, whose articles were all about analyzing Guangdong/Lingnan culture. This journal’s primary goal was to promote the Guangdong culture. Very much like the associations initiated by Jian Youwen in the 1940s, *Guangdong Literary and History Monthly* considered Gao Jianfu and his art to be manifestations of the “Lingnan Spirit.” This journal followed the footsteps of *Yijing* and *Dafeng* in the 1930s and therefore, became an extended venue for the promotion of Gao Jianfu and his New National Painting principles. (Appendix 1)

\(^{158}\) Liang Hanhou was a Guangdongnese born in Gaoyao. He became a Christian and a member of the Nationalist Party in 1923. See *Mingguo renwu da cidian*, 881.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

By looking at Gao Jianfu’s life-long ambition to promote the New National Painting and the subsequent regional naming of the Lingnan school, we have made it very clear by now that the “Lingnan School” is a title erected by historians and art critics. Jian Youwen’s close relationship with Gao Jianfu, his background as an historian, and his enthusiasm for researching and promoting Guangdong culture partially explain how and why Gao Jianfu was made the founder of the Lingnan school. The tension between region and nation in Gao Jianfu’s art is a product of the subsequent scholarship on the artist, not the artist’s intention and his career trajectory. In the representations of Gao Jianfu and his art, we have already seen how different scholarship affects the ways we understand Gao Jianfu as the founder of a regional school. It is my contention that Gao Jianfu never wanted to elevate Guangdong art in his proposal of the New National Painting, nor did he profess to be an expert on Guangdong art. A sense of local pride appeared in Gao Jianfu’s work only in the last phase of his life when he took refuge in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau during the years of the War of Resistance and onwards. His fame as the founder of the Lingnan school emerged only after his death in 1951, and it became

159 Chinese translation of Liang Hancao’s inscription is found at The Art of the Gao Brothers of the Lingnan School, 99.
widely accepted with Jian Youwen’s consistent and vociferous support for the artist and his New National Painting principles. (Appendix 1)\textsuperscript{160}

It would be an over-generalization to dismiss all the connections between Gao Jianfu and his native Guangdong. As I have demonstrated above, Gao Jianfu probably inherited his concern for mastering \textit{xiesheng}, or realism, from Ju Lian. This prepared him to be attracted to the Western techniques of perspective, modeling, and atmospheric effects. Gao Jianfu did not feel ashamed of his local identity as a Guangdongese, because one of his most frequently used seals bore the characters of his birthplace, Panyu 潘禺. In pushing forward his New National Painting revolution, however, he must have found that the experience and techniques he learned in Japan were more useful and more plausible for catching the attention of a nationwide audience. Because it did not evolve out of Guangdong painting tradition, the proposal of the New National Painting cannot be understood as a regional school seeking to challenge others to become a nationally dominant. The primary orientation of Gao Jianfu’s revolution in art was to renew the old, the conventional, and the traditional by means of his foreign experiences. This is evident in Gao Jianfu’s aesthetic and painting vocabulary. Gao’s rhetoric was geared toward making the New National Painting a new paradigm for Chinese painting. As a whole, the more commonly known name, “Lingnan school,” therefore reflects a practice of naming that shrank a national ambition to a regional style. The Lingnan school label is also a result of a modern discourse of a region.

The regional title for Gao Jianfu was primarily a result of Jian Youwen’s interpretations. Jian Youwen’s representations of his teacher and close friend, whose

\textsuperscript{160} \textit{Guangdong wenxian jikan} became the new venue for Jian Youwen’s continuing promotion of Gao Jianfu and the New National Painting. See Appendix 1
position as a reformer and whose experience as a revolutionary, coincided with Jian's conception of the Guangdong/ Lingnan culture, as a source of revolution. Gao Jianfu's New National Painting revolution fit this concept perfectly. It became the standard representation of the Guangdong culture with which we are familiar today.
APPENDIX A:

Articles on magazines, journals and books about Gao Jianfu and his art during 1926 and 1979.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Magazine, issue</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>Zhou Shoujuan 周瘦湘</td>
<td>“Jianfu zhi hua” [Painting by Jianfu]</td>
<td>Liangyou huabao 良友 [Young Companion] no. 10 (Nov. 30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Huang Banruo 黃般若</td>
<td>“Piaojiao xinpai yu chuangzue zhi qubie” 刻観新派與創作之區別 [Differentiate plagiarism and act of creation concerning the New Style]</td>
<td>Guohua yanjiuhui yuekan 國畫研究會詩刊</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lu Jinxiao 盧進修 Ma Wenfeng 馬文峰</td>
<td>“Guangdong yishujie” 廣東藝術界 [Guangdong’s art circle]</td>
<td>Liangyou huabao 良友 [Young Companion] no. 11 (Dec. 30)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Jieshao Gao Jianfu xiansheng” 介紹高劍父先生 [Introducing Mr. Gao Jianfu]</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“Guohua gemin wenti da nianzhu (bianxu)” 國畫革命問題答念珠 &lt;編續&gt;</td>
<td>Guomin xinwen 國民新聞 [Citizen’s News] (June, 26)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 paintings by Gao Jianfu</td>
<td>Liangyou huabao 良友 [Young Companion] no.16 (Jun. 30)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Gao Qifeng de hua” 高奇峰的畫 [Paintings by Gao Qifeng]</td>
<td>Liangyou huabao 良友 [Young Companion] no.18 (Aug. 30)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“Lingnan ming huajia Gao Qifeng ji qi yishu” 嶺南名畫高奇峰及其藝術 [Famous Painter, Gao Qifeng and his works of art]</td>
<td>Liangyou huabao 良友 [Young Companion] no.19 (Sept. 30)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Painting by Gao Jianfu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Artist/Author</td>
<td>Title/Description</td>
<td>Journal/Publication</td>
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<td>1927</td>
<td>Chen Danian</td>
<td>“Huajia Chen Shuren ji qi zuopin” 畫家陳樹人及其作品 [Painter Chen Shuren and his works of art]</td>
<td>Liangyou huabao 良友 [Young Companion] no.20 (Oct. 30)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Chen Shuren xiaozhuan” 陳樹人小傳 [Brief biography of Chen Shuren]</td>
<td>Liangyou huabao 良友 [Young Companion] no.20 (Oct. 30)</td>
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<td>1928</td>
<td>Qiushan 秋山</td>
<td>“Lingnan sanjiahua” 嶺南三家畫 [Paintings by three famous artists of South China]</td>
<td>Liangyou huabao 良友 [Young Companion] no.25 (April 30)</td>
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<td>“hunxueer de hua” 混血兒畫 [Hybrid painting]</td>
<td>Guohua Tikan 國畫特刊 [Journal of Guohua] no.2</td>
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<td>Pan Tianshou 潘天壽</td>
<td>“Zhongguo huihua shi” 中國繪畫史 [History of Chinese painting]</td>
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<td>1929</td>
<td>Huang Binhong 黃賓虹</td>
<td>“Xinpai guohua Gao qifeng shi zhi zuopin” 新派國畫高奇峰氏之作 [New style Chinese painting Gao qifeng’s works of art]</td>
<td>Liangyou huabao 良友 [Young Companion] no.38 (May 30)</td>
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<td>“Meizhan guohua tan” 美展國畫談 [Discussion of the traditional painting in the National Art Exhibition]</td>
<td>Yiguan 藝觀 [Arts Opinions] no.3 (May 15)</td>
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<td>1930</td>
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<td>1931</td>
<td>Li Puyuan 李樸園</td>
<td>“Gao Qifeng hua” 高奇峰畫 [Paintings of Gao Qifeng]</td>
<td>Liangyou huabao 良友 [Young Companion] no.63 (Nov. 30)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“Benxiao xuesheng chengji gaiping” 本校學生成績概評 [An evaluation of the result of our students]</td>
<td>Ya donna 亞丹娜 &lt;Xihuyizhuan di sanjie zhanlanhui zhuanhao&gt; 西湖藝專第三屆展覽會專號 [Special Issue of The third exhibition of the West Lake Art Academy]</td>
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<td>1932</td>
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<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Li Puyuan 李朴園</td>
<td>&quot;Dao Gao Qifeng xiansheng&quot; 忻高奇峰先生 [Gao Qifeng]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wang Zhaoming 汪兆銘</td>
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<td>Ye Gongciao 葉恭朝</td>
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<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Liu Haisu 劉海粟</td>
<td>&quot;Zhongguohua zhi tedian ji ge huapai zhi yuanliu&quot; 中國畫之特點及各畫派之源流 [Characteristics of Chinese painting and the origins of different schools]</td>
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<td>1935</td>
<td>Lu Danlin 陸丹林</td>
<td>&quot;Tan xin huapai&quot; 談新畫派 [Discussion on new schools of painting]</td>
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<td>Xu Beihong 徐悲鴻</td>
<td>&quot;Tan Gao Jianfu xiansheng hua&quot; 談高劍父先生畫 [Discussion on painting of Mr. Gao Jianfu]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun Fuxi 孫福熙</td>
<td>&quot;fenyong qianjin de Gao Jianfu xiansheng&quot; 雲勇前進的高劍父先生 [Diligent and Progressive – Mr. Gao Jianfu]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Ni Yide 倪贻德</td>
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