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WU CHANGSHI AND THE SHANGHAI ART WORLD
IN THE LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By
Kuiyi Shen, M.A.

*****

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation, which focuses on the late Qing and early twentieth century Chinese artist Wu Changshi (1844-1927), argues that fundamental changes took place in the economics of the Chinese art world at the end of the nineteenth century that led to basic shifts in the attitudes of artists and patrons to each other and to art itself. The remarkable career of Wu Changshi, China’s most famous painter at the time of his death in 1927, makes possible a case study of the transformation of China’s cultural world between about 1895 to 1905 and of the contradictions inherent in the life of a modern traditionalist artist. Born and educated into the Confucian literati class, Wu spent the first fifty-five years of his life seeking to become a scholar-official. Ironically, he failed at this traditional career path, and by 1900 found himself at the center of a burgeoning urban art world, where he became a great success in the highly commodified Shanghai cultural scene.

The four chapters of this dissertation discuss the economic, cultural, and social background of Shanghai in the period; patronage of art in Shanghai, including the growth of art shops and art societies; Wu Changshi’s biography, social network, and painting, with reference to his unpublished correspondence; and his modern legacy. Despite selling in an increasingly anonymous market, where buyers might include foreigners and
uneducated merchants, Wu remained faithful, in many respects, to his scholarly ideals. Most significantly, he succeeded in bringing the aesthetics of ancient epigraphy (jinshixue) into his painting, calligraphy, and seal carving. His fundamentalist reform of Chinese painting imbued it with an archaeological flavor believed to embody the most authentic qualities of China's ancient culture and aimed to rescue Chinese art from its late Qing dynasty decline. Ultimately, Wu's art came to represent for sympathetic critics the strength needed to prevail in the modern world against the invasion of Western culture. He was successful in his own work, but his achievements ultimately failed to survive his own lifetime. Despite many competing claims to this title, we consider Wu Changshi to be China's last great literati painter.
To my parents
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation argues that fundamental changes took place in the Chinese art world at the turn of the last century that led to basic shifts in the attitudes of artists and patrons to each other and to art itself. Changes in the style and subject matter of traditional ink paintings were important, but even more significant was the dramatic change in social status and economic function of the artist himself (or herself).

The new Chinese art world may have been most evident with the western-style oil painters who emerged in the late 1920s and early 1930s, but the restructuring of the economics of art was well underway several decades earlier. There has been a tendency in the field of Chinese art history to assume that twentieth century practitioners of ink painting are authentic transmitters of a continuous tradition. Although many artists and patrons of good faith may have wished that this ideal were true, the basic changes in society made it impossible for norms of pre-modern literati culture and art to survive.

The focus of this dissertation, Wu Changshi [Fig. 1.1], is the artist who was not only China’s best-known painter at the time of his death in 1927, but also a remarkable case study of the transformation of China’s cultural world between about 1895 to 1905.
Born and educated as a Confucian literatus, Wu spent the first fifty-five years of his life seeking to become a scholar-official. Ironically, he failed at this traditional career path, and found himself, by about 1900, at the center of a burgeoning urban art world, where he became a great success in the highly commodified Shanghai cultural scene [Fig. 1.2]. Unashamed to sell to anyone the fruits of his brush, his new attitude toward buyers and his art define the response of Chinese painters to the collapse of literati culture and the challenge of dealing with an imperfectly educated but newly dominant commercial class.

The overthrow of the traditional order of society is generally attributed to the “semi-colonial” nature of China’s political realities in the late Qing era. This concept, however nebulous, includes many specific aspects that are important. Establishment of Western economic and educational models, extraterritorial protections of international trade, and the rise of a wealthy but comparatively uneducated (at least in cultural terms) business class, all appeared at this fluid intersection of foreign and Chinese cultural spheres.

It would, of course, be an exaggeration to say that China’s cultural norms ended in 1900. My grandfather, born in that year, wrote letters in classical Chinese with a writing brush until the end of his life in 1986. Wu Changshi and his friends used decorated stationery for correspondence that may only be distinguished from that of the Ming period on the basis of comparatively subtle stylistic developments in the practice of calligraphy and paper decorating that are internal to China. And, although living in a Westernized society, Wu Changshi’s art, calligraphy, painting, and seals, appealed to a Chinese taste. Even his foreign patrons, who were mainly Japanese or Korean, appreciated Wu for his
seemingly authentic Chineseness. The Boston Museum of Fine Arts commissioned a signboard form Wu Changshi in 1912, on which Wu wrote “yu gu wei tu” (be a disciple of antiquity) in his favorite seal script calligraphy, apparently an appropriately scholarly ornament for the institution’s Asian galleries. As will be evident, the network of friends that supported Wu’s career was of a peculiarly Chinese kind, guanxi networks that may perhaps be different from those of pre-modern times, but which remain a necessary part of doing business in China.

Wu Changshi was thus in the seemingly contradictory role of making art with an intensely Chinese aesthetic, but selling in context strongly impacted by the development of westernizing economic and social trends. The glory of his artistic achievement and the tragedy of his personal aspirations both center around this contradiction.

State of the Field

The view of the nineteenth century in Chinese art history is rather narrow. Its comparative modernity and the lack of interest by art historians in the artists of that time led to a general disregard of nineteenth century Chinese painting until the 1970s. Many scholars, in their teaching of Chinese art, stopped at the eighteenth century. Museums, as a rule, seldom collected paintings of this period. Research has also been discouraged by the lack of documentary sources and access to such recent Chinese paintings. This situation existed in both Asia and the West.

Similarly, the Shanghai School of painting rarely attracted scholarly attention in China or the West before the 1970s. Only Ren Yi (Bonian, 1844-1895), one of the major
Shanghai artists, was an exception. He was praised as a representative of popular art in China for obviously political reasons summed up in the Maoist slogan “serve the people” during the 1950s and 1960s. Most of the painting albums of other Shanghai painters, however, such as Wu Changshi and Xugu, were published in China only beginning in 1979. But the scholarly study of Shanghai School painting remained at a very preliminary stage before the 1980s.

In the last two decades, however, with changes in art historical methodologies, art of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially Shanghai School painting, has been approached from a new point of view. Some art historians and students, both in the West and China, have started to pay scholarly attention to the art of the period. Ding Xiyuan, for example, wrote his graduation thesis on the art of Ren Yi (Ren Bonian) (China Academy of Arts, 1981), and started to touch on some issues mentioned above through detailed textual research and reliance on historical documentation. Although the development of Ren Yi’s art was Ding’s primary interest, the relationship between the development of Shanghai society and Shanghai painters was a part of his concern. The chronicle of Ren Yi’s life that Ding carefully compiled is also very useful for the study of other Shanghai painters. At almost the same time, Gong Chanxin, a research fellow at the China Academy of Arts, and Xue Yongnian, of the Central Academy of Art in Beijing, also wrote several essays and edited painting albums on Ren Bonian’s art. Later Ding, Xue, Gong, and Hu Haichao and Shan Guolin both of Shanghai, wrote numerous essays on other Shanghai painters, including Xugu (1823-1896) and Ren Xiong (1823-1857). Wu Changshi has also become a hot topic in recent years, with several conferences on his
art held in China. In Japan, in the early 1970s, Tsuruda Takeyoshi wrote a series of articles on modern Chinese painters, which included brief biographies of Shanghai painters based on original Chinese literature and early studies done by the Japanese scholars Hashimoto, Yonezawa, and Nakagawa in the 1920s and 1960s. Later Tsuruda and other Japanese scholars, such as Sofugawa, Kohara, and Yamaoka, wrote many essays for the catalogues of the modern Chinese painting exhibitions held in Japan in the 1980s. Thus far, the scholarship published by Asian scholars on the Shanghai school concentrates mostly on the painting styles and biographical documents of Shanghai painters.

Western scholarship on the Shanghai School has been somewhat limited to date. Although discussions of the works of art by Shanghai painters were published in the form of entries in exhibition catalogues before the 1970s, they tended to be predominantly descriptive, not interpretive. Beginning with the 1970s, however, a gradual shift in concerns may be seen in English language scholarship. Beyond the range of styles within an artist's tradition, and the impact of its weight upon the artist, art historians now ask what influences outside the immediate realm of painting affected the development of the painting style as a stimulus to his creativity. They try to see what artists and their patrons saw, to somehow realize what comprised aesthetic enjoyment and artistic standards in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Shanghai. Michael Sullivan wrote a book and several articles between the late 1950s and early 1970s about twentieth century Chinese art, in which he began to consider Shanghai painting as an important school for the development of modern Chinese art. May-ching Kao's dissertation, "China's Response to
the West in Art 1898-1937" (Stanford University, 1972), discussed the change of Chinese art under the challenge of Western art in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although the focus of her thesis was not the Shanghai school of painting, her discussion of the general social and cultural context of the time is extremely valuable to the understanding the environment in which Shanghai artists emerged.

Since 1970, several doctoral dissertations on painters of the Shanghai school have been completed. One serious study of the Shanghai school was done in the late 1970s, before scholarly access between China and the U. S. had resumed, by James Soong in his dissertation, “A Visual Experience in Nineteenth-Century China: Jen Po-nien (1840-1895) and the Shanghai School of Painting” (Stanford, 1978). In his study, Soong focused on the development of Ren Bonian’s (also romanized as Jen Po-nien) painting style and subject matter. Ren Bonian and his popular paintings, naturally raised questions about patronage. Soong also collaborated with Jung Ying Tsao to write an exhibition catalogue, Chinese Paintings by the Four Jens, Four Late Nineteenth Century Masters (1977). Another scholar, Stella Lee, also focused her dissertation on Ren Bonian, “Figure Paintings of Ren Bonian (1840-1895): The Emergence of a Popular Style in Late Chinese Painting” (University of California at Berkeley, 1981). Like Soong, she devoted considerable attention to the background of Shanghai as an artistic center and the life of Ren Bonian. Her later essay about the art patronage of Shanghai in the nineteenth century (1989), which was collected in the book Artists and Patrons, edited by Chu-tsing Li, is very informative. The article uses primary literature to touch on the relationships between Shanghai artists and their new patrons, the wealthy merchants, and compares them to
those of Yangzhou painters and their patrons. Elizabeth F. Bennett’s dissertation, “Zhao Zhiqian (1829-1884), a Nineteenth Century Chinese Artist: His Life, Calligraphy and Painting” (Yale University, 1984), mainly concentrated on the life and art of Zhao. A great many new materials on Zhao Zhiqian in Chinese museums and libraries have become accessible. Since that time, however, Hans van der Meyden’s “Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Chinese Painting” (University of Amsterdam, 1989) is a rather general overview of Chinese painting of the past two centuries. The Shanghai school of painting is only briefly introduced in its first chapter as a background for the discussion of later paintings. One recent dissertation by Britta L. Erickson, “Patronage and Production in the Nineteenth-Century Shanghai Region, Ren Xiong (1823-1857) and His Sponsors” (Stanford University, 1996), through an extensive biographical study and a discussion of the artist’s oeuvre, established a general understanding of Ren Xiong. She examined two of the artist’s greatest works in great depth, using them to illuminate the respective artist-patron relationships out of which they grew. There are also several ongoing dissertations concentrating on aspects of the Shanghai School. At University of Kansas, Philip Wu plans to study the relationship between the art of Zhao Zhiqian and the Kaozheng movement; Roberta Wu of New York University is working on Ren Bonian’s portraits. Hongxing Zhang, at London University, devoted his attention to the important Shanghai illustrator Wu Youru (d.1893) and the popular pictorial of the late nineteenth century, Dianshizhai Huabao, with which the artist was involved.

Besides those dissertations, other scholarly writings on the Shanghai School include the following: Josef Hejzlar, a Czechoslovakian diplomat, organized an
exhibition of Shanghai School paintings, "Masters of Shanghai School of Painting," at the Prague National Gallery in 1968 and wrote a book, Chinese Watercolors (English edition, 1980) with a brief introduction of the Shanghai school; James Cahill wrote an essay, "The Art of Wu Changshi and Qi Baishi," which was published in Japanese in the ten-volume Bunjinga suihen (Chuokoronsha, 1977), which included an overview of the Shanghai School; James Cahill's "The Shanghai School in Later Chinese Painting" in Twentieth-Century Chinese Painting (1988), edited by May-ching Kao, was a brilliant analysis of the painting styles of Shanghai artists, and also posed some questions on issues of patronage. A recent publication, The Paintings of Xugu and Qi Baishi (1993), edited by Jung Ying Tsao, is a detailed study of the biographies and painting styles of the Shanghai painter Xugu and a follower of the Shanghai school, Qi Baishi.

Transcending Turmoil: Painting at the Close of China's Empire, 1796-1911 (1992) by Claudia Brown and Ju-hsi Chou, which accompanied an exhibition they organized, is the first comprehensive scholarly survey of the nineteenth century. Its treatment of Shanghai artists, however, is quite limited, undoubtly because the scope was limited primarily to works of art in the exhibition. For example, to name five of the most important artists, only seven paintings by Xugu, eleven paintings by Zhao Zhiqian, four paintings by Ren Xiong, six paintings by Ren Bonian, and three paintings by Wu Changshi are reproduced. Its conference volume, Art at the Close of China's Empire (edited by Ju-hsi Chou, 1998), however, covered a wide range of topics related to the art of late nineteenth century Shanghai, such as patronage, the publishing industry, and
calligraphy movements. Jonathan Hay’s excellent article on the Shanghai publishing industry opens a new window into the art world of late Qing Shanghai.

A joint project supported by the Luce Foundation on the visual arts in Shanghai from the 1850 to the 1930s by American and Chinese scholars has been underway since 1994. Through a series of workshops in China and the U.S. and an exhibition at the Palace Museum in Beijing which was documented in a paired special-issue painting album (Yiyuan duoying, 1995), they have tried to apply the different approaches of the two scholarly communities to the study of Shanghai art in its social and cultural context. A few articles presented at the workshops have already appeared, more are currently in press. The project’s participants include Julia Andrews, Ding Xiyuan, Jonathan Hay, Jason Kuo, Shan Guolin, Shan Guoqiang, Frederic Wakemen, Xue Yongnian, and Wen-hsin Yeh.

Several developments during the last twenty years have also helped to create a greater interest in the art of the late Qing period. A considerable number of paintings of the late Qing began to come out of mainland China in the early 1970s due to the special circumstances of the Cultural Revolution. Private collectors in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and the west became interested in them, and then auction houses began to promote late Qing paintings. In the mid-1980s, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York accepted a large collection of later Chinese paintings and calligraphy from the collector-dealer Robert Ellsworth and published a two-volume catalogue. At about same time, Jeannette Elliott Shambaugh of Tucson gave a collection of modern Chinese paintings to the Phoenix Art Museum which included a considerable number of late Qing
works. This was followed by the Phoenix exhibition, “Transcending Turmoil: Painting at the Close of China’s Empire, 1796-1911.”

Recently, some excellent studies of the culture, economy, and literature of modern Shanghai have also been published in both Asia and the West. However, so far, the study of Shanghai school painting is still in a preliminary phase. Many important issues remain for further study, such as what was relationship between the development of Shanghai society of the time and the Shanghai school of painting, how the new patrons’ tastes and popular art influenced Shanghai School painting, how these traditional painters responded to the challenge of modernity, and how the Shanghai School played a transitional role between the Qing, the last imperial era, and modern painting.

**Approach**

This dissertation consists of four substantive chapters, on the following topics,

1. Shanghai society and its art world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries;
2. patronage of art and art groups in Shanghai; 3. Wu Changshi: the last scholar-official painter; 4. Wu Changshi’s legacy. It tries, through a detailed art historical study centered on an important individual, to provide a particular understanding of the social and cultural history of modern China and that of modern Shanghai in particular.

1. Shanghai society and its art world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

As an engine for China’s modern transformation, Shanghai was a city of tremendous complexity. Shanghai rose to become China’s largest city after 1843, when it was opened up by the Treaty of Nanking to trade with the West. It rapidly became
China’s leading center of economy and industry, as well as that of art, printing, publishing, journalism, popular entertainment, and higher education. Home to the conservative comprador merchants of the nineteenth century, Shanghai in the republican period nonetheless witnessed the birth of radical ideology, mass demonstration, anti-colonial nationalism, and political organizations of all kinds.

Shanghai, the earliest modern city of China, is also one of the earliest cities to be influenced by modern Western civilization. In modern Chinese history, many of the adoptions and inventions of advanced science and technology first occurred in Shanghai. Not only did western science and technology pour into Shanghai during the time, but western culture, as well. In this sense, Shanghai was different from earlier commercial centers of Suzhou and Yangzhou. In Shanghai, foreigners were not assimilated into traditional Chinese culture, as happened in early Chinese history, but instead gradually changed the traditional Chinese mode of life.

The influx of population, rapid development of the economy, and establishment of a pluralistic culture contributed to laying a rich foundation for the city’s cultural and artistic growth. Against this historical background, Shanghai, in which there were few artists before, suddenly became a strategically important place of art activity and the cultural center of southern China. It attracted the attention of artists who were not refugees but professionals in search of active consumers. Shanghai artists themselves experienced many changes in the period. In comparison, eighteenth century Yangzhou artists were of a more mixed nature, standing between amateur and professional status, and scholarly and semipopular trends. However, only when the domination of society by
the commercial bourgeoisie reached its full vitality in nineteenth-century Shanghai, were artists able to overcome their scruples and enjoy unashamedly the profits they had earned by their own efforts.

2. The Patronage of art and art groups of Shanghai

Meanwhile, Shanghai merchants, like their counterparts in the previous century, the merchants of Yangzhou, not only managed the local economy, but also involved themselves deeply in many aspects of cultural life in order to establish their own reputation as people of good taste. In comparison, the Yangzhou merchants involved themselves in cultural life in order to be taken seriously by the Confucian scholar-gentry-official circles. This kind of relationship between merchants and artists, however, did not develop in Shanghai. By the late nineteenth century, the scholar-officials had lost their importance. The major reason is that in the late Qing dynasty, many official positions could be bought by donation. With the arrival of commercialism, many officials themselves also engaged in trade. The boundary between the scholar-official and merchant almost disappeared. The traditional conception, that the literati were respected as the highest class in society, was on the verge of extinction. Meantime, a new social class, so called comprador, who worked for foreign banks and companies, emerged in Shanghai. Relying on the foreigners' extraterritorial privileges to control the economy of Shanghai, they became an even more powerful class. As for the patronage of art, they seemed to depend much more than previous collectors on the function of an anonymous commercial art market. Their interest in acquiring culture resulted in the opening of many fan shops and art shops to collect and sell antiques, paintings, and calligraphy.
Furthermore, the patronage of Shanghai painters was not limited to Shanghai patrons. Because Shanghai became the center of international trade, many merchants from southern China and Japan also became important patrons of Shanghai painting.

Because painters became professionalized, the gathering of painters in Shanghai was combined with the function of guild organizations, and left few characteristics of the scholar-official ideal remaining. Some groups that flourished in the 1910s and 1920s had particular importance not only socially but also from an economic point of view. That is to say, they placed a great deal of emphasis on promoting traditional painting by controlling the prices and ways of marketing art.

3. Wu Changshi: the last scholar-official painter

Wu Changshi (1844-1927) was the leading painter among the Shanghai artists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A well educated scholar-official under the classical norms of education of the last imperial era, Wu Changshi may be considered the last so called literati painter among Shanghai painters of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. His career best represents the process of evolution from artistic patterns of late imperial China to those of the modern era. However, after he moved to Shanghai, he became a professional painter living on selling painting. The change of his social status forced him to face the challenges of the modernizing society and respond to the taste of new patrons. He had to chart a career that had no prototype in the past. During the last stage of his career, with the foundations of traditional art under attack by both a western-oriented educational system and the western-influenced New Cultural Movement, the continued practice of Chinese painting had a larger communal or even
national significance. The epigraphic taste in Wu Changshi’s painting, I believe, may be considered a final effort on the part of traditional painters to save the tradition of literati painting. Therefore, his career was representative of the artists of the important transitional period.

Wu was as popular as a calligrapher and seal-carver as he was as a painter, and achieved a harmony of style in the three forms. Wu Changshi did not start to paint until he had reached his mid-thirties, much later than he practiced calligraphy, or seal carving. At that time, jinshiqi, or antiquarian epigrapher’s taste in calligraphy and its extension into painting was a very important trend in the Shanghai school. It is well known that the Yangzhou school painter Jin Nong of the eighteenth century and others derived their script styles from old rock-cut inscriptions and rubbings. Earlier penetrations of this style and taste into painting are harder to define and document. Calligraphy and painting were brought closer together by the close interaction of the jinshijia or epigraphic style calligraphers and painters who came to share a basic character. In each case, whether calligraphy or painting the work of art has a strong, fine design made up of slow-moving stroke, like engravings in stone. Wu Changshi spent a lot of time to study calligraphy, especially stone drum script. In his youth, he was basically self-taught. During his early period, Wu largely made pictures of blossoming plum branches, using modes of rendering that combined the strengths of brushwork as a record of movement. The lines were fluent and smooth, and the ink was light and elegant, which was similar to his early shiguwen calligraphy.
From age fifty to seventy, Wu Changshi’s political and official career was tortuous and unsuccessful. From his unsuccessfully joining the army at age fifty to his resigning from the position of magistrate (Xianlin) of Andong County, which he occupied for only one month in 1889, the tortuous experience in the political and official circle let him realize the negative aspect of the society. However, this period was a golden time for the development of his art. Although the quantity of art work he created in this period was less than in his later period, the artistic conceptions shown in his works of the period were very original. Along with the establishment of his unique style of shiguiwen calligraphy, his painting also entered to a mature period, and achieved a masterful balance of calligraphy and painting. His favorite themes were now set: they were usually flowers and rocks, which might also reflect what the new patrons of the time sought. Because in Shanghai, the new metropolis of China, the major patrons of art were replaced by merchants, the rapidly raising, new social group. To these new patrons, colorful, decorative themes, such as flower and bird, were more acceptable and functional than the landscape painting which had been favored by the scholar-official class for a thousand years, although the tastes of these new patrons were regarded as vulgar by the literati. Without exception, Wu Changshi, as a professional painter in Shanghai, had to make his paintings suitable to this tendency, even though he was well-versed in classics and as a former minor official, he had a legitimate claim to literati-gentry status. In this period, however, Wu Changshi developed his own unique composition in his painting.

Wu Changshi was quite active in Shanghai after his 60s, and became one of the most important artists in Shanghai art circles. He was also a founding member of several
important art societies, such as *Xiling Yinshe*, which was basically a calligraphers and seal-carvers group, as well as *Haishang Tijinguan* and *Yuyuan Shuhua Shanhui*, which I will discuss later.

Wu Changshi did not leave many writings to serve as original literary sources for the study of his art. But two selections of his poems and inscriptions published when he was alive, *Foulu Ji* (1895) and *Foulu Biechun* (1915), are primary sources for art historians. Slightly later, Yang Xian, a scholar who was his contemporary, selected some of his poems and published an album called *Foulu Shi*. His calligraphy and seal-carvings were also collected in numerous publications, and among them the most important one may be the series of his seal-carving published by Nikensha in Japan. His biography was also recorded in some of his contemporaries’ writings, such as *Haishang molin* by Yang Yi (1920), *Guang yinren zhuang* (Biographies of seal-carvers) by Ye Min, *Hansongge tanyi suolu* (Jottings on Art from Cold Pine Pavilion) by Zhang Mingke (1923), and others. His paintings, calligraphy, and criticism of his art were also published in many art journals and exhibitions in the early twentieth century.

Wu Changshi’s art also left a great influence on later artists, not only in Shanghai, but in all of China, even in Japan. Some of his followers and pupils became important artists in China, such as Wang Zhen (1867-1938), Chen Hengque (1876-1923), Wang Geyi (1897-1988), and Pan Tianshou (1898-1971).

These artists, most of whom were also born and educated in imperial China, faced fundamental questions regarding their own position and the survival of traditional Chinese painting. What it meant to be an artist in China was radically transformed, like
most aspects of Chinese cultural life, by the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the classical norms of education, and, especially, the rapid changes of the economic situation between 1900 and 1937 in urban China. With the foundations of traditional art under attack, the choice of traditional painting as the preferred form of artistic expression could no longer be assumed. Nevertheless, many painters chose to work in traditional forms. They believed that modernizing Chinese art was necessary, but in full awareness of a cosmopolitan world, must proceed on the basis of its own history, standard and internal dynamics. What was unique in the next generation was that the vehicle for their modernizing project was a purposefully traditional kind of Chinese painting. By using modern organizational structures, exhibitions, public relations, advertising, sales and periodical distribution networks, Shanghai artists, who included many Wu Changshi's disciples and followers, tried to continue the tradition of Chinese painting and raise China's position in the international art world.

Major Resources of the Study

The most primary literary source for the study of Shanghai School painting may be writings by contemporaries of the Shanghai painters. Among them, *Haishang Molin* (A collection of biographical notes on Shanghai painters), compiled by Yang Yi in 1919 is one of the most important books. In the book, Yang Yi included 741 artists who were active in Shanghai area since the Tang period. But most of the artists, more than six hundred painters, were active in the Qing period. Later Yang Yi added 61 artists in
supplements to the book. Almost all of the important Shanghai school painters of the late Qing were included in this book. Yang Yi himself a minor painter and associate of many famous artists provided a brief biography for each artist and gave a brief description of their specialities and styles of art. Because it may provide the most complete list of Shanghai painters, it has served as a very useful source for the biographical study of Shanghai artists for all scholars of the field.

*Molin jinha* (A collection of jotting on the arts and artists) by Jiang Baolin, who was a painter and established the Xiaopenglai Painting Society in Shanghai in 1839, included brief biographies and some poems and inscriptions of 1286 artists of the Jiang-Zhe region. *Hansongge tanyi suolu* (Jottings on Art from Cold Pine Pavilion) completed by Zhang Mingke in 1923 was a collection of anecdotes on artists of the Jiangnan region. Zhang Mingke was a friend of Wu Changshi, so his writing provides valuable information about Shanghai painters.

Besides the literature directly related to art, many historical sources also provide primary material on the art world, such as *Yingyu Zazhi* (A collection of jottings on miscellaneous subjects relating to Shanghai) by Wang Tao, completed in 1853; *Huyou zajī* (A travelogue of Shanghai) by Ge Yuanxun in 1876; *Songnan mengying lu* (A collection of miscellaneous jottings on Shanghai) by Wang Xiyeun; *Qingbei leicao* (A collection of Qing Dynasty anecdotes) by Xu Ke in 1917; and *Shenjiang minsheng tushuo* (Miscellaneous jotting on Shanghai with illustration). Later publications, such as Chen Dingshan's *Chunshen Jiuwen* (Stories of Shanghai) and Zheng Yimei's *Xiao Yangqiu* are also useful. In these writings, the authors provided many detailed
descriptions of the social and cultural life of Shanghai during the time. They are very useful for understanding the cultural context which surrounded both the Shanghai artists and their patrons. Most of this literature has not been thoroughly used in previous art historical studies.

Another very important type of source is the local gazetteers and chronicles, such as The Chronicle of Shanghai County and The Chronicle of Songjiang County, of the time, and other official records, such as Shanghai renkou tongji ziliao (Shanghai vital statistics), and Shanghai yanjiu ziliao (Studies on Shanghai) by Liu Yazi in the 1930s, which provide precise information for the study of the historical background of the time.

Newspapers and pictorials published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are also very useful for the understanding of social and culture background of the period. They include Shen bao, Shanghai xinbao, Zilin hubao, Dianshizai huabao, and Feiyinngge huabao. The Shanghai painter Wu Jiayou played a key role on the illustration staff of Dianshizai huabao and later issued his own pictorial, Feiyinngge huabao, for which he was the sole illustrator.

As to secondary sources, more and more scholars in both Asia and the West seem to be interested in Shanghai since the 1980s. Numerous studies of the history of Shanghai have been published in English and Chinese.

Part of the difficulty in conducting research on Shanghai’s art history in the context of late nineteenth and dearly twentieth century social and cultural history, of course, has been the scattered nature of the source material. Personal diaries, private correspondence and unpublished scripts of popular performances that exist only in the
special collections of the Shanghai Library have almost never been used in previous studies. The Shanghai Library has since the 1950s steadily collected correspondence and other historical documents as they were turned over to used book stores by collectors and family members. Although the vast quantity of this material is still incompletely catalogued, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to study much of the Shanghai School material, including unpublished letters. These documents may be the most important sources for the study of patronage in Shanghai School painting. In addition, many important historical documents of the period between 1850 and 1930 now under the control of the Shanghai Archives have opened to the public recently and will also provide important documentary information on Shanghai’s cultural and social history.

In addition, since 1994, I have interviewed the family of major Shanghai School painters, as well as some Shanghai painters who were active during the 1920s and 1930s, such as Wu Changshi’s grandson, Wu Changye, and great-grandson, Wu Minxian; Wang Gongzhu, son of Wang Geyi (1897-1988) (Wu Changshi’s disciple); Wang Zhen’s disciple, Cao Jianlou (1915- ); and the elderly Shanghai painters Zhu Qizhan (1892-1995), Xu Zihe (1916- ), and Wu Qingxia (1910- ); and viewed collections and works of some of them. Through these interviews, I have gathered first hand information on Shanghai School painters and the activities of the art world of their time. I also visited Wu Changshi’s hometown, Anji, in Zhejiang, and Wu Changshi’s Memorials in Shanghai and Zhejiang to view his art work and related documents.

Finally and primarily, the painting of the Shanghai painters, as visual documentation, is essential to the study of art of the Shanghai school. Although many
paintings are collected in Asian and Western museums, most of those works are still in private collections. I visited Mr. Michael Shih, one of most important collectors of Chinese painting of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in Tainan, Taiwan, and had an opportunity to view about 300 pieces of works of the 6000 works in his collection. The art auctions held in New York, London, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Taipei, and mainland China in recent years, have also exhibited paintings of Shanghai painters. More and more art works of minor Shanghai painters have appeared on the art markets in recent years and also provide opportunities to understand the formation of the aesthetic taste of the Shanghai populace and of the style of the Shanghai school of painting, as a whole.
Notes

1. Please consult the bibliography for specific references.

Figure 1.1: Portrait of Wu Changshi, Shanghai, 1918
Figure 1.2: Ren Yi. *In the Cool Shade of the Banana Tree* (Portrait of Wu Changshi). 1888.
CHAPTER 2

SHANGHAI SOCIETY AND ITS ART WORLD
IN THE LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

As a powerhouse for China's modern transformation, Shanghai was a city of tremendous complexity. Shanghai rose to become China's largest city after 1843, when it was opened up by the Treaty of Nanjing to trade with the West. It rapidly became China’s leading center of economy and industry, as well as that of art, printing, publishing, journalism, popular entertainment, and higher education.

Shanghai is located at the mouth of the Yangzi River with access to both the Pacific Ocean and the Grand Canal. The region of Shanghai was called Yugong in the ancient period. It belonged to the States of Wu and Yue successively during the Spring and Autumn period (770-476). During the Warring States period it was under the control of Chu. The Qin court set up a county, Miao, which was located in a place near modern Shanghai and was under the administration of the Huiji (now Suzhou) prefecture. In the Han period (206 B.C.E. -220 C.E.), this region was divided into two counties, Wuyan and Lou. The Tang court reorganized the local government and set up Huating county near the region nowadays called Shanghai. The Song Emperor Shenzong appointed an official to
manage to the port in 1074. This port might have been the first town established in the present Shanghai region.\textsuperscript{1} According to the *Shanghai xianzhi* (Annals of Shanghai County) edited in the middle of the Qing period, the name “Shanghai” came from the river Shanghaipu [Fig. 2.1].\textsuperscript{2} Not until the twenty-ninth year of the Zhiyuan reign of the Yuan Dynasty (1292), was Shanghai officially set up as a county with its own local government.\textsuperscript{3}

**The Emergence of a New Metropolis**

The eruption of the Opium War in 1840 raised the curtain of modern Chinese history. Very soon after China’s opening under foreign pressure in 1842, Shanghai, a small town before the Opium War, became one of the most important treaty-ports and commercial cities in China and the entire Far East,\textsuperscript{4} and replaced Suzhou, Yangzhou, and Guangzhou as a center of commercial activity.

In September 24, 1846, the British established the first foreign concession in the northern suburb of old Shanghai city,\textsuperscript{5} in order to provide a special residential area for foreigners.\textsuperscript{6} After only a few years, American and French also settled in concessions on both sides of the Yangjing River and on the north side of the Wusong River in Shanghai.\textsuperscript{7} The British established the Shanghai Municipal Council in 1854. The council was actually the governmental authority with its own justice system in charge of the concessions. Under the doctrine of extraterritoriality, the Chinese local government had no right to interfere in their business. The council, however, was called *Gongbuju* in
Chinese, which made it sound just like a department in charge of irrigation or construction.8

These concessions originally permitted only foreigners to live there. In September of 1853, however, because the Taiping Rebellion was met with armed response by the Xiaodaohui (Small Sword Society) in Shanghai’s Chinese city, many Chinese officials and merchants entered the concession areas to take refuge, breaking the rule.9 The population of the concessions increased to 20,000 in a very short time.10 When the Taiping Rebellion expanded into the Jiangsu and Zhejiang area in 1860, the local officials, wealthy people, and even lower middle-class people fled from their homes to seek refuge in Shanghai.11 At that time, the population of the international concession in Shanghai, which was also called the "British and American concession," increased from 20,000 to 300,000, and then even to 500,000 in 1862.12 It is believed that by the end of the nineteenth century, Shanghai was densely populated with more than three million inhabitants.13

Only one year after Shanghai was opened, it was recorded that there were eleven foreign companies set up in the city, such as Yihe Yanghang (Jardine, Matheson & Co.), Renji Yanghang (Gibb Livingstone & Co.), Yiji Yanghang (Holliday, Wise & Co.), Badi Yanghang (Wolcott, Bates & Co.), and Baoshun Yanghang (L.Dent & Co.).14 By 1876, however, there were more than two hundred foreign companies operating in Shanghai.15 After the first British bank, Liru Bank (Oriental Banking Corporation) was set up in Shanghai in 1847, many countries vied with one another to open new banks in Shanghai, such as Hejiala Bank (Agra and United Service Bank, Ltd.), Youli Bank (Chartered
Mercantile Bank of India, London & China), Huilong Bank (Commercial Bank of India), Majiali Bank (The Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China), and Defeng Bank (National Bank of India), by the British in 1854, 1855, 1858, and 1875; Huifeng Bank (Hongkong & Shanghai Banking Corporation) by British, American, and German investors in 1865 [Fig. 2.2]; Yokohama Specie, Mitsui, Mitsubishi, and Taiwan Banks by the Japanese in 1880, 1893 and 1895. The first American bank, Huaqi Bank (International Banking Corporation, much later called National City Bank of New York) was opened in 1902, and Meiguo Yuntong Bank (American Express Corporation) in 1918; Falanxi Bank (Comptoir d'escompte de Paris) and Dongfang Huili Bank (Banque de l'indo-chine) by the French in 1860 and 1899; Helan Bank (Netherlands Trading Society) by the Dutch in 1903; Huabi Bank (Banque Belge Pour l'etranger) by Belgians in 1902. By rapidly gathering capital and treasures from different areas, Shanghai soon became the biggest financial center in China and East Asia [Fig. 2.3].

Shanghai, the earliest modern city of China, was also one of the earliest cities to be influenced by modern Western civilization. In modern Chinese history, many of the adoptions and inventions of advanced science and technology first occurred in Shanghai. For example, the first western style avenue was completed in 1856 in the French concession; the first gas street lamp on street and the first electric wires were set up in 1865; the first railway was built between Shanghai and Wusong in 1876 [Fig. 2.4]; the first telegraph line was completed between Shanghai and Tianjin in 1881; in the same year, the first running water company was opened in Shanghai by the British.
Not only did western science and techniques pour into Shanghai during that period, but western culture, as well. Before 1840, there were only about 140 foreign missionaries in China; moreover their activities took place mainly in Guangdong and several southern provinces and were limited to missionary work. After the Opium War, when Shanghai became the center of international trade in China, the diplomatic envoys of several foreign missionaries moved to Shanghai. In the twenty-fourth year of the Daoguang reign (1844), the first missionary hospital, Renji Hospital, called Zhongguo (China) Hospital at beginning, was established in Shanghai. By 1853, foreign missionaries had established about eighty schools in the Jiangnan area. It is said that the number of students in these schools approached sixteen thousand in the 1860s. In Shanghai itself, there were some famous foreign schools, such as the American St. Johns College [Fig. 2.5], the French Zhengdan (Aurora) School, and the British Mohai Academy. These schools not only did missionary work but imparted a knowledge of western science and culture to their students. Most of these schools had their own printing houses and libraries.

Translating books in foreign languages into Chinese was one of most important ways to spread Western cultures in China. In 1843, the first translating and publishing house, Mohai shuguan, was established by a British minister, Walter Henry Medhurst (1796-1857), in Shanghai. Before he came to Shanghai in 1835, Medhurst lived in Indonesia as a missionary for many years. Mohai shuguan was basically a missionary publisher, but also translated and published books of science, medicine, and astronomy. An American minister, William Gamble (?-1886), opened Meihua shuguan (American-
Chinese publishers) in Shanghai in 1860. Its predecessor was the bible publisher *Huahua shengjing shufang* which was established in Macao in 1844 and later moved to Ningbo in 1845. When Gamble came to Shanghai from Ningpo, he saw the potential of Shanghai, decided to move the publisher to Shanghai, and then changed its name. Meihua shuguan translated and published many important books of geography and mathematics.\(^{21}\) In 1863 the one of the leaders of the Reform School in the Qing court, Li Hongzhang, founded the *Guangfangyan guan* (The Language Center) in Shanghai for training students to translate Western books of law, natural science and military technique into Chinese.\(^{22}\) In October 1869, Guangfangyan guan merged into another very important institute of the time, *Jiangnan zhizhaoju fanyiguan* (The Translation House of the Jiangnan Arsenal).

The Jiangnan zhizhaoju was an arsenal founded in 1865 by the Qing court in the suburbs of Shanghai. In 1867 a Chinese scientist, Xu Shou (1818-1884), suggested establishing an institute to translate and publish foreign books and introduce Western science and technology to China. This idea was supported by Zeng Guofan, another leader of the Reform School and the executive officer of the Jiangnan region. The Fanyiguan (Translation House) was formally established in June 1868, and hired nine foreign scholars and fifty Chinese scholars. Among them the most important foreign scholar was John Fryer (1839-1928). He was a British missionary and came to China in 1861. He taught English in Hong Kong and Beijing, and came to Shanghai in 1865, becoming the principal of the Yinghua shuguan (British-Chinese Academy) and editor of the newspaper *Shanghai xinbao*. In 1868 he was hired by Fanyiguan and worked there for twenty-eight years until 1896, when he accepted a teaching position at the University of California and
moved to the U.S. During the years he worked in the Fanyiguan, he translated sixty-six books, mostly of mathematics, physics, chemistry, engineering, and law. The Chinese scholar and founder of the institute, Xu Shou, was a famous scientist of his time. He translated sixteen books, most of them were about chemistry and engineering technology. It is said that more than a hundred sixty books and series were translated and published by the Fanyiguan during the period from 1871 to 1890.

The first English weekly newspaper published in Shanghai was *North China Herald* (Beihua jiebao), founded by Henry Shearman, a Briton, on August 3, 1850. In 1864, Shearman launched another daily newspaper *North China Daily News* (Zilin xibao), which existed until 1951 and was one of the most influential newspapers in Shanghai. The first Chinese language newspaper *Shanghai xinbao* (Shanghai News), later renamed *Zilin hubao*, was established by Shearman in 1861. It was the Chinese version of the *North China Daily News*. Before the *Shenbao* began publication, *Shanghai xinbao* was the major source of news and prices of goods for most of Shanghai people. On April 30, 1872, another Englishman, Ernest Major, began to publish *Shenbao*, which was the most popular Chinese-language daily newspaper in Shanghai, and even in all of China, up until 1949. The first issue sold only 300 copies, but three years later *Shenbao* issued 6,000 copies every day. By 1926, its circulation reached over 140,000. Its dominance was such that in daily life Shanghai people called any old newspapers used for packing or wrapping by the generic term "*Shenbao zhi*" (*Shenbao* paper) long after the newspaper ceased publication. Another weekly Chinese paper, *Wanguo gongbao* (International Public Newspaper), was published by an American missionary known only
as Lin Lezhi. It mainly reported international news and introduced knowledge of natural science, but also published many essays on the late Qing reform movement, such as Wang Tao’s Yangwu, Lin Lezhi’s own Zhongxi guanxi lüelun (on the relationship of China and the West), and Sun Yat-sen’s Shang Li Hongzhang shu (A Letter to Li Hongzhang). Wanguo gongbao might have been the most influential newspaper for Chinese intellectuals and the reform movement in the late Qing period. 28

In this sense, Shanghai was different from earlier commercial centers of Suzhou and Yangzhou. In Shanghai, foreigners were not assimilated into traditional Chinese culture, as happened in early Chinese history, but instead gradually changed the traditional Chinese mode of life.

Besides the influence of Western cultures, the most important elements that changed the Shanghai cultural environment might have been the new merchant class that emerged in Shanghai since the middle of the nineteenth century. Chinese merchants were the majority of traders in the semi-colonial business world of Shanghai. These merchants came from different regions, such as Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Fujian, and Guangdong, and dominated many business fields in Shanghai. For example, Canton merchants were in charge of the tea business; Jiangsu merchants controlled the trading of silk; 29 and Fujianese and Cantonese opened hundreds of pawnshops in Shanghai. 30 Meanwhile, Zhejiang natives dominated the financial industry; for example, the first Chinese bank, Zhongguo Tongshang Yinghang (Chinese Trading Bank) in Shanghai was controlled by two Zhejiang men. 31 The backgrounds of these merchants were extremely complicated. Some of them came from official families or were officials themselves, such as Yan
Xinhou, who was the official in charge of the salt production in Henan and Tianjin. In 1885, he opened several cotton mills in Shanghai and Ningpo, and became the first chairman of the Shanghai Merchants Society (Shanghai shanghui) established in 1902. Most of the merchants, however, did not receive good educations and built their fortunes up from the bottom of society. For example, the Rong brothers, Rong Songjin and Rong Desheng, worked as clerks in a qianzhuang (traditional Chinese bank) when they first arrived in Shanghai. Later they became owners of many cotton mills and flour mills. More and more cities were opened as trade ports, and along with the development of industry and commerce, increasing numbers of foreign companies and banks opened. Chinese who worked for foreign companies and banks were called compradors (maiban), and formed a new social class. Such Chinese agents relied on the foreigners' extraterritorial powers to dominate the booming economy of Shanghai. Possessed of foreign language skills, good connections, business acumen, and a talent for negotiation, they became an extraordinarily powerful class in Shanghai, and lived in luxury as if they were nobility [Fig. 2.6]. Compared with their wealth and power, even officials seemed slightly inferior. These merchants then used their wealth to establish relationships with government officials, buy official positions, involved themselves in charitable activities, mingled with men of letters, and pose as lovers of culture.

The Formation of A New Art Center

Against this historical background, treaty-port Shanghai was significantly different from other commercial cities in Chinese history, including the cultural centers of
Suzhou and Yangzhou in more recent times. The influx of population, rapid development of the economy, and establishment of a pluralistic culture contributed to laying a rich foundation for the city's cultural and artistic growth.

The Taiping rebellion in the middle of the 1860s also changed the cultural environment of the Jiangnan region, or the Yangtze Delta. Since the Song dynasty, this region has been the most agriculturally fertile and economically rich. Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and southern Anhui, especially the two cities of Suzhou and Hangzhou, were cultural centers of China. The region "was a key region from which the mainstream of important painters, calligraphers, and poets of China's Great Tradition arose," and where the art markets were centered. These artists "were from the educated class; some were officeholders, some 'professional' painters with a scholarly bent. Their level of education and intellectual cultivation afforded them some part of the privileges of the elite, whether or not they owned land or held formal office. For the most part, they were members of the leisure class, in the broad sense, and were both the producers and consumers of art." During the Taiping rebellion period, however, a great number of local officials, merchants, literati, and artists fled to Shanghai to seek refuge. Along with them, the art market, the producers, and consumers also moved into Shanghai.

Shanghai, in which there were few artists before, suddenly became a strategically important place of art activity and the cultural center of southern China. It attracted artists who were not refugees but professionals in search of active consumers. "Since the ban on maritime trade was removed, prosperous trade became typical of Shanghai. The people who lived on their painting all came here and tried to sell their works." Artists
who moved from other places to live in Shanghai outnumbered the natives. Among the
more than six hundred artists whose names were recorded by Yang Yi, author of an
important history of the late Qing and early Republican Shanghai art world, at least 338
came from other provinces.\textsuperscript{40} The well known artists were not natives, but came from
Jiaxing, Huating, Shaoxing, Suzhou, Yangzhou, Ningbo, and Nanjing.\textsuperscript{41} Among about
two hundred and fifty artists of the Qing dynasty listed in Yang Yi’s \textit{Haishang molin},
none of the natives’ reputation could rival those of the sojourners and immigrants.
Among them, some painters, such as Zhang Xiong (1803-1886) [Fig. 2.7], Ren Xiong
(1820-1864)[Fig. 2.8], Xu Gu (1824-1896) [Fig. 2.9], Ren Xun (1835-1893)[Fig. 2.10],
Ren Yi (1840-1896) [Fig. 2.11],\textsuperscript{42} Qian Huian (1833-1911) [Fig. 2.12], Wu Changshi
(1844-1927), and Wang Zhen (1866-1938) [Fig. 2.13],\textsuperscript{43} gathered in Shanghai and formed
the Shanghai school. “The Shanghai school represents the most vital movement in
Chinese painting during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and contributed
more than any other traditional school to contemporary Chinese painting.”\textsuperscript{44} Many of the
differences that set Shanghai apart from other areas in China are reflected in the
patronage, the artists themselves, their subject matter and styles of art.

The Changes of Artists’ Status

Whereas a few painters still served as high officials and painted in typical literati
styles, a majority of the artists active in Shanghai did something very different. How this
situation developed is related to changes in the political, economic, and social situation of
Qing China.
A very complicated and contradictory phenomenon developed in the imperial examination system during the nineteenth century. On the one hand, with China’s increasing population and expansion of education, more and more people participated in the examination system in order to pursue an official career. Competition in the examination system thus became extremely intense. The number of passing scores was strictly limited. Moreover, even successful examination candidates were not assured of government positions upon attainment of their degrees. On the other hand, many official positions could be purchased in exchange for a donation to the government. This trend accelerated in the Daoguang (1821-1850) period, and continued until the examination system was abolished in 1905, with corruption of the merit system becoming more and more serious.

Under the traditional imperial examination system, men who passed the lowest level examinations (xiucai or shengyuan) would immediately qualify as government functionaries, and could waive military service and other obligations. The degree holder would be treated with respect by local officials and citizens. If he then passed the provincial level examinations (juren), he would qualify for the status of a government official (guan). If he was successful on the national examinations, he would become a jinshi and would qualify to work at court or as a provincial governor. In traditional China, no matter what one’s family background, receiving a good education and passing the examinations was the only way to rise to or remain at the top of society.

In one late Qing administration of the local examination in the two counties of Wuxi and Jingui, between 1,000 and 1,500 people took the examinations, competing for
only 30 lower level degrees. The success rate for these aspiring xiucai was thus roughly 2%. Even during the Guangxu era of the late Qing (1875-1909), when Western educational models and technology were introduced to China, enthusiasm for taking part in the imperial examinations was still strong. In the Jiangnan area alone, which admittedly was China’s educational heartland, more than 15,000 people regularly sat for the lowest level examination.

In the middle of the Qing dynasty, about 2000 juren degrees were granted nationwide at every administration of the provincial examinations. Roughly 500,000 xiucai degree holders competed for these places, with about 0.4% chance of success.

According to this bureaucratic system, becoming a xiucai was the first step in entering an official career. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, people who held the xiucai degree, when added to people who had bought the jiansheng, an equivalent degree, numbered 1.1 million people. By the end of the nineteenth century, the total number of degree-holders had increased to 1.5 million, but the number of positions, combining officials and clerical functionaries, was approximately 20,000. Obtaining the degree was thus no guarantee of obtaining government employment. Recommendation or bribery were critical, but often still insufficient.

Zhao Zhiqian, for example, took the jinshi examination three times in Beijing, devoting ten years to this unsuccessful pursuit. Relying on his juren degree, he finally obtained his first significant official position as a collator (tenglu) in the dynastic history academy when he was already 44 sui. Wu Changshi passed his xiucai examination in 1861, when he was 21 sui. He was not granted his first official appointment, however,
until thirty-five years later, when he relied on the recommendation of an influential friend to become a county magistrate in Andong, Jiangsu. During this long waiting period, he had to purchase a low-level clerical job in order to make a living. He worked, essentially on a free-lance basis, doing bureaucratic errands for government offices, and also served, in a similar capacity, as a personal assistant to several scholar-officials. He was thus unable to obtain a secure job or stable income.

The Chinese population greatly increased during this period, but the number of government jobs did not. The chance of enjoying a government career thus became smaller and smaller. An official career, in traditional China, would generally bring wealth. In the nineteenth century, along with the development of industry and commerce, however, the fastest way to get rich was in business. More and more officials began to engage in trade. The character of the traditional scholar-official class thus began to change. The paradigmatic boundary between the lofty Confucian official and the crass merchant faded and almost disappeared. The traditional ideal of the literatus as the highest and best-respected member of society was on the verge of extinction by the end of the nineteenth century.

In the past, position brought wealth. In the new society, wealth could buy position. In the late Qing dynasty, many official positions were bought by donation, with no concern for scholarly attainments (or lack thereof). Merchants could obtain high positions up to the daoyuan (senior counsellor), and jiansi (supervisor) by using their money and without having to pass the imperial examination.
The decline of the power of scholar-officials was inevitable with the deterioration of the merit system. The changes in political administration, society, and even more important, the economy, led to a new class of patrons, particularly in Shanghai.

Because of the extremely competitive situation in the examinations, frustration with poor official prospects among degree holders, and the general difficulty of making a living as a Confucian scholar, some educated people turned to business as a career. Another group of scholars, those to whom we will devote our attention, sold their artistic and literary talents in order to support themselves. A count of the Qing artists discussed by Yang Yi yields 42 jinshi degree holders, 37 juren, and 108 xiucai. Some of the most prominent Shanghai school artists, including the subject of this dissertation, Wu Changshi, belong to this group. They joined an expanding number of painters and calligraphers in Shanghai, most of whom were professional artists.

Ge Yuanxun noted in *Huyou zaji* that famous painters such as Zhang Xiong, Hu Yuan, Ren Yi, Yang Borun, and Zhu Cheng all openly showed the prices of their works in their homes. In fact, so many people went to their homes to seek paintings that the thresholds of their doors were almost broken.

Determined to make a living with their works, Shanghai artists were willing to paint according to the taste of their new urban public. These professional painters, however, unlike more traditional literati, were not ashamed to safeguard their own economic interests, and were often unwilling to make concessions on the price of paintings. According to *Qingcao yeshi daguan* (Great survey of unofficial histories of the Qing dynasty):
A high official of Songjiang sent a servant with money to Hu Gongshou [Yuan]'s home asking Hu to execute a painting. Hu complained that there was not enough money, and said to the servant, 'Give my thanks to your boss. I don't know what he is, but I will only paint for him when he pays for paintings according to my fixed price.'

Another anecdote shows us the change of the artist's position in the market:

Those who came for his [Ren Yi's] paintings were countless, but he was distant and haughty in nature, and was addicted to opium smoking. He kept his hair several inches long. Even if they doubled the price, he would not stretch out his paper to paint; therefore, the scrolls which he was obliged to complete piled up mountain-high.

An unpublished letter in the Shanghai Library from Hu Yuan to the prominent collector Zhang Mingke makes clear a concern on the part of famous artists for economic efficiency [Fig. 2.14].

I have received your letter and several blank album leaves. Because so many people in Shanghai want my paintings, I haven't done albums for quite a long time. For that reason, I have to send them back to you. If in the future you have any relatives or friends who want panel sets or big hanging scrolls (guaping or zhongtang), I will be happy to do them for you.

As we will see in subsequent chapters, the changes in patronage and in the artists' relationships with those patrons may be associated with changes in subject matter and painting style. The expanded patronage not only included the rich and powerful, but the whole range of the middle class, and even the foreign buyers. The new patronage network also encouraged a diversity of subject matters and styles. First, along with the reduction of the power of the scholar-official class, landscape painting, which was always regarded as the highest class of Chinese painting by the literati, also lost its attraction. The subject matter of the art works was broadened in order to satisfy different tastes of patrons. Shanghai school paintings are often figural, and more often bird-and-flower
subjects, although landscape paintings still make a rare appearance in the works of some artists. Those who want portraits or subjects from legends could rely on Ren Yi [Fig. 2.15]. Those in search of images of immortals and folk heroes might seek out Qian Huian [Fig. 2.16], Ren Yi [Fig. 2.17], or Shen Xinhai. Those wanting a Zhong Kui or Buddhist images could ask Wang Zhen [Fig. 2.18] or Yu Li (1862-1922) [Fig. 2.19]56. Those with a taste for epigraphy could visit Wu Changshi [Fig. 2.20]. Those found of birds and flowers had Zhang Xiong [Fig. 2.21], Wu Changshi, and Zhu Cheng [Fig. 2.22]57. Even those in search of landscapes could find Hu Yuan [Fig. 2.23].

The patrons of Shanghai school artists were primarily merchants and middle class people, who lived in a more intensely commercialized modern society. These patrons, unlike the scholarly, leisured elite who might collect and study paintings in their carefully designed Suzhou mansions, bought paintings like any other off-the-shelf commodity, for the immediate pleasure of enjoyment and ownership.

For members of the old scholar-gentry, landscape painting was an intellectual vehicle to convey their minds to distant mountains. But in Shanghai, a busy, modern metropolis, colorful, pleasant bird-and-flower paintings were probably a greater attraction than magnificent landscapes to merchant-bourgeois buyers. In response, the painting of Shanghai artists came to reflect the rise of a plebeian urban culture in the city.

The basic trend of Shanghai school painting was an increasing popularization or even vulgarization of art. In practice, Shanghai artists tended to blend literati and professional elements in their own ways, in a variety of manners. Newly arrived literati painters learned to accommodate the tastes of the commercial society of Shanghai by mixing
popular themes and styles with their work. Professional painters, on the other hand, under the influence of a thousand year tradition of respect for literati, sought to incorporate elements of literati taste into their work. These two trends developed in a parallel fashion, as the literati became professionalized and the professionals aimed at more scholarly effects. The friendship between the professional Ren Yi and the literatus Wu Changshi presents a concrete example of how this binary opposition might merge, as their close relationship seems to have helped both men move their painting beyond the limitations of their individual backgrounds.

A very important trend in bringing a scholarly aura to commercial painting in Shanghai was the craze for epigraphic painting in the late Qing and Republican period. The serious study of epigraphy began in the early Qing period along with the turn to “evidential” research (kaozhengxue) on the part of Confucian scholars. Study of ancient bronze and stone inscriptions, in an effort to discover authentic early texts, brought changes to the practice of calligraphy by the eighteenth century. Scholars not only studied the philology of antique rubbings, but began modeling their own calligraphy upon ancient styles.

By the nineteenth century, scholars had identified a calligraphic tradition they believed could revitalize China’s art, a tradition they called beixuepai, or stele style calligraphy. The models they followed were primarily anonymous stone engravings of the Qin, Han, and Northern Wei periods, works believed to possess an authenticity and virile strength that could overcome the weakness of the more common styles of calligraphy practised in their time.
In the late Qing period, the ability to discuss archaeology and epigraphy was considered a necessary conversational skill for an educated person. As described by Liang Qichao, rich merchants and wealthy officials sought out Confucian scholars in order to absorb this culture. From them they might learn a few clever formulations with which they could later demonstrate their knowledge of archaeological jargon.

Epigraphic research took three primary forms. The first was study of stone steles; the second was study of bronze inscriptions; and the third was the collecting and authenticating of rubbings. During the Qianlong (1736-1796) and Jiaqing periods (1796-1820), many stone steles were excavated, so more rubbings became available to make study of Han and Wei calligraphy possible. From that time, stele school calligraphy gradually came to replace the earlier tiexue styles, which were based upon the tradition of Wang Xizhi.

In the nineteenth century, many painters and calligraphers collected and studied rubbings of stone steles and bronze inscriptions. The book Haishang molin alone lists more than thirty such artists. The calligrapher and seal carver He Shaoji (1799-1873), for example, was known for his achievements in archaeological and epigraphical studies. He also collected many stone steles and rubbings of inscriptions. The calligrapher Yang Xian (1819-1896) studied clerical script and was an expert on Han dynasty stone steles. The famous collector Wu Yun (1811-1883) called his studio the Liangleixuan (Studio of the Two Lei), after a pair of bronze vessels in his possession. He was also famous for his knowledge of epigraphy. Wu Dacheng (1835-1902) learned seal script calligraphy as a small child. After middle age he also studied the Stone Drum.
inscriptions of the Zhou dynasty. He published several treatises on epigraphy, including *Guzibu* (Commentary on the Stone Drums) and *Hengxuan jinshilu* (Hengxuan’s Record of Epigraphy). Gao Yong (1850-1921) was famous as a calligrapher in the clerical and seal script styles as a very young man. He possessed great knowledge of stone steles. Hu Zheng (1817-1862) was crazy about epigraphy and was good at seal-carving. In his studio, he used rubbings of Qin and Han steles as screens. He himself was good at writing clerical script calligraphy.

Epigraphic studies, along with excavated Han stone steles and other archaeological materials, provided the opportunity to let calligraphers and painters study Stone Drum script and seal script calligraphy. The vitality and primitive vigor of the early writing replaced the soft, elegant Wang Xizhi style (known as *tiexue*) appreciated by the Qing emperors with the more powerful *beixue* style. Some artists adapted the direct power of the *beixue* style for use in painting. Wu Changshi directly adopted the calligraphic strokes of the Stone Drum script [Fig. 2.24] and seal script in his flower painting, especially in his favorite theme of plum blossoms.

Wu Changshi sometimes painted directly on genuine ink rubbings of ancient bronzes. In many cases, such works place auspicious flowers, such as peonies, rendered in bright or even gaudy colors, as floral arrangements inside a Zhou bronze vessel [Fig. 2.25]. The combination of the archaeological element and the floral theme is generally considered to be vulgar, and far more such examples appear to have been produced than may now be found in published or exhibited examples. They exemplify, however, the complex contradictions in Wu Changshi’s career and in the Shanghai art market.
One of the earliest surviving examples of an artist painting on a rubbing is a gaudy four-panel set collaboratively painted by Ren Xun and Zhu Cheng in 1872. [Fig. 2.26] The set features carefully crafted rubbings of a Zhou lamp, along with ding, gui, jue, zun, and hu vessels of the Shang and Zhou periods, each with rubbings of its interior inscriptions. The painters have covered the paper with polychromatic flowers and fruit, auspicious products of each of the four seasons. At the behest of the patron, the serious forms and documentary inscriptions of the ancient ritual vessels have been converted into playful supports for bright-colored decorations.

This trend in Shanghai school art has a double meaning. Scholars of the period clearly appreciated epigraphic taste. They rejected the softness of court painting and calligraphy and believed that only a quasi-fundamentalist revival of archaic Chinese script could convey the vigor of China’s national culture. Moreover, Han Chinese scholars had throughout the Qing period avoided the literary inquisitions and censorship imposed by the Manchu rulers by devoting themselves to seemingly esoteric philological and archaeological explorations. However, despite the absence of overt political meaning in their studies, the entire project of excavating China’s cultural past could be interpreted, at least as anti-Manchu feeling grew in the late Qing period, as a demonstration of disappointment in the failures of the non-Chinese dynasty. The nouveau riche, on the other hand, saw this archaeological learning as an emblem of high culture and social status, and were likely to find paintings such as these, which combine auspicious imagery with the superficial traces of epigraphic study, perfect physical manifestations of their material and social aspirations.
Among the new and relatively vulgar styles, the epigraphic manner may be the most elevated. However, most new collectors did not set their sights so high. It is clear that the majority of figure paintings were strongly influenced by popular images, particularly as seen, beginning in the mid-Qing dynasty, in popular folk wood-block prints.

Yangliuqing near Tianjin, Taohuawu in Suzhou, and Yangjiapu in Weixian were three of the most famous areas for the production of wood block prints. The subject matter of these popular wood-block prints can be broken down into six categories:\(^6\) 1. historical stories, legendary figures, and popular gods [Fig. 2.27]; 2. beauties and children; 3. bird-and-flower or beautiful scenery; 4. labor in the countryside; 5. genre and current affairs; 6. festivals, including dramas, and other symbols of happiness [Fig. 2.28]\(^7\). It is said that one workshop in Yangliuqing produced over one million wood-block prints a year.\(^8\) This huge issue of wood-block prints, which represent scenes of daily life or people's desires for future happiness [Fig. 2.29],\(^9\) must have reflected the taste of common people throughout China. This kind of taste probably entered Shanghai with the refugees who poured into Shanghai during the Taiping Rebellion of the mid-nineteenth century. These refugees originally included both wealthy people and lower middle class people who subsequently became prosperous. As the major patrons for Shanghai school painting, their taste and desires were influential. It is for this reason, most of the popular subjects in wood-block prints, such as folk stories, accounts of historical and legendary figures [Fig. 2.30],\(^10\) and emblems of future happiness [Fig. 2.31]\(^11\) can be found in the paintings of the Shanghai school.
The Shanghai school painter Qian Huian (1833–1911) even went to Yangliuqing to
design prints in the Guangxu reign of the late Qing period (1875–1909), thus establishing
a very direct connection between popular art and Shanghai school painting. Qian
Huian, zi Jisheng, hao Qingxi jiaozhi, was a native of Baoshan, near Shanghai. He began
learning painting as a child, and was famed for his fine outline figure paintings, especially
images of beauties. He occasionally also painted flowers and landscapes. According to
Yang Yi, writing in 1919, Qian Huian was very famous for a long time, and his paintinhe
very close connections between the themes g style remained quite fashionable. He was
also extremely important in Shanghai painting societies, as we will see. The very close
connections between the themes of Qian Huian’s paintings and those of contemporary
new year’s pictures are exemplified in the examples illustrated here.

Ren Xiong, in the course of his short life, also did some wood-block prints, such as
the 48 designs for *Liexian jiupai* (Drinking cards of the immortals) [Fig. 2.32] and 80
designs for *Yuyue xianxian zhuan* (Images of the sages). In 1857, Ren Xiong did
illustrations for Huang Fumi’s *Gaoshi zhuan* (Images of Scholars). Ren Xiong, in all,
did some illustrations for four books [Fig. 2.33]. The popularity of novels and the
development of publishing in the late Qing seemed also to give some influence to
Shanghai school painting.

Beyond subject matter, the aesthetic of popular art, such as folk wood-block prints,
festival paintings, even *yuefenpai* (calendar posters), also influenced the painting style
of the Shanghai school. In its essential qualities, the style of Shanghai school painting
tended to be rich, colorful, pleasant, sensuous, and easily comprehensible.
On the other hand, the unique material circumstances made Shanghai stand out from other cities. In Shanghai, foreign culture was right there to be explored. Western art entered Shanghai with the import of western goods, science, and techniques. The Roman Catholic church opened a library at Tushanwan in Xujiahui, the western part of Shanghai. Ren Yi had a close friend, Liu Dezhai, who was a curator of the library [Fig. 2.34]. It is said that Liu was good at drawing in the western style, which influenced Ren Yi's portrait painting. A widely repeated “fact” is that Ren Yi was good at sketching from nature due to his training in pencil drawing. It is thus believed that Ren Yi even did drawings of nude models. The story may be true, but its documentation is hardly solid. It comes from a newspaper publication of an informal talk given by sculptor and watercolor painter Zhang Chongren (1907-1997) in 1961. Zhang had grown up in the Catholic orphanage at Tushanwan and studied with Tushanwan painter Xu Yongqing. Even if his tale is accurate, Zhang was a third-generation transmitter of the oral account. Some of the earliest Chinese painters in the western style received their training in the Tushanwan library, including Zhang Chongren's teacher Xu Yongqing, who was famous in watercolor and landscape paintings. Many early western style painters in Shanghai were also pupils of Liu Dezhai.

In the figure paintings of Ren Xiong, Ren Yi and Wu Youru, it is not difficult to see their mastery of proportion, perspective, and light. In the application of color, many Shanghai school painters were influenced by Western paintings. In Ren Yi's works, the striking juxtapositions of color seem more closely associated with watercolor painting than Chinese art. Following Zhang Xiong, Ren Yi used a pigment called “foreign red”
color to paint flowers [Fig. 2.35], which in turn also influenced Wu Changshi's flower painting [Fig. 2.36].

A few artists of the period also traveled abroad. Painters Gu Yun (1835-1896), Wang Yin, Hu Zhang (1848-1899), Wu Qinyun (? -1916), and later Wang Zhen, visited Japan. "It is questionable, however, to what extent Qing dynasty visitors changed as a result. The lure of the West was more significant, but its full impact had to await the dawn of the new age, after 1911, when China faced Western artistic forces in a far more through and more meaningful way."

The overthrow of the Qing dynasty by the Republican revolution of 1911 changed China's political structures, but also accelerated and sharpened debates over "traditional" culture, which was the object of both sharp critique and robust defense in the early Republican decades. "This period is characterized by economic strife and political upheavals. The psychological burden carried by the people of China, including her artists, has been enormous. To an extent greater than ever before in Chinese history, intellectuals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have come to question every aspect of Chinese civilization, including her traditional philosophical, political, social and economic system. All of these systems have undergone dramatic reforms in the twentieth century." Artists, most of whom were born and educated in imperial China, faced fundamental questions regarding their own positions and the survival of traditional Chinese painting. What it meant to be an artist in China was radically transformed, like most aspects of Chinese cultural life, by the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the classical
norms of education, and, especially, the rapid changes in the economic situation in urban China between the 1900s and 1930s.

Following the founding of the new Republic in 1911, a growing movement for social and intellectual reform was led by students returning from foreign countries and by the new intelligentsia being produced by China's Western-style educational system. This background must also be taken into account when considering the nature of the Shanghai art world. The decade of the 1910s was marked by various social and political activities of the new intellectuals, including the "new thought tide," the literary revolution, the student movement, the boycott against Japan, and other such trends.

Of importance to us is that in all these cultural activities, the new intellectuals used Western ideas in a "totalistic" attack on tradition, which they felt was an absolute obstacle to China's modernization. The scope of their moral iconoclasm is perhaps unique in the modern world; no other historical civilization outside the West undergoing modern transformation has witnessed such a phoenix-like impulse to see its own cultural tradition so completely negated. They claimed that to achieve modernization, China must be Westernized, and the old ideas, ethics, and culture from its feudal past must be replaced with the new ideas, ethics, and culture from Western democracies:

To build a Westernized new country and a Westernized new society so that we can survive in this competitive world, we must solve the basic problem of importing from the West the very foundation of the new society... We must get rid of the old to achieve the new.

If you want to reform Chinese painting, you should revolutionize the Four Wangs' paintings first, and... apply the realism of Western art to reform Chinese painting.
In this great upheaval of cultural values, Cai Yuanpei's (1868-1940) aesthetic views, under the influence of Western aesthetics, played a very important role in the early development of modern Chinese art. Cai Yuanpei ranked aesthetic education equally with universal military education, utilitarian education, moral education, and education for a world view. He thought that the traditional attitude of regarding art as a kind of ink-play for literati in China was no longer sufficient to fulfill the needs of modern society in general and of the modern artists in particular. In his famous article, "Replacing Religion with Aesthetic Education," he stated that "the art educator should apply the theory of aesthetics in education, with molding a person's emotions as aims." He believed that art should become an important molding force in the creation of an ideal society. This attitude inspired in Chinese artists a sense of importance and social responsibility in the years to come. Along with the New Culture Movement, the peak of which was reached in the May Fourth Movement of 1919, and with the influential Cai Yuanpei as its eloquent champion, art education began to flourish in the second decade of this century.

In contrast to the Westernizers of the New Culture Movement, another very important ideological group active since the early 1900s, the "national essence school," promoted native culture. The advocacy of national essence cultural ideology, however, was already acquiring a conservative aura when the first rumblings of the new cultural movement were felt in 1915. After the 1911 revolution, national essence advocates continued to find themselves part of a larger preoccupation with cultural change, but with the founding of the radical journal, Xingqingnian (New Youth), in 1915, advocates of cultural revolution jarred them into defensive and untenable positions. Although the
National Essence group did not deeply involve itself in arguments about art in the 1910s, its attitudes toward the heritage of Chinese culture significantly influenced National Essence thought in the art circles of the 1920s and 1930s.

Since the beginning of this century, voices for reform were heard in the realm of traditional painting. Along with the importation of Western goods and culture, a new social structure emerged that was dominated by merchants. The scholar-literati class lost its unshakable social position, and the taste for orthodox literati painting was challenged by popular art. The emergence of the Shanghai school in the late nineteenth century was a reflection of the general mood of society. Some of its painters tried to pour new blood into traditional literati painting by expanding its subject matter and absorbing popular tastes, such as bright color and novel compositions, but they only hastened the decline of traditional painting into vulgar superficiality. Almost all artists of the time were conscious of the necessity of reforming traditional painting.

At the same time, it was natural that the cultural nationalism of the Late Qing, which often took an anti-Manchu tone, gradually shifted to a concern for Chinese values in the modern world. As Chou Ju-hsi has written, "A China in turmoil was also likely to defend its own 'Sinic' heritage.. Whence the emergence of the term guocui, which referred to the finest that the indigenous tradition could provide," especially in the face of encroaching Western culture. The sense of urgency perhaps was strongest in cities like Shanghai which, existing at the edge of both worlds, provided a viable, though ironic, basis for those who were traditionalists." The most important period of Wu Changshi's artistic career took place in this context, in Shanghai amidst new Chinese and foreign
patrons, in a new social setting, and amidst increasing concern about the survival of China’s great artistic tradition.
Notes


10. See *Shanghai fazhujie shi* (Shanghai: Shanghai yiwen chubanshe, 1983), 134.

11. Wang Tao recorded that many scholar-officials went to Shanghai to seek refuge during the Taiping rebellion period. See *Yingruan zazhi*, 89-91.

12. Ibid., 47.

13. Ibid., 19.


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16. Xiao Yishan, Qingdai tongshi (The general history of the Qing period), 3 vols. (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1963), 3:1597-1599; Shanghai Jinrong Jiguan Yi Lan (The review of the capital organizations of Shanghai), Shanghai Yinghang Zhoubao (The weekly of The Banks in Shanghai), 1920; Shanghai Yanjiu Zhilao Xu Ji (The continuation of materials of the study on Shanghai), Zhonghua Shuju, 1939. 217-220; Yang Yinfu, Shanghai jinron Zhuzhi Gaiyao (The capital organizations in Shanghai), Shangwu Yinshugua, 1930, 116-125; and Wu Peichu, “Jiu Shanghai de waishang yinghang maiban,” in 20 shiji Shanghai wenshi zhiliao (Historical Materials of Twentieth-Century Shanghai), Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 1999. 14-17.

17. See Shanghai yanjiu zhiliao (Research Materials on Shanghai) (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1984), 8-18.

18. Ibid.


21. Ibid.


24. Ibid., p.917.

25. Xiao Yishan, Qingdai Tongshi, 2010-2011; Zhang Zhongli, 912.


29. Ibid., 525-528.


33. Ibid., 99-101.


35. Wu Peichu, “Jiu Shanghai de waishang yinhang maiban.” In *Ershi shiji Shanghai wenshi ziliao wenku*, vol. 5 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 1999), 13-33. Wu, who began working as a compradore in the banking industry in 1903, ended his career as the compradore for the most powerful bank in China, the National City Bank of New York (Huaqi yinhang). He describes the professional function of the Chinese compradore and the economic arrangements under which he might work. The majority of compradores worked on commission, but also might make money by short-term high-interest speculation with assets of the foreign company. They then made more substantial investments in Shanghai’s new industries, including banks, qianzhuang, insurance companies, real estate, gold shops, cotton factories, cigarette factories, and shipping companies. Successful compradores were often able to buy enough stock in the companies for which they worked to sit on the board.


38. Ibid.


41. See his *Huyouzaji*, vol. 2, juan 4, 6a-8a.

42. The five successful sons of Chinese folk legend are those of the tenth century scholar Dou Shi (also called Dou Yujun). All five of his sons attained the jinshi degree. The term dengke, used to signify passing the exams, was also called zhegui (breaking the osmanthus branch). The title of this painting, dangui wufang (five branches of blossoming golden osmanthus) comes from a poem by Dou Shi’s friend Feng Dao, in
praise of father and sons, which describes the family as one spirited old trunk producing five blossoming osmanthus branches. *Cihai* (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1980), 73.

43. The pine tree, which grows straight and tall, is a useful construction material. Its straightness is posed here in as a subject for Confucian self-reflection, and further contrasted with the inscriber’s “bent waist.”


45. Wang Dezhao. *Qingdai keju zhidu yanjiu* (Study of the civil service examination system of Qing) (Hong Kong: Hong Kong zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 1982), 143.


47. Wang Dezhao. *Qingdai keju zhidu yanjiu*, 144.

48. Wu Renan. “Shanghai diqu Ming Qing shiqi de wangzu” (The famous families in Shanghai during the Ming and Qing periods). *Lishi yanjiu* 1 (1992), 134.

49. Xiao Yishan. *Qingdai tongshi, xia*, 1607.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., 1606-1607.


54. Ibid.


56. Zhongkui, the demon queller, was a particularly popular subject for the *duanwu* festival on the fifth day of the fifth month. When the Tang emperor Minghuang was very ill, he dreamed of a big demon eating a small demon. The emperor questioned the big demon, who identified himself as Zhongkui, an unsuccessful candidate for military examination honors. After he died, he decided he wanted to destroy all the evils in the
world. When Minghuang woke up, he asked the painter Wu Daozi to paint an image of Zhongkui. It became customary to hang portraits of Zhongkui on the duanwu festival. In the Five Dynasties period Zhongkui portraits were hung at new year's. The images were intended to drive away ghosts and other evil forces. *Cihai*, 1700.

57. In folk customs, peach blossoms were identified with the second lunar month, and more generally with spring. They were also considered to bring good luck in romantic love, and in some contexts, were associated with extramarital attachments. The arrival of swallows heralded the arrival of spring and good news.


61. Ibid., 76.

62. Ibid., 68.

63. Ibid., 76.

64. Ibid., 81.

65. Ibid., *zhenglu* 1 (1925), 11.


68. In the Chinese folk custom referred to in the inscription, peonies symbolize *fugui ronghua* (wealth, power, glory, and brilliance). The inscription describes the *ding* as possessing the permanence of antiquity, and the flowers as having the ability to take root in the durable bronze vessel. Thus, Wu Changshi concludes, this theme bears wishes that wealth, power, glory, and brilliance will take root and last for many generations. Craig Clunas refers to the custom of making flower arrangements in antique bronze vessels, but
notes that among Ming literati, this was considered an inappropriate and implicitly vulgar use of an antique. The painting, of course, is a work of fiction. Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 100.


70. *All Things are Renewed* (wanxiang gengxin). The Chinese word for phenomenon (xiang), here translated as “thing,” is homophonous with the word for elephant (xiang), which gives the artist an excuse to add the exotic creature.


72. The Three Stars (fu, lu, shou) are the gods of fortune, official position, and longevity. Other auspicious symbols in this print include the bat (bianfu) of fortune, the peony (see figure 2.25), the peach of longevity, the ingot of wealth, the gourd for storing immortality pills, and children holding a ruyi, wishes for a perfect future. The Star of Fortune also holds a baby boy, thus equating good fortune with the birth of many sons. This intensely auspicious iconography was widely popular, especially among merchants, and was often displayed in shops.

73. *Fortune, Wealth, Happiness, Longevity, and Eternal Health* (fulu huanxi changshou yongkang). The good wishes expressed in the title are depicted in the forms of the three stars of fortune, official position, and longevity, along with the goddess Magu, the deer of longevity and official position, the gourd and lingzhi fungus of immortality, and two little boys.

74. *All Things Are Returning to Spring* (wanxiang huichun). The elephant in this painting makes clear the uninscribed title, as in figure 2.28.


77. See Zhang Mingke's *Hansongge Tanyi Suolu* and Yang Yi's *Haishang Molin*.

78. It combined the elements of Chinese folk painting and western poster and was popular in Shanghai from the end of the nineteenth century.


82. Ding Xiyuan. Ren Bonian. (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanche, 1989), 141.

83. See Pan Tianshou. “Huiyi Wu Changshi xiansheng” (Memory of Wu Changshi). In Huiyi Wu Changshi (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1986), 209.


89. See Chen Duxiu's letter to Lu Cheng, Xinqingtian 6, 1 (1919): 86. Here the Four Wangs Chen mentioned are the four early Qing orthodox painters, Wang Shimin (1592-1680), Wang Jian (1598-1677), Wang Hui (1632-1717), and Wang Yuanqi (1642-1715). Their works were still emulated by some traditionalists in the early twentieth century China.


91. Ibid.


Figure 2.1: Shen Shichong. *Fengliu tu.*
Figure 2.2: Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation, Shanghai, 1860s
Figure 2.3: The Bund, Shanghai, 1880
Figure 2.4: The locomotive “Pioneer” pulls into Shanghai Station, 1876, on the first Shanghai-Songjiang Railway.
Figure 2.5: St. John's University, Shanghai, 1879
Figure 2.6: The home of Sheng Xuanhuai, one of the most powerful compradores in Shanghai.
Figure 2.7: Zhang Xiong. *Autumn Flowers, Plants, and Insects*. 1877.
Figure 2.8: Ren Xiong. Self-Portrait. Undated.
Figure 2.9: Xugu. *Fish in Spring Water*. Undated.
Figure 2.10: Ren Xun. *Peacock and Magnolia*. Undated.
Figure 2.11: Ren Yi. *Five Successful Sons*. 1877.
Figure 2.12: Qian Huian. Figure 1902.
Figure 2.13: Wang Zhen. *Scholar Amongst Pines and Rocks*, 1925.
Figure 2.14: Hu Yuan letter to Zhang Mingke.
Figure 2.15: Ren Yi and Hu Yuan. *Portrait of Gao Yong.* 1877.
Figure 2.16: Qian Huian. *Portent of Bountiful of Harvest*. 1900.
Figure 2.17: Ren Yi. *The Three Knights Errant*. 1882.
Figure 2.18: Wang Zhen. *The Monk with a Bag (Budai).* 1920.
Figure 2.19: Yu Li. Zhongkui. 1884.
Figure 2.20: Wu Changshi. *Ink Bamboo*. 1923.
Figure 2.21: Zhang Xiong. *Lotus and Dragonfly*. Undated.
Figure 2.22: Zhu Cheng. *Peach Blossoms and Swallows*. Undated.
Figure 2.23: Hu Yuan. *Cloudy Mountains*. 1857.
Figure 2.24: Wu Changshī. *Stone Drum Calligraphy*. 1889.
Figure 2.25: Wu Changshi. *Peony in a Bronze Vessel Rubbing*. 1919.
Figure 2.26: Ren Xun and Zhu Cheng. *Flowers in Rubbings of Bronze Vessels.* 1872.
Figure 2.27: Zhongkui.
Figure 2.28: *All Things are Renewed.*
Figure 2.29: *The Three Stars of Fortune, Wealth, and Longevity.*
Figure 2.30: Qian Huian. *Fortune, Wealth, Happiness, Longevity, and Eternal Health*, 1905
Figure 2.31: Qian Huian. *All Things are Returning to Spring.*
Figure 2.32: Ren Xiong. *Drinking Cards with Illustrations of the Forty-Eight Immortals*. 1854.
Figure 2.33: Ren Xiong. *Yuyue xianxian xiangzhan.*
Figure 2.34: Tushanwan studio, Shanghai.
Figure 2.35: Ren Yi. *Flowers and Plants*. Undated.
Figure 2.36: Wu Changshi. *Peonies*. 1916.
CHAPTER 3

THE PATRONAGE OF ART AND ART GROUPS IN SHANGHAI

Along with rapid development in the economy, particularly in port cities, the patronage of art changed greatly during the Qing dynasty. Especially in Shanghai, as it was transformed into a new modern metropolis and the hub of southern China's cultural and artistic activities, art patronage of a new kind emerged from a new class of art buyers, and was associated with a dramatic increase in the number of painting and fan shops, the emergence of new types of artists’ associations, and the establishment of a thriving art market for contemporary art. These structural features, which appeared in the context of a rapidly commercializing society, directly resulted in changes of subject matter and style in Shanghai painting of the period.

Treaty-port Shanghai was significantly different from other commercial cities in Chinese history, including the cultural centers of Suzhou and Yangzhou in more recent times. In contrast to those of Shanghai, the Yangzhou merchants involved themselves in cultural life in order to be taken seriously by Confucian scholar-gentry-official circles. They often invited poets, calligraphers, and painters to their beautiful gardens in order to establish their own reputations as people of good taste, and to elevate themselves into the
For example, the salt merchant Lu Zhonghui established the "Hanjiang shishe" (Han River Poetry Society) in his Rangpu garden. Many literati, such as the scholars Li E, Quan Zhuwang, Hang Shijun, the painters Gao Xiang and Wang Shisheng, and the calligrapher Ding Jing, often gathered in his garden. The gardens of other salt merchants, including the Ma brother's Xiaolinglongshan Guan (Small and Exquisite Mountain Garden), Wang Tingzhang's Wang Yuan (Wang Garden), Cheng Mengxin's Di Yuan (Di Garden), and Zheng Xiaru's Xiu Yuan (Xiu Garden), were also places the literati often met. In organizing this kind of scholarly-gatherings, the merchants developed relationships with painters and calligraphers.

Art patronage in Shanghai continued the Yangzhou tradition in certain respects, that is, the Shanghai merchants, like their counterparts in the previous century, not only managed the local economy, but also involved themselves deeply in many aspects of cultural life. Shanghai merchants, like those in Yangzhou, were the major patrons of art in the city, but the relationship between merchants and artists in Shanghai did not develop in the same way as in Yangzhou. By the late nineteenth century, the scholar-officials had lost most of their status because wealthy merchants could get high positions by purchase, and without having to pass the imperial examinations. With the arrival of commercialism, many officials themselves engaged in trade, and found that the quickest way of getting rich was in urban business. With the declining importance of the scholars, the boundary between the scholar-official and the merchant almost disappeared. On the other hand, the particular nature of treaty-port industry and commerce, with its foreign companies and banks, further affected the role of Chinese merchants, especially in
Shanghai. Relying on the foreigners' extraterritorial power, Chinese who worked for these companies and banks formed a new, powerful social class, and lived in luxury as if they were nobility. Among the newly prosperous merchants, there were many who were enthusiastic art connoisseurs and collectors, yet “even greater numbers of social climbers who mingled with the men of letters and posed as art lovers, spending huge amounts of money purchasing art without any true knowledge or appreciation of the works.”

As Chu-tsing Li has written, “The new patronage in these port cities was very different from the one before which was mainly made up of high officials and local gentry. They preferred the literati tradition, attempting to follow the taste of the scholar-officials. But in the port cities the new merchants did not have the educational background of the literati, although some of them did aspire to the same taste as the officials. These merchants gradually developed a taste of their own, not so highbrow in standard but more popular in subject matter, drawn directly from real life to from legends and stories from the past, more appealing in style, with exaggerated and showing ostentatious characteristics. Colorful, decorative and dramatic, the style of Shanghai became a new language in its own right.”

**Shanjianzhuang: Art Shops**

There is little evidence that Shanghai merchants, unlike successful merchants in earlier times, needed to seek the kind of psychological compensation to be gained by buying social position. They did not use money to establish direct relationships with literati or artists in order to enter scholar-gentry-official circles, as Yangzhou merchants
had done. As for the patronage of art, they seemed to depend much more on the function of an increasingly anonymous art market.

Their interest in acquiring culture resulted in the opening of many antique and art shops to collect and sell antiques, paintings, and calligraphies. A modern Western-style art gallery system has never taken hold in China, but the development of *shanjian zhuang* (literally, fan and stationery shops) and other Chinese-style art shops in Shanghai seems to have taken place in new and distinctly modern ways. Such shops did not entirely replace the three major traditional modes of acquiring a painting: direct contact between patron and artist; an indirect approach made through a mutual friend or other intermediary; and sponsorship of a live-in painter. Nevertheless, fan shops absorbed many of the functions of the second and third of these modes, serving as both non-exclusive agent and place of lodging for the artist. They offered clients easy places to buy a painting—free of the stresses of personal obligation involved in many pre-modern transactions. At the same time, they helped establish the artist’s fame and price structure and thus contributed to developing a celebrity that might lead to direct business between patrons and artists themselves.

By the first year of the Xuantong reign (1909), there were as many as a hundred and nine art shops registered in the *Shanghai huashanghang minglu* (Record of Shanghai Chinese Companies). The earliest fan shop to be opened in Shanghai may have been the Manyunge (Silken Cloud Pavilion) on Jiujiang Road. A piece of stationary on which Yu Yue (1791-1864) wrote a letter to Pan Zengyn (1808-1878) in 1829 shows a printed mark of Manyunge with a painting of plum blossoms by Zhang Xiong’s wife Zhong
Huizhuh printed as a background decoration [Fig. 3.1]. It means that Manyunge had already existed at the time. According to an advertisement in the newspaper Shenbao of March 25, 1872, Manyunge mainly sold paintings, calligraphy, and painting pigments. The shop had also recently opened a mounting shop on Fuzhou Road which specialized in the mounting and framing of fans, paintings, and calligraphy. But it was not listed in Shanghai zhinan, a guide book published in 1909, so it probably had closed by the time.

During the Tongzhi reign (1862-74), there were more than a dozen fan shops, mounting shops, and antique shops in business. Among them were Guxiangshi (Chamber of Fragrant Antiquity), Qinglianshi (Chamber of Blue Lotus), Jinruntang (Luxuriant Hall), Yilantang (Orchid Hall), Lihuatang (Magnificent Hall), Xihongtang (Hall of Sporting Wild Geese), Feiyunge (Flying Cloud Pavilion), Laotongchun (Evergreen Hall), and Deyuelou (Moon-Possessing Tower). Guxiangshi was opened later than Manyunge, during the Tongzhi reign (1862-1874), and also was located on Jiujiang Road. Its business of selling paintings, calligraphy, and fans ran very well and lasted until the middle of the 1940s.

Qinglianshi, located inside Yu Garden, was famous for its color-printed stationery. It also dealt in paintings, calligraphy, fans, couplets and provided mounting services. Jinruntang, located on Guangdong Road, was another one of the most famous fan shops in Shanghai. It changed its name to Sun jingrun tang in 1925, and was closed in the early 1950s. Deyuelou was also set up inside Yu Garden. According to one of its advertisements in the June 28, 1880, issue of Shenbao, it mainly sold fans but also dealt in paintings and calligraphy. In 1909, Yuyuan Calligraphy and Painting Charitable
Society rented its premises for their activities. Xihongtang was famous for selling beautiful stationary, especially its “Xihong xuetao jian,” but also dealt in fans, screens, painting pigments, account books, and mounting and framing paintings and calligraphy. It was located on Henan Road. According to a guide book written by Ge Yuanxun in 1876, "Guxiangshi, Manyunge, Lihuatang, and Jingrentang were the best in the foreign concessions, and Deyuelou, Feiyunge, and Laotongchun were famous in the old city."

At least twenty-five shops were established in the Guangxu reign (1875-1908), including Jiuhuatang (Hall of Nine Splendors), Liyunge (Pavilion of Glorious Clouds), and Duoyunxuan (Cloud Blossom Studio). Jiuhuatang was originally set up on the main street, Guanqianjie, of Suzhou, and later moved to Shanghai during the Guangxu reign (1875-1908). An advertisement published in Dianshizhai huabao in 1889, announces the opening of their new Shanghai shop, which was located south of the polo fields on Ermalu [Fig. 3.2]. A typical example of Shanghai commercial architecture, similar to that still found today in the old city area, with a wooden railing, square and octagonal lanterns, a banner, and several beautifully inscribed shop signs, is depicted as filled with customers buying folding fans and feather fans. In the back are visible shelves neatly piled with account books, empty albums, and other specialized goods. The advertisement promotes the availability of famous stationary, jiantie (similar to calling cards) and account books from all provinces; famous fans from Suzhou and Hangzhou; palm-leaf fans from Guangdong; feather fans from Manchuria; all types of painting pigment and seal paste; famous artists’ calligraphy and painting; mounting services; specially prepared Dongyang (Japanese) seals and pigments; Huzhou brushes and Huizhou ink cakes; and
birthday banners. The name of the shop, Jiuhua (Nine Splendors), was taken from Cao Cao’s (155-220) preface for his poem, Jiuhuashan fu (Poem on the nine splendors fan).\textsuperscript{18} The owner of Jiuhuatang, Zhu Jintang, was a lover of painting and calligraphy, so the shop mainly dealt with painting and calligraphy. Zhu was also a good friend of the Shanghai painters Ren Yi and Xugu.\textsuperscript{19} Ren Yi painted a group portrait for Zhu Jintang, Zeng Fengji, who was Ren Yi’s friend, and himself in 1884 [Fig. 3.3].\textsuperscript{20} Xugu also painted many paintings for Jiuhuatang.\textsuperscript{21} Although later the shop established several branches and changed its name several times, it kept the longest history among art shops in Shanghai. It was eventually merged into Duoyunxuan in 1956.\textsuperscript{22} Liyunge was opened on Yuyuan Road in the old city in 1888. It mainly dealt in paintings, calligraphy, and fans. Duoyunxuan was established in 1900 on Henan Road. Its name was taken from Xin Tangshu, Wei Zhi zhuan (New Chronicles of Tang, Biography of Wei Zhi). It says: “[Wei Zhi] often used five-color-stationary to write letters to others, and they looked like five clouds (wu duo yun).” Later people used duoyun to indicate letters.\textsuperscript{23} Duoyunxuan, therefore, mainly dealt with stationery and fans at the beginning. Its owner, Sun Jipu, however, became a good friend of many Shanghai painters, such as Wang Zhen, Zhao Qi (1873-1955), and Ni Tian (1855-1919). They often held artistic activities on the second floor of the shop. Zhao Qi also designed stationery for the shop.\textsuperscript{24}

In Shanghai, artists who moved from other places to live in Shanghai outnumbered the natives. Among the more than six hundred artists whose names were recorded in the authoritative Haishang molin by Yang Yi for the late Qing period, at least 338 came from other provinces.\textsuperscript{25} For those newcomers, who depended for their living on
painting, but had yet to make their names, the most urgent thing when they arrived in the new metropolis might be to have their basic needs supplied, especially lodging and food. Such artists were largely unfamiliar with their surroundings and the local populace. The pattern of accepting someone’s hospitality, serving as a private artist-in-residence, was not new for impoverished artists in China’s art history. As James Cahill has described, accounts of painters spending periods in residence with a patron begin as far back as the early Song period, and include many famous names, such as Guo Xi and Yi Yuanji of the Song, Zhou Chen, Qiu Ying, and Tang Yin of the Ming, and Wang Shimin and Wang Hui of the Qing. But in late Qing Shanghai, instead of individual patrons, some newly established art stores and fan shops, presumably the mediator between artists and patrons, served as venues to help these artists make a living and build their reputations. They offered food and lodging to impoverished newcomers, and created steady commissions or consignment opportunities for their work. For example, when Pu Hua (1830-1911) arrived in Shanghai from Jiaxing, he became an artist-in-residence at the fan shop Xihongtang, working during the day and lodging in the upper story of the shop at night. When Ren Yi (1840-1895), one of the most important Shanghai School artists, arrived in Shanghai in 1868, the price of his paintings was quite low. It is said that Ren Yi only earned three jiao for a fan painting [Fig. 3.4], which would have made it impossible for him to support his family. With the aide of Hu Yuan (1823-86), who is held a position of authority in Shanghai painting circles and enjoyed strong support at the time from merchant society, Ren Yi entered the fan shop Guxiangshi as one of its artists-in-residence. The shop provided him painting supplies and steady commissions. Through
the help of the Guxiangshi fan shop, Ren Yi's art began to enjoy the appreciation of many patrons, especially the wealthy Cantonese merchants who comprised the majority of the Bankers' Society membership. These Cantonese patrons later became the most important promoters of Ren's art and spread his name widely. Later Ren Yi himself got to know many famous merchants, such as the owner of the art shop Jiuhuatang, Zhu Jingtang, and the banker Tao Junxuan. Even after he became one of the most famous painters in Shanghai, every year Ren Yi would go back to Guxiangshi to paint several paintings for the owner to repay the hospitality and kindness he received in his early career.

Some of the kinder fan shop owners were even willing to go a step further in helping the artists out of their difficult predicaments. Somewhat later, in 1919, when young Zhang Daqian (1899-1983) went to Shanghai to seek his career, he wanted to learn calligraphy. However, he was unsuccessful at finding a good teacher in this unfamiliar place. It was only through Duoyunxuan's introduction that he came to study under the famous calligrapher and painter Zeng Xi (1861-1931), learning both calligraphy and poetry. In this case, Duoyunxuan played a crucial role in the development of this artist. By doing so, increasingly the practices of art dealers promoted not only individual paintings, but the whole career of the painters.

**Price Lists**

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Shanghai already developed into a booming art market. Most artists who lived in Shanghai were professionals relying
on selling art works for a living or for achieving a reputation. As Ge Yuanxun recorded in 1876:

Shanghai is a place where merchants and the wealthy live. Many celebrities and scholars also gathered here. The thresholds of [famous] painters and calligraphers were all worn to breaking by these people [who tried to get their art works]. Artists, therefore, had to set up price lists. Among these artists, the most famous calligraphers are Wu Jutan (Wu Gan), Tang Yunbo (Tang Jinchang), and the painters are Zhang Zixiang (Zhang Xiong), Hu Gongshou (Hu Yuan), Ren Bonian (Ren Yi), Yang Borun (Yang Peifu), Zhu Menglu (Zhu Cheng). These artists all have price lists and sample charts. This already became a trend, and there is no way to pull it back.31

Art works, as commercial goods, also required a monetary value. Thus, setting the price lists for art works became unavoidable. The relationship between artists and patrons was more than ever of a straightforward commercial nature, as Xugu stated in one of his poems: "In my leisure time [I] write three thousand sheets [of paintings], with which I beg my bread."32 In this sense, both patron and artist became much more independent. It probably should not be denied that the western concept of market value influenced the cultural life of Shanghai and the buying and selling of paintings.

The ways of setting price lists may be divided into four categories:

1. The painters set the price lists themselves. In this case, usually the painter, who had already gained high reputation and became too busy to handle the commissions, as Ge Yuanxun mentioned above, tried to use the price list to reduce the number of commissions. For example, Wu Changshi revised his price lists twice within one year between 1919 and 1920. The price list of 1920 shows:

   Calligraphy
   *Tangbian* (inscribed board for a greeting hall): thirty liang [silver].
   *Zhaibian* (inscribed board for a studio): twenty liang
Yinglian (couplet), three feet long: six liang
  four feet long: eight liang
  five feet long: ten liang
  six feet long: fourteen liang

Flower Painting and Calligraphy
Hengzhi zhengfu (full width paper, vertical or horizontal),
  three feet long: eighteen liang
  four feet long: thirty liang
  five feet long: forty liang

Pingtiao (vertical panel or screen format), three feet long: eight liang
  four feet long: twelve liang
  five feet long: sixteen liang

Landscapes will be three times the price
On gold paper, add an additional half to the price
Seal script and semi-cursive script are counted similarly
Seal carving, four liang per word
Poetic inscription and colophon, thirty liang each
Ink grinding fee, four cents per item.
(Every liang is equal to one silver dollar and forty cents)\textsuperscript{33}

2. Teachers or senior artists set price lists for pupils or young artists. For
example, Xu Muru (1904–), a young calligrapher, was a neighbor of Wu Changshi in the
1920s. He studied stone drum script calligraphy and often went to Wu Changshi’s house
to ask Wu’s advice. Several years later, Wu Changshi saw his calligraphy had gradually
reached maturity, and then decided to set a price list for Xu in order to introduce him to
the public and increase his reputation [Fig. 3.5]. It says:

Mr. Xu Muru is young but likes the classics. He has seriously copied and studied
calligraphy of the Qin, Han, and Six Dynasties periods, and is good at all different
styles of calligraphy. His seal script and clerical script calligraphy, however, are
the best, which are vigorous and forceful. Therefore, I set this price list for him
and hope he will gain further achievements in the future.

Bian e (inscribed board): every foot two yuan
Tangfu (full width scroll), four feet long: six yuan
  five feet long: eight yuan
  six feet long: twelve yuan
  eight feet long: twenty yuan

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Pingtiao and Yinglian (panel or screen format scrolls and couplets), half of the above price.  
Shance (fans and album leaves) two yuan per item  
Semi-cursive and regular scripts: seventy percent of seal script and clerical script  
Seal script Baishoutu (hundred shou scroll), four feet: eighteen yuan  
five feet: twenty-two yuan  
six feet: twenty-eight yuan  
Seal carving: one yuan per word  
Ink grinding fee: ten percent  
Late autumn of the year of Jiazi (1924), Wu Changshi, at the age of eighty-one. 

The woman painter Zhou Lianxia (b.1908) asked her teacher Zheng to place an advertisement in Shanghai huabao (Shanghai Pictorial) (No.166, 1926). It says:  

Ms. Zhou Lianxia, zi Yu, is from an educated family of Luling, Jiangxi. She has studied the six canons [of painting] with Zheng Husou ever since she was young. She is good at all painting genres, flowers, landscapes, figures, and beauties. [Wu] Changshi and Yiting [Wang Zhen] all praised her work, and considered her a promising young artist among women painters. Because there have been more and more people asking for her paintings since this spring, Husou has made a price list for her. In order to make things convenient for the clients, all the fan shops in Shanghai will receive orders for her. Ms. Zhou lives at the first door of Renshouli, Haining Road. If you want a price list, please send a letter with the postage of one cent. 

3. The art shops also assumed the function of setting the prices for art works.  
When those young and unknown artists came to Shanghai, the owner of the art shop would set the price for them. As mentioned above, when young RenYi came to Shanghai and resided in Guxiangshi, the price of his fan painting, three jiao, was set and paid for by the owner of the shop. 

4. Price lists set by the art societies. For example, the Yuyuan Calligraphy and Painting Charitable Society, which was established in 1909, set a price list for all the member's works painted as collaborations in the society. Half the income from sales went
to the society for its charitable activities, and the other half went to artists. The price list is as below:

“Prices for calligraphy:
- full-width (zhengzhang) hanging scroll, less than four chi high, one yang yuan over four chi, every additional chi, add one-half yang yuan over six chi, price will be negotiated
- half-width hanging scroll (tiaofu), priced at 70% of full-width horizontal scrolls (hengfu), priced according to half-width hanging scroll (tiaofu) plus one-half yang yuan
- hand scroll, per chi, and album, per leaf, one-half yang yuan
- round fans and folding fans, as above
- panels for picture frames (jingping), double the above large-character inscriptions for horizontal boards (bian), paired inscriptions (duilian), inscriptions for steles (beiban), and inscriptions for birthday celebrations (shouping), which cannot be collaboratively written, price negotiable

Prices for painting:
- Double the price of calligraphy
- Double [i.e. quadruple the calligraphy] price for commissioned work, extremely detailed work, long inscriptions, or works on gold paper or silk
- Other calligraphy and painting prices will be negotiated.”

The price lists, however, were changeable. The change usually depended on the reputation of the artist and the demands of the art market. According to Hansongge tanyi suolu:

Zhu Menglu (Cheng) . . . made a living in Shanghai by selling his paintings and had very high reputation. In his later years he tired of painting fans and small size works. Although he raised his prices many times, the number of people who wanted his painting was also increasing constantly. Almost every merchant wanted his work, and was proud of holding a [Zhu Cheng] fan in his sleeve when he went out.”
**Other Sales Methods**

Besides selling paintings through fan shops or other commercial enterprises, painting sales were also arranged directly by the artist with either the buyer or with a middleman.³⁹

According to available documents, we can assume that merchants were the major patrons of Shanghai school painters. Most of the people addressed in the dedicatory inscriptions on surviving paintings are unidentifiable, and thus are probably middle class merchants, compradors, or wealthy commoners, who may have been anonymous to the artists, as well. As Wang Tao described in *Yinruan zazhi*: “Most of the rich who lived in Shanghai had no eye for art. They just mingled with men of letters and posed as lovers of culture, so they had no scruples about paying high prices to buy calligraphy and paintings. They, however, did not really know how to appreciate [art works], but only buy famous names.”⁴⁰ Despite the existence of some letters exchanged between artists and these individuals, we still do not have enough evidence to document their social or family backgrounds. Documentation is also insufficient to describe exactly how the artists sold their paintings.

Fragmentary interchanges between artists and buyers are preserved in letters, however, and give us some hints of the types of sales that took place. It seems that commercial exchanges took several different patterns.

First, the payment, in the form of cash (*runbi*), was given directly by the buyer to the artist. The exchange of correspondence between Wu Changshi and the collector Ye Pingshan may be representative [Fig. 3.6].
I was very happy to meet you when I was staying at Xiling in Hangzhou. I returned to Suzhou yesterday, but I was quite sick. I have completed the commissions you made and have sent them to you. Please give me your comments. After I receive the payment (runbi) I will write to you.\footnote{41}

In another letter to Ye, Wu Changshi wrote [Fig. 3.7]:

I’m very happy we met in Shanghai. Because I don’t feel very good, I’ve returned to Suzhou to try to recover. The commissions from you are completed. They’re not worth looking at. Please give me your comments.\footnote{42}

Second, the payment was given to the artist by a middleman. Numerous examples of such exchanges are preserved. For example, Wu Changshi wrote in an undated letter to a certain Renweng [Fig. 3.8]:

As you requested, I carved the seal. Please accept it. Also please write to tell me that you have received it. I have received the price (runbi) of six yuan for your last order... Thank you very much for all the effort you have made for this.\footnote{13}

Ma Gongyu (1890-1969), a calligrapher and painter who was quite active in Shanghai during the 1920s, responded to a request for his price list from the newspaper columnist Zheng Yimei (1895-1992) [Fig. 3.9]:

I have received your letter. The prices of my calligraphy are: large characters, one foot square, forty yuan per word. If written in seal script, the price will be double. Small characters, one inch square, two yuan per word. If this is for yourself, I will reduce the price as a special favor.\footnote{14}

The previous examples involved middlemen presumed to work for the buyers. In a variation of this pattern, the artist dealt directly with a middleman who worked on the artist’s behalf. In many cases the person who arranged the sale was not so much a commercial agent as a helpful friend, although the close social ties between the two does not necessarily preclude material benefits for the go-between.\footnote{45} A letter from Zhou Xian...
to Zhang Mingke (1828-1908) expresses hope that his friend/agent can help increase his sales [Fig. 3.10]:

I have received your note and the fee (runbi). Thank you very much. I enclose here a four panel set, a horizontal work, two round fans, two album leaves, and one folding fan. Now winter has just passed, so it is time to lift my brush. If there is an opportunity for you to praise me extravagantly to others, I hope [the patrons you introduce] will come in a steady stream.46

In a letter to Guo Wanxiang, Pu Hua asked for help in obtaining timely payment:

If you have already delivered the paintings [to the clients], could you please vigorously praise and promote [my work to them], to help me solve my [financial] urgency. I very much hope you can use your talent to help me in this difficult time. I really appreciate your assistance.47

A third pattern involves barter, or exchange of goods instead of cash. Wu wrote to an unidentified middleman named Xibo, acting on behalf of a retired official [Fig. 3.11]:

I have received yesterday’s letter. You said that Zhang Taishi [Jingyun] wants to use his collection as payment (runbi). I think I cannot accept this kind of treasure as runbi. Recently I saw a full-size rubbing of the Zhang Qian Stele, with the inscription of Tan Yun. If it is all right, could you give me this as the runbi? Its price is not so high. Mr. Zhang has collected quite a lot of such antiques, so I think this would not be among his most cherished possessions.48

New Patrons

The patronage of Shanghai painters was not limited to Shanghai patrons. Because Shanghai became the center of international trade, many merchants came from southern China and Japan. These merchants also became important patrons of Shanghai painting. The "big merchants from Min (Fujian) and Yue (Guangdong)"49 clustered in the eastern part of the city's port area. It was said that the Guangdong merchants were great buyers of
the works of Ren Yi, the leading master of the Shanghai school. They spread Ren’s name throughout southern China in their travels.50

A letter written by a Suzhou calligrapher, Li Hongyi (1831-1885) to painter Gu Yun (1835-1896) indicated that French buyers started to collect his paintings in the Shanghai area during the 1880s [Fig. 3.12].51

The Japanese tradesmen, however, might have been the earliest foreign buyers in the art market of Shanghai.52 As early as 1872, many Shanghai artists, such as Zhang Xiong (1803-1886), Zhu Cheng (1826-1900), Hu Yuan, and Ren Yi, became quite famous among Japanese who resided in the city.53 According to a Japanese source, in the fortieth year of the Meiji reign (1907), there were only four Japanese artists and sixty Japanese bookstore and art supply merchants in Shanghai; but by the fourth year of the Taisho reign (1915), the number of Japanese dealing with art in the city rapidly increased to hundreds, including fifty-three artists and two hundred antique shop owners.54 Their involvement in buying art works in Shanghai were also noted by Yang Yi in his *Haishang Molin*:

Xu Fangzeng, *zi* Xiaoyun, a native of Pinghu, lived in Shanghai in the early Tongzhi period (1861-1874). He was good at clerical script calligraphy, and copied Han stele script everyday. The Japanese were wildly enthusiastic about his calligraphy, and bought a great many to take back to Japan.55

The first Japanese to meet Wu Changshi might have been calligrapher Osakabe Narutazu (1838-1922), who was a native of Koshu. In the thirteenth year of the Meiji reign (1880), Chinese scholar of epigraphy, Yang Shoujin, went to Japan as an assistant to the Chinese ambassador Li Suchang, and took more than a hundred thousand stele
rubbings with him to Tokyo. Osakabe, along with other Japanese calligraphers, such as Matsuda Yukika and Iwatani Rokuschi, sought out Yang as a teacher to study the calligraphy of the Six Dynasties’ stele style. Osakabe later became the founder of the stele school of calligraphy (bei\textit{xue}) in Japan. In March of the twenty-fourth year of the Meiji reign (1891), Osakabe went to China and met Wu Dacheng, Yang Xian, and Yu Yue. On this trip Osakabe also got to know Wu Changshi and studied calligraphy with him. He deeply admired Wu’s calligraphy and seal carving. After he went back to Japan, he spread Wu’s name in the art world of Japan and introduced many of his students and friends to Wu. Osakabe kept his friendship with Wu for more than thirty years. When he died in 1922, Wu wrote an inscription in seal script style for his tablet.\footnote{In the twenty-sixth year of the Guangxu reign (1900), the Japanese calligrapher and seal carver Kawai Senrō (1871-1945) traveled to Shanghai to meet Wu Changshi. Kawai Senrō, a native of Kyoto, studied calligraphy with Osakabe Narutazu (1838-1922) and Iwatani Rokuschi. Influenced by his teacher, Kawai also admired Wu Changshi’s art. In the thirtieth year of Meiji reign (1897), Kawai mailed his works to Wu Changshi to ask his advice. Unexpectedly, Wu Changshi responded to him very quickly with appreciation for his work and encouraged him to come to China to meet. Three years later, Kawai, with Tanaka Yasutarō, owner of the art shop Bunkyūdō in Tokyo, came to Shanghai, and were officially introduced by Luo Zhenyu (1866-1940) and Wang Kangnian (1860-1911)\footnote{7} to become Wu Changshi’s students [Fig. 3.13].\footnote{8} The second time Kawai came to China was in December, 1902. This time he stayed in China for two months and spent most of his time in Hangzhou. When \textit{Xiling yinshe} (Xiling Seal Carving Society) was}
established in 1904, Wu Changshì was selected as director. Kawai and another Japanese artist, Nagao Uzan, became the earliest foreign members of the society. From 1904 to 1931, Kawai went to China almost every year. He was also a very important person to promote Wu Changshì's art in Japan.59

In 1903, Nagao Uzan (1864-1942), originally named Kubuto, quit his job at the Tokyo Senior Normal School and Tokyo Imperial University, and moved to Shanghai to work at Shanghai's Commercial Press as editor and translator. He was introduced to Wu Changshì by Matsuzaki Tazuo, a Japanese dealer in Shanghai. Wu Changshì liked his personality and his poetry very much. Nagao lived in China for more than a dozen years. He was neighbor of Wu Changshì for three years, and during the period they often discussed art and composed poems together. Wu Changshì painted many paintings for him, such as *Shuanghetu* (Double cranes) [Fig. 3.14], and *Ink Plum*. The latter one was the present Wu Changshì gave to him when he went back to Japan after the First World War erupted.60

Wang Zhen (1867-1938) also introduced many Japanese patrons to Wu Changshì, including Mizuno Sobai [Fig. 3.15].61 Mizuno Sobai (1864-1921), a native of Fukuoka, went to China for the first time in the forty-third year of the Meiji reign (1910). He met Yang Shoujing and Wang Zhen, and later became Wu Changshì's pupil to study painting.

Moreover, the Japanese restaurant Musaen (Liusanyuan) in Shanghai was the place where Wu Changshì, Wang Zhen, Zhu Zongyuan, and other Shanghai painters often gathered [Fig. 3.16]. Through the owner of the restaurant, Shiroishi Musaro, an admirer of Wu Changshì, many Japanese, among them Tomioka Tessai (1836-1924), Nakamura

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Fuori (1866-1943), Naito Konan, Saionji Kobo, and Tanaka Yasutaro, bought Wu’s painting and calligraphy. They organized several exhibitions for him in Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagasaki, spreading Wu’s name in Japan.62

Because many Japanese patrons liked Wu Changshi’s painting and vied with each other to trying to get his painting, they even doubled the price.63 This dramatically increased the price of Wu Changshi’s painting. Besides Japanese patrons, many Koreans also admired Wu Changshi’s art. It is said that during the early 1910s, Wu Changshi carved more than three hundred seals for a Korean patron.64

Painting Societies

While the gatherings of painters held in 18th century Yangzhou were informal and for the purpose of exchanging painting skills and making friendly contacts, the commercial dynamic in Shanghai gradually transformed painting groups into something like guild organizations. Few characteristics of the scholar-official ideal remained by the end of the Qing dynasty, as the artists coordinated their sales and commercial activities for mutual benefit. From 1839 to 1911, at least eleven formally organized painting societies were established in Shanghai.65

In the early and mid-nineteenth century there were several active painting clubs in Shanghai to which professional painters belonged, but documentation for any commercial activity has not yet been found. Xiaopenglai shuhuahui was established by Jiang Baoling (1781-1841) in the old town of Shanghai in 1839 and attracted many artists who were active in the city, including Li Yunjia, Fei Danxu (1801-50), and Yao Xie (1805-64).66
In 1851, the Pinghuashe (Duckweed Flower Club), was established in the Guanwangmiao (Temple of the Lord Guan) in the western part of the city by Wu Zonglin. The activities of the society were documented in a colophon written by Wu Zonglin in 1864 on a now lost painting *The Elegant Gathering of the Pinghuashe*, which was painted by members Qian Huian (1833-1911), Wang Li (1813-1879), and Bao Dong (active 1849-1866).  

By the second half of the century, the commercial function of the societies became more evident. Unlike the scholarly gatherings of the past, the new societies broadened their membership to all artists, without earlier concerns for social status and learning. Feidange shuhuahui (Feidan Pavilion Painting and Calligraphy Society) was active in the old town of Shanghai during the Tongzhi and Guangxu reigns (1862-1908). It was located at the original site of the Deyuelou fan shop in the Yu Garden [Fig. 3.17]. The owner of the Deyuelou was also one of the founders of the society. The members of the society included almost all famous Shanghai painters of the time, such as Gai Qi, Hu Yuan, Yang Borun, Ren Xiong, Ren Xun, Ren Yi, Zhang Xiong, Pu Hua, Wu Changshi, and Wu Jiayou. Yin Baohe, the son of the fan shop owner, who was also a member of the group, turned over the Deyuelou building to the club, which used it as a place to meet and to sell their paintings. It also provided lodgings to painters from other places who wished to temporarily stay in Shanghai. Ren Yi is believed to have stayed there frequently even before he permanently settled in Shanghai in 1868. The inscriptions on many of Ren Yi’s paintings indicated that Ren Yi painted at Feidange.
The first organized calligraphy and painting society may have been The Seal-carving, Calligraphy, and Painting Institute of Haishang Tijin Guan (The Tijin Hall of Shanghai). It is not clear which year the group began, but it ceased functioning in the autumn of 1926 after about thirty or forty years of operation. Based on the activities of its first director, Wang Xun, it is estimated that the group was founded in the mid-Guangxu era, the 1890s. After 1911, many retired Qing officials moved to Shanghai; most liked calligraphy and painting. The Haishang Tijinguan became like a club for them, especially in the evenings. The old gentlemen would talk not only of painting and calligraphy, but also about politics of the by-gone era. The group also established an important economic function by maintaining a price list for each member and serving as an agent for painting and calligraphy sales. This phenomenon reflected a self-coordination of the prices of Shanghai school painters' work, and demonstrated the power of painters' self-help. These professional painters not only realized their value as individuals, but established their value as a group. Most painters newly arrived in Shanghai would present themselves to these gentlemen in order to establish a price list and to obtain their backing. The society also provided a place where members might study and trade old paintings and antiques. It is said that more than one hundred painters, calligraphers, and seal carvers joined the group. The first director of the Haishang Tijinguan was Wang Xun (?- 1915), with Wu Changshi as his vice-director. Wang Xun, zì Ziyuan, hào Yuanrou, was a native of Changzhou, Jiangsu. He received the jinshi degree by passing the national level of the civil service examination in 1892 and was appointed as bianxu (senior editor at the Hanlin yuan). He excelled at calligraphy and seal carving. Later he moved to Shanghai as
a professional artist and stayed there for twenty years.\textsuperscript{69} Funding of the society was said to have come from the wealthy official and comprador Sheng Xuanhuai. After Wang Xun died, Wu Changshi succeeded him as director, and Ha Shaofu and Wang Zhen became vice-directors of the group. Notable members of that organization who were later important in art circles included Wang Zhen, Huang Binhong, He Tianjian, and Qian Shoutie.\textsuperscript{70}

A decade later, in 1908, the Yuyuan Shuhua Shanhui (The Yu Garden Calligraphy and Painting Charitable Society) was founded. It was headquartered at the Deyuelou of the Yu Garden in Shanghai. This artistic and literary group soon became a quasi-commercial cooperative organization, with a formal written charter which stipulated that all work, except calligraphy, be collaborative. It accepted public commissions and orders for art by the members, and the members shared the profits. The name of the group, Calligraphy and Painting Charitable Society, was selected because half the price of work sold would be returned to the artists; the other half would be invested in a Chinese-style bank (qianzhuang), with the interest used for charitable purposes. The cause to which the money would be contributed was decided by a meeting of the group. In winter they usually bought rice and in summer purchased medicine. They donated to areas of Gansu, Zhejiang, Shandong, and Henan that suffered from floods or droughts.\textsuperscript{71} Its directors included Qian Huian, Gao Yong, Yang Baoguang, Ma Ruixi, Shen Xinhai, Wang Zhen, and Wang Xun. Many important Shanghai school painters participated throughout their lives in the activities of these art societies which came, in the twentieth century, to include group exhibitions. One letter written by Wang
Zhen to Ha Shaofu, an active member of the society, showed that Wu Changshi also participated these activities:

Thank you very much for displaying the painting and calligraphy in recent days. I still have more than twenty pieces at my place, which include Fouweng [Wu Changshi]'s painting. I will ask people to send them to you.  

Shanghai Shuhua Yanjiuhui (Shanghai Research Society of Painting and Calligraphy) was established in 1910. It chose the Xiaohuayuan Yaji Chalou (Little Garden Gathering Tea House) as its headquarters. It is said that more than a hundred artists and art collectors joined the society when it was founded. The goal of the society was to study and preserve the national essence. It had a very detailed charter which listed the rules of the society and the responsibilities of the members. This document indicated that the society would accept commissions for the members, and members also could leave their art works or collections there for sale. In order to encourage the young artists to join the society, it would waive or reduce the membership fee for them. Its first director was Li Pingshu (1854-1927). Li was a native of Shanghai and good at calligraphy. He was also a famous collector of Song and Yuan paintings and calligraphy. He, with Ha Shaofu, organized an exhibition of ancient Chinese painting and calligraphy in Japan. He also joined activities of many art societies, such as Haishang Tijinguan. Many important Shanghai painters joined the group, including Wu Changshi, Pu Hua, Wang Zhen, Lu Hui, Ha Shaofu, Shen Xinhai, Yang Xian, Wang Kun, Ni Tian, Pang Yuanji, and Huang Binhong.  

A spin-off from the Haishang Tijinguan, the Guhuan Jinyushe, was founded in 1926, after the Tijinguan collapsed due to internal conflicts. It welcomed new members.
to the old Tijinguan group, and like the Tijinguan all expenses were paid by a private individual, Wu Youqian of the Xiling Seal Society, and membership dues were not required. The group met nightly from six to ten, and held additional dinners, usually monthly, which were hosted in rotation by its members. Some members, including Qian Shoutie, Ding Nianxian, Wang Zhen, Ma Qizhou, Shang Shengbo, Zheng Yue, Wang Geyi, Ma Mengrong, and Fang Jiekan, went on to form the Chinese Painting Society in 1931. The group disbanded in 1930.

These groups, which flourished in the 1910s and 1920s, had particular importance not only socially but also from an economic point of view. That is to say, they placed a great deal of emphasis on promoting traditional painting by controlling the prices and ways of marketing art. A slightly differently oriented group was the Zhongguo Jinshi Shuhua Yiguan Xuehui (Chinese Epigraphy, Calligraphy, and Painting Study Society), founded in late 1925 by Huang Binhong and others and based at Youzheng Book Company on Weihaiwei Road. This group met once every season, and one of its primary purposes seems to have been publication of its scholarly journal. The manifesto for the group, possibly composed by Huang Binhong, makes clear the culturally nationalistic goals of the society:

With the communication of all nations in recent times, all civilized countries wish to actively cherish their nation’s native products, and thus those scholars who investigate the past are increasingly numerous. The powerful countries of Europe and America have museums and exhibitions everywhere, and thus can further expand their [people’s] learning, create elegant arts and crafts, firmly maintain their ambition and moral fortitude, and cultivate lofty dispositions. Now, any gentlemen or ladies of our nationality may be members of our society. The goal of the society is to collect epigraphy, calligraphy, or painting; research the arts of calligraphy, painting, and seal carving; create opportunities for people to meet to
pool their collective wisdom and absorb useful ideas; promote Chinese art to a perfect realm; and attract more artists with the same ideas.  

The mission statement of the society further states that it will “preserve the national essence and develop national glory; research art to inspire in people loftiness of mind.”

The new types of painting societies that emerged during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with their charters, price lists, and sales to the new merchant elite, was an organized response to the needs of professionalized painters living in this new modern metropolis, and reflect the strong influence of a Western oriented modernization in both their organizational and economic structures.

Similarly, the art shops of late nineteenth century Shanghai transformed earlier kinds of trade in art into commercial structures that rival modern Western galleries. They set the prices for artists’ work, took commissions and received orders from buyers, and sold art by displaying it in their shops. They provided easy access to the market in contemporary painting to anonymous buyers, including foreigners who existed outside any previously known Chinese social structure.

Although we are arguing for the modernity of these innovations, it is important to recognize that they nevertheless developed within a cultural continuum, and that these shops retained many aspects that we must label local or traditional. The social pattern of the artist living in residence at the art shop, for example, is a unique combination of pre-modern conventions of private patronage and the new commercial structure. Similarly, at the same time that the art shops offered a public space for an anonymous, and even foreign, public, they continued to provide necessary goods and services to a Chinese
The art shops mounted paintings and calligraphy, decorated fans, and printed elaborately decorated stationary, sometimes to special order. They did a thriving business in writing brushes, ink cakes, and ink stones, as well as a variety of other supplies for painting and calligraphy. We thus find that while the old elites were greatly transformed by the new situations; the new elites were more influenced by existing traditions than might at first be assumed.

The proliferation of art periodicals and painting clubs devoted to traditional Chinese art in 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s in Shanghai suggests that the continued practice of Chinese painting was envisioned as possessing a larger communal or even national significance. Through study of dominant individual artists in Shanghai, most notably Wu Changshi, we will be able to understand some of the ways in which artists in that city might be linked to such larger cultural and political issues in modern Chinese history as ethnic nationalism, anti-imperialism, or patriotism.

The modernity reflected in late Qing Shanghai may be summed up in theoretical terms by Shumuel N. Eisenstadt and Wolfgang Schluchter: “The cultural codes of modernity have not been shaped by the evolutionary potentialities of societies, nor by the natural unfolding of their traditions, nor even by their placement in a new international setting. Rather, they have been shaped by the continuous interaction between the cultural codes of these societies and their exposure to new internal and external challenges.”76

As we will examine in the next chapter, the changes in patronage and in the socio-economic situations of artists themselves were often reflected in their artistic productions. First, their subject matter increasingly included themes from popular culture. Along with
the declining power of the scholar-official class, landscape painting, which was regarded as the highest category of Chinese painting by most literati, also lost its attraction, thus consolidating a shift in taste that emerged first in Yangzhou school painting. As we shall see, Wu Changshi, like most Shanghai painters, primarily concentrated on figures and birds-and-flowers, and only occasionally painted landscapes.
Notes


2. Wang Shisheng, Caolin ji (Collections from the grove), n.d.

3. An Qi, Mayuan huiguan, Duanfang xu (Survey of calligraphy and painting, with preface by Duanfang); Yangzhou huafang lu (Records of Yangzhou painters), reprint (Taipei: Xuehai Publishers, 1969), 406. Among the gardens, the Xiaolinglongshan Guan of the Ma Brothers, Ma Yueguan and Ma Yuelu, was most popular.

4. According to Man Han wenwu guansheng mingcilu (Index of Manchurian and Han civil and military officials), in the third year of the Jiaqing reign (1798), there were more than one thousand four hundred lower rank official positions in the capital and three thousand positions at local levels purchased by the wealthy. See Liu Guangjing, Jingshi sixiang yu xinxing hangye (New ideas of business and new professions) (Taipei: Lianjing chubanshe, 1990), 302-3.

5. Xiao Yisan, Qingdai tongshi (The general history of the Qing dynasty), xia (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1963), 1607.


7. Xiao Yisan, xia, 1607.

8. Wang Tao, Yingruan zazhi (A collection of jottings on miscellaneous subjects relating to Shanghai), with preface of 1876, juan 4; reprint (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), 73.


13. It was listed in *Shanghai zhinan* (Shanghai guidebook), 1925 and 1944.


16. An advertisement in *Shenbao*, the ninth day of the second month of 1877.


19. It was listed as one of the best art shops in Shanghai in *Shanghai zhinan* (Shanghai guidebook), vol.6, 1910.


21. See *Xugu huace* (Painting album of Xugu), eds. Fu Hua and Cai Geng (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1990), 151.


23. Ibid., 2.

24. Ibid., 2-3.


27. According to Peng Renpu, who worked for Jiuhuatang, Duoyunxuan, and other fan shops during the first half of the century, interview conducted by Zheng Wei. Here I quote from Zheng Wei’s unpublished article, “A Record of Old Shanghai Fan Shops from 1821-1960.”

29. The source is based on the inscription written by Ren Yi on his painting of 1885, which is collected in Chicago Institute of Art. Shanghai collector Qian Jingtang also heard same story from Ren Jin (1881-1930), Ren Bonian’s son, according to Ding Xiyuan, *Ren Bonian*, Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1989, p.65.


33. This price list is in the collection of the Wu Changshi Memorial in Xiling Yinshe, Hangzhou.

34. Wu Minxian, “Foulu shiyi” (Stories of Foulu), in *Huiyi Wu Changshi* (Memories of Wu Changshi) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1986), 42-44.


39. Important generalizations about patterns of Ming and Qing art exchange have been formulated by James Cahill, *The Painter’s Practice*, especially ch. 4:32-70. My research largely confirms an argument Cahill credits to Shan Guolin (p. 41), that the relationship between artists and go-betweens became more commercial in the late Qing period.

40. Wang Tao, *Yingruan zazhi*, vol.4, preface of 1853, reprint (Shanghai, 1989), 73.

41. An undated letter from Wu Changshi to Ye Weiming. Collection of Shanghai Library. Ye Weiming (1876-1948), *zi* Pingshan, was a native of Hangzhou. He was a well known seal carver, and one of the founders of Xiling Yinshe.

42. Ibid.
43. An undated letter from Wu Changshi to Renweng. Collection of Shanghai Library.


45. No documentary evidence for commissions or gifts from the artist to his friend has yet been found, but contemporary practice leads one to suspect that some material token of gratitude may have been given by the artist to the middleman.

46. An undated note from Zhou Xian to Zhang Mingke (Gongshu), the author of Hansongge tanyi suolu. Collection of Shanghai Library.

47. Qian Zhuren, "Pu Hua nianpu" (The chronicle of Pu Hua’s life), Duoyun no.34 (August 1992): 75.


50. Chen Banding’s oral memoir as recorded by Ning Ren. In "Ren Bonian he ta de hua (Ren Bonian and his painting),” Meishu (May 1957): 42-44.

51. Unpublished correspondence between Li Hongyi and Gu Yun, collection of Shanghai Library.


56. Zhu Guantian, “Junzhiwu ru wuzhijun (You knew me just as I knew you),” in Huiyi Wu Changshi (Memories of Wu Changshi) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1986), 67-68.

57. Luo Zhenyu was a calligrapher and seal carver. Wang Kangnian was a famous newspaper publisher in the late Qing period who published Shiwu bao in Shanghai and Chuyan bao in Beijing.
58. Interview with Wu Changye, grandson of Wu Changshi, by the author in August 1994, and October 1995 in Shanghai; also see Zhang Zhengwei, “Wu Changshi de huaping yu renping” (The characteristics of Wu Changshi’s painting and personality), in *Wu Changshi zuoping ji, huihua* (Works of Wu Changshi, painting) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1984), n.p.; Zhu Guantian, “Wu Changshi yu riben youren zhi jiaoyou” (The friendship between Wu Changshi and his Japanese friends), in *Huiyi Wu Changshi*, 69-71; and Ding Xiyuan, “Wu Changshi nianbiao” (Chronicle of Wu Changshi), in *Mingjia hanmo* 38: 70.


60. Ibid., 70-71.


62. Interview with Wu Changye, grandson of Wu Changshi, by the author in August 1994, and October 1995 in Shanghai; also see Zhu Guantian, “Wu Changshi yu riben youren zhi jiaoyou,” 73-75.


64. Ibid., 102.


72. Unpublished correspondence between Wang Yiting and Ha Shaofu, collection of Shanghai Library.

73. Xu Zhihao, Zhongguo meishu shetuan manlu, 18-20.

74. Zhongguo meishu nianjian, shi: 5, transcribes the group’s charter and records that the group was founded in the spring of the fifteenth year of the republic (1926) by Huang Binhong. According to Xu Zhihao, the group was established at the end of 1925, reached a high of two hundred members, and met at Shenzhou guoguangshe at the same address, 309 Weihaiwei Road. According to Xu, the journal Yiguan was published between February, 1926, and 1929. See Zhongguo meishu shetuan manlu: 76.

75. Zhongguo meishu nianjian, shi: 5.


Figure 3.1: Yu Yue’s letter to Pan Zeyin.
Figure 3.2: Jin Gui, *Dianshizhai Huabao* advertisement for the Jiuhuatang fan shop. 1889
Figure 3.3: Ren Yi. *Three Friends*. 1884.
Figure 3.4: Ren Yi. *Morning Glory and Sweet Sedge*. 1873.
Figure 3.5: Price list made by Wu Changshi for Xu Muru in 1924.
Figure 3.6: Wu Changshi’s letter to Ye Pingshan.
Figure 3.7: Wu Changshi’s letter to Ye Pingshan.
Figure 3.8: Wu Changshi’s letter to Renweng.
Figure 3.9: Ma Gongyu's letter to Zheng Yimei.
图 3.10：周玄的信给张明克。
Figure 3.11: Wu Changshi’s letter to Xibo.
Figure 3.12: Li Hongyi’s letter to Gu Yun.
Figure 3.13: Kawai Senro with Wu Changshi and Wu Cankan
Figure 3.14: Wu Changshi. *Double Cranes*. 1913.
Figure 3.15: Mizuno Sobai (second from right) meeting Wu Changshi (third from right), Wu Cangkan (left), and Wang Zhen (right).
Figure 3.16: Liu's Yuan (Musaen) Japanese restaurant, Shanghai.
Figure 3.17: Deyuelou teahouse, in the Yu Garden, Shanghai.
WU CHANGSHI: THE LAST SCHOLAR-OFFICIAL PAINTER

Wu Changshi was born in the twenty-fourth year of the Daoguang reign (1844) in Guirenli, Zhangwu Village, Xiaofeng County (now Anji), Zhejiang. His ancestors, from Huai’an, Jiangsu, moved to Anji, Zhejiang, during the Song dynasty. Wu Changshi was the youngest son of the family. His oldest brother was named Youbin, and second older brother named Xiangqing. His father, Wu Xinjia (1821-1868), zi Zhoushi, hao Ruchuan, attained his juren degree in 1851, during the Xianfeng reign period. Although he was qualified to be a county magistrate, he was never appointed, so he just stayed in his hometown. Wu Xinjia was good at seal carving, and wrote Banricun shigao (Poems of Banricun).

Zhangwu Village, where Wu Changshi grew up, was located in the northwest corner of what was then Xiaofeng County. Before the Qing dynasty, the region in which Anji is located was called many different names. From the thirty-ninth year of Qianlong (1774), Anji County and Xiaofeng County were part of Huzhou Prefecture, so people from both Anji and Xiaofeng were called either Guzhang or Taozhou natives. Guzhang refers to a place in the northwestern part of Anji, while Taozhou indicates the Taohua
Mountain, located in the southwestern part of Xiaofeng. Xiaofeng people were accustomed to calling themselves Anji natives. Therefore, Wu Changshi often inscribed his paintings, "Wu Changshi of Anji," "Wujun of Anji," or "Wu Junqing of Gutao." On his seals one can often find "Gutaozhou," which he indicates was the name of the old town of Guzhang. He also had a seal reading "Huzhou Anjixian."

Wu Changshi began to learn the classics and poetry from his father when he was six. When he was ten, he was sent to a traditional village academy (sishu), located ten miles away from his home. Wu Changshi began his artistic career by carving seals, an enthusiasm for which he may have been influenced by his father. He liked carving on stone when he was young. According to one story, when he was thirteen years old, he was locked by his parents in their storage room because he was naughty. He was furiously angry at the punishment, so he used a nail to completely cover the brick wall with incised characters. When he was fourteen he started to learn seal carving from his father, an art he practiced for the remainder of his life. As he mentioned in the preface he wrote on the establishment of the Xiling Seal Society. "I loved seal carving when I was young. Since then, until today, I have never left it for even a single day. So I know something about its origins and evolution."

Wu Changshi's life was constantly upset by warfare and flight. When he was seventeen, the Taiping rebel troops occupied Anji and Xiaofeng. After that, he personally experienced almost all the historical catastrophes of modern China. In 1881, his hometown was looted and burned by rioters. In 1884, the Sino-French War occurred. In 1894-1895 there was the Sino-Japanese War, and in 1900 the Boxer Rebellion.
Following the 1911 Republican revolution, battles between competing warlords erupted. His entire life was passed during a period of political and social chaos.

In the tenth year of the Xianfeng period (1860), when Wu Changshi was 17 sui, the Taiping Rebellion spread from Anhui to Anji and Xiaofeng, Zhejiang. The Qing army followed the Taipings to Anji. At the same time, the western part of Zhejiang suffered a terrible famine. Wu Changshi, his father, and family members sought refuge from the disorders, as described in a later poem published in Foulu shi (Foulu’s Poetry):

On new year’s eve in xinyou year [1861], I was with my family at Banshan [a mountain east of Xiaofeng]. We had no food and were starving, so we ate wild berries from the trees, and we dwelt with ghosts as our neighbors.

They continued their flight, but were soon separated and family members lost contact with one another. Wu Changshi himself went to Anhui and Hubei. By the end of the year, many family members, including his grandmother, second older brother, and his younger sister, had died of either starvation or disease. In 1862, Anji had returned to a relatively peaceful state, so Wu Changshi went home to try to find his family. His first wife died several days before he arrived, and his mother died later in the same year, at the Mid-Autumn Festival. The following year, the Qing army came again, so Wu Changshi fled once more, finally returning home in the fall of 1864. By that time, only he and his father, of the nine original family members, survived.

From that point, he and his father relied on agriculture to eke out their existence. For the next few years, they led a relatively settled life in their new home, and Wu
Changshi renewed his studies. This peaceful period ended when Wu’s father fell ill and died in 1868 at the age of 48.

Wu Changshi continued his study of the classics during this period. In the fourth year of Tongzhi (1865), he passed the *xiucai* examination, the lowest rank of the civil service examination. The examination system had been interrupted by the Taiping Rebellion, so at its 1865 renewal he was considered an examinee of the canceled *gengshen* examination, and thus listed as a graduate of 1860. He decided at that point to discontinue his efforts at further progress on the examinations, and began intensively studying seal carving and epigraphy. He remarried a Miss Yang in that year and moved from his home village to the town of Anji, where he rented a house he called the Zhuanyun lou (Seal Script Cloud Pavilion). He had a small garden, in which he planted bamboo and turnips, and which he called Wu Yuan (Turnip Garden). That year, he began to teach at a traditional private school (*sishu*) and also came to know many local scholars, including Shi Xucheng and Zhu Zhenchu.

With fellow townsman Shi Xuchen, Wu Changshi studied poetry, seal carving, calligraphy, and epigraphy. Shi introduced him to many scholarly friends, such as the poet Jin Shuben (Tielao). Much later, Shi Xuchen composed the preface for Wu Changshi’s first album of seal carvings, which was called *Pucao yincun*. In the spring of 1889, he also wrote the preface for Wu Changshi’s poetry collection, *Foulu ji*, in which he said:

My friend Wu Changshi is of an eccentric disposition. He is extremely talented but not yet recognized. He now works as a low-ranking functionary in Wuxia. His frustration and loneliness are all reflected in his poems.
Shi Xuchen originally taught at Qingshan shuyuan in Anji, so Wu Changshi always referred to him as “teacher.”

In his early twenties, Wu Changshi started to study the painting of plum blossoms with Pan Zhixi in his home town. This early period of study influenced his entire career, as the plum blossom remained his favorite theme for the rest of his life. Furthermore, Pan insisted that Wu Changshi take the *xiucai* examination, which he passed, and which was the only civil service rank he ever attempted. Attaining this degree, however, qualified him as a literatus, the only artist of the later Shanghai school to have achieved this formal distinction.

During the latter half of the 1860s, Wu travelled frequently throughout Zhejiang and Jiangsu, visiting friends particularly in Hangzhou, Shanghai, and Suzhou in an effort to find a teacher. In 1872, the eleventh year of the Tongzhi reign, he traveled to Shanghai and Suzhou with his friend Jin Jie (Fujiang). On this trip, Wu Changshi got to know a very important person in his life, Gao Yong (1850-1921). They first met in 1872 (the eleventh year of Tongzhi). The next time they saw each other was not until 1884, twelve years later, but from their first meeting they frequently exchanged poems. Gao Yong introduced Wu Changshi to the art of the Hangzhou seal carver Qian Song, whose seal carving album Gao Yong had compiled and published.

In the fall of 1872, Wu Changshi went to Hangzhou and studied the classics and epigraphy with Yu Yue (1821-1906) at his studio, Gujin jingshe. In 1879, when Wu was
36, he took his new seal-carving album, *Zhuanyunxuan yincun*, to Yu Yue for advice.  

Yu wrote a colophon:

> In ancient times, Li Yangbing claimed the method of seal carving has four skills. “Inspiration that comes from the spirits is called divine (*shen*). Subtlety beyond brushwork (*bimo*) is called marvelous (*qi*). Art that excels because of well-composed structure is called neat (*gong*). Compositions with good balance between simplicity and complexity are called skillful (*qiao*).” For your work, I cannot say it can yet be called divine, but you have achieved the other three: *qi*, *gong*, and *qiao*.

Wu Changshi later carved many seals for Yu Yue.

In 1874, Wu was introduced to the poet and calligrapher Jin Shuben (Tielao, ?-1885) by Shi Xuchen. From 1874 to 1878 he and Jin Shuben worked as assistants to the Du Wenlan (1815-1881) family in their home, the Mantuoluo guan (Mandala Hall) in Suzhou. Du was a native of Jiaxing, Zhejiang, who was a high-ranking official in charge of salt production for the entire Lianghuai area.

He also studied the works of the late seal carver Wu Rangzhi. In 1879, he moved to Wuxing to stay with Jin Jie (zi Fujiang). The next year, he moved to Suzhou to assist in Wu Yun’s house, but he traveled quite often to Zhenjiang and Danyang.

In 1880 when he went to Suzhou, he got to know Yang Xian, a famous calligrapher. Yang Xian (1819-1896), zi Jiashan, hao Miaoweng, was a native of Wuxing, Zhejiang. He received his *juren* degree in 1855 and became mayor (*zhifu*) of Changzhou. Because he was very upright and did not like to flatter his boss, he was eventually dismissed and went back to his hometown. Some people said that he should not despise (*miaoshi*, in Chinese) his boss, but he took exception to these words, and instead took a hao Miaoweng (despising man). He excelled at the classics and poetry,
and was also good at calligraphy, especially clerical script (lishu). Wu Changshi met him in Suzhou and the two men became very good friends, often discussing the classics and poetry [Fig. 4.1]. Because Yang Xian’s knowledge of literature was superior, he often corrected Wu Changshi’s poetry.

Wu Changshi admired Yang Xian very much, and in a letter signed himself “your pupil.” Yang Xian immediately responded with affection:

Using this appellation is too modest— I would like to consider myself your older brother and you as my younger brother. The teacher-student relationship is one of respect, but not friendship. The relationship between older and younger brother is one of fraternal love. Henceforth, we will be friends until old age.9

Yang Xian remained Wu’s close friend until his death, inscribing many paintings.

In about 1882, with help from his friends, Wu Changshi purchased a low-ranking official position called zuoer, and was based in Suzhou, so he moved his wife, son, and mother-in-law to the city. This was a temporary job, without a regular salary, his pay issued on a project by project basis. However, the job gave him a chance to visit many places, and to meet many painters and collectors in many places. In 1882, Wu Changshi met a young friend, Shen Rujin (1858-1917) in Changshu, who played a very important role in Wu Changshi’s subsequent artistic and personal life. Shen Rujin, zi Gongzhou, went by the name Shen Shiyou (Friend of Stones) because he liked inkstones, .

According to Yang Yi in Haishang molin, he was a native of Changshu, good at calligraphy in the Wang Xizhi style, and also excelled at painting. He had solid training in the classics and poetry, writing poetry in the Han-Wei style. He published several volumes entitled Shiyou shiji (Shiyou’s Collected Poems). He was addicted to inkstones,
collecting more than a hundred high quality examples. Wu Changshi went to his studio quite often to enjoy the stones and, at Shen's invitation, to carve inscriptions on them. Shen also published a two-volume *Shiyou yanpu* (Shiyou’s Inkstones). Shen Rujin lived in Changshu and never left the Jiangnan area in his entire life. Wu Changshi was fourteen years his elder, and the first time they met, in 1882, Wu Changshi was already thirty-nine *sui*. Wu Changshi nevertheless appreciated the younger man’s learning. They remained close friends for more than thirty years, often exchanging letters several times a week, along with poems, paintings, seals, and rubbings. After Wu Changshi moved to Shanghai, Shen Rujin sent him local delicacies, such as mushrooms, bamboo shoots, and high quality rice. Wu Changshi would often respond with a poem, a painting, wine, or black sesame candy. Because Shen Shiyou was extremely good at composing poems, Wu Changshi often asked him to correct his own poetry, and even to substitute for Wu in composing the poems he needed as painting inscriptions. When Wu Changshi published his *Foulu shi*, he asked Shen to edit and proofread. In one letter, Wu asked him to write a few sentences and poems to inscribe on paintings of Bodhidharma, Guanyin, and Budai. In 1915, Wu Changshi wrote a letter to Shen Shiyou: I don’t have talent in poetry, but I always write anyway. And every time I have to bother you. Now I enclose another poem; please correct it for me.

Shen Rujin also accompanied Wu Changshi on excursions to many places, such as Jianmen at Yu Shan (near Changshu); and Tiger Hill, Hanshansi, Zhuozheng Yuan, and Canglang Ting in Suzhou. He wrote inscriptions on several portraits of Wu Changshi. One early example, *Hunggrily Looking at the Sky*, survives only in the form of a rubbing.
Shea Rujin wrote many poems, most of which are included in his poetry collection, *Mingfianbaizhai shiji*, which Wu Changshi helped him publish and for which Wu wrote a preface. Wu Changshi carved seals for him and painted many paintings dedicated to Shen Shiyou, as he was commonly known. According to Shen's *Pinyantu*, among the 158 famous inkstones in his collection, more than 120 bore Wu Changshi's carved inscription. Because the two men frequently exchanged poems, more than 20 poems written by Wu to Shen were included in *Foulu shi*, *Foulu ji*, and *Foulu biecun*.

One very important role played by Shen Rujin in Wu Changshi's professional life was as a middleman for Wu Changshi's buying and selling [Fig. 4.2]. Wu collected rubbings of stone steles and ancient bronzes, as well as antiques. Although he occasionally painted on a rubbing, and enjoyed trading rubbings with other collectors, he left more than 2000 in his collection when he died in 1927. Perhaps more important for our purposes, Shen Rujin arranged purchases of Wu Changshi's paintings on behalf of potential buyers.

In the same year, 1882, Wu Changshi received a *fou*, an ancient pottery bowl, as a present from his long time friend Jin Jie. Wu Changshi liked it so much that he took the hao Fouweng and later named his studio Foulu (Fou Cottage) [Fig. 4.3].

Wu Changshi seems to have been particularly busy in the early 1880s. According to surviving inscriptions and poetry, he travelled constantly in this period. He visited Shanghai, Hangzhou, Tianjin, Suzhou, and other places. In Suzhou, Wu Changshi saw many bronzes, antiques, and important early paintings in the homes of Pan Zuyin, Wu Yun, and Wu Dacheng. Pan Zuyin, *zi* Boyin, hao Zheng'an, was famous as a collector,
especially of seals and bronzes. He was a jinshi of the Xianfeng reign who had risen to the high position of Minister of Works (Gongbu shangshu). Wu Yun (1811-1883), zi Shaopu, hao Pingzhai and Tuilong, was a native of Shexian, Anhui, who held the juren degree and was mayor (shifu) of Suzhou. He liked to collect seals, bronzes, Han roof tiles (wadang), Song and Yuan books, paintings, calligraphy, and stele rubbings. The most famous works in his collection were Wang Xizhi’s Lanting xu and two bronzes of the Northern Qi period. He himself was good at calligraphy in the Yan Zhenqing style and also painted landscapes and bird-and-flower paintings. Wu Dacheng (1835-1902), zi Qingqing, hao Hengxuan and Kezhai was a native of Wuxian in Jiangsu. He moved to Shanghai in his later years and was a member of the Pinghuashe Shuhuahui. He received his jinshi degree in 1868 and became a high official in Guangdong and Hunan. When the Sino-Japanese War erupted in 1894, Wu Dacheng was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Qing defense forces. Wu Changshi and Lu Hui both served under him in the armed forces. Wu Dacheng was dismissed from his military command within a year, after China suffered serious losses. He then opened the Longmen Shuyuan (Dragon Gate Academy) in Suzhou. Wu Dacheng studied seal script calligraphy with Chen Shuopu when he was young. Later he studied the archaic Stone Drum script. He was also good at seal carving and at running script (xing shu) and regular script (kai shu) calligraphy. He painted, as well, primarily landscapes and birds-and-flowers. Most significantly, he was one of the most famous art collectors in Suzhou.

In 1883, Wu Changshi travelled to Shangshi and met many famous painters, calligraphers and scholars, including Zhang Xiong. Zhang Xiong (1803-1886), zi
Zixiang, hao Yuanhu waishi, was from Jiaxing, Zhejiang. Zhangxiong moved to Shanghai, where he made his living selling paintings, at a very young age. Yang Yi said in *Haishang molin* that Zhang Xiong lived in Shanghai “for the longest time” of any artist. *Molin jinhua* also mentions that he was the most famous painter of all of Shanghai, and that everyone praised him as “yugong zhiguan,” King of the Sojourners. He excelled at figures and landscape painting, and was especially well-known for his huge peony paintings. He was also famous as a collector of paintings, calligraphy, and seals. Wu Changshi’s son, Wu Dongmai, claimed that his father lived with Zhang Xiong during this time in Shanghai. Because Zhang Xiong had a very generous disposition, he had many friends among Shanghai painters, including Ren Yi, Pu Hua, and Hu Yuan. Some of Wu Changshi’s introductions into the Shanghai art world may have dated to this period, although no documentation has yet surfaced.

According to one commonly repeated anecdote, Wu Changshi was introduced by Gao Yong to Ren Yi when he was 34 (i.e. around 1877) and became Ren Yi’s student. This date was accepted by Lin Shuzhong in his *Wu Changshi nianpu*, published in 1994. Lin writes that Wu Changshi went to Shanghai to meet Ren Yi in 1877, when he was 34 sui. Lin quotes an undated story by Wu Changshi’s son, Wu Dongmai, published in his *Yishu dashi Wu Changshi*. Wu Dongmai recounts the occasion on which Wu Changshi asked Ren Yi to accept him as a painting student. Ren asked him to demonstrate his painting first. Wu Changshi replied, “I haven’t started to learn painting, how can I demonstrate?” Ren insisted that he simply paint whatever he liked, so he made a few strokes. After Ren saw them, he said, “You will be famous for painting in the
future." Wu Changshi was very surprised and thought that Ren Yi was joking. But Ren said, very seriously, "Even now, your brushwork, especially your use of ink, is better than mine." Later Ren Yi and Wu Changshi became close friends, and Ren Yi asked advice from Wu Changshi about calligraphy. The story, as told by Wu Changshi’s son, may be fairly accurate, but Lin’s attempt to date the event is pure hypothesis.

The nature and beginning date of the relationship between Wu Changshi and Ren Yi has been a matter of sufficient controversy to warrant a brief digression here. The Taiwanese writer Wang Jiacheng claimed in 1985 that Wu Changshi was introduced to Ren Yi by Gao Yong when he was 43 sui (i.e. around 1886). In Wang’s version, which agrees in all but date with the preceding story, when Ren asked Wu to paint, he was surprised by the calligraphic skill and power in Wu’s painting and treated him as a friend.

Shanghai art historian Ding Xiyuan, in several publications, including his preface for Wu Changshi, published in 1996, writes that Wu Changshi was introduced to Ren Yi by Gao Yong, but several years earlier, in 1883 (age 40 sui), when he was waiting in Shanghai for a ship to Tianjin. This account agrees with the 1989 version of Taiwanese scholar Chen Siming.

The artist’s chronology compiled by Wu Changshi’s grandson, Wu Changye, in 1984, is somewhat different. Wu writes that in 1883 (the ninth year of Guangxu), when Wu Changshi was 40 sui, he took a business trip to Tianjin. On the way, he stopped in Shanghai to wait for the ship. He was introduced to Ren Yi by mutual friends at that
time, and Ren Yi painted a portrait for Wu Changshi to commemorate the event. Gao Yong is not mentioned in this version.

As we shall shortly see, a portrait of Wu Changshi by Ren Yi from 1883 survives (though not necessarily the one mentioned by his grandson), so the two men had definitely met by that year. According to a seal inscription written by Wu Changshi in 1884 to commemorate his reunion with Gao Yong, the two men did not see each other between 1872 and 1884. Thus, Gao Yong could not have personally introduced Ren Yi to Wu Changshi in either 1877 or 1883. It is always possible that an introduction took place by letter or intervention of a third party, but not in the more personal manner suggested by most writers.

Many surviving portraits testify that Gao Yong and Ren Yi were long-time friends. A portrait also documents the meeting of Ren Yi and Wu Changshi in 1883. Gao Yong and Wu Changshi were reunited after a twelve-year separation in 1884. Portraits tell us, as well, that by 1888 Wu Changshi and Ren Yi were close friends. These are the only facts, but on this basis, Wu Changye’s version of the story seems most plausible.

The first surviving portrait of Wu Changshi by Ren Yi, a rather sloppy picture of Wu at the age of 40 sui, is entitled Wuqing tingzhang (Master of the Turnip Pavilion), and was executed in 1883 [Fig. 4.4]. The title came from the name of Wu Changshi’s garden, which was named Wu Yuan, after turnips he planted (Wuqing: i.e. brassica rape). Wu Changshi carved an inscription for a seal that reads:
I built a garden called Wu Yuan and also built a thatched pavilion from which to view [the turnips]. Every time, in late fall, when frost descends, the leaves fall. Only the turnips stay green, along with the pine and cedar.”

Yang Xian inscribed the painting for him.

In 1884, Wu moved to Ximei Lane, Suzhou, next to Yang Xian’s home, which was called Nan Yuan (South Garden). He continued to serve as assistant to Wu Yun. That year he printed his seal carving collection, Foulu yincun, for which Yang Xian wrote a long preface.

Wu Changshi moved to Shanghai in 1885 and gradually shifted his circle of activity to the growing metropolis. But he still travelled to Suzhou very often. During that period, Wu Changshi established a very close relationship with Ren Yi. Ren painted another portrait for Wu called Ji kan tian tu (Hunggrily, Looking at the Sky) [Fig. 4.5] in bingxu, the twelfth year of the Guangxu reign (1886). Wu Changshi wrote a very depressing inscription on this work:

The world seems to like me, so it let me become a man.
A body seven feet tall, with a pair of bright and piercing eyes.
For twenty years, I suffered every day from hunger.
I rushed about, everywhere, until my face became haggard.
I lived on ink and brush, and still so poor I faced an empty room.
When I sold my books, I felt as though I had sold my land.
Every remaining scrap looks like a treasure.
My mother-in-law gnaws the roots of vegetables, but still tries to satisfy her grandsons.
My wife makes dinner, but cannot find any rice in our storage urn.

From this poem we can imagine how hard the life of Wu Changshi was at the time. In the next year, 1886, Wu moved his family to Shanghai. Two years later, Ren Yi painted another portrait for Wu Changshi, Suanhanwei (The Shabby Official) [Fig. 4.6].
In this painting, Wu Changshi wears an official uniform, a conical Manchu hat with its rows of red tassels, a long yellow gown, a black mandarin jacket, and high-soled boots. His awkward posture is one of fear and trepidation. Wu Changshi wrote an inscription for the painting:

I asked Ren Bonian to paint a portrait for me. It was titled *Portrait of the Shabby Official* (Suanhanwei xiang), [and I appear] wearing a uniform and standing very properly, with hands joined in obsequious respect. The awkward appearance of the figure really made people laugh. People who know me all immediately say, ‘This must be Wu Gutie [Wu Changshi]!’ I inscribe this to make fun of myself.

In another poem, published in *Foulushi*, Wu Changshi wrote equally colorfully:

High officials stay in a grand hall; lowly clerks run in the summer heat. Escorted by petty bureaucrats to the yamen, I was already sweating like mid-summer rain. Only after being summoned did I dare to enter, but I was already fearful and depressed. I was asked ‘Why do you come here to see me?’ I tried to answer, but I just couldn’t speak. I knew my shabby appearance would make the high official angry. I hemmed and hawed, frightened and on guard, my back bent and my arms hanging submissively. I hadn’t had enough breakfast, but it was already lunchtime. Only middle-aged, I looked like an old man [standing there], my back sore and legs in pain...

It is said that Ren Yi lived in the Sanpailou neighborhood of Shanghai and that Wu Changshi went to his house very often. One day, Wu visited his home, but after looking around the house for some time, he couldn’t find him. Later, he found that Ren Yi had climbed onto his roof, attracted by two fighting cats. This became a favorite anecdote to demonstrate how Ren Yi painted from life.

In October of 1894 the Sino-Japanese War broke out in Korea. Wu Dacheng, who was a Hanlin official, was a strong advocate of “zhongxue weiti; xixue weiyong,” Chinese learning as the core; Western learning for practical application. He always insisted that without Western technology, China could not win. An ardent advocate of protecting
Chinese territory, he volunteered to lead the Chinese army at the front in its defense against Japan. After many years as Wu Dacheng’s assistant, Wu Changshi truly admired his heroic spirit. In addition, as a young man, Wu Changshi had taken the romantic nickname Jianhou (Knight of the Sword). In one poem he wrote:

When I was young I learned swordsmanship, but never had a chance to fight. [In all these years] I’ve only used a seal knife to cut the evil dragons (jiaolong) [from the stones].28

After so many years, he had nothing to show for it. He was still busy, running about in hope of obtaining a lowly official position, and was thus ashamed to return to his home town. This time, when his hero Wu Dacheng decided to lead the Qing forces against Japan, Wu Changshi felt that at last the opportunity to accomplish something had arrived. Then fifty years old, he joined the army as Wu Dacheng’s assistant. He accompanied Wu Dacheng north of the Great Wall at Shanhaiguan (Liaoning) on December 20, 1894. Unfortunately, his dream was soon dashed, for the Chinese forces were easily defeated by the Japanese in February, 1895. Wu Dacheng was ignominiously dismissed, and Wu Changshi returned in disappointment to Shanghai later in the year. Wu Changshi returned to his unstable livelihood as a painter.

Eventually, with the recommendation of his fellow townsman Ding Baoyuan, Wu Changshi’s thirty-four year wait as an alternate for a county magistracy came to an end. Wu was appointed zhixian (county magistrate) of Andong (now Lianshui), Jiangsu, in November of 1899. Ironically, he only served in the position for one month before he quit and returned to Shanghai, unable to accustom himself to the petty politics that occupied the local officials. This resignation, and the self-realization that led to it, was a
turning point in his life. Before that time, he tried to prepare himself to become a traditional scholar-official gentleman. After more than thirty years of consistent effort, he realized this was not the career he should pursue. From that point, he gave up his early dream and became a professional painter and calligrapher.

During the early 1900s, Wu Changshi frequently moved back and forth between Shanghai and Suzhou. In 1904, Wu Changshi established his residence in Suzhou, at number 19, Guihefang. He named his new home Pisitang (Crazy Man's Hall). In summer of that year, Ye Weiming, Ding Fuzhi, Wu Shiqian, Wang Fu'an, and others established the Xiling yinshe in Hangzhou, at the Renyilou, on the banks of West Lake. They invited Wu Changshi to join the society and later, in 1913, appointed him as the society's director.39

Ye Weiming (1867-1948), zi Pingshan, hao Yezhou, was a native of Huizhou, Anhui. He was good at seal-carving and calligraphy. He especially excelled at epigraphic textual studies (jinshi kaoju xue) and also authored an extremely important biographical dictionary of seal carvers called Guangyin renzhuan, as well as a gazetteer of epigraphy in his native county called Shexian jinshi zhi.

Ding Ren usually was called by his zi, Fuzhi. His hao was Helu. He was a native of Hangxian, the suburbs of Hangzhou, Zhejiang. He was famous for writing oracle bone script, but he was best known for his large and high quality book and seal collection. He died in the mid-1940s, although the exact date is not recorded.

Wu Yin (1867-1922) is usually called by his hao, Shiqian. A native of Shaoxing, Zhejiang, he was good at painting and calligraphy, but especially excelled at seal carving.
He was particularly known for making good seal paste. After he and his colleagues founded the Xiling yishe in Hangzhou, he established a branch in Shanghai.

Wang Ti (1878-1960) was known by his hao, Fu’an. He was a Hangzhou native who had learned seal carving with his father. He was good at archaic calligraphy, especially zhongding (Zhou dynasty bell and tripod) inscription style. After 1930, he moved to Shanghai and lived by selling his calligraphy and seal carvings.

During that period, Wu Changshi’s right arm developed an ailment, so he gradually reduced his seal carving and shifted to painting and calligraphy. He moved back to Shanghai in 1914, when he was 70, and lived in Jiqingli, on North Shanxi Road in Zhabei. He stayed there for the rest of his life.

Wu Changshi was active in Suzhou and Shanghai for about fifty years. Although he took brief official jobs, his livelihood was always unstable. The intellectual and artistic atmosphere in Suzhou made it possible for him to know many scholars, painters, and collectors, providing cultural capital which helped his later artistic career. On the other hand, the economic and social environment of the metropolis of Shanghai offered opportunities to sell his work, and guarantee his material existence. The new painting societies in Shanghai, for example, served to establish his patronage base and price structure. He joined several major painting societies, such as Haishang Tijinguan Shuhuashe and Yuyuan Shuhua Shanhui. He participated in the charitable work organized by these new organizations. The international port of Shanghai also enabled him to know many foreign patrons, especially Japanese.
Wu Changshi’s Painting

Wu Changshi’s paintings are mostly of botanical subjects, such as plum blossoms, orchids, bamboo, pine trees, narcissus, peonies, gourds, wisteria, fruit, and vegetables, although he occasionally also painted figures and landscapes. Of the three major genres of Chinese painting: landscapes, figures, and bird-and-flower, bird-and-flower painting has rarely been most highly valued. Although bird-and-flower painting flourished during the Five Dynasties and Song periods, and has remained popular throughout the centuries, it has never attained a dominant role. By the Qing dynasty, however, especially in the eighteenth century Yangzhou school and the late nineteenth century Shanghai school, bird-and-flower painting became the most popular genre.

The art historian and landscape painter Zheng Yong (1894-1952) wrote in 1929:

“In Qing dynasty painting, bird, flower, and insect painting was the most popular (sheng). It not only continued the ancient styles, but also established new concepts (yi)... In the early Qing, before the Yongzheng era, landscape and bird-and-flower painting were almost equally popular, but after Qianlong, bird-and-flower painting overshadowed landscapes. The most famous group were the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou... At the beginning of the Guangxu period, the brothers Ren Xiong and Ren Xun were good at outline-style painting. You may call them innovative, but they also continued the ancient traditions.”

Wu Changshi combined his accomplishments in seal carving and calligraphy with his bird-and-flower painting and thus became the most representative artist of the epigraphic school of painting (jinshihua pai). His bird-and-flower painting was inspired by earlier artists who worked in a free and self-expressive mode. His own words, in the self-preface to Foulu biecutu proclaimed, “I am crazy about the painting of Qingteng [Xu Wei] and Xuege [Zhu Da].” He had a rather modern attitude to his study of painting,
however, in that he advocated the importance of loving the ancients, but at the same time fairly evaluating his contemporaries. When he studied the ancient masters and epigraphy in Suzhou, he developed his understanding of the antique, but at the same time he stayed in close contact with contemporary masters such as Ren Yi. For that reason, both the influence of the early masters and his own unique characteristics are evident in his painting.

Periodization

The development of Wu Changshi's individual painting style can be divided into four general periods: 1. 1874 to 1894; 2. 1895 to 1907; 3. 1908 to 1918; 4. 1919 to 1927.

Wu Changshi's accomplishments as a painter appeared later than his seal carving or calligraphy. He himself said that he only began to learn poetry in his thirties and painting in his fifties. This self-assessment is somewhat modest, because he had begun to learn plum-blossom painting in his twenties, when he was still in Anji, from Pan Zhixi. One dated plum blossom painting was made when he was 36 sui. In his early years, he concentrated on seal carving, calligraphy, and poetry. When he was only 33 sui, he compiled his first seal album, *Qiyunguan yinpu*. The following year, his poetry album, *Hongmuguaguan chucao*, was printed. When he was 38 sui, he obtained rubbings of the Shiguwen (Stone Drum Inscriptions) from his friend Wang Mingluan. After that, he studied Stone Drum style calligraphy and also compiled an album of rubbings called *Tiehanshanguan yincun*. During this period, he achieved a high reputation for his accomplishments in seal carving.
Xu Kang wrote a preface in 1884 for Wu Changshi’s *Xiaogulu yincun*, in which he said:

Changshi madly loves the Stone Drums and deeply understands the flavor of ancient epigraphy. Now his seal carving has already reached this level of accomplishment. We cannot deny his heaven-bestowed talent (*tianfen*). In 1885 Wu Changshi compiled another poetry album called *Yuangaiyulu shiji*. From 1886 to 1888 he carved many seals for Ren Yi and Lu Hui (1851-1920). Also during that period, Ren Yi painted at least three portraits, *Ji kan tian tu*, *Jiaoyin naliang tu*, and *Suanhanwei xiang* for him. He only occasionally painted in this period, but his close relationship with painters probably influenced his later development in that medium. In 1893, when he was 50 *sui*, he published his poetry album *Foulu shi*, and also, in the same year, compiled his own inscriptions on paintings and ink stones in *Foulu biecun*.

In 1880, when Wu Changshi was 37 *sui*, he painted a plum blossom painting called *Lengxiang tu* (Cold Fragrance) [Fig. 4.7]. He wrote on it:

Blooming in the frost. Even Thirteen Peak Thatched Pavilion (*Shisanfeng caotang*) doesn’t have this wild flavor.

Thirteen Peak Thatched Pavilion is Zhang Cining, who was famous for his polychromatic flower paintings. Wu was thus contrasting himself with a famous painter in the genre. Zhang, *hao* Guiyan, was a native of Changzhou and is mentioned in many later Wu Changshi inscriptions.

*Wu’s Fence and Chrysanthemum*, painted in 1889 bears the artist’s inscription [Fig. 4.8]:

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“Foudaoren follows Zhang Menggao’s brushwork.” Zhang Menggao, according to Molin
*jinhuax* was also named Xueguang and was a native of Tianjin. A low ranking official
who served in Zhejiang, he was good at painting blossoming branches on fans. His
brushwork was simple and appealing. The nineteenth century writer Jiang Baolin
complained of being able to see very few of his paintings. Wu Changshi nevertheless
mentioned his name many times in his later inscriptions.

Wu Changshi’s *Lotus*, painted in 1890 when he was 47 *sui*, is painted in splashed
ink style similar to the style of Xu Wei and Zhu Da [Fig. 4.9].

We cannot call on Qingteng [Xu Wei] and Baiyang [Chen Chun] anymore. But
who is a truly good hand and who a wild fox?

Before 1893, we can see that Wu Changshi’s painting is based on the brushwork of Xu
Wei, Zhu Da, Chen Chun, Zhang Cining, and Zhang Menggao. He does not, however,
simply copy or imitate, but seeks to understand their composition, brushwork, and use of
ink, as well as to merge his calligraphic taste with their styles. Most of his paintings of
that period are chrysanthemums, narcissus, plum blossoms, peonies, and orchids. His
early work tends to be monochromatic, although sometimes pale color is applied along
with the ink. His style is mainly *xieyi* [free, broadly brushed lines and forms, with no
outlines] in this period, although occasionally he uses *pomo* [splashed ink].

In spring of 1891 Ren Yi painted several paintings for Wu Changshi, including an
ink lotus and an autumnal lotus. Wu Changshi went to Ren Yi’s home to discuss painting
with him, and Ren gave Wu some advice:
Your painting should use the style of seal script calligraphy to paint flowers, and use the style of cursive calligraphy to draw branches. Then you can make the painting have more variation.  

Wu Changshi’s enthusiasm for lotus painting in this period may have been related to that of his friend.

In this period, Wu Changshi spent most of his time on seal carving and calligraphy. He carved many seals for Ren Yi [Fig. 4.10]. In March of 1891, a famous Japanese calligrapher, Osakabe Narutsuru (1838-1922) who was visiting Shanghai and Suzhou met Wu Changshi. He asked Wu to carve a seal for him. This was the beginning of his contact with Japanese artists and patrons.

The early period of Wu Changshi’s activity ended with his military service in late 1894 and 1895. We may recognize the work of 1895 to 1908 as Wu Changshi’s second period. In these years he still sought to find a suitable personal painting style and continued trying to merge calligraphic taste with the brushwork of painting. His study of epigraphy and Stone Drums helped him gradually bring the simplicity and vigor of ancient engravings into his painting [Fig. 4.11; 4.12]. That is why a forceful and unrestrained feeling gradually appeared in his painting of this period.

After Wu Changshi returned from the Sino-Japanese War, he travelled to many places for the purpose of making a living. On the fourth day of the eleventh month of 1895, Ren Yi, the early Shanghai school master, and Wu Changshi’s good friend, died in Shanghai. Wu Changshi wrote an elegiac couplet:

Your painting brush, famous for a thousand years.
Like Han stones, which covered with soil, do not decay.
I’ve wept a hundred times, face to the wind.
The stains of water and traces of ink have lost their bosom friend.\textsuperscript{36}

The same period as Ren Yi’s death saw the passing of many early Shanghai school masters. Ren Xun died in Suzhou in 1893, Wu Jiayou (Wu Youru) died in Shanghai in the same year. Gu Yun and Wu Tao (Botao) both died in Suzhou in 1895. In 1896 Yang Xian and Xugu died in Shanghai. A group of major Shanghai and Suzhou painters left the scene in that period, leaving Wu Changshi to play an important role in the development of painting in Shanghai. In those years, Wu Changshi gradually switched his primary activity from seal carving to painting and calligraphy. One reason for this change, however, may be the injury or disease that affected the lower part of his right arm, a condition about which he frequently complained in his writings and called \textit{bingbi} (sick arm). The quantity of his seal carving from that period dramatically declined.

In 1899 he was appointed as county magistrate in an impoverished area north of the Yangzi River, Andong (Lianshui) in Jiangsu. He only stayed in the position for a month before he resigned [Fig. 4.13]. During that period he met more Japanese calligraphers and seal carvers. The seal carver Kawai Senrō came to Shanghai in 1900 accompanied by a Japanese dealer, Tanaka Keitarō, the proprietor of an art shop called Bunkyudō. Through the introduction of Luo Zhenyu and Wang Kangnian, Kawai asked to become Wu Changshi’s disciple in seal carving. The same year, Wu Changshi also published the second volume of his \textit{Foulu yincun}.

Another Japanese calligrapher and seal carver, Nagao Uzan, was invited by Commercial Press to come to Shanghai to serve as an editor and translator. Through the Japanese dealer in Shanghai, Matsusaki Tsurō, he met Wu Changshi in 1903. The same
year, Wu Changshi established his first formal price list (runge) for his painting, calligraphy, and seal carving. The next year, when the Xiling yishe was established in Hangzhou, both Nagao and Kawai became members, and Wu Changshi was actively involved in the group’s activities [Fig. 4.14]. During that period, Wu Changshi’s paintings very much followed Ren Yi’s late style. For example, his work of 1896, Peony and Narcissus, is inscribed by the artist:

My brushwork is rough and awkward, in drawing the branches and outlining the stones, I sometimes achieve the feeling of archaic seal-script engravings. Some critics say that in my poems the epigraphic spirit (jinshiqi) is combined with the straight-forward purity of ginger and osmanthus (jiangguiqi). I think these words can be used to describe this painting.

In this inscription Wu not only emphasized the archaic flavor of seal script calligraphy, but also his pursuit of direct, rough strength, similar to that of ginger or osmanthus, which have the capacity to dominate and thus purify the complexity of other flavors. This combined aim of archaism and straightforward strength is more and more evident in his later painting.

In this period, he began to develop an important new compositional trend, the strong diagonal. He usually left one upper comer of the paper completely empty as a site for the inscription. Ink Lotus, of 1896, represents this new manner [Fig. 4.15]. In this case, the upper right corner was left empty. He began the upper left with a small flower, which he later overpainted with a massive ink lotus leaf, to add weight to the top corner of the picture. Above this leaf he added another lotus flower, creating a continuous diagonal from lower right to upper left. In this period, he painted many different subjects beyond his earlier literati themes of orchid, plum, bamboo, and chrysanthemum. He
added vegetables, fruit, and wisteria to his repertoire. The compositions were very subjective, with the pictorial elements arranged with no concern for time or space. He freely reconstructed his own temporal and spatial order, with no regard for realistic or objective relationships of locale, season, or proportion.

A good example of this subjectivity is a painting of 1898, when he was 55 sui, entitled *Plum Blossoms, Vegetables, and Fruits* [Fig. 4.16]. This is a very new combination of elements, including different objects that might not actually exist simultaneously in the real world. A large bok choy cabbage occupies the foreground, while plum blossoms serve as its background.

Wu Changshi’s inscription focuses entirely on style, not subject matter:

> I tried to follow [Zhang] Menggao, but suddenly got the feeling of Qingxiang [Shitao]. This is what is called adopting one method, but attaining another, beyond it.

He describes a process in which he consciously tried to emulate the manner of one painter, Zhang Menggao, but the results seemed to resemble more the work of another. Because he had studied the painting of Shitao for many years, his style merged unconsciously with Shitao’s style.

Another undated inscription on *Azalea*, of about the same period, is similar [Fig. 4.17]:

> Copying Shisanfeng caotang [Zhang Cining], but only getting Zhang Beiping [Menggao]. Although trying to achieve the best, I only reached a middle level.

For *Outline Orchids*, of 1897, he claims in the inscription to have painted freely and spontaneously, unlike the careful labor of a school child.
In the second month of dingyou [1897] I went with a friend to a monk’s residence, where we saw big stone urns filled with orchids. The new leaves looked very fresh and tender, and the flowers had a pure but potent scent. The monk brought out a Guan Daosheng (1262-1319) orchid painting to show us. Her rendering of the orchid leaves had a thick and heavy feeling, unlike the soft and weak examples in recent painting. Here I use shuanggou (outline) technique. Although the spirit consonance (shenyun) [of my work] cannot compete with that of Guan Daosheng, I am confident my directness and spontaneity are her match.

Wu is explicitly more concerned with spirit than form.

One of Wu Changshi’s favorite painting themes throughout his life was plum blossoms. We may look at this from several angles. Based upon his inscriptions, there were three principle purposes for which he painted plum blossoms. The first was nostalgia (huaijiu), the second was emotional self-expression in symbolic form (qianxing and jiqing), and the third was formalist enjoyment of brushwork (xiequ). For example, he had planted about twenty plum trees in his Turnip Garden in Anji. Every spring, he liked to walk in the garden to enjoy the plum blossoms. He left home permanently at the age of twenty-nine sui, but he later always referred to his garden whenever he painted plum blossoms. In a painting called Cold Fragrance (Hanxiang tu) of 1898 [Fig. 4.18], he wrote:

I planted plum trees in my Turnip Garden (Wu Yuan). Every year in late winter or early spring, the plum trees would bloom. White and red blossoms reflected on each other, and seem to cover half of the sky. Especially at dawn and dusk, they are as beautiful as five-colored jade (linglongyu). Now I only randomly paint two blossoming branches, one red and one white, hanging on the wall across from my table. Facing them is just like looking into Turnip Garden. Although there is nothing there, this gives me some comfort.

This is one example in which he used his painting to express his nostalgic feelings.

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Wu Changshi often used plum blossoms to express other kinds of emotions, as well. In Turnip Garden, there was an old plum tree by the fence. The shape of the tree looked very much like a dragon drinking water. Every time the wind gusted, the petals of the plum blossoms blew with the wind, and looked like the dragon was flying. One day, because of heavy snowfall, a branch of the old tree was broken. The old man who lived next door picked up the branch and put it in a vase, saying that he really cherished this tree. But Wu Changshi felt that by putting the branch in a vase, the plum had already lost its fundamental nature, and could only be enjoyed for several days. So he painted the broken plum branch and wrote a long inscription to express his sorrow. In his inscription he said:

The wind is cold, the moon has set, the spring night is deep.
The spirit of the plum must be crying underneath the roots.
I drop ink as the tears of a close friend, and paint its complete appearance on this long paper. Broken scales or empty shells might be much easier to keep, but [I hope] it won’t be hurt by other people’s hands again.38

In plum blossom paintings of the final type, which were essentially formalistic plays with brushwork, he often tried to use calligraphic standards in executing painting strokes. An inscription on a plum painting made when he was seventy-five sui reads [Fig. 4.19]:

Using the “crooked and flattened method” [wai bian fa, a manner Wu used for writing seal script] to paint, you can achieve forceful and free effects.

In his mind, painting plum blossoms was just like writing calligraphy. As he wrote himself: “Is it a plum blossom or seal script? I really don’t care.”39 If viewed concretely, then, the paintings represent the branches and flowers of the plum tree, but if viewed abstractly, they are the same as strokes of calligraphy. Blossoming plum
branches, then, are drawn in a style that emphasized strong gestural brushwork similar to his early shiguwen (stone drum script) calligraphy [Fig. 4.20].

In this period, from about age fifty-two to sixty-five sui, or 1895 to 1908, his painting gradually became mature. Besides continuing to study the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou, Xu Wei, Shi Tao and Zhu Da, he studied more contemporary masters, such as Zhao Zhiqian and Wu Rangzhi. During this period, Wu established his unique style of shiguwen calligraphy and achieved an equal mastery of calligraphy and painting [Fig. 4.21]. Most important, he brought his studies of seal carving, calligraphy, and epigraphy, into his painting. His painting of this period successfully realizes a forceful and free epigraphic taste. Because he gave up his pursuit of an official career after the unsuccessful experience at Andong, and chose to use his calligraphy and painting to become a professional artist, one can see changes. He broadened the subject matter and themes of his paintings from narrow literati subjects such as plum blossoms, orchids, bamboo, and chrysanthemum (meilanzhujù), to include auspicious subjects and objects from daily life, such as vegetables and fruits, in order to better suit the varied tastes of the Shanghai market [Fig. 4.22]. His favorite themes are now set: they are usually flowers and rocks, which might also reflect what patrons of the time sought [Fig. 4.23]. 

Appraised of painting’s commercial value compared to seal carving and calligraphy, he jokingly referred to it as something that he picked up only because it could obtain for a him “[a bowl of] rice with meat.” His painting also became more colorful in this period, and less often was painted in monochromatic ink. Several standard compositional types
often appeared in his painting of this period, perhaps to facilitate larger volume production [Fig. 4.24].

The third period of Wu Changshi’s activity spans the decade between 1908 and 1918. Although he was versed in classics and as a former minor official he held some claim to literati-gentry status, after he moved to Shanghai as a professional painter, Wu Changshi had to live on selling paintings and chart a career that had no prototype in the past. His change in social status forced him to face the challenge of a modernizing society and respond to the taste of new patrons.

In the spring of 1913, Wu Changshi moved to Jiqingli on North Shanxi Road in Zhabei, Shanghai. At that time he had resigned all his administrative jobs and reestablished his price list for painting and calligraphy. He completely relied on selling his art for his livelihood and he participated in many activities of Shanghai art groups. In this period, Wu Changshi was quite active in the art circle of Shanghai. He became director of Shanghai Calligraphy and Painting Association (Shanghai shuhua xiehui) and honorary director of Haishang Tijinguan Shuhuahui. He also participated in many charitable activities organized by Yuyuan Shuhua Shanhui and other organizations. In a letter to a friend he wrote:

According to Yiting [Wang Zhen] the Jishenghui [Salvation Society]’s funds have already been distributed to the refugees in different places, so we don’t have any money left. Since the Kueryuan [the orphanage for poor children] needs money; we will have to donate the money personally. I therefore donate one hundred yuan to modestly represent my sympathy.41

This very productive period may have been the most important of his artistic career. His painting style became even more vigorous and unrestrained. His work of this
period is marked by a simplicity that seems sincere and unaffected. His flower painting is less naturalistic than that of his early period, with more emphasis on brushwork and abstract composition [Fig. 4.25]. The color is heavier and brighter, like that of most Shanghai painters [Fig. 4.26]. The set of four hanging scrolls, *Four Seasons* [Fig. 4.27], painted in 1911, when he was sixty-one, is representative of the period. According to his inscription, the four seasonal flowers were after styles of the Qing individualists Li Shan (1686-1762), Shitao, and Zheng Xie (1693-1765), but the bolder brushwork, brighter color, and much more superficial composition, just as he wrote, made his painting fall "between resemblance and non-resemblance" to the essentials of those masters. His paintings are to be seen not as images from nature but as arrangements of flowers, plants, and rocks in an abstract space. His decreasing concern for fidelity to specific models is suggested by advice he gave to one of his last students, Wang Geyi, "As long as you are thinking of a particular painter when you paint, you may say that your painting follows that artist."

Wu Changshi’s painting of this period gradually attained his own style, which was a combination of his seal script calligraphy and his *xieyi* style painting. In composition, especially, several unique structures appeared during these years. One is the increasingly heavy weight given to long inscriptions, which are wider and often occupy at least three quarters or even the entire length of the painting. It balances the pictorial surface, and the image occupies proportionately less space in the composition. The meaning of the painting is also conveyed by the inscription. One such example, *Plum Blossom*, was painted in 1914 [Fig. 4.28]. This work was made as a present for his Japanese friend and
patron Nagao Uzan, who was preparing to return to his country. The long poetic
inscription ends by politely asking Nagao for advice. He now used the same brushwork
for calligraphy and painting. In this painting, the structure of the plum blossom is very
similar to his Stone Drum script calligraphy [Fig. 4.29]. The curved branches of the plum
blossoms resemble the irregular forms of the eroded ancient script carvings. In some
cases, the forms of the entwined branches almost look like characters. The forceful and
uninhibited quality of the brush strokes is also shared with his calligraphic works.

In another example, Loquats (Pipa tu) of 1917, the branches, leaves, and fruit
occupy the left half of the composition [Fig. 4.30]. Wu Changshi used the empty space in
the upper right to balance the image with poetry, a long inscription, and seals. This kind
of composition may be found in many works of this decade. Among many examples may
be included his Autumn Splendor of 1912 (Qiuju) [Fig. 4.31] and Wisteria, of 1914 [Fig.
4.32], Narcissus, Peony, and Rock, of 1918 [Fig. 4.33], and Magnolia, Peony, and
Narcissus (Yutangfugui), also of 1918.

Another prominent composition of the period places man-made objects and
natural objects together, often in unnatural, surprising, or artificial ways. One type is to
place objects from a still life in a natural setting, such as Pomegranate and
Chrysanthemums (Liuju tu) of 1910 [Fig. 4.34] and Pomegranate and Plum Blossom of
1912 [Fig. 4.35]. Another is to actually paint on a rubbing of an antique bronze, thus
making the epigraphic specimen part of the painting [see Fig. 2.25]. The latter is not Wu
Changshi's invention. Ren Xun and Ren Yi both used this method at a time when
epigraphic study was very popular [Fig. 4.36]. A technique of manipulating the rubbing
of bronze vessels to create a three-dimensional effect became popular in the nineteenth century. Good rubbings included clear images of the bronze inscription, which could serve as objects of pleasure for connoisseurs of epigraphy. Wu Changshi, as we have seen, was an enthusiastic collector of rubbings for their own sake.

This combination of bright colorful flower paintings with antique rubbings might also appeal to nouveau riche buyers who genuinely enjoyed gaudy or appealing imagery, but were flattered to be considered scholarly enough to understand these esoteric scripts. Wu Changshi sought to save literati painting by imbuing it with an epigraphic essence. Ironically, the illegibility of Zhou dynasty inscriptions to most wealthy Shanghai collectors yielded a largely superficial pretense of erudition on the part of his audience. More and more paintings of auspicious (jixiang) subjects appear in Wu Changshi’s painting of this period. Such works were obviously made on commission or for sale to his new class of patrons in Shanghai [Fig. 4.37].

The last period of Wu Changshi’s career began around 1919, when he was 75, and lasted until he died at the age of 83. He maintained a very high level of creativity until the very end of his life. According to the memory of his grandson, Wu Changye, despite ill health his grandfather began a new orchid painting three days before his death, a work that remained on his painting table when he died.

Wu Changshi formally raised his painting prices several times during this period because of the unceasing demand for his work. An undated letter that is probably from this period illustrates, nevertheless, the commercial pressure he felt.
I was sick and I’m still in poor spirits. But people to whom I owe paintings and calligraphy won’t let me take a rest to recuperate. At such an old age, I’m still subject to pressure from these people. Isn’t this ridiculous?^ 

He wrote a poem when he raised his prices in the first month of 1919.

The weak old man is 76 in this new year. I drunkenly pull the dragon guest in and wave the tiger servant away. In my intoxication I madly ask people to pay my drunken price. Actually it just follows common custom.

At new year’s in 1920, he raised his prices again, and similarly wrote a poem:

This year the weak old man is 77. Painting carelessly, I’m embarrassed that I cannot discipline myself. I crazily ask people to pay my drunken price. [For] every drop of wine [I drink], you have to pay the price.45

These writings give us some idea of how popular his paintings were in his late years, forcing him to raise his price twice in less than two years to try to control the demands on his time.

During that period many publications of his paintings appeared. In 1918 he was invited by Commercial Press to paint twelve flower paintings for the cover of Short Story Monthly (Xiaoshuo yuebao). The following year Commercial Press published the album separately under the title Twelve Leaves of Wu Changshi’s Flower Painting (Wu Changshi huahui shier zhen). In 1920 Bunkyudō in Tokyo published Paintings of Wu Changshi (Go Shoseki gafu). Another similar title, Go Shoseki gachō, was published in Nagasaki in the same year. In 1921, the Takashimaya department store in Osaka held Wu Changshi’s first painting and calligraphy exhibition in Japan and published a catalogue, Fouweng moxi. Shikeidō published Wu Changshi’s Calligraphy and Painting (Go Shoseki shoga fu) in the same year. In 1924, Shanghai Calligraphy and Painting Society (Shanghai shuhua hui) published Treasures of Wu Changshi’s Painting (Wu Changshi...
huabao). Commercial Press in Shanghai published in 1925 *Wu Changshi shuhua ce*, which included sixteen paintings and calligraphy made after his seventieth birthday. The same year, Takashimaya held Wu Changshi’s second solo exhibition and published *Fouweng jinmo*. In 1926, Shanghai Xiling Seal Society published *Wu Changshi’s Album of Flowers and Fruit* (*Wu Changshi huaguo ce*).

There were many publications of Wu Changshi’s calligraphy and seal carvings during this era, as well. The year 1919 saw the eight volume privately published *Foulu yincun*, with a preface by the calligrapher Zhu Deyi. In 1922 Shanghai Xiling Seal Society published a compilation of Wu Changshi’s recent calligraphy edited by Ding Fuzhi as *Foulu jinmo*. The next year Ding Fuzhi edited the second volume of *Foulu jinmo*, published by the same press.

In his later painting, the epigraphical and calligraphic elements were emphasized. Compared to his early painting, the later paintings seem more ancient, awkward, and simpler in rendering. The influence of his early calligraphic training became even stronger. In his compositions, he used more diagonals and triangular structures. The heavy, emphatic ink and strong color he applied came as a refreshing contrast to the timid good manners of most late Qing painting. These characteristics may be found in *Wild Roses and Loquats* [Fig. 4.39], which was painted in the fall of 1920, right after he recovered from suffering a bout of foot pain. Power and energy are evident in this painting, which is marked by heavy color and strong, bravura brushwork. His shaping of the rockery, in a series of counter-hugging layers, has not yet achieved his later state of simplicity. But the final phase of his evolution is in sight, reaching toward the series of
marvelously free and uninhibited personal statements that distinguish Wu's art from 1915 onward.

*Ink Plums* [Fig. 4.40], painted in 1927, the year of his death, is representative of his later work. A purist taste here is manifested in a further simplification of the images, reducing the urge toward zigzag directions in favor of a single sweep; a stark contrast among pictorial elements; and a growing awareness of the desirability of a pictorial axis, primarily for its stabilizing influence and also in the interest of coordinating the characteristic, angular cross-movements. The last feature, in a hanging scroll, tends to be vertical and sometimes can be supplied by calligraphy as an integrated component.

Wu Changshi was born in the middle of the nineteenth century, but his painting style matured in the early twentieth century. For this reason, he is usually considered an artist of the late Qing or early Republican period. He, along with Pu Hua, Xugu, and Ren Yi, comprise a group considered the Four Masters of the Shanghai School in the late Qing period. Wu Changshi was a literatus. Born into an educated family, he sought an official career in his early years, as did most Confucian scholars. The social circumstances and his personal temperament forced him to give up this career trajectory and turn instead to art. He learned painting in his middle thirties, but like many Chinese painters of earlier times, his work did not mature until his old age. The subject matter of his painting is relatively narrow, only botanical themes, so his great contribution to the development of Chinese art is in his bringing of the arts of poetry, calligraphy, and seal carving into painting. Although Wu Changshi was not the first to introduce an epigraphic taste to
painting, a tendency that is equally strong in the works of Jin Nong or Zhao Zhiqian, his contribution was unique. Wu Changshi excelled at all four arts, and was able to combine them in an unprecedented manner in his art. The traits of his personal style were a powerful brushwork, with evident vigor and spontaneity and a feeling of naive, awkward, or primitive innocence (zhuo). This is completely different from the gentle, pretty, and softly decorative bird-and-flower style that dominated the art of late Qing China. In the Qing dynasty, bird-and-flower painting tended to be very delicate and refined, like the work of Yun Shouping [Fig. 4.41], or very skillful, colorful and decorative, like the work of Zou Yigui [Fig. 4.42], or lively and soft, like the work of Hua Yan. All of these styles are elegant, careful, and ornamental. With the rise of the stele school of calligraphy, Zhao Zhiqian started to introduce some of the archaic awkwardness of ancient inscriptions into painting. Zhao Zhiqian’s painting achieved an epigraphic flavor, but often at the cost of liveliness. Wu Changshi’s lifelong practice of Stone Drum script and seal carving enabled him to more naturally and spontaneously produce epigraphic effects in his painting. His work is comparatively rough, wild, and intentionally naive. For this reason, his painting appears more powerful and more lively than that of earlier artists such as Jin Nong or Zhao Zhiqian.

During the last stage of his career, with the foundations of traditional art under attack, challenged by western culture and education, as well as criticism from the western-influenced New Culture Movement, the continued practice of Chinese painting had a larger communal or even national significance. At that time, an intensified consciousness of the West marked artistic pursuits, regardless of an artist’s approach. Wu
Changshi, instead, recalled the literati tradition, and drew his strength from his epigraphical and calligraphic heritage and from the art of seal carving. The epigraphic taste in Wu Changshi’s painting, therefore, could be considered as the last effort that traditional painters made to save the so-called tradition of literati painting. Wu Changshi, as a major master of the time, was confident of his own course, with a certainty that a later artist could no longer possess. His career was representative of artists of the important transitional period.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, China was very weak and corrupt. It is natural that people admired Wu Changshi’s bold and powerful innovations. His intention was to revive the best of China’s ancient culture, and he would have preferred to be called a revivalist rather than an innovator. He rejected the delicacy long associated with court painting and sought power in the cultural vocabulary of the scholar.

During the second half of Wu Changshi’s career he lived in Shanghai, selling paintings to make a living. His patrons were either wealthy, educated people, including shidaifu (former Confucian officials), or merchants and middle-class shimin urban people. The first group of patrons appreciated the literati tradition, with its classical references and themes. The second group liked more cheerful, lively, bright-colored work, with popular, especially auspicious themes. In Wu Changshi’s painting, although he tried to revive traditional literati taste, he also incorporated some elements of popular urban taste.

Wu Changshi’s painting, with its literati themes, epigraphic essence, and unrestrained boldness, may be seen as expressing in an intuitive fashion the psychological
aspirations of his generation of Confucian scholars—men who continued to believe that China’s traditional culture was powerful enough to overcome any obstacle, but that the corruption and chaos of the contemporary period had left her pathetically weak. This was a time when refined beauty was of little meaning. The forcefulness of Wu Changshi’s brushwork, then, may be viewed as the challenge of an individual to the social conditions that had conspired to destroy his hopes. It would not be overinterpreting the significance of his work, however, to see his straightforwardness and strength as the voice of his generation, the protest of like-minded Confucian scholars who had seen their ideals destroyed by the forces of history, but would never quietly surrender.
Notes

1. The seven chronicles of Wu Changshi’s life (nianpu), in order of publication, are:


3. See Wu Dongmai, Wu Changshi, 4. He blamed all the atrocities in their native village of Zhangwu on the Qing army, even though Wu Changshi attributed the massacre to the Taiping rebels. See Foulu ji, vol.1. la-2a.


5. According to Yang Yi, Haishang molin, juan. 3 (1989), 84; (1928), 31-32, Shi Yushen, zi Xuchen and Ziming, was a juren of the Guangxu reign whose knowledge was wide-ranging. He was particularly familiar with the classics and with epigraphy; Yang characterizes his calligraphy as antique and elegant. Later Shi moved to Shanghai and lived in Wu Changshi’s house. He subsequently travelled to Beijing to take the civil service examinations, but failed, and died there. A fellow townsman named Dai collected his writings, which he published as Jinzhong shanfang shiwen jil


7. Yu Yue, zi Yingpu, hao Quyuan, was a native of Deqing, Zhejiang. He received the jinshi degree in the thirtieth year of Daoguang (1850). He served in the position of Director of Education (xuezhen) in Henan, but resigned. He was famous in the lower Yangze region for his writing and knowledge of classics. In the beginning of the Guangxu reign, he returned to his hometown, where he enjoyed composing poems and writing. He published his writings as Chunzaitang ji and died in his eighties. See Yang Yi, Haishang molin, juan 3 (1989), 68; (1928), 15.

8. Zhu Xingzhai, Yi yuan tanwang, 1964. 42, quoted from Chen Siming, Wu Changshi huahuihua de changzuo beijing ji qi fengge yanjiu (Taipei:Taipei Municipal Art


11. These details are summarized from letters between the two men in the Shanghai Library.


18. In addition, a recent controversy has surfaced about whether Ren Yi was Wu Changshi’s teacher. In China, it was Gong Chanxing’s article, “Ren Bonian yu Wu Changshi de youyi,” *Duoyun* 1 (May 1981): 195-98, that stated the dispute, suggesting that Ren indeed was his teacher. Afterwards, Wu Minxian, a descendant of the master, argued that they were but friends with shared interests, and perhaps occasional instruction. Both Wang Geyi and Liu Haisu followed suit in their respective accounts: “Wu Changshi xiansheng shishi kaoding,” 8-9; and *Huiyi Wu Changshi*, 223. Wu Minxian’s article is published in *Meishu Shilun* (History and Theory of Fine Arts) 2 (1986), 68-69. A further rebuttal by Gong Chanxing followed in *Meishu Shilun*, no.3 (1988), 108-09, with the title “Shushi shufei.”

19. See Wu Dongmai, *Wu Changshi*, 8. The dating of the first meeting is still uncertain. Wu Dongmai placed it in Wu Changshi’s thirties, though it could have been in his forties, as Wang Jiacheng tends to argue; see his “Wu Changshi zhuan,” *Gugong Wenwu Yuekan* vol.1, no.8 (November 1983), 37; Zheng Yimei, however, placed the event in Wu Changshi’s fifties. See Ding Xiyuan, *Ren Bonian* (Shanghai, 1989), 103, citing his *Xiao Yangchun*. In another anecdote, cited in *Ren Bonian*, 81, when Hu Yuan noted that Wu Changshi started painting far too late, Ren Yi and Yang Xian both defended and encouraged him.


24. According to Wu Changshi’s Kutie yinxuan, ed. Fang Jie’an (Taipei:Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1980), 241, Wu carved a seal reading “kuangxin weixie” (wild heart not yet at rest) for Gao Yong in the fall of 1884. In the inscription on the side of the seal, Wu wrote, “I haven’t seen my old friend Gao Yong for twelve years. I met him again in the ninth month of jiashen (1884) at Wuxia.”

25. Wu Changshi, Foulu yincun.


31. Wu Changshi, Foulu biecun, prefaced 1893, n.p..

32. Two leaves from this album of monochromatic plum blossom paintings, now in the collection of the Xiling yinshe, is reproduced in Wu Changshi zuopinxuan (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chuban she and Xiling yinshe: 1984), pls. 4 and 5. However, Ding Xiyuan argues in his article “Mo heng shen chu shi zhen hong: Wu Changshi huahui lun,” Hamno 37 (1993), 41, that the painting is not genuine.


36. Wu Dongman, *Yishu dashi Wu Changshi*.

37. This translation is based upon a *baihua* rendering in Chen Siming, *Wu Changshi huahuihua de chuangzuo beijing ji qi fengge yanjiu* (Study of the Style and Background of Wu Changshi’s Flower Painting) (Taipei: Taipei Municipal Art Museum, 1989), 143. The inscription itself is not legible in Chen’s reproduction.


40. Quoted in Wu Minxian’s “Foulu shiyi” in *Huiyi Wu Changshi*, 35. Wu Minxian’s explanation is that in the nineteenth century the level of income for calligraphers and seal carvers could furnish them only with vegetarian meals, whereas painters were able to have meat.

41. Wu Changshi’s letter to Chunbo. Collection of Shanghai Library.

42. See Wu Changshi’s inscription on Plate 23a.


44. Undated Wu Changshi letter to the calligrapher Guiqing, mss. Shanghai Library Rare Book Collection.

Figure 4.1: The title page for *Foulu ji*, inscribed by Yang Xian in 1893.
Figure 4.2: Wu Changshi’s letter to Shen Rujin.
Figure 4.3: Wu Changshi's antique *fou.*
Figure 4.4: Ren Yi. *Wuqing tingzhang* (Master of the Turnip Garden). 1883.
Figure 4.5: Ren Yi. *Ji kan tian* (Hungrily Looking at the Sky). 1886.
Figure 4.6: Ren Yi. *The Shabby Official*. 1888.
Figure 4.7: Wu Changshi. *Lengxiangtu* (Cold Fragrance). 1880.
Figure 4.8: Wu Changshi. *Fence and Chrysanthemum*. 1889.
Figure 4.9: Wu Changshi. *Lotus*. 1890.
Figure 4.10: Wu Changshi. Seal for Ren Yi. 1884.
Figure 4.11: Wu Changshi. *Pine and Rock*. 1895.
Figure 4.12: Wu Changshi. *Buddha Hand and Pomegranate.* 1908.
Figure 4.13: Wu Changshi. Seal carving reading "Yiyue Andong ling" (The one-month Andong magistrate).
Figure 4.14: Wu Changshi and other members of the Xiling yinshe. Hangzhou, 1913.
Figure 4.15: Wu Changshi. *Ink Lotus*. 1896.
Figure 4.16: Wu Changshi. *Plum Blossom, Vegetables, and Fruit*. 1898.
Figure 4.17: Wu Changshi. *Azalea*. Undated.
Figure 4.18: Wu Changshi. *Cold Fragrance.* 1898.
Figure 4.19: Wu Changshi. Plum Blossom. 1918.
Figure 4.20: Wu Changshi. *Stone Drum Script*. 1903.
Figure 4.21: Wu Changshi. *Cooking Tea*. 1907.
Figure 4.22: Wu Changshi. *Bok Choy*. 1905.
Figure 4.23: Wu Changshi. *Camelia*. 1906.
Figure 4.24: Wu Changshi. *Peony and Narcissus*. 1905.
Figure 4.25: Wu Changshi. Peaches. 1915.
Figure 4.26: Wu Changshi. *Gourds*. 1914.
Figure 4.27: Wu Changshi. *Four Seasons*. 1911.
Figure 4.28: Wu Changshi. *Plum Blossoms*. 1914.
Figure 4.29: Wu Changshi. Stone Drum Script Calligraphy. 1909.
Figure 4.30: Wu Changshi. *Loquats*. 1917.
Figure 4.31: Wu Changshi. *Autumn Splendor*. 1912.
Figure 4.32: Wu Changshi. *Wisteria*. 1914.
Figure 4.33: Wu Changshi. *Narcissus, Peony, and Rock.* 1918.

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Figure 4.34: Wu Changshi. *Pomegranate and Plum Blossom*. 1912.
Figure 4.35: Wu Changshi. *Pomegranate and Chrysanthemums*. 1910.
Figure 4.36: Ren Yi. Fugui tu. 1882.
Figure 4.37: Wu Changshi. *Suichaotu*. 1917.
Figure 4.38: Wu Changshi's letter to Guiping.
Figure 4.39: Wu Changshi. *Wild Roses and Loquats.* 1920.
Figure 4.40: Wu Changshi. *Ink Plums*. 1927.
Figure 4.41: Yun Shouping. *Flowers and Fruit*. Undated.
Figure 4.42: Zou Yigui. *Lotus*. Undated.
CHAPTER 5

WU CHANGSHI'S LEGACY

Wu Changshi sought to revive Chinese painting by imbuing it with the essence of China's antiquity, following the aesthetic of the rough but honest words of China's golden age. He was, in the end, a failure in this goal, for his achievements did not outlive his own career. He did, however, have a few followers who took his innovations a step further. We will discuss first two who for practical reasons were unable to fulfill the promise of Wu's inheritance. Wang Zhen was essentially destroyed by the Japanese invasion; Chen Hengque died prematurely four years before his teacher. Only Pan Tianshou, the innovator, and Wang Geyi, the emulator, survived to bring Wu's aesthetic into the second half of the century.

Wu Changshi’s Influence and His Followers

Wu Changshi's career was representative of the artistic milieu of an important transitional period in Chinese art history. He, moreover, was a great influence on many Chinese artists who were active in the twentieth century. Among them were some of the most renowned artists of the modern era: Wang Zhen, Chen Hengque (1876-1923), Qi
Baishi (1863-1957), and Pan Tianshou (1889–1971), through whom his art and ideas were given new dimensions.

Wang Zhen, also named Yiting, may be the most famous disciple of Wu Changshi. He, indeed, first studied under Ren Yi and later under Wu Changshi, combining the inspired calligraphic hand of the former and the solidity of the latter to form his own style. Wang Zhen was born in Zhoupu, Shanghai. At the age of thirteen, Wang Zhen began his life as an apprentice at the Shengyu Qianzhuang, a traditional Chinese bank owned by Li Pingshu. At same time, he used his spare time to study Japanese at the Guang Fangyan Guan, which helped him to secure an appointment as comprador for the Riqing (Japan-Qing) Shipping and Transportation Company in 1900, and subsequently to obtain a lucrative post at this major Japanese company, which he held from 1907 to 1931. He became a very successful businessman in Shanghai, eventually even serving as chairman of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce. He was a generous supporter of artists in Shanghai, and extremely active in Shanghai art circles. He helped to found the Yu Garden Calligraphy and Painting Charitable Society in 1909, and was a major member of Haishang Tijingguan Shuhuahui. As a painter, he was proficient in painting figures, birds-and-flowers, landscapes, animals, and was particularly renowned for his Buddhist figures and his dragons and cranes. His brushwork was executed with a fluent and calligraphic approach. He studied painting with Xu Xiaochang and Ren Yi in his early years. After Wu Changshi eventually settled in Shanghai in 1913, he started to study with Wu. Some of his work shows the influence of Ren Yi, others of Wu Changshi, who he looked after in his old age, even arranging his
burial. Because he was very popular in the business world in Shanghai, especially in Japanese circles, he introduced many Japanese friends and patrons to Wu Changshi and helped spread Wu’s name in Japan. His pair of figure paintings, Fate [Fig. 5.3], was painted in 1922. The figures, depicted with speedy, free, and spontaneous lines, best represent the characteristics of his figure style. The plebeian subjects are not new, and the theme of solitary street characters may be traced back to the Ming painter Zhou Chen or the Qing Yangzhou painters. Even his contemporary, Chen Hengque, painted an album of street people, Beijing Customs, a few years earlier. But the admonishing inscriptions by himself and Wu Changshi on these paintings show his Buddhist beliefs. In his later life, Wang Zhen became a devout Buddhist and served as the president of the Chinese Buddhist Association in 1922. His visits to Japan gave him an enthusiasm for Chan painting that shows in his many paintings of Bodhidharma and other Buddhist subjects [Fig. 5.4]. In 1931 he headed (and very probably paid for) a party of more than twenty guohua artists, including Zhang Daqian, Wang Geyi, and Qian Shoutie, on a month-long tour to Japan.³

Chen Hengque, a native of Yining, Jiangxi, and born into a scholarly family, was an accomplished scholar.⁴ He excelled in poetry, calligraphy, painting, and seal carving. He began to learn painting when he was only six years old, and was educated at the South China Technical School in Nanjing beginning in 1898. He went to Japan in 1902 and stayed there for seven years. When he studied Western art in Japan, he had the opportunity to see the works of the Qing individualists, Zhu Da and Shitao, which inspired him to break free from Qing academicism. After he returned to China, Chen
Hengque taught Chinese painting in several schools, including Peking National Normal College and Peking Girl's Normal School.\(^5\) When the Institute for Research on Chinese Painting Practice was established by Cai Yuanpei at Peking University in 1918, he was appointed as the Chinese painting teacher. In his notable article, "The Value of Literati Painting," published in 1921, he advocated that in order to promote literati painting, one should merge one's delight in life with literati sentiment. Along with the elevation of people's sentiments, a taste for literati painting would be realized and appreciated.\(^6\) He did not oppose the application of Western methods, but he claimed that "painting should be based on the structure of traditional Chinese painting, but then overcome our own shortcomings by learning from others' strong points."\(^7\) He believed that "Western painting stressed [form-likeness], especially since the nineteenth century, by using . . . scientific techniques to study . . . light and color. . . But recently, the Post-Impressionists acted in a diametrically opposite way. They did not attach importance to the objects, but to subjective thinking."\(^8\) Therefore, Chen thought that the subjective expression in Chinese literati painting and modern Western art had some similarities. Although he was trained in western art in Japan, his own painting was completely Chinese, vigorous, free, and spontaneous, with some addition of the simple and naive quality of Japanese Zen art. The *Album of Miscellaneous Subjects* [Fig. 5.5], painted in an elongated format in 1922, a year before his early death, shows typical characteristics of his style. The free, forceful brushwork, strong, bright color, simple compositions, and naive quality, all recall characteristics of Zhu Da, Shitao, and Wu Changshi. Although the date when he began to
study painting with Wu Changshi is not clear, he was listed as Wu's student when he died in 1923.

Another student of Wu Changshi, Pan Tianshou, stands as an antidote to overrefinement among China's greatest modern innovators. Pan Tianshou was an artist who reached the height of his creative ability after 1949 and is therefore not very well known outside China. Born in Ninghai, Zhejiang, Pan received his first art training under a famous scholar, Li Shutong at the Zhejiang First Normal School in Hangzhou, and then taught from 1923 to 1928 in Shanghai. Except for a short visit to Japan in 1929, he spent the rest of his life as an art teacher at various art schools, especially the Hangzhou Academy of Arts. In 1932, he, with others, founded the Baishe Painting Society and published its journal *Baishe Pictorial*. He was also one of the organizers of the 1937 National Art Exhibition in Nanjing. During World War II, he accompanied the Hangzhou Academy in its wanderings throughout western China. After 1949, he continued to teach in Hangzhou and was appointed president of the academy in 1958. Pan Tianshou painted flowers, birds, fish and figures, as well as landscapes. His style is characterized by clearly articulated forms and bold energetic lines influenced by those of Zhu Da, Wu Changshi, and Huang Binhong. In 1922, when he taught at Shanghai Art School, through the introduction of Zhu Wenyun, he formally took Wu Changshi as teacher. During the period he taught Chinese paintings at many schools in Shanghai and Hangzhou, and he often went to Wu Changshi's house to ask his advice. His true style seems to have matured around 1948, and he maintained and developed it until his death. *Black Chicken* painted in 1948 [Fig. 5.6] is considered the first painting that demonstrates his unique
style and marks the beginning of his mature period. The modernity of his painting, as
evidenced by this work, stems from his predominant concern with the formal organization
of the pictorial surface, to be contrasted with his minimal interest in subject matter. His
simple use of color reinforces these formalist tendencies. His forceful brush and daring
composition impart a freshness and graphic power that helped Chinese painting truly
move into the twentieth century. During the Cultural Revolution, when his paintings were
criticized for being too abstract and too individualistic, Pan was the victim of severe
persecution.

These artists, most of whom were also born and educated in imperial China, faced
fundamental questions regarding their own position and survival of traditional Chinese
painting. What it meant to be an artist in China was radically transformed, like most
aspects of Chinese cultural life, by the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the classical
norms of education, and, especially, the rapid changes in the economic situation between
1900-1937 in urban China. With the foundations of traditional art under attack, the choice
of traditional painting as the preferred form of artistic expression could no longer be
assumed. Nevertheless, many painters chose to work in traditional forms. They believed
that modernizing Chinese art was necessary, but in full awareness of a cosmopolitan
world, must proceed on the basis of its own history, standards and internal dynamics.
What is unique is that the vehicle for their modernizing project was a purposefully
traditional kind of Chinese painting. In the next stage, following Wu Changshi’s death in
1927, Shanghai artists, who included many of Wu Changshi’s disciples and followers,
more aggressively used modern organizational structures, exhibitions, public relations,
advertising, sales and periodical distribution networks to promote the tradition of Chinese painting and to try to raise China’s position in the international art world.

Conclusion

This dissertation argues in explicit terms that despite his literati education, Wu Changshi’s fame as an artist could fully develop only in the uniquely modern context of semi-colonial Shanghai. His way of selling art, and of making a living as a painter, whether through fan shops, published price lists, or painting societies, were new in the twentieth century. His patrons, similarly, be they merchant, compradores or foreigners, were also, in part, a new social group. As his fame grew, his handling of the business of art must have set a standard for younger artists who followed. This study thus implicitly suggests that the changes in early twentieth century art were essentially permanent. The literati art world into which Wu Changshi was born began to fade by 1900, and now, a century later, it is gone. The works of Wu Changshi’s students, including Pan Tianshou, are admired, copied, and even forged today, but they are artifacts of a completely different world.

This dissertation is not intended as a catalogue raisonne of Wu Changshi’s surviving paintings, which number roughly two thousand, nor as a year by year chronology of his life. For the latter, the many nianbiao (chronologies) that have been published in recent years are already more than adequate. Instead, with the aid of newly available letters and documents, this study seeks to interpret the significance of Wu Changshi’s career as a whole. The growth in Shanghai studies, which is reflected in
chapter two, makes it somewhat easier to situate his life in the context of late Qing China than it might have been until quite recently. In addition, art history’s interest in patronage issues during recent decades has led to the asking of new questions of the artist’s relationship to his collectors. Our results appear in chapter three. Finally, against this background, we attempt to situate Wu Changshi’s life and art. We argue that due to a combination of political, demographic, and economic factors, Wu Changshi was a failure as a Confucian scholar-official. Ironically, as a professional artist, selling to new patrons in a modern metropolis, he was a success. His experience set the standard for later generations, and his particular fight to keep Chinese painting viable in a changing world was emulated by some of his younger contemporaries.

Writings by Wu Changshi himself and by his immediate contemporaries support a complicated picture of losses and gains. Among surviving collections of his work are Foulu shi, which bears an 1893 title page inscribed by Wu Changshi’s friend and patron Yang Xian. A five volume comprehensive collection of Wu Changshi’s writings was published in 1923 under the title Foulu ji. It included some early prefaces, such as the 1889 writings of Shi Xucheng and Tan Xian for Foulu shi, but added to them was a 1915 preface by Zheng Xiaoxu. Zheng was a Qing loyalist who later served in the puppet government in Manchukuo. Wang Zhen painted an amusing portrait of his teacher for the anthology [Fig. 5.7]

Wu Changshi’s writings, as reflected in these collections, are of three basic types. He wrote about other people, including reflections on his relationships with friends and acquaintances, as well as comments on things he saw or people he met during his travels.
He also wrote many poems that he inscribed on paintings. Wu Tao gave him a landscape painting, which seems to have included pine trees. He asked Wu Changshi for a plum painting in exchange. Wu Changshi’s undated poem for his own work reads:

A dozen pines surround your house.
If Old Tao doesn’t paint them, who should?
All our lives we’ve loved antiquity, which is how we have this present day.
I read your painting just like reading an ancient stele...
I paint these plum blossoms as though in Zen meditation.
But only gruel and rice monks [i.e. secular literati] can enjoy them.®

Many poems, however, reflected on his own situation. In one example, he wrote a poem for his friend Jin Shuben (Tielao), who had invited him to Dengwei in Wuxi to view plum blossoms. Because he was not able to make the trip, he wrote:

The rippling water and green willows merge, water and sky in an endless expanse.
One or two caws of the crow echo in the empty sky.
In my tiny house by the trees, daylight suddenly turns to dusk.
A cold wind blows through the whole town, and spring does not bloom.
I heave a sigh--how lonely is this traveller in the world.
With a worn robe, cotton socks, and long wild hair,
I wish I could float up and down with the white clouds.
And not worry about crossing mountain and rivers.®

A poem he wrote in 1913, on his seventieth birthday is a depressing autobiographical reflection on his life. He had recently settled permanently in Shanghai, and his own experience indirectly reflects the chaos of his times

My grandfather and father can both be called ru [Confucian scholars]. It’s a terrible pity that they had no opportunity to teach me. When I was seventeen, we suffered from bandits [i.e. Taiping and Qing soldiers]. People died, families were destroyed, and I existed in a state of fear and anxiety. In jiawu [1894] I joined the army and went to Shanhaiguan; in gengzi [1900] there was terrible disorder [Boxer Rebellion] that caused me to flee in terror. In the winter of xinhai [1911] I witnessed another change in the world [the Republican revolution]. My blood boiled and nearly destroyed my heart. No dust has settled in my mind, but when I discuss poetry with guests, I pretend I have two deaf ears [to politics]. My four
walls are bare, blown by autumnal winds. I sell calligraphy to earn some money to buy food and wine. I have this skill with my hands, so I will not be hungry. Lu Gong [Yan Zhengqing] exchanged calligraphy for rice and [Wang] Xizhi for geese. The ancients are gone... and I am seventy years old. Facing my history, how can I feel happy? I have lost both fame and wealth, and had no chance for either.\textsuperscript{11}

Wu's pessimism was premature. When he died fourteen years later, the republican revolutionary and famous cursive script calligrapher Yu Youren composed and transcribed his epitaph. Yu praised the older master for his excellence in seal carving, as well as seal, clerical, and cursive script calligraphy. He praises in particular, however, the originality of his painting, and mentions the great fame he enjoyed in his late years.

His painting is profound and vigorous, with an antique simplicity; it constantly changed and evolved, so that one cannot trace the origins of his brushwork. After age seventy he became very famous, and the Japanese, especially, asked him to carve seals. [Asakura Fumio] made a statue to put at Gushan at West Lake [at Xiling yinshe]. Now when people stroll at Gushan, they always look at this statue.\textsuperscript{12}

Wu Changshi's experience working alongside Wu Dacheng in the unsuccessful military defense of northeastern China must have instilled in even the most naively apolitical man of letters a profound recognition of the arrival of the modern world on China's shores. No evidence survives to suggest close ties with any of the many reformist political thinkers who clustered in Shanghai in the first decades of the twentieth century. On the contrary, his surviving writings are filled with nostalgia for China's Confucian past. He talks of his "two deaf ears (shuanger long)," directly avoiding discussion of contemporary politics.

He and most of his patrons could not have escaped contact with writings of Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Cai Yuanpei, and others, but to him, larger questions about
China's cultural modernity were not of explicit concern. Nevertheless, China's modernization, which developed so rapidly in Shanghai, was ultimately the reason artists congregated in Shanghai, and determined the nature of the new artistic career in the twentieth century.

As a literati-scholar, Wu Changshi could not avoid becoming a tragic failure. His life was like a mirror of his entire class in late Qing China. As we discussed in chapters two and three, historical forces beyond the control of any individual remade the world in which he lived. His commitment to the Confucian tradition, which he never fundamentally discarded, left him in a deeply contradictory position. At the most fundamental level, he believed he should contribute to the Chinese literati culture into which he was born. His paintings, calligraphy, and seal carvings, even those that have added elements of more popular taste, exemplify both the aesthetic and the essence of that tradition, as he understood it. This belief was a fully integrated part of his personality, and in a very typical literati-painter pattern, was directly manifested in his artistic production. It was for this reason, in part, that he joined the various traditionalist painting societies that sprang up in Shanghai in the early twentieth century.

On the other hand, because of the power of his style, his choice of floral subject matter, and striking use of color, his work satisfied the new class of patrons who sought to buy the physical signs of culture. In the last years of his life, selling paintings in Shanghai, he felt burdened by economic pressures and an unproductive family. His commercial paintings, while bringing literati taste into the homes of their buyers, only represent a fragmentary part of the man. In his late years, paintings often did not have
poems inscribed on them, unless the patron had specifically commissioned a poem (and paid a higher price) [Fig. 5.8]. Even when such poems were inscribed, the memoirs of his students tell us that the actual texts for many of the inscriptions were composed by friends and students, with only minor editing by the master himself. His late disciple Wang Geyi, for example recounts an instance of a late night guest bringing a handscroll with the request that Wu Changshi write a poem on it. Wu agreed, but after the guest left, he turned to Wang Geyi and said, “Qizhi [Wang Geyi], you write this poem for me.” The final product, presumably, was written by Wu Changshi in his own hand, and consisted of an approved version of Wang Geyi’s composition. Despite the hasty nature of some of his late painting, the best and most thoughtful examples may be counted among the greatest paintings in China’s recent past. His creative powers were at their peak, and he benefitted, as he himself was aware, from the wisdom of his many years of study and his complex life experience. The traits of originality, honesty, boldness, and erudition that his critics praise reach their peak in this final period.

However, the surviving works that may best represent the hybrid nature of the art world in which Wu Changshi lived were his bogu, or paintings on rubbings [Fig. 5.9]. The rubbings themselves, especially if the artist used high quality examples, would have delighted any scholarly enthusiast of archaeology, and would have provided deep satisfaction, as the texts were read and deciphered. However, in order to appeal to his new consumers, he often painted large gaudy flower arrangements in the ancient bronze vessels. Such auspicious subjects and bright color exemplify in purest terms Chinese popular, or even vulgar, taste. The peonies’ evocation of wealth and happiness would fill
the drawing room of any successful businessman with a suitable aura. At least one example survives on which the artist actually wrote that he painted pink flowers because the lady who commissioned the painting liked bright colors.¹⁵

Because of the growth of a new class of commercial patrons, Wu Changshi, somewhat unexpectedly, became extremely famous, and even relatively prosperous. The reputation he enjoyed in Shanghai, and indeed throughout Asia, was probably higher, broader, and more lasting than any fame he might have hoped to achieve as a Confucian scholar-official in Qing China. Only in Shanghai, in this new, fully commercialized treaty port, did an economic and cultural environment exist that might enable a Confucian artist like Wu Changshi to become a modern celebrity.
Notes


5. See Yang Yi, Haishang molin, supplementary volume, 4-5.


7. Ibid., 4.

8. Ibid., 5-6.


10. Ibid, 3.


12. Yu Youren, Yu Youren shu Wu Changshi mubiao (Yu Youren Writes Wu Changshi’s Tomb Epitaph) (Shanghai dazhong shuju, n.d.).


15. Wu Changshi zuopinji, huihua (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chuban she, 1984), pl. 52
Figure 5.1: Wang Zhen. *Lotus and Birds.* 1918.
Figure 5.2: Wang Zhen. *Dragon and Clouds*. 1920.
Figure 5.3: Wang Zhen. *Fate.* 1922.
Figure 5.4: Wang Zhen. *Bodhisattva Guanyin*. 1925.
Figure 5.5: Chen Hengque. *Album of Miscellaneous Paintings in an Elongated Format*. 1922.
Figure 5.6: Pan Tianshou. *Black Chicken.* 1948.
Figure 5.7: Wang Zhen. *Portrait of Wu Changshi.*
Figure 5.8: Wu Changshi. *Plum, Bamboo, and Rocks*. 1917.
Figure 5.9: Wu Changshi. *Plum, Peony and Bronze Vessel.* 1902.
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jingping 鏡屏
Jinrun tang 錦潤堂
jinshi 進士
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Jiu huatang 九華堂
juren 舉人
kaishu 楷書
kaozhengxue 考證學
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Nakamura Fuori  中村不折
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Pan Zengying  潘曾瑩
Pan Zhixi 潘芝畦
Pan Zuyin 潘祖蔭
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pingtiao 屏條
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qiao 巧
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Rangpu 讓圃
Ren Xiong 任熊
Ren Yi 任頤
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Renji yanghang 仁記洋行
runbi 潤筆
runge 潤格

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Xiaohuayuan yaji chalou 小花園雅集茶樓
Xiaolinglongshan Guan 小玲瓏山館
Xiaopeneglai shuhuahui 小蓬萊書畫會
Xiaoshuo yuebao 小說月報
Xihongtang 戲鴻堂
xing shu 行書
Xinqingniani 新青年
xiuyuan 休園
xiucai 秀才
Xu Yongqing 徐詠青
Xugu 盧谷
Xu Wei 徐渭
Xu Shou 徐壽
Yang Baoguang 楊葆光
Yang Borun 楊伯潤
Yangjiapu 楊家埠
Yangliuqing 楊柳青
Yang Shoujing 楊守敬
Yang Xian 楊岘
Yao Xie 姚燮

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<td>Zhang Menggao</td>
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Zhangwu
Zhao Qi
Zheng Yong
Zheng Yue
zhengzhang
zhifu
zhixian
Zhong Huizhu
Zhongding
Zhongguo Tongshang Yinghang
Zhongguo Jinshi Shuhua Yiguan Xuehui
zhongtang
Zhongxue weiti; xixue weiyong
Zhu Cheng
Zhu Da
Zhu Jintang
zuanteng
Zhuozheng Yuan
Zilin hubao
Zilin Xibao
Zou Yigui

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APPENDIX

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE [YUYUAN] CALLIGRAPHY AND PAINTING CHARITABLE SOCIETY

The first calligraphy and painting society in Shanghai, Xiaopenglai yaji, was established in the yihai year of the Daoguang reign (1839). Then, in the renxu year of the Tongzhi reign (1862), Pinghuashe was founded in the Temple of Lord Guan at the west side of the [Chinese] city. Since then, many societies were established. In the yiyou year of the Xuantong reign (1909) Yao Hong, Huang Jun, and Wang Kun initiated the Calligraphy and Painting Charitable Society at Yuyuan. They discussed this matter with me and Gao Yong. We all thought this was a good thing, so started to make plans and drafted a charter. We then rented the second floor of the Deyuelou as our clubhouse. We had a meeting on the third day of the third month and selected Gao Yong as director. Mr. Gao modestly declined, so we recommended Qian Huian for the position.

The original charter of the society follows:

"In Shanghai there are many societies, perhaps more than anywhere in China. We have seen, among them, many philanthropists use their wealth and generosity to aid the needy and help the poor and many notables promote cultural pursuits fengya and preserve the
national essence. We painters, however, only tend to our brushes and ink, and conscientiously cultivate the fields of our inkstones. We are not able to help these notables to reform society; we also are not able to help support the poor people. We live in the same city, so we feel shame. Although big buildings and overcoats can help people avoid wind and rain, but fine dust and drops of dew can also help to supplement the mountains and sea. Although the degree of power differs, they are all magnanimous. This is a responsibility we should not decline to shoulder. That is why we have gathered like-minded colleagues to establish this Calligraphy and Painting Charitable Society and have rented the second floor of the Deyuelou at Yuyuan as our headquarters. After painting and writing, we can use the place to discuss ancient and modern affairs, and also to educate the younger generation. The society has established a price list for members which we attach as an appendix to our charter. Half the income from sales goes to the society and is deposited in qianzhuang [Chinese-style banks] to earn interest. If we want to do some charitable work, we will discuss how to use this money and demonstrate our charitable intent.

Prices for calligraphy:

full-width (zhengzhang) hanging scroll, less than four chi high, ..... one yang yuan
over four chi, every additional chi...add one-half yang yuan
over six chi...price will be negotiated
half-width hanging scroll (tiaofu), priced at 70% of full-width horizontal scrolls (hengfu)
priced according to half-width hanging scroll (tiaofu) plus one-half yang yuan

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handscroll, per *chi*, and album, per leaf...one-half yang yuan
round fans and folding fans, as above
panels for picture frames (jingping), double the above
large-character inscriptions for horizontal boards (*bian*), paired inscriptions
(*duilian*), inscriptions for steles (*beiban*), and inscriptions for birthday
celebrations (*shouping*), which cannot be collaboratively written, price
negotiable.

Prices for painting:

Double the price for calligraphy

Double [i.e. quadruple the calligraphy] price for commissioned work, extremely
detailed work, long inscriptions, or works on gold paper or silk

Other calligraphy and painting prices will be negotiated.

When we established the society, we had already decided the standard calligraphy
styles: *zhongding* (bell-and-tripod), *xiaozhuan* (small seal script), *bafen* (clerical script),
and *liuchao* (Six Dynasties), *xingkai* (semi-cursive and regular), and *kuangcao* (wild
cursive). Painting will be: *shanshui* (landscapes), *huahui* (flowers), *xumei* (male figures),
*shini* (female figures), *feiqin* (birds) and *zoushou* (animals). All work should be
collaborative. In the event a work is done by one individual, the inscription should be
written by someone else. Not only is this novel and innovative, but it also will permit
artists to develop their own strengths.

Most painters and calligraphers rely on their artwork for their livelihood, so we
must set rules that will benefit both the artists and the society. We can thus maintain our
sincerity and generosity. Now we establish the rule that half of the income will come to the society and half to the artists. In case the buyer stipulates a specific artist or makes a special commission, the price will follow the standard price list of that individual and the proceeds will go entirely to the artist. This transaction will have no relationship to the society.

Of the society members, some are good at connoisseurship but rarely lift their brushes; some make work infrequently, but it is of high quality; some have diligently studied painting for many years, but still have not found their path; some are on the right path, but still haven’t reached their peak; some are famous, but generous and are willing to reduce their price; some are not members of the society, but occasionally come here to paint. When we have commissions and call artists to collaborate, however, we always can find excellent artists to fulfill the elegant tastes of the buyers. Our artists will never take the matter carelessly, even though it is a work for charity, because they do not wish to damage their reputations. For commissioned work, the buyers are also not supposed to request specific individuals to paint or write. In the case of collaborative works, if the patron wants the painting, calligraphy, or inscription to be done by specific artists, the price will not follow the price list shown above. It will be determined after consulting with those artists.

Because the society has just been established, we need some outlay for basic expenses, such as the rent, office supplies, housekeepers, tea, and other miscellaneous uses. Based on a discussion with all members, every member should contribute one-half yang yuan per month to support the society. The payment may be monthly, or will be
deducted from the income of selling art works. If there is any surplus, it will go to charitable activities. After a one year trial period, we will decide whether to raise or reduce the amount of individual contributions.

The regulations of the society should be strict and consistent. The directors and administrators have been selected. The person who will be in charge of the budget should also be decided as soon as possible, because this key position will be crucial to the success of the society. People who concentrate on painting or calligraphy, however, find it very difficult to take charge of this matter. We, therefore, should select one respected member, who is willing to contribute to the charitable work of the society, but does not paint or write often, to take charge of accounts, receipts and expenditures. Every month we will make the accounts public and post them in the society. When members come to the society, we are only able to afford a cup of tea for them, because we must save money for our charitable activities.

This draft of the charter was based on a series of discussions among members, but it might still be imperfect and in need of amendment. If any Shanghai painter or calligrapher has comments on the charter, or finds any inadequacies in the charter, please feel free to tell us and help us to improve it. It will be good fortune for us and for the society.

Now we already have nearly a hundred members. The name list as below is recorded in order of the date the member joined the society. If people join the society later, we will add their names every quarter.
Decided by all founding members in yiyou year, Xuantong reign (1909), at the place of Fourth Son Xili of Zhexi [Western Zhejiang]." 

This charter has been followed by the members since that time. Every summer we give people medicine, every winter we give people rice, and do this every year. In case other places have natural disasters, we will help them based upon the surplus of our society's budget. Since 1909, this society has already been established for ten years, so we write this for the record.¹

Note

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