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Hiroshige.

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Abstract

This thesis focuses upon the artistic and poetic subject of the *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang*, from its origin in the Xiao-Xiang region in the Hunan province of China throughout its dispersal in East Asian countries such as Korea and Japan. Certain aesthetics and iconography were retained from the early examples, throughout the *Eight Views*' transformation from the eleventh to the nineteenth century. The subject's close associations with poetry, atmospheric phenomena and the context of exile were reflected in the imagery of the painting and the accompanying verses. This thesis will discuss the historic, geographic and poetic origins of the *Eight Views*, along with a thorough investigation into the artistic styles which various East Asian artists employed in their own interpretations of the series. Furthermore, the dispersal and diaspora of the subject throughout East Asia are also investigated in this thesis. The work of Japanese artist Andô Hiroshige will serve as the concluding apogee. The *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang* is an important East Asian artistic subject in both poetry and painting and contains many pervasive East Asian aesthetics.

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A note to the reader:

All Japanese, Chinese and Korean names are presented in the traditional order: family name followed by given name. All Chinese terms are spelled the modern *pinyin* method, as opposed to the former Wade-Giles method.

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Introduction

The transformation of the artistic and poetic subject of the *Eight Views* spans from its origins as the *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang* in eleventh century China to the *Eight Views of Ômi* in nineteenth century Japan. This subject spans nine centuries throughout China, Japan and Korea. This thesis will discuss elements of the artistic and poetic themes that are preserved intact, those that are re-interpreted and those that remain as reduced versions of the original sentiment. At each stage of the transformation process from eleventh century China to nineteenth century Japan, this thesis will examine the means of and the reasons for the transfer of these artistic and poetic themes and subjects. In this way, the thesis will study issues as diverse as politics, international relations and religion, as well as the prevailing aesthetic tastes of the time, people and places involved.

The artistic subject of the *Eights Views of the Xiao and Xiang* originally depicted the lush river region of the Hunan Province in Southern China. The first artist to create a series of works on this subject was Song Di (c.1015-c.1080), a cultured official who was wrongfully dismissed from office and exiled. He therefore imbued his artworks with the melancholia associated with his lamentable fate. The imagery in his scenes conveyed the injustice felt, as well as a strong desire to return to his former status. Song Di's series and the individual scenes were entitled by the poet Shen Gua (1031-1095). His titles were poetically inspired by the oeuvre of the poet Du Fu (712-770). These poetic titles reflected the scenes' imagery through expressions which indicated further underlying meanings to poets, artists and scholars. Contemporary poets and scholars such as Su Shi (1037–1101) were influenced and intrigued by this new subject in painting and poetry. Intellectual discussion and literature promulgated the

popularity of the subject and inspired later poets and artists such as Juefan Huihong (1071-1128) and Yujian (act. thirteenth century). In turn, their works stimulated more discussion and reproduction, and the subject of the *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang* spread.

From its inception, the subject was intimately connected to poetry and the context of exile. These associations were expressed in the imagery of the artworks and in the supplementary verses. In both art forms, the imagery focused upon a vast landscape, where only a few or no human figures or features are delineated. The immensity of nature not only reflects Daoist and Buddhist thought, but also reinforces the overwhelming power of nature over mankind. Natural landscapes also highlight the natural order of the world, where people are subject to the *yin* (negative) or *yang* (positive) forces of the cosmos. The solitary recluse or traveler within a majestic natural scene emphasised these ideas and also the overriding theme of exile.

The subject's history can be traced from the eleventh century and it continued to inspire artists to create their own versions of the *Eight Views* until the nineteenth century. The subject was dispersed throughout China and other East Asian countries including Korea and Japan. Diverse artists interpreted it using different mediums and styles. Early Chinese and Japanese artists were exclusively influenced by the style and poetry of the early versions. They depicted the river region in diluted black ink (*sumi*) in the monochromatic ink painting (*suibokuga*) style. Early artists tended to portray their versions of the *Eight Views* in the Southern School style of painting which promoted artists' use of rapid brushstrokes that created a 'spontaneous' artwork thought to reflect their inner feelings.

Throughout the subsequent centuries, the *Eight Views* was also depicted in the Northern School style of painting, characterised by the use of colours and meticulous detail. Korean artists particularly preferred the Northern School style. Furthermore, later Japanese artists and poets such as Konoe Nobutada (1565-1614), Yamamoto Soken (act. 1683-1706) and Andô Hiroshige (1797-1858) transformed the series into Japanese versions of the *Eight Views*, where the Chinese Xiao-Xiang river region was substituted with the Japanese location of Lake Biwa in the Province of Ômi. The theory of transformation is central to the *Eight Views*, as it assists in our understanding of the historical changes that alter the subject. Through the process of transformation, the artist imbued the series with their own style, however certain aesthetic principles, theories and iconographical characteristics were retained. This is due to the theory of transformation's espousal of learning, imitating yet transforming the past examples and models. In this way, the *Eight Views* maintained close associations with poetry, exile, and the depiction of atmospheric phenomena such as mist and moisture.

Therefore, this thesis will discuss the historic, geographic and poetic origins of the *Eight Views* and investigate the styles which various East Asian artists employed in their own transformations of the series. The methodology used to assess, interpret and describe the transformation process includes ascertaining historical precedents in poetry and painting, analysing each examples' relation to the past and also considering the artists' own styles in the work. Furthermore, the dispersal and diaspora of this subject throughout East Asia will also be explored. The *Eight Views*

of the Xiao and Xiang is an important East Asian artistic subject in both poetry and painting and contains many pervasive East Asian aesthetics.

Chapter One

Geographic and Historic Context

The Xiao and Xiang rivers flow through the southern Chinese province of Hunan. This is one of China's wettest regions, where many tributary rivers supply the vast Lake Dongting.¹ The Xiao and Xiang rivers originate in the south: the Xiang from Guangxi and the Xiao from Mount Jiu-i.² Technically, the Xiao-Xiang region only extends from the rivers convergence (near Changsha) then travels two hundred and fifty miles northwards until the Cheng river joins the flow. However, paintings and poetry of the region include the entire landscape from the lush hills of the south to the low-lying marshy basin of the north. Therefore, artistically, the Xiao-Xiang region refers to most of the Hunan province.³ From approximately the fifth century C.E., the region's name, Xiao-Xiang, was also frequently amalgamated with other natural features such as Lake Dongting and its Grotto Court.⁴

The Xiao-Xiang region was renowned for its beautiful riverscape, with its aura of serenity and tranquility. Due to the region's picturesque splendor, the Xiao and Xiang rivers have been painted for centuries. The earliest known example of painting this

¹ Average annual rainfall measures 1320 millimetres.

² Before the tenth century, *xiao* was not a name, but an adjective that described the depth and clarity of the Xiang. A sixth-century note in the *Commentary on the Classic Waterways* states "As to *xiao*, it means clear and deep". See D. Li, "Xiang River" in *Shuijing zhu*, Taipei, 1974, p. 477. During the Eastern Han (25-220 C.E.), the river was identified as Shen. During the Eastern Jin (317-420) it was renamed Ying, a name that was retained through the Tang dynasty (618-907). Only in the Northern Song period (960-1127) did the Ying River officially become the Xiao. The nomenclature indicates that in the Tang "Xiao-Xiang" would have been understood as "the clear, deep Xiang". See A. Murck, "The Eight Views of Xiao-Xiang and the Northern Song Culture of Elite" in *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies*, Albany, 1996, p. 114.

³ W. C. Fong, *Images of the Mind*, Princeton, 1987, p. 214.

⁴ The Grotto Court refers to a cavernous hall which legends claimed to be located beneath the gigantic lake. There, the daughters of Yao were said to reside in an underground labyrinth that connected all corners of the empire. Legends told that the sisters lived on the mountainous island Junshun ("princess mountain") while seeking their husband, the sage-king Shun. After learning of his death, they drowned themselves in the Xiang and their spirits discontentedly roam the shores and depths of Lake Dongting evermore. See Murck, "The Eight Views of Xiao-Xiang and the Northern Song Culture of Elite", pp. 114-115.

location dates to the Tang period (618-907) when an amateur painter, Liu (act. eighth century), painted a scene of the riverscape on a screen. The Chinese poet Du Fu (712-770) surmised that the landscape on the screen may have depicted the two rivers. He wrote to Liu:

I have heard it said that you first painted the landscape of your home district, and that now you are yielding to your desire to paint interesting ideal landscapes... Confronted with this picture, spirit and mind are consoled, and one realizes that you have indeed put your heart into painting on silk... If this picture does not show part of the rocky Hsüan-p'u [Xuanpu] of the K'un-lun [Kunlun] Mountains, it may be taken from the region of the rivers Hsiao [Xiao] and Hsiang [Xiang] which now flow past here.⁵

An Association with Exile

Historically, the Chinese did not necessarily share in this vision of beauty, as the Hunan province was where political officials were sent into exile. Therefore, officials viewed the Xiao-Xiang area with disdain and despair. These negative connotations were compounded with tangible issues, such as rudimentary rural facilities and extreme climate changes, including regular floods. Sending unfavoured men into exile was a long-standing tradition, beginning as early as the ancient kingdom of Chu (1030-221 B.C.E.) which was historically located in the Xiao-Xiang area. Chu was a semi-Chinese kingdom with a tradition of shamanism. At the height of its reign the Chu kingdom dominated almost half of the Chinese empire and attempted to conquer the whole. Despite a remarkably stable royal house and an effective administration,

⁵ D. Fu, *Gedichte (Poetry)*, Cambridge, 1952, p. 73, cited in H. Brinker, *Zen in the Art of Painting*, New York, 1987, p. 138.

Chu was defeated in 221 B.C.E by the Qin, the state that succeeded in unifying China.⁶

As previously mentioned, the Xiao-Xiang region's association with exile began during the Chu kingdom's administration, and one occasion was historically renowned. A wise and competent statesman, Qu Yuan (343-278 B.C.E.), was slandered by an envious colleague and therefore fell out of favour with the King. After many attempts to regain the King's benevolence, Qu Yuan's advice on issues of foreign policy were considered as seditious,⁷ therefore he was banished. In exile, he wrote poems illustrating his plight: an honest man against corruption. These poems were compiled into the legendary volume *Chu ci (Songs of Chu)*.⁸ Ultimately, his lamentable fate and the increasing Qin invasion overwhelmed him, therefore, he drowned himself in the Miluo river, a tributary of the Xiang river.⁹ The legend of Qu Yuan warns against the misuse of power and corruption. Moreover, it sets the tone of the location in literary terms, as a place of sorrowful reclusion and furthermore adds to the aura of the atmosphere for scholars, poets and painters to exploit.¹⁰

Creation: Song Di and Shen Gua

The Xiao-Xiang region became known as the location of a famous series in East Asian art, referred to as the *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang* (or *Eight Views*). This subject was devised by the government official Song Di (c.1015-c.1080) in Changsha,

⁶ Information on Chu from Fong, *Images of the Mind*, p. 214.

⁷ Qu Yuan advocated uniting with other states to combat the increasing behemoth Qin.

⁸ Poetry by Qu Yuan has been compiled into D. Hawkes (ed.), *The Songs of the South: An Anthology of Ancient Chinese Poems by Qu Yuan and Other Poets*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1985.

⁹ The Miluo River is similar to the Xiao and Xiang rivers, where two rivers converge and flow together; here the Mi and Luo rivers unite.

¹⁰ Fong, *Images of the Mind*, pp. 214-216.

the capital of the Hunan province.¹¹ He decided to separate his view of the region into eight scenes. He painted these scenes upon the walls of a terrace that overlooked Changsha and the river region. Although his paintings are not extant, contemporary scholars and poets wrote descriptions of them which convey their character. The poet Shen Gua (1031-1095) entitled the eight paintings as the *Eight Views*, and then each scene separately, with poetic titles.¹²

The earliest record of Song Di's *Eight Views* appeared in a compendium by Shen Gua. The title of the compendium, *Mengxi bitan*, refers to the name of Shen Gua's peaceful garden estate where he wrote the book. The title, translated as *Dream Brook Brush Talks*, he explained: "Because I had only my writing brush and ink slab to converse with, I call it Brush Talks."¹³ Shen Gua was a respected and highly cultivated individual, who called the *Eight Views* series Song Di's most successful achievement:

Assistant Secretary Song Di was a competent painter

He was especially good at level-distance landscapes.

The ones that are truly masterful, are

Geese Descending to Sandbar

Returning Sails from Distant Shore

¹¹ It is recorded that Song Di held two official positions during his early time in office. His first recorded position states that he was the Assistant Transport Commissioner in the Ministry of Transportation's regional office. He also became the Vice Director of Governmental Administration in Changsha. See Fong, *Images of the Mind*, p. 216.

¹² The poetic titles are as follows: *Wild Geese Descending to Sandbar* (*Pingsha yanluo*); *Returning Sails from Distant Shore* (*Yuanpu fangui*); *Mountain Market in Clearing Mist* (*Shanshi pinglan*); *River and Sky in Evening Snow* (*Jiangtan muxue*); *Autumn Moon over Lake Dongting* (*Dongting qiuyue*); *Night Rain on the Xiao Xiang* (*Xiaoxiang yeyu*); *Evening Bell from Mist-Shrouded Temple* (*Yansi wanzhong*) and *Fishing Village in Evening Glow* (*Yucun lezhao*). See V. M. Ortiz, "The Poetic Structure of a Twelfth-Century Chinese Pictorial Dream Journey" in *The Art Bulletin*, New York, 1994, p. 260.

¹³ N. Sivin, "Shen Kua" in C. C. Gillispie, (ed.), *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, New York, 1975, pp. 369-70.

Mountain Market in Clearing Mist
 River and Sky in Evening Snow
 Autumn Moon over Dongting
 Night Rain on Xiao Xiang
 Evening Bell from Mist-Shrouded Temple
 Fishing Village in Evening Glow,
 He calls them Eight Views.
 Connoisseurs are talking about them.¹⁴

After viewing the works, Shen Gua composed these poetic titles separately, and the language that he used emphasized conclusion or imminent darkness. Phrases such as ‘descending’, ‘returning’, ‘snowy evening’, ‘autumn night’, ‘rainy night’, ‘obscuring mist’ and ‘setting sun’ suggest a melancholy mood. In poetic terms, the pattern of introduction, parallel description, and closure mimics the structure of regulated verse. The poetic titles are testimony to a concern with atmospheric phenomena in contemporary painting and poetry, which rapidly increased to a major theme for artists during the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279).¹⁵

The numbered subject, *Eight Views*, draws further associations to poetry, exile, reclusion and contemplation. Certain numbers were associated with good fortune in East Asian societies therefore certain numbers, such as six and eight, were associated with sets of sages or immortals.¹⁶ An immortal, (C: *xian*, J: *sen*), was someone who

¹⁴ S. Gua, *Mengxi bitan jiaozheng (Dream Brook Brush Talks)*, Shanghai, 1987, p. 549.

¹⁵ M. Loehr, *The Great Painters of China*, Oxford, 1980, p. 225. The Northern Song and Southern Song styles of painting will be discussed further in this chapter.

¹⁶ The previously mentioned poem by Du Fu on p. 3 refers to the K’un-lun [Kunlun] Mountains. K’un-lun is the mythical *axis mundi* (site of the world’s creation) and the abode of immortals. The path through these mountains is called K’un-lun because of that name’s associations with immortality. Perhaps Du Fu mentioned the K’un-lun Mountains to further reinforce the association with immortals to the Xiao-Xiang region. See W. H. Nienhauser, Jr., *The Grand Scribe’s Records: The Basic Annals of Han China*, vol. 2, Bloomington, 2002, p. 250.

had reached bodily immortality, a transcendent who lived away from civilization, immune from disease, age and death. Originally associated with Daoist recluses, the term was also used to designate poets of such talent that they surpassed mere mortal status, and thus through the excellence of their poetry, would live forever. The number eight is prominent in Chinese culture, in part due to the fame of the Eight Immortals, who were associated with good fortune.¹⁷

Song Di was exiled after being falsely accused of arson. He served as the director of the Salt and Iron Monopoly in the State Finance Commission until 1074, when he decided to leave in order to become an administrator of a strategic prefecture in Eastern Gansu. Three months after leaving, a large fire swept through the State Finance Commission, and over five days it destroyed hundreds of rooms, archives and documents. The fire was said to have spread from an unattended stove in an abandoned hall of the Salt Monopoly that was formerly Song Di's responsibility. He was wrongfully held responsible and was dismissed from office.¹⁸ Song Di retreated to Luoyang (central China) which became the centre of the conservative opposition under the leadership of the historian Sima Guang (1019-1086). The group of conservatives or anti-reformers spoke of themselves as exiles. Sima Guang wrote a poem about Song Di, helped him purchase a plot of land and welcomed him warmly, urging him to forget the painful business of court politics:

Friends since youth, now we are white-haired,
 Completely versed with official affairs, we love the deep and hidden;
 Retiring on a modest neighbouring plot,
 In old age we will often sit next to these walls;

¹⁷ Brusckhe-Johnston, Lee, *Dismissed As Elegant Fossils: Konoe Nobutada and the Role Of Aristocrats in Early Modern Japan*, Amsterdam, 2004, p. 116.

¹⁸ Murck, "The Eight Views of Xiao-Xiang and the Northern Song Culture of Elite", p. 118.

Although happy that the new neighbour is a Yan Zi,
 I'm still ashamed that the one recommending the house isn't a Zhou Lang;
 How soon can you put the official carriage aside?
 Leaning on staffs, we'll greet each other by the road.¹⁹

There are many historical references in this poem. Firstly, Yan Zi (also referred to as Yan Ying, c. 500-c. 400 B.C.E.) served as Prime Minister of Qi during the Spring and Autumn era (c. 700-400 B.C.E.). By comparing Song Di to a man who was famous for wisdom and personal integrity, Sima Guang praised his honesty and implied that he was innocent in regards to the Ministry fire. Sima compared himself unfavourably to Zhou Lang (also referred to as Zhou Yu, 175-210 C.E.), who defeated the infamous general Cao Cao (155-220 C.E.) by sending flaming ships sailing into his fleet at the Red Cliff. By this comparison, Sima is lamenting that if he had been able to defeat his nemesis, Wang Anshi (1021-1086),²⁰ as Zhao Yu defeated Cao Cao, such disasters would not continue to befall worthy men, such as Song Di and his exile predicament.²¹

Song Di's *Eight Views* immediately attracted attention: they were praised for their poetic quality, were lauded in poetry, and for centuries were widely imitated by other painters. Most modern scholarship considers the scenes as exercises in atmospheric painting, yet the *Eight Views* show much more than mere studies in atmospheric phenomena. This subject touches upon different aspects of poetry, atmosphere, theory, style and aesthetics which will be explained further in this chapter. Song Di's

¹⁹ Cited in Murck, "The Eight Views of Xiao-Xiang and the Northern Song Culture of Elite" p. 119 from S. Guang, "Rhyming Ninshou Director Song Di Upon His Siting a House and Becoming a Neighbour of the South Garden" in *Sima wenzheng gong chuanjiaji*, Shanghai, 1937, p. 159.

²⁰ Wang Anshi was the chancellor who implemented Emperor Shenzong's (1048-1085, r. 1067-1085) New Policies. See F. W. Mote, *Imperial China: 900-1800*, Cambridge, 1999, p. 138-142.

²¹ Murck, "The Eight Views of Xiao-Xiang and the Northern Song Culture of Elite", pp. 119-120.

political career and the four-character titles of the eight paintings suggest that the *Eight Views* was a complex of ‘ideas from poems’ based on what Sima Guang called ‘poetry of grief’. This type of poetry was written by men “who saw their wishes checked and frustrated”.²² If the *Eight Views* were indeed related to ‘poetry of grief’ for Song Di, then the inception of the subject would have coincided with the end of his career, when he was exiled and truly ‘in grief’.²³

Ascertaining the correct date of the creation of Song Di’s *Eight Views* is difficult as there are conflicting pieces of evidence which lend weight to varying claims. It was stated that Song Di painted the first version of this series on a terrace whilst serving in Changsha in the early 1060s. This is based upon evidence that a Ming dynasty gazetteer discovered, which states that an ‘Eight Views Terrace’ was built in Changsha during the Jiayou era (1056-1064 C.E.).²⁴ However, the underlying message which associated the *Eight Views* with exile, suggests a later date. The scenes are laden with melancholy imagery which implies an official’s exile and therefore suggests that they were composed after Song Di’s dismissal from government in late 1074. The ‘Eight Views Terrace’ may have been created in response to the popularity of Song Di’s subject and to satisfy travelers’ expectations of seeing the celebrated paintings upon visiting Changsha. Later gazetteer writers possibly ascertained the date from the consideration of Song Di’s period of service in Changsha and then dated the terrace accordingly.²⁵

²² Murck, “The Eight Views of Xiao-Xiang and the Northern Song Culture of Elite”, p. 113.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.

²⁴ Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 143.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

Poetic Influence: Du Fu

At the time of the *Eight Views*' creation, the poet Du Fu was popular amongst scholars, and therefore his poems could have been a textual source for not only Shen Gua's poetic titles, but also the imagery in Song Di's paintings. Many poems written by Tang dynasty exiles proclaim the innocence and loyalty of the banished officials and the desire for an imperial reprieve to restore their reputations and former status. Du Fu's poems best capture this sentiment. As we shall see, his poems also contain many similarities to the *Eight Views*' titles and aesthetics. Furthermore, as Du Fu wrote in the Xiao-Xiang region during the last two years of his life, his poems from this period are additionally significant. The following examination of the titles through Du Fu's poetic imagery will elucidate this claim.

Firstly, *Wild Geese Descending to Sandbar* implies a poetic metaphor for order and hierarchy, as the geese's inclination of flying in a V-shaped configuration implied retaining ranks. This concept could be applied by poets to both family and court, and more importantly, with exile. Du Fu used migratory geese as a metaphor for a noble and loyal official, separated from friends, family and colleagues, similar to a wild goose separated from his flock. Du Fu continually makes reference to his desire to return to the court in the north. "Lone Goose" illustrates this:

Wild goose, alone, neither eats nor drinks:

It flies crying out, voice longing for the flock.

Who is it pities that single shadow

Now lost in a thousand folds of cloud?

Gaze as far as you can - as if still in sight.

Many calls of lament - as though still heard.

Crows of the wilderness pay it no heed -

They squawk and caw in their multitudes.²⁶

In this poem, Du Fu empathised with the bird while experiencing his own anguish. Furthermore, in his poem, “Returning Geese”, Du Fu outlined his eagerness to return to the capital, yet also included phrases that are close in syntax and meaning to the title of *Wild Geese Descending to Sandbar*. A phrase in the third line, ‘One by one they turn their backs on me’ implies an affront, which furthermore reinforces the dejection associated with being exiled. If wild geese in flight expressed the hierarchy of court officials, when they descended, as in the title *Geese Descending to Sandbar*, Du Fu hinted that descending geese are metaphors for officials who have been disgraced by unjustified exile. Contemporary scholars would have recognized Song Di’s painting title of descending geese as an allusion to southern exile, with the unspoken implication that it was unjust.

For the next painting title, *Returning Sails from Distant Shore*, Du Fu used the ‘distant shore’ as a metaphor for the place to which an official was exiled. Therefore, a boat returning from a ‘distant shore’ referred to an official returning to court from exile. Returning to court became a major theme in Du Fu’s poetry. A poem written in the last months of Du Fu’s life, entitled “Boarding a Boat to Hanyang,” elucidates the context of *Returning Sails from Distant Shore*:

Spring dwelling abandoned, I leave.

Autumn sails hasten the traveler’s return:

The garden’s vegetables are still before my eyes,

The shore’s waves are already blowing my robe;

²⁶ Du Fu quoted in D. R. McCraw, *Du Fu’s Lament from the South*, Honolulu, 1992, pp. 135-136.

My life's pattern of drifting has been inept,
 My aspirations in twilight years are thwarted;
 On the Central Plain cavalry horses abound,
 On this distant circuit ordinary letters are few;
 Geese of the pass gather as the season advances,
 Crows on the mast fly at year's end;
 From here I will go to Deer Gate,
 And forever put a stop to Hanyin schemes.²⁷

References to 'sails', 'traveler's return' and 'this distant circuit' evoke the poetic title. Scholars would have recognized the title *Geese Descending to Sandbar* as an allusion for officials suffering unjust banishment and *Returning Sails from Distant Shore* as signifying a loyal official's desire to return from exile.

The *Eight Views*' third title, *Mountain Market in Clearing Mist* also parallels with poetry by Du Fu. In the Tang dynasty, Du Fu was one of very few poets to use the contemporary rural villages and mountain markets in poetry. In his late poetry, sparsely populated mountain villages were not sites of serenity, but typically the scenes of human suffering. In one poem Du Fu explains that an autumn harvest would be plentiful, however since everything had to be sent to the government, the local village would go hungry:

In dangerous times tax collection is frequent,
 Rough-hulled grain for you is squandered;
 Clasp hands, walking in the bean field,
 Autumn flowers dense and fragrant;

²⁷ A. Murck, *Poetry and Painting in Song China: The Subtle Art of Dissent*, Cambridge, 2000, p. 84.

But when the beans mature, they cannot be eaten -

Market produce will be sent to the capital.²⁸

The harsh conditions in a mountain village prompted Du Fu to write about the callousness of officials. In his poetry, the idea of market echoes his concept of court, for he held the government responsible for rural suffering. Therefore, contemporary scholars would have regarded the 'mountain market' as a negative connotation. Furthermore, the reference to 'clearing mist' could imply lifting a metaphorical veil off the harsh conditions of the mountain village and markets, revealing the situation to the wider public through poetry.

The fourth title, *River and Sky in Evening Snow*, contains ideas such as enduring adversity and acknowledging decline. Given the advanced age and political misfortunes of officials such as Du Fu and Song Di, a title which refers to 'evening' and 'snow' implies declining fortunes. By erasing familiar landmarks snow causes disorientation and conceals the natural hierarchy. It makes movement (or progress in a career) uncertain and dangerous. Du Fu wrote many poems which included references to snowfall, such as "Facing Snow" and "Late Clearing". In the latter, he described a landscape obliterated and cleansed by snow, where only black maples punctuate the monochromatic whiteness of the scene:

Lofty hall at end of winter, a heavy snow!

Old miasmas cannot return: all is dust and powder;

Cliffs are covered, valleys disappear: white pure white.

Boulders as if split, black maples pressed down.²⁹

²⁸ Du Fu quoted in Murek, *Poetry and Painting in Song China*, p. 86.

²⁹ Du Fu quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 103.

Again, through Du Fu's poetry one may suppose that *River and Sky in Evening Snow* carries a negative view of the struggles of the exiled official.

The *Eight Views*' fifth title, *Autumn Moon over Lake Dongting*, refers overtly to decline, as autumn is a time of deterioration into bleak winter weather. Furthermore, Lake Dongting was the subject of a poem by Du Fu. In 769, he climbed the Yueyang Tower, which was built by the Wu Kingdom advisor Lu Su (172-217 C.E.), and was strategically situated where the Yangtze River joins Lake Dongting. Any artworks depicting this fortress usually include the scenic riverscape area of the Hunan where the Xiao and Xiang rivers are situated. The Yueyang Tower could very well be the viewpoint from which artists sketched the river region. Du Fu's poem entitled "Ascending Yueyang Tower" begins in a tone of elation: he is a joyous traveler who has finally reached a long-sought destination, however, more troubling thoughts soon enter his mind:

Long ago I heard of Dongting's waters,
 Today I ascended the Yueyang Tower;
 Wu and Chu to east and south are cleaved.
 The whole world day and night floats;
 From friends and family, I have no word,
 Old and ill, I have only a solitary boat:
 Warhorses stamp north of the passes,
 Leaning on the railing my tears flow.³⁰

This poem deals with the expansive lake, a personal lament on a solitary life, and contemplation over the court and the country. Furthermore, the connection between

³⁰ Du Fu quoted in D. Hawkes, *A Little Primer of Tu Fu*, Boston, 1988, pp. 206-209.

Lake Dongting, the Yueyang Tower and the court was established before Du Fu wrote this verse. Poems by Meng Haoran (689-740) initiated the connection, and three centuries later, Dongting continued to inspire meditations on the state and official service. In 1045, politician and scholar, Fan Zhongyan (989-1052) wrote a commemorative essay on the occasion of the refurbishing of the Yueyang Tower. Fan Zhongyan and Teng Zongliang (990-1047), who commissioned the essay, were in exile following their failure to persuade the emperor to implement the Qingli reforms.³¹ The renovation of the building included wall engravings of the complete anthology of Tang and Song dynasty poems written at the Yueyang Tower. Unfortunately, the Yueyang Tower was destroyed in 1079, and stone engravings of many poems that were composed there were also destroyed in the fire. However, by 1085 the pavilion was rebuilt. Therefore, the title and image of *Autumn Moon over Lake Dongting* evoked poetry composed at the Yueyang Tower and asserted the anti-reformers' claim inherent in the verses.

Again, the sixth title, *Night Rain on Xiao Xiang* implied an inauspicious decline. References to 'night' and 'rain' certainly suggest conclusion and sorrow. The legendary history of the Xiao-Xiang region could provide a noble facade for a miserable exiled official. As Murck stated: "The lament could be for the sage-king Shun, with the unspoken implication that a great ruler could not be found. Or the lament could be for Qu Yuan, the exemplar of the [slandered] loyal minister, and suggest that the government would suffer the consequences of ignoring a wise councilor's advice."³² Rain showers are often used in poetry to signify copious tears.

³¹ The Qingli reforms took place during 1043-1045. They attempted to reform the traditional way of conducting Chinese government. They were the precursor to Wang Anshi's reforms of the New Policies.

³² Murck, *Poetry and Painting in Song China*, p. 108.

Du Fu wrote, “Sadly looking across a thousand autumns, one shower of tears”.³³ Rain, especially the *yin* or negative implication of ‘night rain’, was an ideal means of expression for the scholar-official in exile, as bleak weather invited reflections on an unfulfilled career. Poetically, *Night Rain on Xiao Xiang* conveyed messages of lament from loyal exiled officials and questioned how promising careers and a flourishing state could dramatically decline.

Evening Bell from a Mist-Shrouded Temple is also rich suggests poetic images. Mists and clouds have many symbolic meanings in Chinese poetry: they are a manifestation of the earth’s vitality (*qi*), the breath of the mountain, the creator of rain, and a symbol of the wandering scholar. Clouds imply impermanence, and the ephemeral state of life. Clouds were also used as a metaphor for obscured vision and lack of understanding or enlightenment, as implied in the previously discussed title *Mountain Market in Clearing Mist*. However, the former part of the title, the toll of the ‘evening bell’, promises an epiphany. In Chinese literature a tolling bell often prompted reflection on one’s existence. Du Fu visited many Buddhist temples and befriended innumerable monks. In “Calling on the Chan Master at Zhendi Monastery”, he wrote:

A small temple high on a mountain,
 Clouds and low hanging mist, layers of peaks;
 A freezing spring flows over small pebbles,
 Pure snow falls from tall pines;
 Asking about the Dharma: I regard poetry as false,
 Disciplining my body: I see wine as indolence;
 I’m not ready to give up wife and children,

³³ Du Fu quoted in H. Frankel, “The Contemplation of the Past in Tang Poetry” in A. F. Wright & D. Twitchett (eds.), *Perspectives on the Tang*, New Haven, 1973, p. 359.

But I will site a house close to the front peak.³⁴

The first two lines evoke the location of the title. Du Fu then suggests that he is not ready to embrace a Buddhist life, however, he has made many attempts to alter his lifestyle. For Buddhists who created poems or paintings of the *Eight Views*, *Evening Bell from a Mist-Shrouded Temple* was connected to the religious life and a metaphor for Chan (J: Zen) enlightenment. For them, the implications of Du Fu's poetry suited the mood of the concerned scholar-official of the anti-reform persuasion but also reflected the wider religious sentiment of the subject.

The last title of the *Eight Views*' paintings, *Fishing Village in Evening Glow*, employs the image of exile as a fisherman or recluse. As Stephen Owen has noted, reclusion was the sole government-sanctioned alternative to service in the civil bureaucracy.³⁵ The poet outside the government was either a recluse wishing to be recruited or a discharged official enjoying the pleasures of 'retirement' while hoping still to be recalled to service. Within the rhetoric of exile, the topics of fishing and fishermen were highly esteemed. Fishing was an established euphemism for preserving oneself while waiting for better times. The lore extends back some three thousand years to the exemplar of Jiang Ziya (also known as Jiāng Taigōng or Lu Shang, act. c. 1060 B.C.E.), who was fishing when King Wen (1152-1056 B.C.E., r. 1099-1056 B.C.E.) encountered him on a tributary of the Wei River and recruited him to establish the Zhou dynasty.³⁶ By posing as fishermen, scholar-officials in retirement or in exile demonstrated their purity and their distance and detachment from worldly rewards. Du Fu's poem "Old Rustic" contains visual motifs that are commonly found in extant

³⁴ Du Fu quoted in B. Watson (trans.), *The Selected Poems of Du Fu*, New York, 2002, p. 157.

³⁵ S. Owen, *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics: Omen of the World*, Madison, 1985, pp. 28-32.

³⁶ S. Qian cited in W. H. Nienhauser, Jr., *The Grand Scribe's Records: The Hereditary Houses of Pre-Han China*, vol. 5, Bloomington, 2006, pp. 31-35.

paintings of *Fishing Village in Evening Glow*, such as fishing nets set out to dry and a boat moving through the last rays of the evening sun. The title only indicates that the poem was set in a remote place but also reminds the reader that the poet was outside the court bureaucracy. Du Fu composed a verse full of serene imagery, however, he also infused the poem with an exile's melancholy. The title *Fishing Village in Evening Glow* suggested that exiled scholar-officials were still thinking of the court even while cultivating the appearance of a detached and serene life of fishermen.

Poetic Influence: Su Shi

In this period of political turmoil, when even loyal officials were sent into exile, poets became weary of criticising serving officials therefore painting became an outlet for their feelings. In a painting, all kinds of symbols or images could be used to express anger, distaste or sorrow. To the court, Xiao-Xiang was a geographic name, however, to exiled officials, poets and scholars, the name had greater significance as the locale of a rich literature of exile. Moreover, the previously mentioned legend of Qu Yuan was notorious to poets and scholars alike. Contemporaries stressed the relationship of the *Eight Views* to poetry, which reinforced that these landscapes were not concerned with atmospheric effects alone, but also incorporated references to the literature of the region and raised concerns that the artist dared not speak aloud. A specific example of such suppression occurred in 1079 when the respected scholar, Su Shi (1037–1101) was put on trial for sedition.³⁷ He confessed to writing critical references in his poetry

³⁷ Su Shi's poetry was scrutinized at the Crow Terrace Poetry Trial of 1079. Officials working under the chancellor, Wang Anshi, believed that some of Su Shi's poetry had insulted them by praising poet Zeng Gong (1019-1083) and implied that his poetry was superior to their poetry. Su Shi acknowledged that the poem contained criticism and in his confession he wrote: "This criticizes indirectly the many unfeeling men that have recently been employed at Court, that their opinions are narrow-minded and make a raucous din like the sound of cicadas, and that they do not deserve to be heard. There is also [the final couplet] in which I created a metaphor for the expansive talent of Zeng Gong". See C. Hartman, "Poetry and Politics in 1079: The Crow Terrace Trial of Su Shih" in *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles and Reviews*, Madison, 1990, pp. 26-27.

and was granted a relatively light sentence of two year's house arrest in Hangzhou.³⁸

After this trial, poets and scholars edited their work to avoid a similar fate.

The combination of painting and poetry was a long-standing tradition in East Asian art. The idea that a painting should stimulate the viewer's imagination beyond the depicted forms was primarily discussed by Su Shi. Su Shi remains one of the most important theorists of 'picture idea' (*huayi*) or 'poetic painting'. In formulating the notion that "painting and poetry constitute originally one single discipline"³⁹ (*shi hua ben yi lu*), he explained that feelings and descriptions can fuse in mood only if a painting was composed as a poem. He wrote three poems on Song Di's *Eight Views*, in which he praised the paintings at two levels, the natural depiction that arouses the feeling of traveling into the real place, and the lyrical idea that resonates beyond the forms. Su Shi's poems read successively:

Journeying west I remember the southern kingdom:

In the hall your pictures of the Xiao and Xiang.

In dazzling vision cloudy mountains rise up;

Floating up to the horizon, wilds and waters stretch out.

The mind filled with former travels,

Then skillfully you forgot both hand and brush.

Should a traveler come from Henyang

And see these pictures, his thoughts would be a vast expanse of water.

How upright are your aspirations;

³⁸ The legal code at this time decreed execution for sedition.

³⁹ Ortiz, pp. 260-261.

Mountains and streams bend and twist.
 You first composed your painting mentally,
 Then you brushed it out with no difficulty.
 In the river market there are few families;
 In the misty village old trees grow in clumps.
 I understand you have a subtle idea;
 Let me carefully search for it.

There are many feet and inches [of painting];
 Cloudy or clearing, the view is not uniform.
 Paths coiling run toward the distant mountain,
 Waters converging flow into the nearby stream.
 You said yourself the idea was not mere imagination,
 You actually entered there by horses' hoofs.
 Some other year, on an official journey,
 Perhaps we'll talk west of Mount Swordgate.⁴⁰

At this time, the poem and the painting were conceived as a unity, with neither being an 'illustration' or 'explanation' of the other, and both ultimately supporting a view of the representation itself as limited, contingent and incomplete.⁴¹ This idea became common artistic theory in China and was further dispersed throughout East Asia. For example, several Chinese and Japanese versions of the *Eight Views* were compiled into a handscroll and all eight images bore adjacent accompanying poetry. The handscroll format was apt, as it combined poetry and painting flawlessly, and

⁴⁰ Ortiz, p. 261.

⁴¹ C. Clunas, *Art in China*, Oxford, 1997, pp. 119-120.

furthermore one could view all eight scenes in a flowing succession of panoramic landscape. The scenes were usually only separated by a misty and indefinite pause.

Song Di's *Eight Views* were circulated among the elite of society and also impressed Emperor Huizong (1082-1135, r. 1100-1126). The emperor was renowned for possessing exquisite taste and a passion for refined painting. He was enamored with the subject of the *Eight Views* and the aesthetics it upheld. He commissioned the court painter Chang Chien (act. early twelfth century) to travel by boat through the Xiao-Xiang region and record the scenery in eight scenes.⁴² The emperor himself painted a set of *Eight Views* and is said to have inscribed his sixth section with the following comment: "Having looked over Song Di's *Eight Views* I playfully took up my brush and made these. I call them *Eight Scenic Places*."⁴³ This appears in a miscellaneous notebook by the scholar Chang Cheng (d. 1139). He wrote: "Each scene carried a title written by the emperor and an imperial seal reading 'Imperial Painting Treasure'. The seal impression five inches wide was magnificent! It shows the emperor's keen enthusiasm."⁴⁴ Furthermore, two of Song Di's *Eight Views* series are listed among the works in the catalogue of the emperor's own collection.⁴⁵

Poetic Influence: Juefan Huihong

Contemporaneously, a Chan Buddhist monk named Juefan Huihong (1071-1128) composed poems on the *Eight Views*. Huihong was prompted by the comment of a fellow monk to compose verses on the *Eight Views*: "Song Di painted *Eight Views* of excellent quality. People say he creates language without sounds. Monk Yen playfully

⁴² Fong, *Images of the Mind*, p. 217.

⁴³ C. Cheng, *Hua-lu kuang-i (Miscellaneous Record on Painting)*, Taipei, 1975, p. 174.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁴⁵ Loehr, p. 225.

said that I make pictures with sounds. Therefore I have taken each scene and composed a poem.”⁴⁶ Whether Huihong ever saw Song Di’s actual paintings is unknown, yet he followed the sequence of titles in Shen Gua’s list faithfully. This anecdote shows the versatility of the *Eight Views*, from painting to poetry and *vice versa*. This dual use of the subject becomes stronger from the thirteenth century onwards, where handscrolls that contained paintings accompanied by poetry became popular. Moreover, aspects of the aesthetics can be conveyed between the two mediums. Imagery contained in the paintings can be transferred into poetry, and allusions in poetry can be portrayed in the pictorial composition. Therefore, aesthetics of paintings and poetry became intertwined in the *Eight Views*.

Huihong befriended exiled artist Huang Tingjian (1045-1105) in the Xiao-Xiang region in 1101 and later met the monk-painter Zhongren (d. 1123), who created a painting entitled *Xiao Xiang Level Distance View* for him in 1114. Huihong’s poems on the *Eight Views* not only introduced Buddhist ideas about perception and illusion into existing Xiao-Xiang imagery, but also brightened the melancholy topic with references to light and sound. Huihong also broadened the subject’s geographical scope with allusions to places in Zhejiang and Jiangxi. Subsequent painters drew upon the accessible imagery of Huihong’s poems, rather than the veiled allusions to Du Fu’s poems that may have initially influenced the *Eight Views*’ poetic titles. Nonetheless, the concealed theme of lament or complaint was retained and the subject continued to be painted by or referring to people who had been unjustly punished or exiled.

⁴⁶ Fong, *Images of the Mind*, p. 221.

Earliest Extant Examples: Wang Hong

The earliest extant Chinese example of the *Eight Views* was created by Wang Hong (act. c. 1131-c. 1161). Information on Wang Hong is scarce. According to Chinese art historian Xia Wenyan's (1296-1370) fourteenth-century painting catalogue, Wang Hong was a professional painter from Shu (modern Sichuan) and worked during the Shao-xing era (1131-1162).⁴⁷ The imperial seals affixed at the top edge of each of his paintings also suggest that he may have served at the court. The distinct gourd-shaped seals read 'imperialy inscribed' (*yu shu*), and these imply that an emperor once wrote poems or comments that were mounted with the paintings. However, these imperial inscriptions are not extant.

The *Eight Views* are the only known extant artworks by Wang Hong. (See Figures 1-8) They consist of two handscrolls, each of which contains four monochrome ink images and accompanying colophons on silk. They were painted in approximately 1160.⁴⁸ The images show signs of their age and therefore are quite dark, however, they provide a fascinating insight into an early example of the *Eight Views*.

Following the subject's precedent, Wang Hong portrayed the misty atmosphere in monochromatic ink and wash techniques to convey the climate and the region. As Wang Hong's works contain an eclectic mix of methods and techniques, it is difficult to select one style that explains his oeuvre. His brushwork, colourful foliage, architectural structures, and wintry mountains indicate a regional Sichuan painting style, a revival of the Fan Kuan (950-1032) landscape tradition, or a transitional style between Southern and Northern Song periods. His paintings adopt motifs, stylistic

⁴⁷ X. Wenyan, *Tahui baojian (Precious Mirror For Examining Painting)*, Jinxiang, 1365, p. 118.

⁴⁸ Murck, *Poetry and Painting in Song China*, p. 211.

elements, and techniques of previous masters such as Li Cheng (919-967), Gao Keming (act. c. 1008-1053), and Yan Wengui (act. 1000-1025).⁴⁹

Wang Hong's versions of the *Eight Views* were based upon Song Di's paintings, Shen Gua's poetic titles and Juefan Huihong's poetry.⁵⁰ Features of Wang Hong's images correspond directly to these poetic sources. For example, the second scene, *Returning Sails from Distant Shore*, illustrates references to the poetic title and Huihong's poetry. (See Figure 2) Through a forest of thick trees, a pavilion is positioned at the edge of the lake. Upon the balcony, a man leans on a railing and looks out across an expanse of water. Following the direction of his gaze, one can distinguish a tiny sail to the left of the distant shore. Herein Wang Hong illustrated both the poetic title and the distant view outlined by Huihong in his *Returning Sails from Distant Shore* poem:

An easterly wind suddenly turns into a whirlwind,
 I sit watching wave patterns like silk gauze;
 Setting sun illuminates the horizon: White Isle lies crosswise,
 River current swallows the sky: traveler's sail is distant.
 Leaning on a railing, threads of thoughts tangle in wind.
 Over a vast expanse, I suspect I see a wild duck or goose.
 Gradually aware of a mast emerging through the glare,
 This time adding or taking away, rely on the poem's eye.⁵¹

Whilst painting an almost invisible sailboat, Wang Hong visually echoed Huihong's reference to the story of two men who stood on a balcony and attempted to distinguish an object in the distance. Both men were deceived by vast distance, as the man from

⁴⁹ Murck, *Poetry and Painting in Song China*, p. 211.

⁵⁰ For a complete compilation of Huihong's *Eight Views* poetry, see Appendix I.

⁵¹ Murck, *Poetry and Painting in Song China*, pp. 281-282.

Yue called it a wild duck; whereas the man from Chu insisted it was a swallow.⁵²

However, Huihong asserts that it is a sail's 'mast emerging through the glare' in his poem.

Furthermore, Wang Hong's third image, *Mountain Market in Clearing Mist*, contains precipitous rock cliffs where a traveler climbs a path with a guardrail. The path turns and passes through thick woods to reach a village. There is an expanse of water on the left and a misty mountain range on the right. (See Figure 3) The high vantage point and extended recession combine to create a deep and broad panorama, in which the mountain village forms a small part. In order to convey the rusticity of the rural locality, the structures have been simplified. This image was influenced by Huihong's eight-line poem of the same name, *Mountain Market in Clearing Mist*:

Last night's rain is letting up, mountain air is heavy.
 Blowing mist, sun and shadow, light moves between trees:
 Silkworm market comes to a close: the crowd thins out,
 Public willows by market bridge; golden threads play;
 Whose house with flower-filled plot is across the valley,
 A smooth-tongued yellow bird calls in the spring breeze;
 Wine flag in vast distance - look and you can see:
 It's the one west of the road to Yellowbark Knob village.⁵³

Firstly, the location of a misty mountain market, as indicated by the painting's poetic title, is reflected in both Huihong's poem and Wang Hong's image. The sparse number of people in Wang Hong's market scene also suits Huihong's description of

⁵² The story was cited in a debate between Buddhists and Daoists to illustrate the principle that the same truth can have different interpretations. See "Discussions of Schools by Zhang Rong of Southern Qi", in L. Sengyou, *Hongmingji (Record of Spreading Enlightenment)*, Shanghai, 1936.

⁵³ Murck, *Poetry and Painting in Song China*, p. 282.

businesses closing for the day. The ‘public willow’ trees by the ‘market bridge’ in the foreground of the image were also taken from the same poetic source. Furthermore, a house with ‘flower-filled’ garden plot perched on the mountainside ‘across the valley’ was also adopted from Huihong’s verse. Finally, a wine shop ‘flag in vast distance’ is illustrated within the misty trees, almost out of sight, which further reveals Wang Hong’s debt to Huihong’s poetry. Wang Hong painted each of these minute details to fulfill his illustration of Huihong’s poem. As noted, Su Shi promoted the theory that poetic allusions can be translated into painting and imagery contained in paintings can be conveyed into poetry, and Wang Hong’s images provide a good concrete example of this.

Furthermore, motifs such as a bridge and the traveler upon a hill, often on a path with guardrail, became characteristic of this image’s iconography. Almost all twelfth and thirteenth century paintings of the theme, consciously or by convention, reflect the characteristics and positioning of landscape elements of Wang Hong and Huihong’s works. These features are present in the thirteenth century versions of the *Eight Views* attributed to Xia Gui (act. c. 1195-c. 1224) and Yujian (act. thirteenth century). The latter artist, who will be discussed further in the second chapter, wrote an accompanying quatrain, entitled, *Mountain Market in Clearing Mist*, which contains clear allusions to Huihong’s eight line poem of the same name.

Rain-pulled cloud wisps gather at Changsha,
 Faint hint of rainbow carrying evening blush.
 I like best Market Bridge beyond the public willows,
 Wine flag flutters, a traveler thinks of home.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Murck, *Poetry and Painting in Song China*, p. 286.

‘Market bridge beyond the public willows’ and ‘wine flag flutters’ mirror Huihong’s imagery of ‘public willows by market bridge’ and ‘wine flag in vast distance’. The atmosphere of both poems also correspond; as Yujian mentions the ‘rain-pulled cloud’, which aligns with Huihong’s lines, ‘last night’s rain is letting up’ and ‘blowing mist, sun and shadow’. In the last line, Yujian mentions ‘a traveler thinks of home’. Perhaps he is referring to the ‘Yellowbark Knob village’ mentioned in Huihong’s poem. However, perhaps the poet is meaning ‘Changsha’ or the surrounding Xiao-Xiang river region that is ‘home’ to the *Eight Views*. Moreover, as a thirteenth century artist, Yujian, incorporated allusions from the eleventh century poems. Huihong was inspired by Song Di’s originals and later artists such as Wang Hong and Yujian were influenced by Huihong’s poetry, and subsequently their paintings further stimulated later artists to create their own versions of the *Eight Views*. Therefore certain aspects, features and aesthetics of the *Eight Views* were preserved through several forms of art, namely poetry and painting.⁵⁵

Despite Emperor Huizong’s advocacy of the *Eight Views* previously mentioned, some critics in wider society were less enthusiastic when writing about Song Di’s *Eight Views*. One critic, Teng Chun (act. mid-twelfth century), wrote a particular criticism based upon the darkness of the paintings. He wrote:

Song Di’s Eight Views are all evening scenes. “Evening Bell from Mist-shrouded Temple” and “Night Rain on Xiao and Xiang” are practically

⁵⁵ Moreover, the moon in Wang Hong’s version of the *Autumn Moon over Dongting* was not delineated in the sky. However, the moon’s reflection upon the surface of the water was illustrated. This became a characteristic feature of the *Autumn Moon* theme. Later artists, such as Muqi, do not illustrate the moon in the sky, but rather its reflection upon the water. Wang Hong could have been following the precedent established by Song Di, as he may have seen copied versions of the original artworks. Or perhaps Wang Hong invented this characteristic which later artists followed. Furthermore, in Wang Hong’s image, beyond large trees and foliage, a large lakeside structure was delineated. This building is most likely the Yueyang Tower, which further reinforces its significance in the *Autumn Moon* subject. Certain precedents and characteristics mentioned above endure throughout the theme’s historical trajectory and therefore certain aesthetics or features remain.

impossible to represent. The sound of a bell cannot be pictured. How much less Xiao and Xiang at night! Add to that the depiction of rain and what could possibly be seen? Most likely Fu-ku [Song Di] painted and afterward the titles were determined. The paintings are merely summary sketches of enveloping clouds, gloomy and dull.⁵⁶

The idea that the paintings were created before the titles was crucial to the emerging ideal of spontaneous creativity. If the subject matter of paintings was dictated by set titles, the painter's creative process was supposedly inhibited. These ideas on the creative process developed in later Northern Song period essays, most notably in the writings of Su Shi.⁵⁷ However, there is an opposing school of thought that not only espouses the work of the past as models, but also advocates that set boundaries may inspire an imaginative response to the subject. While some critics, such as Su Shi, believe that set titles stunt creativity, other scholars believed that when all artists are painting the same scene, each artist's individuality is clarified.

Important Theories: The Southern and Northern Schools

This brings the discussion to the crucial differences between artistic styles of Song China; the so-called Northern and Southern styles. The Northern School concentrated upon meticulous brushwork and an intensive use of colour, sustained by professional painters, whereas the Southern school was practiced by scholar-amateurs and exhibited brushwork primarily in a spontaneous or rapid style usually in monochrome ink.⁵⁸ The Northern School focused upon study and depiction of a carefully defined scene, whilst the Southern School illustrated the spirit's spontaneous rhythms, of the subject and the artist.

⁵⁶ T. Chun, *Hua-chi (A Continuation of Painting History)*, Taipei, 1974, p. 317.

⁵⁷ Fong, *Images of the Mind*, p. 218.

⁵⁸ Clunas, p. 160.

The Northern and Southern Schools were not based upon geographical locations, but were based upon the schism of the Chan Buddhist religion which occurred at the death of the Fifth Patriarch Daman Hongren (601-675). He conferred his patriarchal robe onto Dajian Huineng (637-712), a man of little learning but great character and intuition. The most learned and admired student among Hongren's pupils was Yuquan Shenxiu (607-706) who would not submit to the leadership of the new Sixth Patriarch. He gathered some followers and established a new monastery in Honan (modern Henan province).⁵⁹ Therefore, Chan Buddhism was divided into two separate schools. Chinese theorist-critic Dong Qichang (1555-1636) explained that: "the Chan sect of Buddhism was divided into Northern and Southern schools in the Tang dynasty. The Northern and Southern schools in painting also appeared at the same time."⁶⁰ The Northern branch of Buddhism, led by Shenxiu, maintained the 'gradualist theory'; meaning that through learning and practice, students would gain enlightenment. However, the Southern branch of Buddhism, directed by Huineng, advocated the 'sudden or spontaneous theory', rejecting ritual and all outward displays of worship.

The main point of division between the two Buddhist schools referred to the way of obtaining enlightenment. Both schools' philosophies were based on the *Lankāvatūra sūtra*, where two different types of mind are characterised: some people will obtain enlightenment only after a long practice of meditation pursued perhaps during many lives; to others it comes all of a sudden, apparently without conscious intellectual effort. However, according to some, the Northern School's gradual method was

⁵⁹ O. Sirén, *The Chinese on the Art of Painting*, New York, 1963, p. 103.

⁶⁰ Cited in Y. Xin, "The Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)" in Y. Xin, N. Chongzheng, L. Shaojun, R. M. Barnhart, J. Cahill & W. Hung, *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, New Haven & London, 1997, p. 233.

natural preparation for the intuitive experience, which was the aim of the Southern School.⁶¹

The painting school's also advocated these ideals. However, rigorous study of painting practice, such as brushwork and composition, remained necessary for artists in both schools. The Southern School especially promoted replication of past masterpieces. Artworks by selected master artists were seen as models of influence for the students to copy and emulate. In this way, the students learned the methods, techniques and styles of the ancient masters. After a certain amount of familiarity with these features, the students could paint 'in the style of' the master artists rapidly, or almost intuitively. Ultimately, the Southern School artists' aim was to become fluent in artistic methods, where the hand and brush responded directly to the artist's experience.⁶² After such training the students were encouraged to create artworks 'spontaneously', and through such action achieve enlightenment.⁶³

Both Northern and Southern School styles were dispersed throughout East Asia. Korean artists tended to adopt the Northern School's style and methods, whereas Japanese artists, especially during the Muromachi period (1333-1568) generally preferred the Southern School. Whilst Northern and Southern Schools prospered and declined in different areas, the two styles of painting contrasted with each other markedly, and yet both could be employed on the same subject of the *Eight Views*.

⁶¹ Sirén, *The Chinese on the Art of Painting*, p. 103.

⁶² J. Rawson (ed.), *The British Museum Book Of Chinese Art*, London, 1992, p. 355.

⁶³ To clarify, the division of two separate schools of painting and two separate schools of religion split by the Buddhist schism was a theory derived by Dong Qichang. To elucidate his delineation, according to Dong, Wang Wei (699-759) was the founder of the Southern School of painting whilst Li Sixun (651-716) was the founder of the Northern School of painting. Whereas Dajian Huineng (637-712) was the leader of Southern Buddhist School whilst Yuquan Shenxiu (607-706) was the leader of Northern Buddhist School.

Dong Qichang's theory is significant because these two schools of thought, methods and approaches to painting have been used by art historians and theorists to the present day to define the styles of art throughout East Asia. There are many versions of both Northern and Southern Schools' styles of the *Eight Views*, making examples of this subject diverse and interesting. Therefore, it is an extremely important to understand the theories behind the Northern and Southern School painting styles in relation to the *Eight Views*.

Dong Qichang and his colleague Mo Shilong (1540-1587) used the theory of the Chan schism as a template for the historical development of Chinese painting styles. In order to connect Chan and painting, they argued that the two schools of painting also emerged during the Tang dynasty. As Mo Shilong died young (aged 47), Dong Qichang is commonly recognized for devising the theory. He wrote:

Li Sixun and his son of the Northern school did landscape painting, and it was carried on in the Song dynasty by Zhao Gan, Zhao Boju, Zhao Bosu, Ma Yuan and Xia Gui. Wang Wei of the Southern school painted with light ink, thus changing the way of doing certain strokes. His method was inherited by Zhang Zao, Jing Hao, Guan Tong, Dong Yuan, Juran, Guo Zhongshu, Mi Fu, and his son Mi Youren, as well as by the Four Masters of Yuan Painting [Huang Gongwang, Wu Zhen, Ni Zan and Wang Meng]. During the same period in Buddhism many of the followers of Huineng, the Sixth Master of Chan, including Maju, Yunmen and Linji, belonged to the Southern School of Chan. While many flourished, the Northern School declined.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Xin, p. 233.

The historical division may be seen to begin in the Song period, when theorists began to distinguish between professional and amateur painting. By the late Ming dynasty, when this theory was written, the assimilation of amateur literati styles into the orthodox tradition was achieved.⁶⁵ In the above passage, Dong outlines the chronology of the development of the literati painting style and identifies it with the Southern school. Dong believed that the Southern School of painting was linked with the Southern Buddhist School as the Buddhist concept of *dunwu*, meaning ‘sudden awakening’ was valued above learning.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Dong produced a critique of painting which dominated Chinese aesthetic thought for nearly three centuries, from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. His book, *Huashuo (Talking of Painting)*, contains a division of Chinese painting into historic and stylistic periods, as well as remarks on connoisseurship and on the classification of paintings.⁶⁷

Important Theory: Transformation

Dong’s classification of the Northern School was underlined with a scholarly disapproval of what he deemed to be decorative or superficial artwork. This is where his bias toward the Southern School is most clear. He believed that the Southern School encompassed the concept of ‘transformation’ which art historian Mary Tregear has explained as incorporating “both the painter’s expression of observed reality and also, within the general theory of the transmission of a tradition, the transformation of one painter’s vision by another”.⁶⁸ Dong clarified the theory of transformation further in a passage entitled ‘Conformity and Detachment’:

⁶⁵ Rawson, *The British Museum Book Of Chinese Art*, p. 118.

⁶⁶ M. Tregear, *Chinese Art*, London, 1997, pp. 165-167.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 165-167.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 165-167.

Even a great master of painting must start from imitation. In time there will be virtuosity and with virtuosity will come spontaneity. Once the method is mastered and digested by the painter he can go in and out of the method at will with his own variations and he can be completely free from his models.⁶⁹

Herein he explains the transformation process: Southern School painters should learn from the past masters, become accustomed with their approaches to painting and only then was the ‘true genius’ of an individual painter revealed. As a painter himself, Dong’s artworks conformed to this theory. In his paintings, he dissected and imitated the composition and brushwork of the Yuan masters.⁷⁰ His landscapes were views drawn from an intellectual perspective, borrowing from nature and the historical legacy of artists.⁷¹ Historical and artistic study forms the foundation of the Southern School of painting. Students use this base of study to confirm their abilities as artists and create ‘spontaneous’ works of art. The *Eight Views* was one of the most popular historical subjects for students to create their own versions.

In spite of its importance for Dong Qichang, this concept of transformation is perhaps the least understood among his major ideas. In the late Ming period, the imperial court’s power declined therefore different voices and ideas emerged and contributed to a new cultural climate. Although the literati theories were based on tradition, many of their ideas were innovative. One such innovation was this process of transforming or reinterpreting the past.⁷² As noted by Chu-Tsing Li, “Dong’s idea of literati

⁶⁹ Tregear, pp. 166-167.

⁷⁰ Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) masters, such as Huang Gongwang (1269-1354), Wu Zhen (1280-1354), Ni Zan (1301-1374) and Wang Meng (c. 1308-1385).

⁷¹ Xin, p. 233.

⁷² This notion also applies to the later Edo period *ukiyo-e* artists, such as Hiroshige, who will be discussed further in Chapter Three. Hiroshige transformed and reinterpreted the *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang* into a new location (Lake Biwa in Ōmi Province, Japan) and a new medium (*ukiyo-e* woodblock prints).

painting was derived more from Yuan precedents than from Song. It was in the Yuan period that artistic expression became more important than formal likeness, giving rise to the development of personal styles that reflected the artists' individual temperaments."⁷³

As James Cahill noted, Chinese artists appealed to learned viewers with clever allusions to earlier painters and styles: "They call upon an assumed mastery in their cultivated audience of an extensive store of esoteric references to their history and literature, as well as to the doctrines of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism."⁷⁴ This is a key aspect of the early Chinese painting practice; copying, learning and alluding to the past was seen as both scholarly and amusing. Furthermore, as Chinese paintings were aesthetically pleasing, on a purely visual level, they were also successful. Cahill stated further: "It is important not to take too literally the claims of Chinese artists that they are imitating the past, a claim that had the function of legitimizing their practice in the eyes of their original audiences."⁷⁵ Here Cahill asserts that the Chinese artists only claimed to imitate the past in order to legitimise their practices for contemporary viewers, however, in reality they were actually imitating, learning and transforming the past in their works. Cahill declared that "an 'imitation' can be very free, to the point where its relation to the claimed model is difficult to discern."⁷⁶ Cahill further explained a key aspect in Dong's theory of transformation: while "studying and copying old masters was essential to a Chinese artist's early development, some reached middle age before they emerged from this imitative stage to establish their

⁷³ C-T, Li, "The Artistic Theories of the Literati" in C-T, Li, and J. C. Y. Watt, *The Chinese Scholar's Studio: Artistic Life in the Late Ming Period*, New York, 1987, p. 18.

⁷⁴ J. Cahill, "Approaches to Chinese Painting: Part Two" in Y. Xin, N. Chongzheng, L. Shaojun, R. M. Barnhart, J. Cahill, & W. Hung, *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, New Haven & London, 1997, p. 6.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

own schools.”⁷⁷ Therefore, as noted by Cahill’s colleague, Yang Xin: “Artists study and learn the ancient master’s techniques then transform them into their own style.”⁷⁸ In this way, Dong’s theory of transformation not only explains the foundation of Chinese painting practice, but also expands the transformation trajectory of the *Eight Views* for later artists.

Transformation is a pervasive theory in the history of the *Eight Views*. For nine centuries, this subject was composed by various poets and artists in different styles and mediums throughout East Asia. During these transformations, the subject developed and evolved. Although later examples lack the immediacy of the underlying meanings intended by the early Chinese creators, the subject retained its close association to the early poetry, aesthetics and iconography. The artists who chose to depict the *Eight Views* became part of the subject’s history and legacy. When they transformed the subject into their own styles, they imbued it with further connotations and meanings. By transforming this historical subject, they rejuvenated it and therefore it survived as a relevant and popular series nine centuries after its conception.

Dong articulated further upon the fundamental qualities of the Southern School, as he advocated capturing the essence or the spirit of nature, rather than meticulously depicting its outward forms. Artists painting the *Eight Views* should not focus upon mimesis, but rather concentrate upon capturing the essence of the natural environment. One of Dong’s famous statements discusses the preparations artists must take before they can undertake creative work:

⁷⁷ Cahill, “Approaches to Chinese Painting: Part Two”, p. 6.

⁷⁸ Xin, p. 218.

There are Six Canons for the painter. The first is “spirit consonance should be lively and vitalizing.” But spirit consonance is not something that can be learned. We already know it when we are born, for it is endowed by heaven. There is, however, something that a painter can learn. Let him read ten thousand volumes and walk ten thousand miles. All these will wash away the turgid matters of the mundane world and help form the hills and valleys within his bosom. Once he has made these preparations within himself, whatever he sketches and paints will be able to convey the spirit of the mountains and rivers.⁷⁹

Here Dong is referring to the *Six Canons of Painting (Liu fa)* by Xie He (act. c. sixth century). Xie He was a figure-painter of relative stature, however, he is renowned for his elucidation of the *Six Canons of Painting*. This theory has been discussed and debated in East Asian art criticism for centuries, yet the importance of the text has never been debated. It is one of the earliest examples of art theory in East Asia and therefore is the foundation for many later theorists such as Dong Qichang. In the words of Xie He:

The first [of the *Six Canons of Painting*] is called ‘animation through spirit consonance.’ (*qiyun shengdong*)

The second is called ‘structural method in use of the brush’. (*gufa yongbi*)

The third is called ‘fidelity to the object in portraying forms’. (*yingwu xiangxing*)

The fourth is called ‘conformity to kind in applying colours’. (*suilei fuzai*)

The fifth is called ‘proper planning in placing’. (*jingying weizhi*)

⁷⁹ Li, “The Artistic Theories of the Literati”, p. 17.

The sixth is called ‘transmission through copying’. (*chanyi muxie*)⁸⁰

The first canon is extremely important to the aesthetic theory surrounding the *Eight Views* and Southern School painting in general. ‘*Qiyun shengdong*’ or ‘spirit resonance’ refers to the mood or spirit of the place depicted and the artist. This law does not restrict artists to mere mimesis, as this canon encouraged them to capture the essence or energy of a certain place or subject. Furthermore, artists who imbued their own energy or vitality into an artwork can also be incorporating the sense of ‘*qiyun*’ into their paintings. An artist must feel the intensity, emotion or energy of a place before they could paint it well. Only then will the *qiyun* of the subject and the artist flows through the brush onto the paper. Dong’s line of ‘help form the hills and valleys within his bosom’ recalls the ancient Buddhist mantra of ‘become one with the world’, which influenced painting preparation methods such as ‘when painting an object, become the object’.⁸¹ Furthermore, the sixth canon also relates to Dong’s theory. *Chanyi muxie* or ‘transmission of the past by copying’ was adopted by Dong in his theories, yet Dong altered this idea somewhat. He extolled to students, learn from the past, however, transform the past. It is not enough to imitate, a student must infuse the work with the *qiyun* of a place and themselves.

⁸⁰ J. Kuo, “Expressive Style and Quality” in S. Bush & H. Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 95-96.

⁸¹ Su Shi wrote: “When Yu Ko painted bamboos he was conscious only of the bamboos, and not of himself as a man... he left his body, which was transformed into bamboos of endless freshness and purity. As there is no Zhuangzi any more in this world, who can understand such as concentration of the spirit?” Zhuangzi refers to a legend of a musician who broke his lute when his only friend that could understand his music died. In this statement, Su Shi echoed the form of the words the musician spoke. Su Shi also instructed the painter: “grasp the brush; fix your attention, so you can see clearly (in your mind) what you want to paint; start at once, move the brush following what you see as the buzzard swoops on the jumping hare. If you hesitate a moment it is gone”. This last statement epitomizes the attitude adopted by the Buddhist painter. For Buddhist enlightenment was expected to be sudden, as was the painter’s intuition. See P. Rawson, “The Methods of Zen Painting” in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 7, no. 4, Oxford, October, 1967, p. 324.

Conclusion

The *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang* is a complex subject. The geographic location provides a picturesque scene and natural environs which compliment the atmospheric phenomena that contribute and align with the poetics and aesthetic tone of the subject. Moreover, these also aligned with the artistic styles of the Song period. Since the schism of Buddhism in China, two schools of thought and two schools of painting separated not only worship, but also style and taste. Religion aside, the styles of these two schools defined the separation of study, methods, approaches and preparations to painting and declared their definition of taste. While the Northern School students, serious and studious, carefully rendered their depictions in colour, the Southern School chose study of ancient artworks as a foundation to spontaneously create monochrome paintings where atmosphere, spirit and mood were paramount. Dong Qichang's theory illustrates not only the delineation between style in Chinese art history but also explains differences in depictions of the *Eight Views*. The next chapter will cover the subject's dispersal throughout East Asia: from the later Chinese examples, to the Japanese and Korean versions of the *Eight Views*. Further delineations between the two Schools will be clarified by examples of the *Eight Views* in these East Asian countries.