

# 再論商琦〈春山圖〉平遠圖式與其社會網絡

## Revisiting the 'Pingyuan' Perspective of Shang Qi's '*Mountains in Spring*' Painting and His Social Network

莊鎮元

Chuang, Chen-yuan David

倫敦大學亞非學院東亞藝術史與考古學研究所碩士生<sup>1</sup>

### 摘要 Abstract<sup>2</sup>

This essay focuses on the painting 'Mountains in Spring' by Shang Qi, an eminent painter of the Yuan Dynasty. The research aims to reassess the landscape significance of the painting and construct Shang Qi's social network and activity trajectory. The study explores the use of 'Pingyuan' perspective and audience configuration in the artwork, highlighting similarities with other works from the period. It also examines Shang Qi's social role as a court painter and his interactions with other prominent figures, such as Zhao Mengfu. The research draws upon various methodologies, including space analysis and formal analysis, to shed light on Shang Qi's artistic contributions. The essay argues and expand that Shang Qi's painting style is rooted in the Li-Guo school but emphasizes the need for a more comprehensive understanding of his art and contextual significance. The lack of textual records poses a challenge, but by considering Shang Qi's social status and geographical context as a descendant of the Dongping literati group, a deeper understanding of his artworks can be achieved.

**Keywords :** Shang Qi, *Mountains in Spring*, Zhao Mengfu, Dongpin, Social Network

---

<sup>1</sup> BA Department of History, National Taiwan University. MA History of Art and Archaeology of East Asia, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

<sup>2</sup> This essay is written by English, and the Chinese abstract is arranged subsequently.

本文探討元代商琦〈春山圖〉的山水畫意，並構建商琦的社會網絡和活動軌跡。本文探討〈春山圖〉使用的平遠圖式和觀眾設定，並強調它與當時其他作品的相似之處；另外考察商琦作為宮廷畫家的社會地位，以及他與其他重要畫家（如趙孟頫）的互動。本文利用不同的方法論，包括空間分析和風格分析，以揭示商琦的藝術貢獻。本文繼承學界對商琦繪畫風格扎根於李郭派的研究成果，但強調對他的藝術和文化背景意義的更全面理解的必要性。然而由於缺乏文本記錄，這也帶來了一定的挑戰。通過考慮商琦作為東平文人的後代在地理背景和社會地位上的重要性，可以更深入地理解他的藝術作品。

**【關鍵詞】** 商琦、〈春山圖〉、平遠、趙孟頫、東平、社會網絡

## Chapter1 Introduction

The painting ‘Mountains in Spring’ (Chun Shan Tu 春山圖) is currently housed in The Palace Museum in Beijing. It boasts dimensions of 214.5 cm in length and 39.6 cm in width. Notably, the scroll bears the signature ‘Cao Nan Shang Qi De Fu,’ [曹南商琦德符] a clear indication that the artist is Shang Qi 商琦 (?- 1324), an eminent painter of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). Shang Qi hailed from Jiyang, Caozhou (present-day Heze, Shandong Province).<sup>3</sup> His father is the counsellor of the Shandong Dongpin Yan Clan 山東東平嚴氏家族, one of the six major noble families of the Han army during the Mongol-Yuan period,<sup>4</sup> Shang Ting 商挺 (1209-1288).



Fig1 Shang Qi ‘Mountains in Spring’, based in The Palace Museum in Beijing, 39.6\*214.5 cm.

Shang Qi held the esteemed position of Jixian Shijiang Xueshi (Imperial Academy Academician 集賢侍講學士),<sup>5</sup> and his artistic prowess primarily manifested in the

<sup>3</sup> For the biography and life of Shang Qi, see Wang Deyi 王德毅 et al., *Yuanren zhuangji ziliao suoyin* 元人傳記資料索引 (Index of Biographical Data of the Yuan Dynasty) (Taipei: Xinwenfeng, 1979-1982), 1028. Refer to The Scripta Sinica database.

<sup>4</sup> During the early Yuan Dynasty, there were six prominent noble families among the Han military officials, the Tiancheng Liu family 天成劉氏, the Zhending Shi family 真定史氏, the Baoding Zhang family 保定張氏, the Dongping Yan family 東平嚴氏, the Jinan Zhang family 濟南張氏, and the Gaoping Dong family 藁城董氏, see Xiao Qiqing 蕭啟慶, “Yuandai jige hanjun shijia de shi huan yu hunyin 元代幾個漢軍世家的仕宦與婚姻 (The Official Careers and Marriages of Several Han Military Noble Families in the Yuan Dynasty),” in *Mengyuanshi xinyan* 蒙元史新研 (Mongol-Yuan History New Research), ed. by Xiao Qiqing (Taipei: Yunchen, 1994), 265-348. Additionally, for a list of scholars from Dongpi, see Sun Kekuan 孫克寬, *Yuandai hanwenhua zhi huodong* 元代漢文化之活動 (Activities of Han Culture in the Yuan Dynasty) (Taipei: Zhonghua, 1968) and Fan Xiangda 范祥達, “Yuanchu de Dongping xuefeng ji yingxiang 元初的東平學風及影響 (Academy and influence of Dong-Pi in initial stage of Yuan Dynasty),” *Journal of History National Chung Hsing University*, no. 19 (2007): 45-80.

<sup>5</sup> Song Lian 宋濂 et al., *Yuanshi* 元史 (History of the Yuan Dynasty), Hongwu jiushiji juanben henan

domain of landscape painting and Yuan Court fresco/mural painter,<sup>6</sup> therefore, he is hailed as one of the three preeminent painters of the early Yuan Dynasty, alongside Gao Kegong 高克恭 (1248-1310) and Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322). Furthermore, Shang Qi's influence permeated the later Daoist artists of the Yuan period, including Fang Congyi 方從義 (approximately 1302-approximately 1393) and Zhang Yanfu 張彥輔 (dates unknown, active in the late Yuan Dynasty).<sup>7</sup>

During the Mongol-Yuan period, the Shang family established a significant literary and artistic network within the court and among the northern literati circle. Shang Qi's reputation is evident in the words of his friend, Confucian scholar Yu Ji 虞集 (1272-1348), who extolled him as a person of noble lineage and exceptional talent, particularly in the realm of landscape painting.<sup>8</sup> [集賢學士左山商公德符，以世家高

---

jianben 洪武九十九卷本和南監本 (Taipei: Dingwen, 1981), volume 159, 3738-3742. Refer to The Scripta Sinica database.

<sup>6</sup> Regarding the evidence of Shang Qi's role as a court mural painter, it can be found in the archaeological site of Dadu (Great Capital), see Lin Meicun 林梅村, "Yuan Dadu Xitaiyigong kao Bei jing Xichengqu Houyingfang he Houtaoyuan Yuandai yizhi chutu wenwu yanjiu 元大都西太乙宮考—北京西城區后英房和后桃園元代遺址出土文物研究 (On the Western Taiyi Palace of Khanbaliq: Research on the Relics of the Houyingfang and Houtaoyuan in the Xicheng District, Beijing)." *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan*, no. 6 (2018): 6-21.

<sup>7</sup> In this context, I refers to Fang Congyi and Zhang Yanfu as "Daoist art painters" based on their social identities, rather than restricting their painting styles to the study of religious imagery; for the latest research on this topic see Hsieh Shu-wei 謝世維, "Yuanmo Mingchu de Daojiao shanshui yishu Fangcongyi yu Daojiao shanshui yishu de guanxi 元末明初的道教山水藝術：方從義與道教山水藝術的關係 (Daoist Landscape Art in the Late Yuan and Early Ming: The Relationship of Fang Congyi and Daoist Landscape Art)," *Bullet of Chinese*, no. 71 (Taipei: Department of Chinese Language and Literature, NTNU): 69-106.

<sup>8</sup> The English context: "The virtuous and erudite scholar-official Shang Gong Defu, known for his noble heritage and exceptional talent, excelled in the realm of ink and brush, particularly in the depiction of landscapes. His artistic prowess garnered great admiration and recognition." And see Yu Ji 虞集, *Dao Yuan Xue Gu Lu* 道園學古錄 (Record of Studying Antiquities in Dao Garden), in 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (Complete Works of the Four Treasuries from the Jingyan Library) (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1986, reproduced from the National Palace Museum's collection 據國立故宮博物院藏本影印), volume 19, wangzhizhoumu zhi ming 王知州墓誌銘, 168.

才，遊藝筆墨，偏妙山水，尤被眷遇。]

The academic community has made remarkable strides in researching the cultural history, calligraphy, painting, and social networks of the Dongpin literati.<sup>9</sup> A prominent focus lies on the painting style of Shang Qi, with Kei Suzuki delving into the significance of mid-Yuan dynasty painters, including Shang Qi, Cao Zhibai 曹知白 (1271-1355), Tang Di 唐棣 (1287-1355), and Zhu Derun 朱德潤 (1294-1365), within the broader landscape painting tradition established by Li Cheng 李成 (919-967) and Guo Xi 郭熙 (approx. 1000-approx. 1090).<sup>10</sup> Exploring the lineage of influences, Ma Jige and Ren Daobin referenced the “*Tu Hui Bao Jian*” 圖繪寶鑑, “Shang Qi learned from Li Yingqiu (Li Cheng), with his ink technique, created a unique style of ink bamboo painting that also possesses its own charm.”<sup>11</sup> [師李營丘，得其墨法，墨竹自成一家，亦有妙處] to propose that Shang Qi acquired knowledge from Li-Guo artistic style, ultimately cultivating his distinctive ink bamboo style.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> For the latest research and review, see Lu Hui-wen 盧慧紋, “Yuanchu beifang shidafu de shuhua huodong yu jianchang yi Wangyun qiujian xiansheng daquanji wei zhongxin de jidian kaocha 元初北方士大夫的書畫活動與鑒藏：以王惲(1227-1304)《秋澗先生大全集》為中心的幾點考察 (The Activities and Connoisseurship of Painting and Calligraphy Among Northern Literati in the Early Yuan: A Survey of Several Points Focusing on Wang Yun’s (1227-1304) *Complete Collected Works of Qiujian*),” *Gugong xueshu jikan* 38, no. 2 (2020): 47-81.

<sup>10</sup> Kei Suzuki 鈴木敬, *History of Chinese Painting, Volume II: Yuan Dynasty* 中國繪畫史·卷之二 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1988), 63-104. Furthermore, for discussions on Yuan Dynasty painters such as Cao Zhibai, Tang Di, and Zhu Derun in the middle and late periods, see James Cahill, “Yuandai” 元代 (Yuan Dynasty), in Yang Xin, Richard M. Barnhart, Nie Chongzheng, James Cahill, Lang Shaojun and Wu Hung eds., *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting* 中國繪畫三千年 (Taipei: Lianjing, 1994), 154-167.

<sup>11</sup> Xia Wenyan 夏文彥, *Tu Hui Bao Jian* 圖繪寶鑑 (Biographies of skilled painters and also touching upon art histories), Ming Chongzhen Shenyushenmaoshi jiguge keben 明崇禎申虞山毛氏汲古閣刻本, volume 5, pp 2-1. Refer to The Scripta Sinica database.

<sup>12</sup> Ma Jige 馬季戈, “Shangqi shengping ji qi huihua yishu 商琦生平及其繪畫藝術 (The Life and Art of Shang Qi).” *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan*, no. 2 (1992): 86-94, and also Ren Daobin 任道斌, “lun Zhaomengfu yu Yuandai shaoshu minzu shuhuajia 論趙孟頫與元代少數民族書畫家 (On Zhao mengfu and Minority Ethnic Painters in the Yuan Dynasty),” *Xinmeishu*, no. 2 (1994): 52-57.

In contrast, Liang Xiaoling, through reinterpretation and brushwork analysis of Shang Qi's paintings, speculated that he drew inspiration from the Li-Guo school while incorporating the lyrical qualities of Dong Yuan 董源 (?-962) from the Five Dynasties period and the meticulous painting style of Xia Gui 夏珪 (1195-1224) from the Southern Song (1127-1279) Painting Academy.<sup>13</sup> Shane McCausland delved into pigment analysis, arguing that the green and blue landscapes featured in Shang Qi's 'Mountains in Spring' may have been influenced by the style of Li Sixun 李思訓 (651-716), an esteemed Tang dynasty painter.<sup>14</sup> Shih Shou-chien, from the perspective of landscape features, conducted a formal analysis, positing that Shang Qi inherited the landscape tradition from Wu Yuanzhi 武元直 (dates unknown) of the Jin dynasty (1115-1234), further exploring the viewer's perception when observing 'Mountains in Spring.'<sup>15</sup> Recent years have seen Jerway Liang master's thesis undertaking a comparative analysis of the distant landscape features in 'Mountains in Spring' with the structured rock contours, concluding that the balanced effect of the mountainous terrain on the picture surpasses the intended spatial depth, thereby demonstrating characteristics akin to the Li-Guo artistic style, as exemplified in Guo Xi's 'Early Spring' (Figure 2).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Liang Xiaoling 梁曉玲, "dui Shangqi ni xizui xishan qingyuan tu de kaocha yu jiangshang 對商琦《擬夏珪溪山清遠圖》的考察與鑑賞 (An Examination and Appreciation of Shang Qi's Imitation of Xia gui's 'Xi mountainous Landscape')," *Gansu Social Science*, no. 1 (2001): 30-31.

<sup>14</sup> Shane McCausland, *The Mongol Century, Visual Cultures of Yuan China, 1271-1368* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2014), 68.

<sup>15</sup> Regarding the composition of the audience, Shi Shou-chien believes that it consists of Jin dynasty literati such as Yuan Haowen, aiming to cater to their refined tastes, see Shih Shou-chien 石守謙, "Zhaomengfu yiwei zi Yan hui Yuanchu wenren shenshuihua yu Jindai shiren wenhua 趙孟頫乙未自燕回—元初文人山水畫與金代士人文化 (Zhao Mengfu's Return to the South in 1295: The Early Yuan Literati Landscape Painting and the Jin Literati Culture)," *Meishushi yanjiu jikan*, no. 15 (2015): 187-240.

<sup>16</sup> Jerway Liang 梁哲瑋, "Image of Transportation: Study on Carts Paintings Development in China 運輸的圖像：盤車圖的形塑和變遷," (MA thesis., National Taiwan University, 2015), 63.

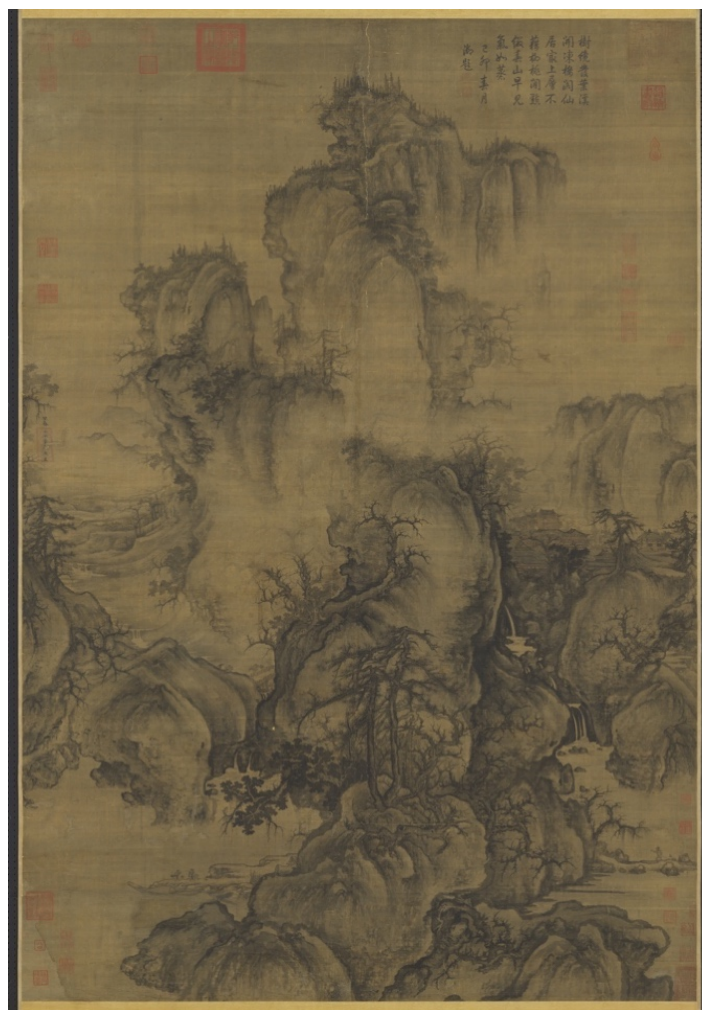


Fig2 Guo Xi 'Early Spring', based in National Palace Museum, 158.3\*108.1 cm.

Within the academic community, it has become a consensus that Shang Qi's painting style is rooted in the Li-Guo artistic style. However, research on the art history of Dongpin literati primarily concentrates on calligraphy, painting, and cultural history, with limited discussions on social networks, often neglecting exploration into Shang Qi's contributions. Although Shih Shou-chien endeavored to establish the influence of Zhao Mengfu's artistic trajectory on Shang Qi's painting experience, much of the understanding of Shang Qi's sources of inspiration remains reliant on textual records, disregarding his geographical context and crucial social status as a descendant of the Dongpin literati group.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> For the research method I want to adopt in this essay, see Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Champaign: University of Illinois, 1991), and Jonathan Hay, *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), and Cheng-hua Wang 王正華, *wangluo yu jiecheng zuoxiang liti de Ming*

This essay seeks to reassess the landscape significance of ‘Mountains in Spring’ as a primary objective. Additionally, it aims to construct Shang Qi's social network and activity trajectory, shedding light on his interactions and collaborations. Finally, it delves into the challenge of reevaluating Shang Qi and his paintings, given the lack of sufficient and robust textual records, and seeks to establish effective connections between the artist's social role and his artworks. By exploring these dimensions, a more comprehensive understanding of Shang Qi's artistic contributions and contextual significance can be achieved.

## Chapter2 The Use of ‘Pingyuan’ Perspective and Audience Configuration in *Mountains in Spring*

Looking up at the mountain peak from its base is called ‘gaoyuan’, indicating a high and distant perspective. Peering at the back of the mountain from its front is referred to as ‘shenyuan’, representing a deep and distant perspective. Observing distant mountains from a close range is known as ‘pingyuan’, signifying a flat and distant perspective.<sup>18</sup>

山有三遠，自山下而仰山巔，謂之高遠，自山前而窺山後，謂之深遠，自近山而望遠山，謂之平遠。

（北宋）郭熙，《林泉高致集》

This concept is described by Guo Xi in his work “*Linquan Gaozhi Ji*” 林泉高致集 during the Northern Song dynasty (960-1279). In the context of Shang Qi's ‘Mountains in Spring’ and its artistic techniques, the concept of ‘Pingyuan’ 平遠 is employed, referring to the perspective of observing distant mountains from a close vantage point. This approach is influenced by the spatial representation technique known as the ‘Three

---

*Qing huihua yu shijue wenhua* 網絡與階層：走向立體的明清繪畫與視覺文化研究 (Networks and Hierarchies: Towards a Three-dimensional Study of Ming-Qing Painting and Visual Culture) (Taipei: Shitou chubanshe, 2020), 2-3.

<sup>18</sup> Gui Xi 郭熙 and Gui Si 郭思, “linquan gaozhi ji 林泉高致集 (Collected Works of Sublime Forest and Springs),” in Yu Jianhua 俞劍華, *Zhongguo hualun lei bian* 中國畫論類編 (An Anthology of Chinese Painting Theory) (Beijing: People's Fine Arts, 1957), Volume 1, 631.



Distances in Tang Style' 唐式三遠.<sup>19</sup> Comparing the horizontal composition of 'Mountains in Spring' with Dong Yuan's 'Summer Mountains' 夏山圖 (Figure 3) housed in the Shanghai Museum, several similarities emerge.<sup>20</sup> Both paintings portray the prominent outlines of foreground mountains adorned with towering trees. The adoption of Pingyuan perspective in these works aligns with Fong C. Wen's observation that early Chinese landscape painters sought to actively engage viewers through the expression of Gaoyuan 高遠, Pingyuan, and Shenyuan 深遠, symbolizing high distance, flat distance, and deep distance, respectively.<sup>21</sup>



Fig3 Dong Yuan 'Mountains in Spring', based in Shanghai Museum, 49.4\*313.2 cm.

Shang Qi's strategic utilization of the Pingyuan perspective bears resemblance to the approach employed by Wang Ximeng 王希孟 (1096-1119), a court painter of the

<sup>19</sup> Regarding the "Three Distances of Tang Style" and "Three Distances of Song Style," the former refers to the spatial representation techniques of "High Distance, Deep Distance, and Flat Distance" that have been used since the Tang Dynasty. The latter refers to the "Broad Distance, Enigmatic Distance, and Serene Distance" seen in the court paintings of the Northern Song Huizong era (1082-1135, reign from 1100-1126) and the small-scale landscape paintings of the Southern Song. For more information, see Chen Pao-chen 陳葆真, "cong kongjian biao xian fa kan Nansong xiao jing shan shui hua de fazhan 從空間表現法看南宋小景山水畫的發展 (The Representation of Space in the Southern Song Landscape Paintings)," *Gugong xueshu jikan* 13, no. 3 (1996): 83-104. In recent years, Li Mengxue has also conducted research on Han Zhuo's 韓拙 "Shanshuichunquanji 山水純全集 (Complete Collection of Landscape Paintings)" from the Huizong era of the Northern Song Dynasty, see Li Meng-hsueh 李孟學, "'shanshu ichun quanji' de san yuan guan 《山水純全集》的三遠觀 (The Three Distances of Shanshuichunquanji)," *Shuhua yishu xuekan*, no. 26 (2019): 103-122.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Barnhart, "Marriage of the Lord of the River: A lost Landscape by Tung Yuan," *Artibus Asiae Supplementum*, no. 27 (Ascona: Artibus Asiae, 1970), p.38.

<sup>21</sup> Wen C. Fong 方聞, "zhongtan liangjian Dong Yuan zhi zuo zaoqi Zhongguo jufu shan shui hua de fanshi 重探兩件董元之作——早期中國巨幅山水畫的範式 (Revisiting Two Dong Yuans (active ca. 937-76): paradigms in Early Chinese Monumental Landscape Painting)," *Gugong xueshu jikan* 30, no. 4 (2013): 4-5.

Northern Song dynasty, in his work ‘A Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains’ 千里江山圖 (Figure 4, 4a) currently housed in The Palace Museum in Beijing. This similarity may be attributed to the significant number of viewers.<sup>22</sup> However, it is essential to note that the positioning and viewing angles of the mountains differ. ‘Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains’ emphasizes the continuous expanse of mountainous terrain and a bird's-eye view perspective, while ‘Mountains in Spring’ concentrates on the clouds and the horizontal view within the mountains.



Fig4 Wang Xiemeng ‘A Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains’, based in The Palace Museum in Beijing, 51.5\*1191.5 cm



Fig4a Partial detail of Wang Xiemeng ‘A Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains’

Unquestionably, the most captivating aspect of ‘Mountains in Spring’ for viewers is the primary mountain on the left side. The vertical orientation of this mountain nearly reaches the painting's edge, with clouds tracing its contours and infiltrating the gaps between the mountains. At this juncture, the artist seemingly succeeds in capturing viewers' attention as the clouds become the prevailing atmosphere, extending from the main mountain and permeating the flat ground. The clouds in this painting move slowly

<sup>22</sup> Regarding the discussion of the ‘Thousand Miles of Mountains and Rivers’ painting, please refer to the following sources, see Chen Yun-ru 陳韻如, “Hua Yi Yi Ye zhonggu Song Huizong zhao de huihua huodong 畫亦藝也：重估宋徽宗朝的繪畫活動 (*‘Painting as Arts’*: Re-examine the Painting Activities at Sung Huizong’s Court) (PhD diss., National Taiwan University, 2009), 203-207. For the exploration of the green-blue landscape style from the Tang to Yuan dynasties, including the transformation of artistic intentions related to religious connotations and literati aspirations, please see Shou-chien Shih, “Eremitism in Landscape Paintings by Ch’ien Hsuan (Ca. 1235-before 1307)” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1984), pp. 279-285.

and lack the dynamic motion of ‘Early Spring’ 早春圖. Nonetheless, they deliberately demarcate the boundary between the mountains and the flat ground. This gradual visual effect is achieved through intentional employment of blank spaces, smudging techniques, and the endeavor to extend the clouds along the scroll and mountain contours.

Moreover, the artist demonstrates meticulous attention to the arrangement of water flow (Figure 5), with traces of Guo Xi's painting technique discernible in the depiction of the river on the far left (Figure 6) and the middle of the scroll (Figure 7). The tranquil movement of slow-flowing water emerges from the clouds and gently converges with the riverbank. On the right side, water flows out of the valley, cascading into the river in a zigzag pattern, in harmony with the natural topography.



Fig5 (Left) Partial detail of Shang Qi ‘Mountains in Spring’  
 Fig6 (Middle) Partial detail of Guo Xi ‘Early Spring’  
 Fig7 (Right) Partial detail of Guo Xi ‘Early Spring’

We are inevitably faced with a question that demands a response: Where do the clouds come from? And how can we determine the foreground, middle ground, and background of the mountains without being constrained by the segmentation of clouds? It is challenging to find a satisfactory answer solely from the depiction of the mountains. Therefore, the slope at the bottom of the composition becomes a discernible reference point. For the figures standing on the slope, this can be regarded as a panoramic view of the scenic landscape.

As the clouds span across the left half of the composition, serving as a medium to divide the upper and lower parts of the painting, the arrangement of the figures on the slope further solidifies the distinction between the distant, middle, and near views. Additionally, the trees in the foreground are depicted larger than other trees, enabling viewers to perceive the painting scene from a comprehensive perspective. It is worth

noting that the placement of a stretch of water's edge at the foot of the mountain employs a Pingyuan strategy. Dimly visible beneath the clouds hovering over the main mountain, a bridge can be discerned, acting as a link between the slope and the mountain.

### Chapter3 Social Network: from North to South<sup>23</sup>

Shang Qi, in the eighth year of the DaDe reign 大德八年 (1304) under Emperor Chengzong 元成宗 (1265-1307) of the Yuan dynasty, entered the Suwei 宿衛 (Imperial Guard). Since then, “he has been known by the emperor, receiving baskets and trays three times a day.”<sup>24</sup> [昔者累蒙天子知，晝日三接賜筐篚] During the Mongol-Yuan period, the position of the Suwei provided a special channel for the promotion of military officers' descendants in their official careers. For Shang Qi, who came from a literati family, this seemed like an exceptional qualification granted to him.<sup>25</sup> Based on this consideration, Shang Qi was not just a literati but also a court painter. His identity as a court painter seemed to be highly valued by the Mongol Yuan court, as can be gleaned from the writings of Wang Shizhen 王士禎 (1634-1711), a literati of the Ming dynasty:

“When Emperor Renzong of the Yuan dynasty was in the Eastern Palace, there were talented individuals: for literature, there was Yuan Fuchu, an Imperial Academy Academician of Qinghe; for calligraphy, there was the Imperial Academy Associate Clerk Zhao Ziang of Wuxing; for landscape painting, there was Shang Defu, a Consultant Academician of the Jiexian Academy; and Wang

<sup>23</sup> In April 2023, I’ve finished my BA thesis that involved the discussion of social/intellectual network of the Northern literati circle, see Chen-yuan David Chuang 莊鎮元, “Intellectual Network and Confucian Practice of the Zhang Family at Baoding in Mongol-Yuan Period,” (BA thesis., National Taiwan University, 2023).

<sup>24</sup> Ma Zuchang 馬祖長, *Shi Tian Wen Ji* 石田文集, Rare Edition of the Siku Quanshu 四庫全書珍本 (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1971), volume 20.

<sup>25</sup> Xiao Qiqing 蕭啟慶, “Yuandai jige hanjun shijia de shi huan yu hunyin 元代幾個漢軍世家的仕宦與婚姻 (The Official Careers and Marriages of Several Han Military Noble Families in the Yuan Dynasty),” in *Mengyuanshi xinyan* 蒙元史新研 (Mongol-Yuan History New Research), ed. by Xiao Qiqing (Taipei: Yunchen, 1994), 265-348.

Zhenpeng of Yongjia, was one of them.”<sup>26</sup>

元仁宗在東宮時，材藝之士：文章則翰林學士清河元復初，書翰則翰林承旨吳興趙子昂，畫山水則集賢侍讀學士商德符，而永嘉王振鵬其一也。

In terms of Shang Qi's social role, his proficiency in landscape painting became a highly valued skill in the Mongol Yuan court, comparable to Yuan Fuchu (Yuan Mingshan 元明善, 1269-1332), Zhao Mengfu, and Wang Zhenpeng (active in 1280-1329), each with their own strengths. In other words, Shang Qi's proximity to the Mongol Yuan court was no less than that of his father, Shang Ting, and perhaps even exceeded it.

Furthermore, the Shang family as a group of literati from the end of the Jin dynasty and the beginning of the Yuan dynasty has been recognized by the academic community. Starting from their base, it is possible to infer some potential sources of visual experience from Shang Qi's activities and his interactions with Zhao Mengfu. In the 23rd year of the Yuan dynasty (1286), Zhao Mengfu was summoned by Kublai Khan (1215-1294, reign 1271-1294) and traveled north to Dadu (present-day Beijing). After arriving in Dadu, Zhao Mengfu established friendships with literati from various ethnic groups, forging connections with figures such as Gao Kegong and calligrapher Kangli Naonao 康里巎巎 (1295-1345),<sup>27</sup> and they appreciated calligraphy and painting together.<sup>28</sup> He also became acquainted with Shang Ting, the father of Shang Qi, and

<sup>26</sup> Wang Shizhen 王士禎, edited by Jin Siren 靳斯仁, *Chi Bei Ou Tan* 池北偶談 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1982, 1987 third printing in Hubei 湖北第三刷), volume 13, 303. Refer to The Scripta Sinica database.

<sup>27</sup> For the discussion of Kangli Naonao, see Lu Hui-wen 盧慧紋, “Yuandai shujia Kangli Naonao yanjiu 元代書家康里巎巎研究 (MA thesis., National Taiwan University, 1996)”, and also Lu Hui-wen 盧慧紋, “Kangli Naonao xing cao shu fenqiyu fengge suyuan zai sikao Yuandai fei hanzu shujia de hanhua wenti 康里巎巎 (1295-1345) 行草書分期與風格溯源：再思考元代非漢族書家的「漢化」問題 (Kangli Naonao (1295-1345) and His Cursive Calligraphy: Reconsidering “Sinification” during the Mongol Yuan Period),” *Gugong xueshu jikan* 32, no. 1 (2014): 47-113.

<sup>28</sup> Ren Daobin 任道斌, “lun Zhaomengfu yu Yuandai shaoshu minzu shuhuajia 論趙孟頫與元代少數民族書畫家 (On Zhao mengfu and Minority Ethnic Painters in the Yuan Dynasty),” *Xinmeishu*, no. 2 (1994): 52-57.

their interactions are recorded in the "Xuedang Yaji" (雅集).<sup>29</sup> In the third year of the Dazhong period (1310) of Emperor Shizu of the Yuan dynasty, Zhao Mengfu returned to Dadu from the south of the Yangtze River and was appointed as an Academician of the Jiexian Academy. At this time, Shang Qi was a lower-ranking scholar in the Jiexian Academy. Whether Shang Qi was a disciple of Zhao Mengfu cannot be conclusively determined, but Zhao Mengfu left a poem on Shang Qi's mural landscape painting:

“The lingering mist dissipates, moistening the green mountains, The falling petals scatter, the creek flows swiftly. In the Peach Blossom Spring, there is abundant spring, At the entrance of the cave, the spring mist sways the green creepers. The green creepers sway, the mist hangs on the sheer cliffs, The flowing stream cascades down three thousand feet. The jade grass spreads abundantly throughout the gorges, The towering pines stand tall, piercing the blue sky. Roosters crow, dogs bark, forming a village on its own, Residents living until old age without recognizing each other. Celestial visitors in the realm of Penglai know the path to immortality, Creating extraordinary simplicity with their brushstrokes. Where else can one find such a mountain in this painting, Yearning to move and reside within its midst.”<sup>30</sup>

宿雲初散青山濕，落紅繽紛溪水急。桃花源裡得春多，洞口春煙搖綠蘿。綠蘿搖煙掛絕壁，飛流淙下三千尺。瑤草離離滿澗阿，長松落落凌空碧。雞鳴犬吠自成村，居人至老不相識。瀛洲仙客知仙路，點染丹青奇輕素。何處有山如此圖，移家欲向山中住。

Such high praise from Zhao Mengfu makes it difficult to deny that he indeed saw Shang Qi's works. With the established acquaintanceship and friendship between Zhao Mengfu and Shang Qi, one may wonder if Shang Qi's "pingyuan" (distant view) style of painting, characterized by its continuous mountain ranges, carefully arranged

<sup>29</sup> Yao Sui 姚燹, *Mu An Ji* 牧庵集 (Qing Qianlong Wuyingdian Juzhenban Congshu 清乾隆武英殿聚珍版叢書), volume 31, “ba xuetang yaji hou 跋雪堂雅集後 (Postscript to the Xue Tang Yaji),” 10-11. Refer to The Scripta Sinica database.

<sup>30</sup> Gu Sili 顧嗣立, 題商德符學士桃源春曉圖 (Inscription on the Painting ‘Spring Dawn in the Peach Blossom Paradise’ by Scholar Shang Defu), in *Yuan Shi Xuan* 元詩選 (Selected Yuan Poetry) (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1987), 557.



streams, and cloud formations, is related to Zhao Mengfu's deliberate pursuit of antiquity in his own paintings, see Zhao Mengfu's painting 'Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains' 鵲華秋色 (Figure 8, 8a).

In other words, after Zhao Mengfu's move to the north and his participation in the Xuedang Yaji 雪堂雅集, where he appreciated calligraphy and painting and observed ancient artworks,<sup>31</sup> did he intentionally seek to explore the taste found within the Yaji gatherings? Due to limitations in available sources, it is difficult to ascertain from historical records. However, by examining the "Spring Mountain" by Shang Qi and Zhao Mengfu's 'Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains' both characterized by their "pingyuan" compositional style, one can speculate on the exchange of visual experiences between these two artists and their mutual influence on each other's artistic journeys.



Fig8 Zhao Mengfu 'Autum Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains', based in National Palace Museum, 28.4\*93.2 cm



Fig8a Partial detail of Zhao Mengfu 'Autum Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains'

<sup>31</sup> For the viewing of ancient paintings, Shih Shou-chien believes that Zhao Mengfu's Pingyuan-style painting seems to be related to the paintings he saw after observing Li Cheng's works, see Shih Shou-chien 石守謙, "Zhaomengfu yiwei zi Yan hui Yuanchu wenren shenshuihua yu Jindai shiren wenhua 趙孟頫乙未自燕回—元初文人山水畫與金代士人文化 (Zhao Mengfu's Return to the South in 1295: The Early Yuan Literati Landscape Painting and the Jin Literati Culture)," *Meishushi yanjiu jikan*, no. 15 (2015): 187-240.

Finally, we can infer from Shang Qi's geographic origins and his artistic trajectory the visual composition and the cultural implications embedded within the landscape depicted in the 'Mountains in Spring.' In his early years, Shang Qi traveled through the regions of Shu and Jiangnan:

“Shang Gong once witnessed the grandeur of Qin and Shu, where the Jianshan Pass unfolded beneath his brush. He then resided in Jiangnan for three years, not confining himself to Lufu but ascending to Tian Tai.”<sup>32</sup>

商公昔者觀秦蜀，劍閣崢嶸筆底開，又向江南住三載，不為廬阜即天臺。

According to Yuan Dynasty painter Zhang Yu 張雨 (1277-1348):

“The White Emperor veiled in mist, the towering peaks of Qutang Gorge, where yellow oxen and red-armored warriors struggle to ascend. Emei Mountain slicing through the west, while Jianshan Pass contends for eminence in the north.”

瞿塘白帝縈岩巒，黃牛赤甲難躋攀。峨眉西來劃開豁，劍閣北首爭巔岼

From these accounts, it becomes apparent that Shang Qi's artistic production might have been visually influenced by his travels. Consequently, the convergence of the painter's life experiences and the inspiration derived from visual encounters shape the painting materials themselves.

## CHAPTER4: Conclusion

'Mountains in Spring' by Shang Qi stands as a remarkable example of landscape painting from the Yuan Dynasty. Shang Qi, recognized as one of the three preeminent painters of the early Yuan Dynasty, showcased his artistic prowess primarily in landscape painting and Yuan Court fresco/mural painting, leaving a lasting impact on the art world. Scholars have extensively studied his painting style and influences,

---

<sup>32</sup> Yu Ji 虞集, *Dao Yuan Xue Gu Lu* 道園學古錄 (Record of Studying Antiquities in Dao Garden), in 景印文淵閣四庫全書(Complete Works of the Four Treasuries from the Jingyan Library) (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1986, reproduced from the National Palace Museum's collection 據國立故宮博物院藏本影印), volume 4, “ti Shang De Fu xiaojing 題商德符《小景》(Inscription on the Painting 'Small Scenery' by Scholar Shang Defu),” 27.



exploring his connection to the Li-Guo artistic style and his incorporation of elements from earlier painters such as Li Cheng and Guo Xi. The analysis of 'Mountains in Spring' reveals Shang Qi's adept use of the Pingyuan perspective, engaging viewers and creating a sense of depth within the painting.

Furthermore, examining Shang Qi's social network and activity trajectory sheds light on his interactions and collaborations. As a court painter and a member of the Suwei, he held a prominent position in the Mongol Yuan court, where his landscape painting skills were highly esteemed. Shang Qi's social status and connections played a significant role in his artistic career and recognition.

However, despite progress in understanding Shang Qi's art and social context, challenges persist due to the scarcity of textual records. Researchers have relied on textual accounts and analysis of his paintings to piece together his contributions, emphasizing the need for further research to establish effective connections between Shang Qi's social role and his artworks.

This essay represents an initial exploration into traditional style analysis and the intersection of social art history, attempting to employ various methodological approaches. By investigating an artist's trajectory, social interactions, and poetic subjects, a more profound understanding of their visual experiences can be attained, thereby facilitating a dialogue between social history and visual culture.

Ultimately, 'Mountains in Spring' holds immense value in comprehending the transmission of visual experiences within the Dongpin literati circle during the transition from the Jin Dynasty to the Yuan Dynasty. Shang Qi's lineage as a literati and his special encounters with Zhao Mengfu resulted in reciprocal influences in their visual experiences. Additionally, the compositional structure and arrangement of clouds in Shang Qi's work evoke a sense of spectatorship through distant perspective, suggesting potential connections to the artistic lineage of Li Cheng and Guo Xi, as well as a shared inclination towards Dong Yuan's revivalist attitude. This introduces a noteworthy and compelling force within visual art among literati in the Yuan Dynasty.

By reassessing Shang Qi's artistic significance and delving into his social network, a more comprehensive understanding of his contributions and contextual significance can be achieved. Overall, 'Mountains in Spring' exemplifies Shang Qi's mastery of landscape painting and his ability to create captivating compositions that leave a lasting impact on the art world of the Yuan Dynasty.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

- Gu, Sili 顧嗣立. "Ti shan de fu xueshi taoyuan chunxiao tu 題商德符學士桃源春曉圖 (Inscription on the Painting 'Spring Dawn in the Peach Blossom Paradise' by Scholar Shang Defu)," in *Yuan Shi Xuan* 元詩選 (Selected Yuan Poetry) Beijing: Zhonghua, 1987.
- Gui Xi 郭熙 and Gui Si 郭思. "linquan gaozhi ji 林泉高致集 (Collected Works of Sublime Forest and Springs)," in Yu Jianhua 俞劍華, *Zhongguo hualun lei bian* 中國畫論類編 (An Anthology of Chinese Painting Theory) Beijing: People's Fine Arts, 1957.
- Ma, Zuchang 馬祖長. *Shi Tian Wen Ji* 石田文集, Rare Edition of the Siku Quanshu 四庫全書珍本 Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1971.
- Song, Lian 宋濂 et al., *Yuanshi* 元史 (History of the Yuan Dynasty), Hongwu jiushiji jiu juanben henan jianben 洪武九十九卷本和南監本 Taipei: Dingwen, 1981.
- Wang, Shizhen 王士禎, edited by Jin Siren 靳斯仁. *Chi Bei Ou Tan* 池北偶談. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1982, 1987 third printing in Hubei 湖北第三刷.
- Xia, Wenyan 夏文彥. *Tu Hui Bao Jian* 圖繪寶鑑 (Biographies of skilled painters and also touching upon art histories), Ming Chongzhen Shenyushenmaoshi jiguge keben 明崇禎申虞山毛氏汲古閣刻本.
- Yao, Sui 姚燹. *Mu An Ji* 牧庵集 Qing Qianlong Wuyingdian Juzhenban Congshu 清乾隆武英殿聚珍版叢書.
- Yu, Ji 虞集. *Dao Yuan Xue Gu Lu* 道園學古錄 (Record of Studying Antiquities in Dao Garden), in 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (Complete Works of the Four Treasuries

from the Jingyan Library) Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1986, reproduced from the National Palace Museum's collection 據國立故宮博物院藏本影印。

## Secondary Sources

- Barnhart, Richard. "Marriage of the Lord of the River: A lost Landscape by Tung Yuan." *Artibus Asiae Supplementum*, no. 27 (Ascona: Artibus Asiae, 1970), p.38.
- Chen, Pao-chen 陳葆真. "cong kongjian biao xian fa kan Nansong xiao jing shanshuihua de fazhan 從空間表現法看南宋小景山水畫的發展 (The Representation of Space in the Southern Song Landscape Paintings)." *Gugong xueshu jikan* 13, no. 3 (1996): 83-104.
- Chen, Yun-ru 陳韻如. "Hua Yi Yi Ye zhonggu Song Huizong zhao de huihua huodong 畫亦藝也：重估宋徽宗朝的繪畫活動 ("Painting as Arts": Re-examine the Painting Activities at Song Huizong's Court)." PhD diss., National Taiwan University, 2009.
- Chuang, Chen-yuan David 莊鎮元. "Intellectual Network and Confucian Practice of the Zhang Family at Baoding in Mongol-Yuan Period." BA thesis., National Taiwan University, 2023.
- Clunas, Craig. *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*. Champaign: University of Illinois, 1991.
- Fan, Xiangda 范祥達. "Yuanchu de Dongping xuefeng ji yingxiang 元初的東平學風及影響 (Academy and influence of Dong-Pi in initial stage of Yuan Dynasty)." *Journal of History National Chung Hsing University*, no. 19 (2007): 45-80.
- Fong, Wen C. 方聞. "zhongtan liangjian Dong Yuan zhi zuo zaoqi Zhongguo jufu shanshuihua de fanshi 重探兩件董元之作——早期中國巨幅山水畫的範式 (Revisiting Two Dong Yuans (active ca. 937-76): paradigms in Early Chinese Monumental Landscape Painting)." *Gugong xueshu jikan* 30, no. 4 (2013): 4-5.
- Hay, Jonathan. *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Hsieh, Shu-wei 謝世維. "Yuanmo Mingchu de Daojiao shanshui yishu Fangcongyi yu Daojiao shanshui yishu de guanxi 元末明初的道教山水藝術：方從義與道教山水藝術的關係 (Daoist Landscape Art in the Late Yuan and Early

- Ming: The Relationship of Fang Congyi and Daoist Landscape Art).” *Bullet of Chinese*, no. 71 (Taipei: Department of Chinese Language and Literature, NTNU): 69-106.
- Li, Meng-hsueh 李孟學. “‘*shanshu ichun quanji*’ de san yuan guan 《山水純全集》的三遠觀 (The Three Distances of *Shashuichunquanji*).” *Shuhua yishu xuekan*, no. 26 (2019): 103-122.
  - Liang, Jerway 梁哲瑋. “Image of Transportation: Study on Carts Paintings Development in China 運輸的圖像：盤車圖的形塑和變遷.” MA thesis., National Taiwan University, 2015.
  - Liang, Xiaoling 梁曉玲, “*dui Shangqi ni xizgui xishan qingyuan tu de kaocha yu jiangshang* 對商琦《擬夏珪溪山清遠圖》的考察與鑑賞 (An Examination and Appreciation of Shang Qi’s Imitation of Xia gui’s ‘Xi mountainous Landscape’).” *Gansu Social Science*, no. 1 (2001): 30-31.
  - Lin, Meicun 林梅村. “Yuan Dadu Xitaiyigong kao Bei jing Xichengqu Houyingfang he Houtaoyuan Yuandai yizhi chutu wenwu yanjiu 元大都西太乙宮考—北京西城區后英房和后桃園元代遺址出土文物研究 (On the Western Taiyi Palace of Khanbaliq: Research on the Relics of the Houyingfang and Houtaoyuan in the Xicheng District, Beijing).” *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan*, no. 6 (2018): 6-21.
  - Lu, Hui-wen 盧慧紋. “Kangli Naonao xing cao shu fenqiyu fengge suyuan zai sikao Yuandai fei hanzu shujia de hanhua wenti 康里巉巉 (1295-1345) 行草書分期與風格溯源：再思考元代非漢族書家的「漢化」問題 (Kangli Naonao (1295-1345) and His Cursive Calligraphy: Reconsidering “Sinification” during the Mongol Yuan Period).” *Gugong xueshu jikan*32, no. 1 (2014): 47-113.
  - Lu, Hui-wen 盧慧紋. “Yuanchu beifang shidafu de shuhua huodong yu jianchang yi Wangyun qiujian xiansheng daquanji wei zhongxin de jidian kaocha 元初北方士大夫的書畫活動與鑒藏：以王惲 (1227-1304)《秋澗先生大全集》為中心的幾點考察 (The Activities and Connoisseurship of Painting and Calligraphy Among Northern Literati in the Early Yuan: A Survey of Several Points Focusing on Wang Yun’s (1227-1304) *Complete Collected Works of Qiujian*).” *Gugong xueshu jikan*38, no. 2 (2020): 47-81.

- Lu, Hui-wen 盧慧紋. “Yuandai shujia Kangli Naonao yanjiu 元代書家康里巎巎研究.” MA thesis., National Taiwan University, 1996.
- Ma, Jige 馬季戈. “Shangqi shengping ji qi huihua yishu 商琦生平及其繪畫藝術 (The Life and Art of Shang Qi).” *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan*, no. 2 (1992): 86-94.
- McCausland, Shane. *The Mongol Century, Visual Cultures of Yuan China, 1271-1368*. Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2014.
- Ren, Daobin 任道斌. “lun Zhaomengfu yu Yuandai shaoshu minzu shuhuaia 論趙孟頫與元代少數民族書畫家 (On Zhao mengfu and Minority Ethnic Painters in the Yuan Dynasty).” *Xinmeishu*, no. 2 (1994): 52-57.
- Shih, Shou-chien. “Eremitism in Landscape Paintings by Ch’ien Hsuan (Ca. 1235-before 1307).” PhD diss., Princeton University, 1984.
- Shih, Shou-chien 石守謙. “Zhaomengfu yiwei zi Yan hui Yuanchu wenren shenshuihua yu Jindai shiren wenhua 趙孟頫乙未自燕回—元初文人山水畫與金代士人文化 (Zhao Mengfu’s Return to the South in 1295: The Early Yuan Literati Landscape Painting and the Jin Literati Culture).” *Meishushi yanjiu jikan*, no. 15 (2015): 187-240.
- Shih, Shou-chien 石守謙. “Zhaomengfu yiwei zi Yan hui Yuanchu wenren shenshuihua yu Jindai shiren wenhua 趙孟頫乙未自燕回—元初文人山水畫與金代士人文化 (Zhao Mengfu’s Return to the South in 1295: The Early Yuan Literati Landscape Painting and the Jin Literati Culture).” *Meishushi yanjiu jikan*, no. 15 (2015): 187-240.
- Su, Kekuan 孫克寬. *Yuandai hanwenhua zhi huodong 元代漢文化之活動 (Activities of Han Culture in the Yuan Dynasty)*. Taipei: Zhonghua, 1968.
- Suzuki, Kei 鈴木敬. *History of Chinese Painting, Volume II: Yuan Dynasty 中國繪畫史・中之二*. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1988.
- Wang, Cheng-hua 王正華. *wangluo yu jieceng zuoxiang liti de Ming Qing huihua yu shijue wenhua 網絡與階層：走向立體的明清繪畫與視覺文化研究 (Networks and Hierarchies: Towards a Three-dimensional Study of Ming-Qing Painting and Visual Culture)*. Taipei: Shitou chubanshe, 2020.
- Wang, Deyi 王德毅. *Yuanren zhuangji ziliao suoyin 元人傳記資料索引 (Index*

- of Biographical Data of the Yuan Dynasty). Taipei: Xinwenfeng, 1979-1982.
- Xiao, Qiqing 蕭啟慶. *Mengyuanshi xinyan* 蒙元史新研 (Mongol-Yuan History New Research). Taipei: Yunchen, 1994.
  - Yang Xin, Richard M. Barnhart, Nie Chongzheng, James Cahill, Lang Shaojun and Wu Hung eds., *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting* 中國繪畫三千年. Taipei: Lianjing, 1994.