

*The Efficacious Landscape: On the Authorities of Painting at the Northern Song Court.*

By Ping Foong. Harvard East Asian Monographs 372. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015. Pp. 318. ISBN 10: 0674417151; ISBN 13: 9780674417151.

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If one had to choose a period to highlight rapid developments and defining achievements in the history of Chinese painting, the eleventh century in the Northern Song would probably be at the top of many scholars' lists. Not only do landscape paintings, records, and important treatises by artists survive from that era, it was also a time when emperors dedicated to ruling the country coexisted with scholar-officials engaged in factional struggles, as seen in the records and poems dealing with various political events. Many tangible links remain hidden in the relationship between these people and events, the stories (historical contexts) which form a network waiting to be revealed in further detail.

Ping Foong's *The Efficacious Landscape* is a book that attempts to do just this, taking as its subject the tradition of ink landscape painting to reveal a broader context in China. A new study that offers readers a plausible historical context for Northern Song landscape painting, Foong's book is divided into two parts based on the social function of painting. Her discussion begins in Part I with the role of painting in the public spaces of palace buildings ("Ruling Images") and in Part II moves to the private network of close scholar friends ("Intimate Scenes"). The former shows how ink landscape painting was used in palace buildings at the Northern Song court, taking the famous example of painted screens at the Jade Hall in the Hanlin Institute. Working on the basis of Ogawa Hiromitsu's research, Foong proceeds further by reconstructing the relationship between the court and painting. Not only does she provide additional discourse on the symbolic meaning of the landscape at the Jade Hall, but in chapter 2 on the "Ritual Context for Painting" she raises the function of painting to a new level and links it to the institution of rites and music. She thereby seeks to interrelate the visual effect of such paintings as Guo Xi's 郭熙 *Early Spring* with rites and regulations at court, suggesting that "it is possible to associate *Early Spring's* creation to the veneration of one deified ancestor" (p. 90). Then, in chapter 3, she posits Guo Xi's landscape painting style by tracing it to Li Cheng 李成 within the context of the "Li-Guo" landscape manner that found support at court, thereby establishing an "efficacious" connection between the two.

In the second part of *The Efficacious Landscape*, Ping Foong focuses on the Guo Xi handscroll *Old Trees, Level Distance* in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art to construct another social function for landscape painting outside of public spaces in palace buildings, pointing out that this handscroll served as a medium for private exchange among close scholar friends. In chapter 4, she first compares the style of this handscroll with *Early Spring* to confirm it as actually coming from Guo's hand, and then proceeds to analyze several sets of poetry and responses dealing with Guo Xi's handscroll paintings in surviving texts to suggest that this particular scroll was once in the collection of Wen Yanbo 文彦博, the famous Northern Song high official. The concept of "intimate scenes" is further discussed in chapter 5 to explain how landscape painting was used in late Northern Song literati painting for voicing emotions and "as a means of private expression and personal interaction" (p. 187). In Guo Xi's reduction of the painting surface to a more intimate setting, Foong shows that "small scenes" such as this relied on sets of motifs to convey poetic ideas and form a "canon of small works."

*The Efficacious Landscape* thus revolves around these two paintings, *Early Spring* and *Old Trees, Level Distance*. Bolstered by a large amount of textual analysis, Ping Foong redefines the boundaries of the social function for painting in eleventh-century China. Starting from a purely aesthetic appreciation,

we now have one painting (the former) expanded in function to include court ritual, while the other (the latter) has become a medium for private exchange among friends. Furthermore, we see how participants in art circles are no longer confined to painters and patrons (the emperor and members of the imperial family) but also allow for the possibility of other intermediaries, including, as Foong suggests, female members of the imperial family (consorts). For example, Empress Dowager Cao had a set of Li Cheng paintings pasted as a screen in the area used by the emperor. In addition, Foong has also noticed how eunuchs played a role in court construction projects.

However, as is often the case in studies such as this, whether the surviving documentary evidence about the specific roles that these types of intermediaries played in such activities can clearly be identified and used for support is a challenge faced by researchers, including Foong in her book. The expanding role of painting finds evidence not only in textual analysis but also, according to Foong, in the visual effect of the painting surface itself. Although she explains in *The Efficacious Landscape* the aspects of public and private in the style of Guo Xi, the question of how the differences between the two are manifested on the painting surface merits further explanation.

When it comes to defining how the landscape became “efficacious,” it would appear that the author needs to provide further evidence on how audiences actually reacted to Guo Xi’s painting. Shih Shou-chien 石守謙, for example, in his essay “History of the Landscape” (*Shanshui zhishi*) used literary anthologies to study the interaction between audiences and painters.<sup>1</sup> By explaining changes in the approach to landscape painting based on the viewers’ responses, Shih effectively describes some of the key developments in the history of landscape painting. In addition, it is worth further study to corroborate whether this theory of public and private painting style that Foong posits for this time applies to works of neighboring periods as well. In the second part of her book, Foong moves from private handscroll painting to discussion of it as a “small canon,” thereby attempting to link it with literati painting, which is one of her goals.

Finally, Ping Foong’s investigation placing Guo Xi as continuing the Li Cheng painting style is quite significant. However, the mention by Mi Fu in his *Huashi* (Painting History) of *xiaoci* 小次 in relation to a space where a set of Li Cheng paintings was pasted as a screen is actually a term that appears quite frequently in *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿 (Compiled Manuscripts of Important Song Documents), where it refers to the private dressing quarters of the emperor. Being an intimate area that differs from the public space of palace halls, it is difficult to infer that the “ink landscape was used in a specific ritual space for a specific rite related to filial principles,” as suggested by Foong (p. 126). In fact, the limitations of surviving textual evidence present perhaps one of the greatest obstacles to studying late Northern Song culture in such depth. After the reform of officialdom and reconstruction projects for government halls in the Yuanfeng reign, for example, many paintings by Guo Xi appeared in court buildings, but it still remains unclear as to who exactly was responsible for this. Also, in terms of displaying paintings in palace halls, there is a similar lack of clear documentary evidence on its relation to the institution of rites. And for Guo Xi, who has always been considered a Henan native of Wenxian, it is far from certain that he was related to another Guo Xi from Sichuan recorded in Fan Zuyu’s literary anthology (pp. 178–80), as Foong suggests. Although Guo Xi’s status was very important in Northern Song painting history, as a Painter-in-Attendance, he was still an expert-servitor whose rank, in the traditional hierarchy of court officials and judging from what we know from Song studies, was not actually a major improvement when compared to others.

1 Shih Shou-chien 石守謙, “Shanshui zhishi- you huajia yu guanzhong hudong jiaodu kaocha Zhongguo shan shui hua zhi shihanshiji de fazhan 山水之史——由畫家與觀眾互動角度考察中國山水畫至十三世紀的發展,” in *Zhongguoshi xin lun: meishu yu kaogu* 中國史新論：美術與考古, ed. Yen Chün-ying 顏娟英, pp. 379–475 (Taipei: Acadmica Sinica, Linking Publishing Company 中央研究院、聯經出版事業公司, 2008).

Thus, generally speaking, many of these issues discussed in *The Efficacious Landscape* break through the traditional boundaries of painting history but are nonetheless still limited by a lack of textual evidence, making precise confirmation quite difficult. As a result, the author tends to rely more heavily on making inferences from the texts, which can sometimes be debatable in terms of their possible meaning. For instance, on pp. 65–66, Foong deals with a text by Ye Mengde 葉夢得 on the commission of Guo Xi's painting of rocks and trees in government buildings. Although this was a form of palace decoration that indeed appeared after the Yuanfeng reforms, one cannot necessarily assume that this change in décor occurred as a direct result of these reforms. Nonetheless, Foong Ping's book overall demonstrates a high level of sensitivity and perspective in cultural history that is quite inspiring for Chinese art and art-historical studies as a whole.

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*Neonationalist Mythology in Postwar Japan: Pal's Dissenting Judgment at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal.*

By Nariaki Nakazato. New York and London: Lexington Books, 2016. Pp. xiv + 255.

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Radhabinod Pal (1886–1967) is both a puzzling and a historically important figure. Moderately prominent in 1940s India as a lawyer, professor of law and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, Pal achieved sudden and rather unexpected international fame following his appointment in 1946 as Indian representative on the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE), set up in Tokyo to try Japanese war crimes. As Nariaki Nakazato's researches show, Pal's appointment to this position was almost accidental. He was one of two Indian judges who put their names forward after the Government of India's first two choices for the post declined the invitation. Pal's expression of interest in the job reached the government fractionally earlier than that of the other volunteer, assuring his appointment. Questions were then raised about Pal's qualifications for the post, since he had served as a high court judge in India only briefly and on a temporary basis, but the appointment was allowed to stand.

The timing of Pal's assignment to the IMTFE was crucial. Colonial rule in India was in its final throes, and Indian independence would be declared while the Tokyo Trials were underway. Against this background Pal, to the surprise of his fellow Tribunal judges, put forward a dissenting ruling radically at odds with the findings of the majority. The trials found twenty-five Japanese military and political leaders guilty of a range of offences including crimes against peace, murder, and crimes against humanity, and seven were sentenced to death. In his dissenting judgment, Pal, on the contrary, disputed the guilty verdicts and accepted most of the arguments of the defence lawyers. At the core of these arguments was the proposition that the Tribunal itself was legally invalid, because it sought to apply the notions of "crimes against peace" and "crimes against humanity" retrospectively. Pal's lengthy dissenting judgment accepted these arguments, and concluded that all the accused should be acquitted. Indeed, as Nakazato's careful examination of the Pal statement of dissent shows, the Indian judge went further. He presented a distinctly positive view of wartime Japan as a country where "the public retained complete freedom in respect of their own creeds, belief and behaviour", and contrasted this to the condition of prewar and wartime China, which he depicted as a failed state "hopelessly involved in anarchy" (p. 41). Little wonder, then, that Judge Pal has become something of an icon to those on the Japanese Right who seek to justify the history of Japan's wartime expansionism. He was invited to return to Japan for much-publicized