

# Wang Xizhi's Letter *Kuaixue shiqing* and Its Reception in the Yuan Dynasty

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## Abstract

The two oldest extant copies of Wang Xizhi's 王羲之 (c. 301-c. 361) *Kuaixue shiqing* 快雪時晴 letter and the colophons and paintings mounted together with them are closely linked to the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368). The Tang dynasty (618-907) tracing-copy—previously part of Qing Gaozong's 清高宗 (r. 1736-1795) Sanxitang 三希堂 (Three Rarities Hall) and today part of an album in the National Palace Museum, Taipei (here referred to as “*Neifu* album”)—is accompanied by appraisals from Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322) and two additional Yuan officials at the request of the Yuan emperor Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1311-1320). The second oldest extant freehand copy of Wang's *Kuaixue* letter from the hand of the Yuan dynasty *wenren* 文人 and Daoist Zhang Yu 張雨 (1283-1350) is part of a scroll in the Palace Museum Beijing (here referred to as “Southern Scroll”). The scroll includes a frontispiece which reads 快雪時晴 written by Zhao Mengfu for Huang Gongwang 黃公望 (1269-1354) and a total of seven colophons by Yuan scholar gentlemen, among others. The colophons on that latter scroll appear to refer to another, now lost Tang copy of Wang's letter. The colophon authors agree that Zhao was able to capture with his excerpt of four large characters the essence of Wang's letter and thus Wang's intentions. Here, for the first time, both artworks, the “*Neifu* album” and the “Southern Scroll,” will be jointly discussed. The following article shows that during the Yuan dynasty, Wang Xizhi was not only esteemed as a sage of calligraphy, but much more, he was regarded as a leading representative of Six Dynasties (220-589) thought and intellectual culture. Both Zhao Mengfu and Zhang Yu, due to their ability to recreate Wang's spirit, were thus entangled within Yuan narratives of Wang Xizhi. In addition, two paintings by Qing Gaozong also suggest how he related Wang Xizhi's work as intertwined with these Yuan narratives: his partial copy of Qian Xuan's 錢選 (c.1235-c.1307) *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese*, and a landscape employing the typical Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301-1374) idiom. The paintings indicate that when viewing his ‘Sanxitang copy’ what came to Qing Gaozong's mind was Yuan semantics, both literal and pictorial.

**Keywords:** Wang Xizhi, Zhang Yu, Zhao Mengfu, Qing Gaozong, Yuan dynasty, Six Dynasties, qingtian

## Prologue

A short letter by Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (c. 301-c. 361) to a Marquis of Zhang, its reception, as well as the ensuing discussions about its content and calligraphic texture have aggregated over almost two millennia and become one of the cornerstones of scholarship on Wang Xizhi's historiographic and art-historical presence. That presence—part history, part fiction, and ever-developing in literature and oral histories—encompasses a broad spectrum of Wang's personas, ranging from the virtuous General of the Right Army or the Daoist metaphysician, to the sage of calligraphy (posthumously 'awarded' only in the Tang dynasty [618-907]); his personalities range from the noble and upright to the complaining and doubtful.<sup>1</sup> Already a few decades after his death, tales of a Wang Xizhi who presented himself bare-bellied to his future father-in-law, or who shunned his new supervisor whom he regarded dull by resigning from his own post, began to come into existence.<sup>2</sup> Wang thus also became the object of sharp linguistic exemplification and characterological analysis as found in Liu Yiqing's 劉義慶 (403-444) *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語, which did not always paint him nor other luminaries in the bright light of flattery and distinction. However, it did present him as a strong-willed and authentic personality.

Much has been written about Wang Xizhi's work and life, spanning the centuries until today. Although no original Wang Xizhi manuscripts exist, a considerable amount of his notes and texts in records remains, while far fewer of his works are preserved as rubbings or later handwritten copies. Yet besides questions of genuineness of sources or their provenance, the general problem put towards the scholarship can be summarized

1 See, for instance, Eugene Y. Wang, "The Taming of the Shrew: Wang Hsi-chih (303-361) and Calligraphic Gentrification in the Seventh Century." In *Character & Context in Chinese Calligraphy*, edited by Cary Y. Liu, Dora C.Y. Ching, and Judith G. Smith, 175-198. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1999; Robert E. Harrist, JR., "A Letter from Wang Hsi-chih and the Culture of Calligraphy." In Robert Harrist and Wen C. Fong *The Embodied Image: Chinese Calligraphy from the John B. Elliott Collection*. Princeton, NJ: The Art Museum, Princeton University, 1999. A detailed bibliography on Wang Xizhi and his works is provided in *Ancient and Early Medieval Chinese Literature*, Part II, David R. Knechtges and Taiping Chang eds. Leiden: Brill, 2014, 1259-1262.

2 Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403-444), *Shishuo Xinyu* 世說新語. Modern edition, Taipei: Sanmin shuju, 2006, 6-19, 36-5. See also Richard B. Mather, *Shih-Shuo Hsin-Yü. A New Account of Tales of the World*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2002, 197, 530, 618. In the *Shishuo Xinyu*, Wang Xizhi is predominantly referred to as General of the Right Army 王右軍, and as Yishao 逸少, but not as Xizhi.

thus: how to identify which 'originals' might copies or engravings have been modeled on, and which of these surviving works are reliable as historical evidence?

Wang Xizhi's original letter to the Marquis of Zhang is now lost, and has likely been missing since the Tang dynasty. The letter's importance was recognized by many collectors early on, and any copies were regarded as treasures of incomparable value. Since Zhang Yanyuan's 張彥遠 (815-907) record in his *Fashu Yaolu* 法書要錄, the letter has been known as the *Kuaixue shiqing* 快雪時晴 letter, referring to that same phrase within the short note. The phrase was taken to be its essence, as will be shown later.<sup>3</sup> The significance of the letter itself, its content, and its transmission—its current existence—differs from other examples of Wang Xizhi's writings and their copies for a number of reasons.

## Collecting and Copying Wang Xizhi in the Yuan Dynasty

The two oldest *extant handwritten* copies of the *Kuaixue shiqing* letter are directly linked to the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) and its cultured men or *wenren* elite. Both of these versions are directly connected to each other. The Tang dynasty tracing-copy (Figure 1) was in the possession of the imperial court at least during the Yuan and in the Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. It is now in the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei, as part of an album (below referred to as the *Neifu* Copy or *Neifu* Album). A free-hand copy (Figure 2) of a second, now-lost Tang dynasty version by the Yuan poet, calligrapher, and Daoist Zhang Yu 張雨 (1283-1350) is part of a scroll that includes works by eight prominent Yuan dynasty *wenren* now in the Palace Museum, Beijing (referred to thereafter as the Southern Copy or Southern Scroll).<sup>4</sup>

3 The complete entry in Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠, *Fashu yaolu* 法書要錄 (*Essential Record of Exemplars of Calligraphy*), juan 3, Zhu Suiliang 褚遂良 (*Youjun shu mu* 右軍書目) reads: 羲之頓首，快雪時晴。六行。In *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu* 中國書畫全書, vol. 1. Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2000, 49.

4 Both extant handwritten copies of Wang Xizhi's *Kuaixue shiqing* letter, the *Neifu* version and Zhang Yu's free-hand copy record the same text in four columns. The column breaks, however, differ. In addition to Zhang Yu's colophon, the scroll includes a frontispiece by Zhao Mengfu, six further colophons by Yuan *wenren*, and two paintings of snow landscapes with similar compositions, one attributed to Huang Gongwang, and one with a signature containing 'Xu Ben of Donghai,' the genuineness of which, however, is doubted by Xu Bangda (徐邦達, *Gu shuhua wei-e kaobian* 古書

Both versions, the *Neifu* Copy and the Southern Scroll are inextricably linked to each other through Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322). As far as can be deemed from the limited Yuan historical sources (including the colophons on the Southern Scroll, as will be shown below), Zhao was one of the most proficient and prolific Wang Xizhi connoisseurs and copyists of his time.<sup>5</sup> For instance, Zhao had presumably copied Wang Xizhi's *Preface to the Gathering at the Orchid Pavilion* 蘭亭序 many times.<sup>6</sup> That Zhao Mengfu also frequently copied small-scale works more than once, is evidenced, for instance, by his three extant freehand copies of Wang Xizhi's so-called *Guozha* letter 裹鮓帖<sup>7</sup> in the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei (Figure 3). Those copies are written in three columns using vivid, round, cursive script; they also reflect the same arrangement of characters per column. Wen Zhengming 文徵明 (1470-1559), in a colophon now attached to one of these copies, credits Zhao Mengfu with having "gained the brush idea of the ancients," and conserving "the meaning in their form," even though differing in ink and paper (Figure 4).<sup>8</sup> In addition, Huang Gongwang 黃公望 (1269-

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畫偽訛考辨. Yangzhou: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1984, 77). Both paintings include a rather unique depiction of a red sun disc. The painting attributed to Huang Gongwang, today titled 快雪時晴圖卷 is unsigned and undated, and its origin is unclear. Published in *Yuandai huihua* 元代繪畫, Yu Hui 余輝 ed. Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2005, cat. no. 23, 66-67. For one interpretive approach to this painting, please see, Birgitta Augustin, "Painting Authenticity: Intersections in the Lives and Art of Zhang Yu, Huang Gongwang and Ni Zan." Ph.D. dissertation, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 2015.

- 5 As will be shown, the *Neifu* Album and the Southern Scroll prove that Zhao Mengfu had seen at least two versions of Wang Xizhi's *Kuaixue shiqing* letter, making him the only person with evidence in the form of extant works.
- 6 Zhao Mengfu copied, for example, the so-called *Dingwu* version of the *Preface to the Orchid Pavilion* 蘭亭序, which today is mounted with one of the extant *Dingwu* rubbings in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing. Published in *Yuandai shufa* 元代書法, Wang Lianqi 王連起 ed., Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2001, no. 24, 76-79.
- 7 The letter tells of Wang Xizhi's sending *Guozha* 裹鮓 (a kind of fish wrapped in lotus leaves) to the recipient.
- 8 米元章書史載薛道祖收唐摹右軍四帖，皆暮年更妙書也。中有裹鮓服食二帖。余家有松雪臨服食帖，精妙得古人筆意。此裹鮓凡三本，雖楮墨不同，然各有意態。前一本與吾家正同。豈出於一時耶。徵明題。Transcription by the National Palace Museum, Taipei. "Mi Yuanzhang's [Fu's] *History of Calligraphy* records that Xue Daozu [10<sup>th</sup> cent.] obtained four Tang dynasty copies of letters by the General of the Right [Wang Xizhi]. All written in his calligraphy of his old age, which is even more wonderful. Among those letters is the *Guozha* and the *Fushi*, these two letters. My family owns the *Fushi* letter freehand-copied by Songxue [Zhao Mengfu]—exquisite—it gained the brush idea of the ancients. The three *Guozha* letters, although differing in paper and ink, still have the meaning in their form. The first is similar to the one my family [owns]. Could it be that they originate from the same time?"

1354) mentions in his colophon written in 1345 to Zhao Mengfu's copy of the *Scripture of the Yellow Courtyard* 黃庭經 (originally also calligraphed by Wang Xizhi) that Zhao had copied this text "several hundred times."<sup>9</sup>

During the Yuan dynasty, copies and rubbings of Wang Xizhi's works were not only in official collections, but also in private hands. Such versions naturally were the subjects and centerpieces of informal gatherings. For example, in 1298 Zhao Mengfu himself states in a colophon to a copy of Wang Xizhi's *Sixiang tie* 思想帖 that he and several others had convened to view the piece, which was then in the collection of Guo Tianxi 郭天錫 (d. 1302), his senior acquaintance.<sup>10</sup> Guo also owned a copy of Wang Xizhi's *Kuaixue shiqing* letter. In 1293 Guo named his Hangzhou studio *Kuaixue Zhai* 快雪齋, which may indicate that he owned his copy by that date.<sup>11</sup> Although a viewing of Guo Tianxi's *Kuaixue shiqing* letter at the above mentioned gathering in 1298 is not recorded (in addition to the *Sixiang tie*, Guo's *Traveling on a River after Clearing Snow* 雪霽江行圖 by Guo Zhongshu 郭忠恕 (c. 910-977) was the singular other work on display),<sup>12</sup> it may be assumed that by 1298, several years after the naming of Guo's *Kuaixue Zhai*, Zhao Mengfu was familiar with Guo Tianxi's copy of Wang's letter.

In 1318, while Zhao was on his second assignment in Dadu serving as Hanlin Executive Academician in Charge of Imperial Edicts, Grand Master of Glorious Happiness, and Special Drafting Official and Compiler for the Secretariat of the National History, he was asked via imperial request to appraise the *Neifu* Version.

9 Published in Wang Lianqi 王連起 ed., *Yuandai shufa*, 75. In their colophons to Zhao's copy of the *Thousand Character Essay* 千字文 (ibid., 106-107), Zhang Yu refers to himself as Zhao's "lao sheng" (老生), while Huang refers to himself as a student of Zhao Songxue's studio ("雪松齋中小學生"). Besides copying Buddhist sutras and Daoist scriptures and other philosophical texts, Zhao Mengfu also copied secular texts from the classical literature, such as the *Book of Filial Piety* 孝經. Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei.

10 The viewing was held at Xianyu Shu's 鮮于樞 (c. 1257-1302). Guo Tianxi (sobriquet 號 Youzhi 右之) hailed from Datong and moved to the south in the 1280's. There he became acquainted with Zhao and also Zhou Mi 周密 (1232-1298). Guo and Zhou visited private collections together, and so Guo had firsthand knowledge of and access to important artworks in the vicinity of Hangzhou. The *Sixiang tie* as well as Zhao Mengfu's colophon are recorded in Wu Sheng 吳升, *Da Guanlu* 大觀錄 (1713). In *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu*, vol. 8, 2000, 144.

11 Ankeney Weitz, *Zhou Mi's Record of Clouds and Mist Passing Before One's Eyes: An Annotated Translation*. Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2002, 108 fn. 456.

12 Guo Zhongshu's *Traveling on a River after Clearing Snow* is in the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei.

Besides this appraisal, at an unknown time and occasion Zhao wrote an excerpt of Wang Xizhi's letter, the four characters 快雪時晴 *kuai xue shi qing*, as a frontispiece for Huang Gongwang (Figure 5). However, the reason why Zhao chose that particular format is unknown. These four characters, already synonymous with the letter itself, became also synonymous with a painted snowscape today attributed to Huang Gongwang, although it is yet unclear whether Zhao's four large characters refer to that work, or any other painting by Huang at all. The four characters are now mounted as frontispiece to the Southern Scroll, and the painting attributed to Huang is mounted behind the colophons (Figure 6).

The story that unfolds when complementing both artworks, the Southern Scroll and the *Neifu* Album (examining especially the content and formats of the colophons on the Southern Scroll by seven high ranking Yuan dynasty *wenren*), provides a coherent image of the letter's reception and thus of the reception of Wang Xizhi in the later Yuan dynasty. That reception extends beyond the mere analysis of Wang's calligraphic skills or the formal properties of his works, which are usually the focus of especially art historical studies of Wang Xizhi today. This new narrative provides evidence of how important intellectually the persona Wang Xizhi, his cultural image, and the values of his time were for the Yuan elite, and they contribute to why he was so significant. In fact, instead of discussing Wang Xizhi's calligraphic iconography, the colophons focus on Zhao Mengfu's recreation of Wang Xizhi's perceived intentions.

The second link between the two versions is of a personal nature. Zhao Mengfu played an active role by having appraised the *Neifu* Version and having written the four characters which are now the frontispiece to the Southern Scroll. Zhang Yu, on the other hand, with his free-hand copy of Wang Xizhi's letter (now part of the Southern Scroll) provided what may be seen as an agent that represents the now lost 'original' (i.e. the privately owned Tang copy from the Yuan dynasty), the copy to which all the colophon authors referred.<sup>13</sup> Zhang had not only studied calligraphy with Zhao, but was one of Zhao's "fifteen otherworldly friends," and had maintained close contact

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13 Please see a detailed discussion of the colophons in the main text.

with Zhao until the latter's passing in 1322.<sup>14</sup> Zhang Yu's contribution therefore underlines the significance in his day of the proper handling of delicate matters such as copying, re-experiencing,<sup>15</sup> viewing and appraising. His writing the 'substitute' further strengthens the argument that spiritual and artistic lineage (in this case a lineage that included Wang Xizhi, Zhao Mengfu, and Zhang Yu) were crucial or even mandatory factors when recreating calligraphic works of historical significance.

The main goals of this study can be summarized as follows: the Southern Scroll's colophons are presented and analyzed for the first time in a Western language, and both artworks—the Southern Scroll and the *Neifu* Album—will be presented for the first time as complementary artworks that crucially set a new foundation for a quasi *in vivo* experience of Yuan dynasty handling of the Six Dynasties (220-589) legacy. A 'quasi *in vivo* experience' refers to the study of mainly *extant* visual sources, which, according to the understanding of Yuan *wenren*, would provide insight into the author's persona and not merely into vitrified historical data. It will also be shown how the Wang Xizhi image and persona was perceived by the colophon writers, and how they transferred that image to Zhao Mengfu, who, according to them, proved an adept not only regarding Wang's calligraphy. Beyond the brush, Zhao also proved to be an adept with respect to the fundamental ideas of the Six Dynasties.

As an extension of these ideas, the study will also suggest that Zhang Yu was the closest of Zhao Mengfu's allies in the endeavor of tackling and incorporating Six Dynasties thought, and could be considered Zhao's spiritual successor after the latter's

14 方外友 . "List of Otherworldly Friends" is recorded in Bian Yongyu 卞永譽 ed. *Shigutang shuhua huikao* 式古堂書畫彙考 . In *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu*, vol. 6, 1992, 97.

15 "Re-experiencing" here is not meant as what is often referred to as *fugu* 復古 , and read as "return to the ancients," or "revival of the ancients," but, in a sense, a concept more closely related to what Wu Hung calls "re-embracing the ancients" with regards to practices in funerary art by which he means "to embody their [i.e. the ancients] values and tastes, and to assume a place among them." Wu Hung, *The Art of the Yellow Springs: Understanding Chinese Tombs*. London: Reaktion Books, 2010, 189. See also Wu Hung's discussion of *fugu* within the frame of George Kubler's idea of "sequence of linked solutions" in art historical writing, within which Wu Hung describes *fugu* as "desire to rediscover, return to and recreate a chosen historical moment." That choice constitutes "patterns of intentions and [artistic] solutions." Wu Hung ed., *Reinventing the Past, Archaism and Antiquarianism in Chinese Art and Visual Culture*. Chicago: The Center for the Art of East Asia, Art Media Resources, 2010, 39-42. The Yuan *wenren* under discussion here chose the moment of Wang Xizhi's time and his *Kuaixue shiqing* letter to discuss artistic authenticity.

passing.<sup>16</sup> Zhang Yu was palpably melded into the genesis of what would become the Southern Scroll. He and Zhao had become conduits transmitting the Yuan dynasty *wenren*'s comprehension of the remote past. That comprehension included the quest for moral and artistic authenticity, as well as the idea to strip off any inconsequentiality, evidenced by the compelling nature of brevity manifest in Zhao's four large character extract and of his sharpness, which is highlighted by some of the colophon authors on the Southern Scroll.<sup>17</sup>

The importance of the Yuan treatment of that remote past for later generations of connoisseurs and *wenren* is indicated by the Qing emperor Gaozong's 清高宗 (Era name Qianlong 乾隆, r. 1736-1795) handling and sense of responsibility towards the *Neifu* Album and the appended appraisals requested by the Yuan dynasty emperor Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1311-1320).<sup>18</sup> As will become clear in the epilogue, Gaozong's apparent focus in his contributions to the *Neifu* Album is, to be sure, Six Dynasties content, but it has clearly been perceived through a Yuan 'periscope.'<sup>19</sup> Gaozong very consciously responded to Wang Xizhi's letter and the colophons by employing Yuan pictorial and calligraphic semantics in referring to works by Qian Xuan 錢選 (c. 1235-c. 1307) and Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301-1374). Given his immense artistic self-awareness and curatorial expertise, his account of viewing a transposed witness of culture (i.e. the Tang copy of Wang's letter) which he chose to be part of his Three Rarities Hall 三希堂, is all the more important evidence for the Yuan influence not only visible in the Southern Scroll, but also in the *Neifu* Album.

## Kuaixue shiqing: A Short Note Makes Its Way to Court

16 See also Chang Kuang-pin 張光賓, *Zhonghua shufa shi* 中華書法史 (*History of Chinese Calligraphy*). Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1981, 128. This includes their activities within the Shangqing order of Daoism at Maoshan, which will be treated in detail elsewhere.

17 See Augustin, "Painting Authenticity," 193-211.

18 For consistency, the temple names of the Yuan and Qing dynasty emperors are used.

19 i.e. the perception of Six Dynasties art and of Wang Xizhi from the vantage point of Yuan *wenren* and their environment. As opposed to a telescope, which only observes the remote, the periscope here views at an angle or around corners, an apt metaphor for Qing Gaozong's perception of the Six Dynasties yet based on or founded in the Yuan environment.



The content of Wang Xizhi's short letter is elusive for today's reader, as is the potential addressee. Some of Wang Xizhi's texts preserved as copies or rubbings are incomplete, and so the letter's brevity may fortunately have safeguarded its complete transmission. As will be illuminated below, the letter's shortness was by no means seen by later connoisseurs as a barrier to understanding its importance, although the content's implicit meaning might not have revealed itself to them either.

Wang, after a somewhat formal opening, begins his message with what seems to be a remark about the weather:<sup>20</sup>

羲之頓首。快雪時晴，佳。想  
安善，未果為結。力不次。王  
羲之頓首。  
山陰張侯。

Xizhi knocks his head on the ground. It is clearing after sudden snow. Beautiful! [I] think it is propitious, but I have not yet succeeded in concluding the affair. I won't say more. Wang Xizhi knocks his head on the ground.  
Shanyin Marquis of Zhang.

Whether Wang only intended to write a short note, or wanted to encode a deeper meaning of political or even of metaphysical nature, from today's perspective Wang's intentions do not appear directly accessible.<sup>21</sup>

20 The transcription here follows the writing on the *Neifu* copy. Punctuation added. I follow Qi Xiaochun's 祁小春 reading (*Mai shi zhi feng* 邁世之風, Taipei: Shitou chuban gufen youxian gongsi, 2007, 179-180): 羲之頓首，快雪時晴，佳！想安善。未果為結，力不次。王羲之頓首。Transcription by Nakata Yujiro: 羲之頓首。快雪時晴佳。想安善，未果為結。力不次。王羲之頓首。山陰張侯。(In 王羲之を中心とする法帖の研究，日本東京：二玄社，1960, 12). Transcription by the National Palace Museum Taipei: 羲之頓首。快雪時晴。佳想安善。未果為結。力不次。王羲之頓首。山陰張侯。For a discussion of the phrase 力不次，please see Chong Li-hsin 鍾立心, "Wang Xizhi chidu yongyu 'li bu ci' kao bian" 王羲之尺牘用語「力不次」考辨, *The National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, 408 (March 2017): 76-87.

21 For translations of some of Wang Xizhi's other letters see Antje Richter, "Beyond Calligraphy: Reading Wang Xizhi's Letters." *T'oung Pao* 96 (2011), 370-407; this letter, however, is not included. Richter mentions that those letters contained "information of personal relevance" or "interpersonal concerns," but denies "real communicative intention." See also Sujane Wu's review of Richter's book (*Letters and Epistolary Culture in Early Medieval China*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013) in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 74, no. 2 (May 2015), 477-478. Wu criticizes the approach to those letters as "small talk," as any personal concern was most significant "in a period of adversity and chaos." Richter did not take *qingtan* into account nor the fact that Wang Xizhi and his peers could communicate

The earliest extant copy of Wang Xizhi's *Kuaixue shiqing* letter belonged to the Yuan dynasty imperial court.<sup>22</sup> It includes two characters (君倩) written below the potential recipient's name.<sup>23</sup> Per decree, the three Yuan court officials Zhao Mengfu, Liu Geng 劉賡 (1248-1328) and Hudu Ta'er 護都查兒 wrote appraisals of the letter. Hudu Ta'er, who was of Mongol descent, obtained his *jinshi* degree in 1315,<sup>24</sup> the year the examinations were re-instated. At this examination, Zhao Mengfu and Liu Geng were both examiners (科舉座師), which may in part explain the sequence of their colophons as mounted today. Their appraisals, colophons by previous private owners as that by the Ming *wenren* Wang Zhideng 王穉登 (1535-1612), who had the *Neifu* copy re-mounted in 1604, and further sixty-nine colophons by Gaozong as well as two paintings by him, one painting of plum blossoms by Zhang Ruo'ai 張若靄 (1713-1746) and one painting of a snowy landscape by Dong Bangda 董邦達 (1699-1769) aggregated into a work now

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in a very abbreviated form that later people could not easily understand (as remarked in the colophons under discussion). Taking the special meaning of 想 in the context of the Jin dynasty (265-420) into account (Tian Xiaofei, "Seeing with the Mind's Eye: The Eastern Jin Discourse of Visualization and Imagination," *Asia Major* 18 (2005), 68), the letter could be read as an attempt to imagine peace and tranquility at the sight of a pristine snow landscape. The hope for a propitious omen could have been what Zhao Mengfu with his frontispiece wanted to convey to Huang Gongwang in a time of uncertainty.

- 22 For the letter's earlier whereabouts, please see, for instance, Chang Kuang-bin 張光賓, "Kuaixue shiqing tie" 快雪時晴帖, *The National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, 11 (February 1984): 105-109; Wang Yao-r'ing 王耀庭, "lue shu Wang Xizhi Kuaixue shiqing tie, Ping'an, Heru, Fengju san tie tiba de shikuang-qian da Luo Cangfeng xiansheng lai han" 略述王羲之快雪時晴帖平安何如奉橘三帖題跋的實況——兼答羅藏峰先生來函, *The National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, 84 (March 1990): 136-144; Wang Yu-min 王裕民, "Kuaixue shiqing tie qianyin de xin faxian—Songdai guanyin yanjiu zhi yi" 快雪時晴帖鈐印的新發現——宋代官印研究之一, *The National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, 171 (June 1997): 110-117; Yang Tun-li 楊敦禮, "Shiqing kuaixue dui shiqing-qian tan Kuaixue shiqing tie" 時晴快雪對時晴——淺談快雪時晴帖, *The National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, 22 (January 1985): 45-49.
- 23 Mi Fu in his *History of Calligraphy* 書史 believed the two characters 君倩 to belong to a Liang Xiu 梁秀. Wang Yuan-jun 王元軍, "Wang Xizhi's 'kuaixue shiqing tie' zhong de 'jun qian' ist shei?" 王羲之「快雪時晴帖」中的「君倩」是誰?, *The National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, 191 (February 1999), 44-52 [p. 49] states that the two characters must have been related to the Tang Imperial Palace 御府 and ascribes them to Tang Gaozong's son in law Xue Junqian 薛君倩. For a different view, please see Ho Ch'uan-hsin's forthcoming article "Qian nian liu chuan gujin zhenxi-kuaixue shiqing tie liuchuan jingli" 千年流傳 古今珍希——快雪時晴帖流傳經歷, *The National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, 415 (October 2017): 34-47. It is unclear whether the version of Wang Xizhi's letter linked to the Southern Scroll included the two characters 君倩 and a seal containing the character 褚. The *Neifu* copy in the National Palace Museum, Taipei collection does have both.
- 24 *Yuanshi* 元史 (*History of the Yuan Dynasty*). Modern edition: Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974, 568. Hudu Ta'er passed the examination as one of only two Mongolian examinees besides eight Semu as top scorer 狀元 (Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing 蕭啟慶, 九州四海風雅同：元代多族士人圈的形成與發展 (*Common literary pursuit in the Nine States and Four Seas: Formation and development of multi-ethnic scholar circles in the Yuan dynasty*). Taipei: Lianjing chubun shiye gongsi, 2012, 149, 172.

mounted as an album (the *Neifu* Album).<sup>25</sup>

Zhao Mengfu wrote in semi-cursive script (*xingshu*) in 1318 what today reads like a eulogy (Figure 7). He expresses “joy and gratitude” from the viewing that resulted from his official task given to him by the emperor:

東晉至今近千年。書跡傳流至今者絕不可得。快雪時晴帖。晉王羲之書。  
歷代寶藏者也。刻本有之。今乃得見真跡。臣不勝欣幸之至。延祐五年四  
月二十一日。翰林學士承旨榮祿大夫知制誥兼脩國史臣趙孟頫奉勅恭跋。

From the Eastern Jin to today it has been almost one thousand years. Ink traces that have been passed on to today can no longer be obtained. The *Kuaixue shiqing* letter was written by Wang Xizhi. It has been treasured and collected throughout the ages. There are rubbings. Today, however, I got to see a genuine [ink] trace. The official [I] extremely overwhelmed with joy and gratitude.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> day of the fourth month in the fifth year of the *yanyou* reign (1318), the Hanlin Executive Academician in Charge of Imperial Edicts, Grand Master of Glorious Happiness, and Special Drafting Official and Compiler for the Secretariat of the National History, Minister Zhao Mengfu respectfully received the imperial decree for and reverently wrote this postscript.

Liu Geng in his undated standard script (*kaishu*) postscript (Figure 8) considers the probability that “lost writings” of Wang Xizhi could still be “retrieved,” even if not many, and that the places to find those would be “collectors.”<sup>26</sup> Two days after Zhao Mengfu, Hudu Ta’er, who refers to himself as a *jinshi* 進士 scholar, wrote a more

25 On Gaozong’s inscriptions, see Chen Pao-chen 陳葆真 “Qianlong huangdi yu ‘kuaixue shiqing tie’” 乾隆皇帝與《快雪時晴帖》, *The National Palace Museum Research Quarterly* 27: 2 (2009): 127-192. Ho Ch’uan-hsin wonders if it was Wang Zhideng who remounted the *Neifu* Version and colophons into an album. Ho Ch’uan-hsin 何傳馨, He Yan-chuan 何炎泉, Chen Yunru 陳韻如, Wang Yao-ting 王耀庭 et.al, 晉唐法書名蹟 *Masterpieces of Chin and Tang Dynasty Calligraphy*. Taipei: National Palace Museum, 2008, 22.

26 王逸少書。不可多得。於好事家。蓋見之一二焉。此祕閣所藏快雪時晴帖墨本。乃真蹟也。尤為奇特。翰林學士承旨臣劉廣奉聖旨謹跋。“Of Wang Yishao’s writings, not many can be retrieved. At collector’s places one could possibly see one or two. The ink copy of the *Kuaixue shiqing* letter collected by the Imperial Palace Pavilion, however, is a genuine [ink] trace, particularly unique. The Hamlin Executive Academician in Charge of Imperial Edicts, Minister Liu Geng respectfully received the imperial decree for and sincerely wrote this postscript.”

elaborate note (Figure 9).<sup>27</sup> In it he calls Wang Xizhi's ink traces "the best calligraphy under Heaven," and his appraisal goes beyond Wang Xizhi's work. By praising emperor Renzong's erudition and esteem for literature and culture, a virtue presented in the letter itself,<sup>28</sup> Hudu Ta'er implies that Wang Xizhi's calligraphic note was in the right hands.

Both, Zhao Mengfu and Liu Geng award the letter a high level of value by calling it a "genuine ink trace" 真迹, but do not appraise it as an authentic work written by Wang Xizhi. This is particularly noteworthy in Zhao Mengfu's case, since it can be assumed that he had already seen another copy, namely the copy owned by Guo Tianxi.

Wang Zhideng wrote his colophon in 1609 to the *Neifu* Version after the copy had already left his collection (Figure 10).<sup>29</sup> He mentions several interesting points: He identifies the copy he saw as handwritten (as opposed to being copied in the *shuanggou* outline technique which, as he states, the Song people were the most skilled at, as their technique "was the most exquisite"), as bearing a colophon by the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127) artist, connoisseur and collector Mi Fu 米芾 (1051-1107), and as the copy formerly in the Song imperial collection. During the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) the copy was in private hands, and was traded on the art market for the princely sum of 300 coins.<sup>30</sup>

27 晉王羲之墨跡。前賢已多論者。當為天下法書第一。快雪時晴帖歷年雖遠。神物護持。不至磨滅。傳之今日。甚可珍藏也。又使四海之內。學儒諸生。知萬幾之暇。不事遊畋。不寶珠玉。博古尚文。致精如此。延祐五年四月廿三日。賜進士及第翰林待制承直郎兼國史院編脩官臣護都沓兒奉勅恭跋。"Ink traces by Wang Xizhi from the Jin have already been sufficiently discussed by previous worthies. They are regarded as the best calligraphy under Heaven. The *Kuaixue shiqing* letter, although from a long time ago, is a divine object that has been protected and preserved, not lost, but passed on until today. It has been extremely treasured and carefully stored! Also, it has enabled the students of Confucian studies in this country to know that the emperor [Renzong] does not in his leisure from ten thousand state affairs amuse himself with hunting games or treasuring pearls and jade, [but] is erudite and esteems literary culture; the essence [of which] is presented in this piece! On the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of the fourth month in the fifth year of the Yanyou reign [1318], the obliged and distinguished jinshi scholar, Hanlin Academician-in-waiting with the rank of Gentleman for Fostering Uprightness and Compiler of the National History Academy, Minister Hudu Ta'er received the imperial decree for and respectfully wrote this postscript."

28 Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing, *Common literary pursuit in the Nine States and Four Seas*, 173.

29 Wang Zhideng also wrote a colophon to a collection of seven letters by Zhao Mengfu in the National Palace Museum. Praising Zhao's calligraphy "entering the sacred" he calls it "unique among his contemporaries." On Zhao's letters, please see Ho Ch'uan-hsin 何傳馨, "Zhao Mengfu de ceying—yuan cang 'qi zha' ce guan hou" 趙孟頫的側影——院藏〈七札〉冊觀後, *The National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, 264 (March 2005), 20-30.

30 The notion of such a letter being a prestigious token and evidence of the collector's erudition may

Wang Zhideng also describes Mi Fu as so skilled in copying Wang Xizhi's works that Mi's copies could be taken as genuine. Indeed, also noteworthy is that Wang Zhideng distinguishes between the true understanding and mere outward appearance: "[...] *Sudden Snow* and *Sending Peaches* can be appraised by scholars who appreciate mysterious things and should not be discussed by people who only look at the surface of things [appearance] and readily believe what they hear from others. [...]"<sup>31</sup> Both topics, the genuineness of copies in general, and Mi Fu's skill to copy ancient works in particular, as well as the distinction between true understanding of intentions and superficial semblance of forms were of special interest for the Yuan dynasty colophon writers on the Southern Scroll.

### Zhang Yu's Copy, Zhao Mengfu's Frontispiece, and the Southern Scroll

On the Southern Scroll, the works listed below are mounted in the following order: Zhao Mengfu's frontispiece *kuai xue shi qing* written on paper, and seven colophons written on silk by seven Yuan *wenren*: the scholar Huang Jin 黃潛 (1277-1357),<sup>32</sup> the poet and Hanlin scholar Zhang Zhu 張翥 (1287-1368), Huang Gongwang 黃公望 (1269-1354), Zhang Yu, the calligrapher Duan Tianyou 段天祐 (1324 *jinshi* degree), the calligrapher Ni Zhong 倪中, and the poet and collector Mo Chang 莫昌 (Figure 6).<sup>33</sup> In

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have been the motivation for private Ming collectors to acquire the copy even if not easily affordable. Further reasons may include attempts to upgrade and publicize one's own collection and thus one's own identity as connoisseur, collector and scholar even for only short periods of time. Wang Xizhi's letter thus developed into a prestige object and symbol for erudition and wealth. One colophon that testifies this notion reads: "The best calligraphy under Heaven, my home [now owns] the best calligraphy under Heaven. Liu Chengxi from Macheng will keep this precious rarity forever." 天下法書第一。吾家法書第一。麻城劉承禧永存珍秘。 Transcription by the National Palace Museum, Taipei.

- 31 獨快雪送梨。玄賞之士。自能鑒定。不可與皮相耳食者論也。 Transcription by the National Palace Museum, Taipei.
- 32 Huang Jin together with Yu Ji 虞集 (1272-1348), Jie Xisi 揭傒斯 (1274-1344) and Liu Guan 柳貫 (1270-1342) were called the Four Eminent Confucian Scholars of the Yuan. The latter is the inscriber of Huang Gongwang's *Stone Cliff at Heavenly Pond* 天池石壁 in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing.
- 33 Mo Chang (name Weixian 維賢) hailed from Hangzhou. One remaining letter by him, which is now part of an album that includes works by other Yuan *wenren* such as Zhang Yu, Xianyu Shu and Zhao Mengfu, bears two seals: *jingxing* 景行 and *liang shan daoren* 兩山道人 (Two Mountains Daoist). Collection National Palace Museum. *Gugong Lidai Fashu Quanj* 故宮歷代全集. Taipei: National

addition, the above-mentioned painting on paper attributed to Huang Gongwang is now mounted behind Mo's colophon. Only Huang Jin's contribution is dated (1345), and the sequence of the works on the scroll may not reflect the order in which they were created. Yet all but two of the colophons refer to the spectacular unification of the two works and to the circumstances under which they were brought together: the works being Zhao Mengfu's four large characters *kuai xue shi qing* and what Zhang Zhu identified as a Tang copy of Wang Xizhi's *Kuaixue shiqing* letter in the possession of Mo Chang's family. This no longer extant copy today is 'represented' by Zhang Yu's freehand work, which is the second oldest extant handwritten copy (the oldest copy, as already mentioned, is the one included in the *Neifu* Album).

Zhao Mengfu dedicated his four large characters to Huang Gongwang.<sup>34</sup> The exact circumstances of the writing and dedication are not recorded. It is, however, the only extant work in which Zhao Mengfu mentions Huang Gongwang, and can as such be viewed as an invaluable proof that Zhao knew Huang personally.<sup>35</sup> From the colophons it becomes evident that Zhao, while in the south, had seen a copy of Wang Xizhi's letter in the collection of Mo Chang's family, which may have been the one formerly owned in the 1290's by Guo Tianxi.<sup>36</sup> During the 1290's, Huang was also in Hangzhou, serving as a clerk 吏 with no ranked civil service status in the office of the Surveillance Commissioner for Western Zhejiang 浙西憲司.<sup>37</sup> In 1318, Zhao Mengfu wrote the

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Palace Museum, 1965, 180. His sobriquet points to a Daoist inclination. He is said to have had a thorough understanding of Buddhist and Daoist thoughts and understanding of inner alchemy practices. Ling Yunhan 凌雲翰, "Mo yingjun muzhiming" 莫隱君墓誌銘, *Zhe xuan ji* 柘軒集, juan 4, in *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 1227. Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2003, 844-846. A poem scroll with contributions by Bai Ting 白珽 (1248-1328), Zhang Zhu, Qiu Yuan 仇遠 (1247-1327), Zhang Yu, and a frontispiece in seal script by Zhou Boqi 周伯琦 (1298-1369), praises Mo as poet. Collection Palace Museum, Beijing. Published in Wang Lianqi ed., *Yuandai shufa*, 2001, no. 99, 258-263.

34 Dedications on Yuan dynasty frontispieces are known, for example, from the piece by Zhou Boqi mentioned in the footnote above. *Yuandai shufa*, 2001, no. 99, 258-263.

35 On influences on Huang Gongwang's art beyond that of Zhao Mengfu, please see Chen Yunru 陳韻如, "Huang Gongwang de shuhua jiaoyou huodong yu qi xuetu fengge chu tan" 黃公望的書畫交遊活動與其雪圖風格初探, *Chongcheng University Bulletin of the Department of Chinese Language and Literature*, 2 (2010): 193-220.

36 Weitz, Zhou Mi's Record: 108. It is unclear, however, on which copy or model Zhao Mengfu based his writing (and if the copy was physically present or if he wrote the four characters from memory).

37 Charles O. Hucker (A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985, 302, no. 3586) translates the position 吏 as clerk (a subofficial functionary with no ranked civil service status). According to Chang Kuang-pin the office of the Surveillance Commissioner for

appraisal for the *Neifu* Copy in the capital. In the same year, Huang was also in Dadu—first imprisoned, and then under house arrest—only to return to the south in 1318. A meeting between both at the two occasions therefore may have been possible, although no personal encounter was recorded.

In his own colophon, Huang Gongwang declares his motive to pass on Zhao Mengfu's four characters to Mo Chang, namely to "have it circulate side by side with the original ink trace." It is not recorded how Huang Gongwang "gave" the four characters written for him by Zhao to Mo. It may be surmised that Huang sold the work to the connoisseur Mo who was presumably very eager to acquire it in order to unite it with the Tang copy of Wang Xizhi's letter in his collection. Huang Jin, Zhang Zhu, and Duan Tianyou all confirm that transfer and Zhang Zhu and Duan Tianyou also confirm Mo Chang's intention to "unite" both pieces.

Some of the colophons go far beyond mere description of the circumstances under which Zhao Mengfu's four characters *kuai xue shi qing* and Mo Chang's copy of Wang Xizhi's letter were brought together. It appears as if other topics were at least of similar, perhaps even of much higher importance, making a close reading of all colophons imperative. Within, the authors expound on intellectual and philosophical ideas prominent in Wang Xizhi's time, and, as the colophons prove, important in the Yuan dynasty.

Huang Jin refers to versions of Wang Xizhi's *Preface to the Poem Collection of the Orchid Pavilion Gathering* written in small characters. By using that example, Huang emphasizes aspects of scaling under momentary transformation, here in the form of a dragon,<sup>38</sup> which, if to be painted, needed to exist in one's mind entirely in the beginning:

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Western Zhejiang moved in 1292 from Suzhou to Hangzhou. Chang Kuang-pin 張光賓, *Si Yuan da jia: Huang Gongwang, Wu Zhen, Ni Zan, Wang Meng* 元四大家: 黃公望・吳鎮・倪瓚・王蒙. Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1975, 13.

38 The Liang emperor Wudi 梁武帝 or Xiao Yan 蕭衍 (464-549) in his discussion of Zhong You's 鍾繇 (151-230) calligraphy 《梁武帝觀鍾繇書法十二意》 stated several interesting points: "generations having studied the calligraphy of the Two Wangs [Wang Xizhi and his son Wang Xianzhi 獻之] never disregarded the calligraphic traces of Zhong You" (世之學者二王，元常遺迹，曾不傲視)，and "studying Xianzhi is like painting a tiger, studying Zhong You is like painting a dragon" (學元常者如畫龍也)。Recorded in Zhang Yanyuan's *Fashu yaolu*, in *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu*, vol. 1, 2000, 39-40. According to this text Wang Xizhi studied Zhong You's calligraphy.

趙公展快雪時晴為大書，與昔人促蘭亭為小本同一機括，如畫龍者，胷中先有全龍，則或小或大，隨時變化在我矣。此四字公為黃君子久作，子久以遺莫君景行，而景行遂以名其齋云。至正五年九月二十日黃潛觀。

Duke Zhao unfolds “Clearing after Sudden Snow” in large-character calligraphy with the same mechanism as ancient people promoted the Orchid Pavilion [Preface] in a small scroll format. It is like painting a dragon: first the entire dragon should be in one’s mind, then, whether on a small or a large scale, its momentary transformations will always be available to one. These four characters the Duke executed for gentleman Huang Zijiu; Zijiu gave it to Gentleman Mo Jingxing, and Jingxing thereupon named his studio with it. On the twentieth day of the ninth month in the fifth year of the *Zhizheng* reign Huang Jin viewed this.

Zhang Zhu points out in his colophon that the version Mo Chang owned bore a colophon by Mi Fu. In Mi’s colophon, according to Zhang Zhu, Mi had recorded the transmission history of what he appraised as a Tang copy. Furthermore, Zhang Zhu, who, together with Zhang Yu had studied under Qiu Yuan 仇遠 (1247-1327), uses a comparison between the size of a single-*cun* pearl and a *chi*-sized *bi*-disc to stress that the quality of Zhao’s characters, no matter their size, were comparable to Wang Xizhi’s characters (a topic that also Huang Jin and Mo Chang pick up on). He concludes by expressing joy over Mo’s ability to “acquire” Zhao Mengfu’s excerpt, and thus to unite both pieces:

右軍張侯帖唐人硬黃所臨，米南宮定為神品，並敘其傳者本末，而字多朽闕。趙文敏公為書與後，帖中快雪時晴一語最為佳絕，文敏復展書之，筆勢結密，咄咄逼真，使南宮復起，見當敘祿。二者俱藏景行氏。嗟乎，徑寸之珠，盈尺之璧，小大或殊，皆至寶也。得而合之，是豈偶然也耶。河東張翥敬題于武林史局。

The letter by the General of the Right Army [i.e. Wang Xizhi] for the Marquis of Zhang is a Tang copy on *yinghuang* paper. Mi Nangong [i.e. Fu] rated it a work of the highest quality, and also recounted its entire transmission history [in a colophon] behind the letter, yet many of the characters are damaged or



incomplete. Duke Zhao Wenmin wrote [the letter] out behind [Mi's colophon], and the phrase 'Clearing after Sudden Snow' was particularly wonderfully written. Wenmin wrote out [the phrase] again in large-character calligraphy, and the unity and the discipline of the brush configurations is so accurate that it makes one sigh with emotion. Were Nangong to rise from the dead and see it, he would have to tidy up his dress and sleeves [in respect]. The two pieces are [now] together in the collection of [Mo] Jingxing. *Jiehu*! A single-*cun* pearl and a *chi*-sized *bi*-disc may be very different in size but both are extremely precious. To be able to acquire and unite the two, how could this simply be fortuitous? Inscribed reverently by Zhang Zhu from Hedong at the Bureau of Historiography in Wulin.

Zhang Zhu's remarks about Mi Fu recall Mi's role as owner, appraiser and possibly also copyist of Wang Xizhi's works. No original calligraphies by Mi Fu in which he copies or re-interprets Wang Xizhi are extant, not in the least a version of the *Kuaixue shiqing* letter in Mi's hand, despite the fact that a copy of that letter was at one point in his possession.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, Zhang Zhu's act of comparing Zhao with Mi deserves further attention, since it appears that Zhang indeed credits Zhao with skills at least comparable to Mi Fu's.

According to Mi Fu's recorded colophons to Wang Xizhi's *Kuaixue shiqing* letter he had known at least three versions of it. In the tenth century, all three were owned by the family of Su Taijian 蘇太簡 (957-995). One of the three copies was later given to Mi Fu by Su Taijian's grandson, Su Ji 蘇激.<sup>40</sup> In his description of the three versions, Mi writes that one version bore (a) seal(s) containing the character 褚 and the two characters 君倩, another version bore (a) seal(s), and a third version did not bear seals. Two versions survived as rubbings recorded in the Southern Song compendium *Bao Jin zhai fatie* named after Mi Fu's Studio of Precious Jin Treasures, one of which with four

39 It is noteworthy that Mi Fu later did not record the letter as being in his collection, even though he elsewhere noted that he obtained one from Su Ji 蘇激. Lothar Ledderose, *Mi Fu and the Classical Tradition of Chinese Calligraphy*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979, 72.

40 Ledderose, *Mi Fu*, 48. For a Su family chart, see Ledderose, *Mi Fu*, 47. On the transmission history and Mi Fu's relation to the letter, please see Ho Ch'uan-hsin's above-mentioned forthcoming article in *The National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, 415 (October 2017): 34-47.

褚 seals and the 君倩 characters, and one which has neither (Figures 11, 12).<sup>41</sup> Neither Zhang Zhu (nor any other of the Southern Scroll colophon authors) mentions a seal carved with the character 褚, and neither does Zhang Yu's copy of Wang Xizhi's letter include the two characters 君倩. As the two characters were not part of the original letter handwritten by Wang Xizhi it seems plausible that Zhang Yu in any case would not have included them in his copy of the letter. Different versions of colophons by Mi Fu to Wang Xizhi's *Kuaixue shiqing* letter are recorded, they vary in length and content, and the one containing the transmission history of the letter is the longest. One possible explanation for this is that Mi had written different colophons to more than one version (perhaps to all three Su family owned copies), and that the version without the seal and the two characters ultimately entered Mo Chang's collection.

Zhou Mi 周密 (1232-1298) in his *Record of Clouds and Mist Passing before One's Eyes* 雲煙過眼錄 mentions two copies of the *Kuaixue shiqing* letter, one owned by the collector Zhao Yuqin 趙與懃 (born in the 1180's) and one by Guo Tianxi.<sup>42</sup> Zhou recorded the latter with a colophon by Mi Fu, but its content is not stated. No colophon is mentioned with Zhao Yuqin's version. Whether or not the colophon to Guo's version of Wang Xizhi's letter is the same one that was attached to Mo Chang's letter is unknown. It is also not clear whether the copy in Zhao Yuqin's collection is a separate, independent copy, or if it is the copy that entered the collection of Guo Tianxi shortly after. Zhou Mi mentions no seals or additional details of those two versions in his record.

Zhang Zhu also states in conjunction with Mi Fu's colophon describing the transmission history of the *Kuaixue shiqing* letter that the characters were "damaged or incomplete." This implies that Zhang Zhu had seen Mi Fu's colophon. Clearly, Zhang states that Zhao Mengfu wrote a colophon behind that written by Mi Fu with the four

41 The *Neifu* Copy bears both a seal containing the character 褚 and the name with the characters 君倩. For details, please see Ho Ch'uan-hsin's aforementioned forthcoming article in *The National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*, 415 (October 2017).

42 In *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu*, vol. 2. Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2000, 135, 143. Zhao Yuqin 趙與懃, sobriquet 號 Lanpo 蘭坡, according to one of his seals hailed from Kaifeng, and may have been born in the 1180's. His exact relationship to Zhao Mengfu's father Zhao Yuyin 趙與峯 (1213-1265) is unclear. (Weitz, *Zhou Mi's Record*, 171, 28, 108 fn. 456). It is also not known whether Zhao Mengfu had access to Zhao Yuqin's collection.

characters *kuai xue shi qing* being “particularly wonderfully written,” and that the precise brush configuration of Zhao’s large characters would have deeply impressed Mi.<sup>43</sup> This statement therefore could be understood as Zhang Zhu rating Zhao’s work at least as high as Mi’s.

Huang Gongwang, the original recipient of Zhao Mengfu’s four characters, indicates that Mo’s possession of the “original ink trace” was apparently one reason to pass Zhao’s excerpt on to Mo. However, Huang Gongwang does not give any information regarding dates, about the reason why Zhao Mengfu had originally written that excerpt, or why Zhao had dedicated it to Huang Gongwang:

文敏公大書右軍帖字，余以遺景行，當與真迹並行也。黃公望敬題。

Duke Wenmin’s large-scale calligraphy of characters from a manuscript by the General of the Right Army [i.e. Wang Xizhi] I gave to Jingxing, since they should circulate side by side with the original ink trace. Huang Gongwang, reverently.

Zhang Yu writes out Wang Xizhi’s letter and Wang Xizhi’s short, strong, and succinct style becomes immediately visible in Zhang Yu’s hand (Figure 2). The transcription here follows Zhang’s arrangement of the columns, which differs from the Tang copy in the *Neifu* Album and from any other extant engraved copy (Figure 7). Zhang Yu closes with his name and that he copied free-hand; yet which model he used<sup>44</sup> or if he wrote out of memory remains unclear:

羲之頓首。快雪時晴，佳。想安  
善，未果為結。力不次。王羲之  
頓首。

山陰張侯。張雨臨。

The function of Zhang Yu’s freehand copy as a complement to Zhao Mengfu’s

43 Mi had access to several collections of calligraphic works including that of Wang Shen 王詵 (1036-1093), which he was invited to visit regularly also to copy the writings at his leisure (Ledderose, *Mi Fu*, 47).

44 Zhang Yu’s characters resemble those in that version of the two rubbings in the *Bao Jin zhai fatie* 寶晉齋法帖 which has neither a 褚 seal nor the two characters 君倩.

frontispiece becomes apparent immediately during the act of unrolling the Southern Scroll: on one hand it provides the viewer with the opportunity to instantly appreciate Zhao's work and skill in condensing the text's essence to the four characters *kuai xue shi qing*, but on the other hand to appreciate Zhao's achievement in reconfiguring the characters' size in a conforming manner, thus confirming Zhang Zhu's statement.<sup>45</sup>

Duan Tianyou also acknowledges that Zhao Mengfu's four characters "were worth transmitting" together with Wang Xizhi's "manuscript" and confirms their unification. The most interesting and notable part of Duan's statement, however, is related to the brevity of Wang Xizhi's letter and its uncommon choice of words: Already in his first line, Duan brings up the Jin people's notion of *qingtán* 清談, Clear Speech or Pure Conversation, and associates Wang Xizhi's talent in speech and literature with it, believing his virtue could not possibly be "transmitted through his calligraphy alone." Duan's reference to *qingtán* in fact is a most valuable extant reference from the Yuan dynasty to this historic concept, and he directly relates Zhao Mengfu's naming his studio Snow Pine to that concept, hence acknowledging the importance of it in the Yuan:

晉尚清談，雖片言隻字亦清。快雪帖首尾廿四字耳，字字非後人所能道。右軍[?]高風雅致，豈專於書邪。趙文敏公以松雪名齋，特表章之。四言而大書之，亦豈無謂歟。此幅可與帖並傳天地間，散落異處，何幸而合於莫君，寶之，寶之。汴段天祐。

The Jin [people] esteemed Pure Conversation. Even just a few words of conversation or a few characters of writing would still have this purity. The Sudden Snow letter from beginning to end has only 24 characters, words a later person would not say. How could the noble virtue and refined elegance of the General of the Right Army be transmitted through his calligraphy alone? Duke

45 In the art of painting, this concept is echoed by Zong Bing's 宗炳 (375-443) notion of attaining likeness through correct scale and proportions, "an idea that seems to reflect the Buddhist iconometry of sacred images" in which "the eye will respond and the mind will also meet [the object represented]." Translation by Miranda Shaw, in "Buddhist and Taoist Influences on Chinese Landscape Painting," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49, no. 2 (April-June 1988): 183-206. If one applies this idea to Zhao Mengfu's four large characters 快雪時晴 in the sense of what may be called 'calligraphic iconometry,' then Zhao's frontispiece could be seen as representing Wang Xizhi and evoking Wang's spiritual presence.

Zhao Wenmin took Snow Pine as the name of his studio, it was especially to indicate this. As for these four words that he has written in large characters, likewise how could they be meaningless? This work is worth transmitting in the world together with [Wang's] manuscript. Having once been scattered in different places, how fortunate it is that they are [now] united at Gentleman Mo's. Treasure them! Treasure them!

Duan Tianyou from Bian.

Ni Zhong makes no reference to Mo Chang or to the unification, but similar to Duan Tianyou, Ni credits Zhao Mengfu with a profound understanding of Wang Xizhi's *intentions*, allowing him to avoid mere emulation of appearances. Ni not only links Zhao Mengfu's characters with those of calligraphers from the Jin dynasty, but also elaborates specifically on the act of writing. Ni describes this process as a unification of intentions as well as of temporalities, the author being "unaware of any difference between past and present," which may have meant a virtual and spiritual equalizing of their and Wang Xizhi's time. Ni again explicates the aspect of scaling, and uses the example of envisioning an "ox in its entirety"<sup>46</sup> before writing:

晉人為書，每能徑丈一字，方寸千言，蓋其胸中自[得]全牛，故或大或小，皆有遊刃之地。若趙文敏書法雖特起今代，而其所造詣實追晉人，及觀快雪時晴四字，信乎與右軍帖高致無異。想當其運筆之時，意合手從，亦不自知有今昔小大之間，故能得其神趣之妙。使第以形骸索諸古人，惡足以及是哉。槁城倪中敬書于武林安國里之和陶軒。

Jin calligraphers could write a single character in a square *zhang* or a thousand words in a small space, because in their minds they had already envisioned the ox in its entirety, and thus whether big or small, all are moved skillfully and easily within their space. As for Zhao Wenmin's calligraphy, even though it rose abruptly in the contemporary age, its attainment truly follows the people of Jin. Viewing these four characters, 'Clearing after Sudden Snow,' I believe that there is no difference from the lofty spirit of the calligraphy of the General

46 See *Zhuangzi* 莊子, "yang sheng zhu" 養生主 (Principle of Cultivating Life), 庖丁解牛 (The skill of cutting up an oxen with a knife of the cook Ding).

of the Right Army. I imagine that when he moved his brush, his intentions came together and his hand followed so that he was unaware of any difference between past and present or between large-scale and small-scale, and was thus able to achieve the wonder of divine charm. If he had only emulated the appearance of ancient masters' writings, how could he have attained this level? Reverently written by Ni Zhong from Gaocheng at the In Harmony with Tao [Yuanming] Studio in Anguoli, in Wulin.

Mo Chang had hoped to have achieved an everlasting unification of the two pieces: his own copy of the letter by Wang Xizhi (which had been kept in his family's possession for a long time) and Zhao Mengfu's four character-frontispiece. Finally, Mo emphasizes again the necessity of "capturing the conception and stylistic principle," rather than "simply adhering rigidly to [outward] resemblances." In mentioning that Zhao Mengfu had inscribed the copy of Wang Xizhi's letter now in his collection on more than one occasion, Mo seems to indicate that Zhao chose that copy as model for his four characters, or that Zhao's characters resembled Mo's version closely:

古人臨帖妙在得其意度，不特規規於形似而已。趙文敏公臨右軍帖為尤多。余家藏快雪帖久矣。公[反]覆題識於上，可見其珍重之深也。又摘此四字展[書]之，雖大小形似之或殊，其意度則得之矣。遂揭之齋中以並傳不朽云。南屏隱者莫昌識。

When the ancients copied manuscript calligraphies, their marvelous achievement lay in capturing the conception and stylistic principle, and not simply adhering rigidly to [outward] resemblances. Duke Zhao Wenmin copied the calligraphy of the General of the Right Army very often. My family has kept the Sudden Snow letter [by Wang Xizhi] for a long time. The Duke repeatedly inscribed it, from which one can see how deeply he valued it. Moreover, when he selected these four characters to make a calligraphy, even though the size and formal appearance may be different, he captured the conception and stylistic principle. Now [the two pieces are] in the studio, and they will be transmitted together forever. Inscribed by the Nanping Recluse Mo Chang.

Mo's wish to have brought together Wang's letter and Zhao's four characters "to be transmitted forever" has not been realized. However, Mo (who called himself "the Nanping Recluse"<sup>47</sup>) initiated the creation of the Southern Scroll. Although he neither refers to any of the colophon authors whom he presumably had requested to contribute, nor explains why Zhang Yu wrote out another complete version of Wang Xizhi's letter (it is unclear whether Zhang Yu modeled his freehand copy after the version in Mo Chang's collection). It was to Mo's credit that the existence of his original Tang copy was documented so well and stayed alive through Zhang Yu's freehand copy, Zhao's frontispiece, and the colophons (which Mo himself concluded with his text written in formal clerical script, *lishu* 隸書), and which were all aggregated into one invaluable scroll.

## Conclusion

The Southern Scroll and the *Neifu* Album, despite their different historical backgrounds complement each other in form, content and meaning in an unparalleled way. The *Neifu* Album appears as a official record of utmost significance, documenting and legalizing cultural heritage in the form of a copy of Wang Xizhi's letter *Kuaixue shiqing* on the imperial level. The mounting of the letter and the colophons as an album reflect its extraordinary value and point at its function as a formal document in an official environment. The Southern Scroll is a private treasure that records the transmission of Zhao Mengfu's four characters; originally a personal gift to Huang Gongwang, the four characters were to be united with Mo Chang's now lost Tang copy of Wang Xizhi's *Kuaixue* letter, to which belonged colophons by Mi Fu and Zhao Mengfu. Although the contributions to the scroll in its entirety touch upon fundamental topics, it assumes and maintains the private nature of a handscroll that requires unrolling and usually reveals its content only partially and in sequential time.

In historical and art historical scholarship the importance of Wang Xizhi's letter in the form of the Tang copy in the *Neifu* Album is enhanced by the Yuan colophons of

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47 Nanping (South Screen [Hill]) is located in Hangzhou.

the Southern Scroll: in reference to Wang Xizhi and his calligraphed text, the colophon authors contemplate societal and artistic specifics during the Six Dynasties, hence documenting their awareness and confirming the significance of these topics in their own time. Likewise, the story behind Zhao Mengfu's four large characters is much enhanced by his having been imperially requested to appraise the Tang copy in the *Neifu* Album. Although known from records and proven by the extant Tang dynasty *Neifu* copy that Wang Xizhi's letter had already enjoyed great attention in earlier times, Zhang Yu's copy, the Yuan colophons and Zhao Mengfu's four large characters are among the earliest now extant witnesses of the attention afforded to it.

Compared to the brevity of Wang Xizhi's letter, the 'feedback' he posthumously received from the Yuan colophon writers on the Southern Scroll and their reactions to the version of his letter they had seen are overwhelming. That feedback is a distinct and important constituent of Wang Xizhi's Yuan dynasty image. The overarching story that unfolds in the Yuan colophons and in the topics the Yuan authors discussed are by no means the only nor are they self-evident choices from the broad spectrum of Wang Xizhi paradigms available to them. Besides original sources and historical texts, there were also tales such as the *Shishuo xinyu* that contributed to the multitudinous paradigmatic facets. And the Yuan *wenren* knew the *Shishuo xinyu* well.<sup>48</sup>

The colophon authors honed in on Six Dynasties essentials and the social fabric of that time, repeatedly citing the Jin people in general and associating Wang Xizhi with key features of Six Dynasties thoughts, concepts, and ideals. "The entire dragon" that ought to be first envisioned "in one's mind," as Huang Jin stated, or "the ox in its entirety," as Ni Zhong observed did not only denote the superb skill of a calligrapher, but were concepts of authenticity that were regarded as *sine qua non* for grasping an idea, understanding it, and being able to recreate it—even if not recreated through exact

48 As recorded, Huang Gongwang wrote out the entire *Shishuo xinyu*. Bian Yongyu, Shigutang shuhua huikao, *Zhongguo shuhua quanji*, vol. 6, 441. Lu Youren 陸友仁 (c.1300-c.1348) wrote parts of the *Shishuo xinyu* for Zhang Yu, which Zhang Yu then gave to Ni Zan. Bian Yongyu, Shigutang shuhua huikao, *Zhongguo shuhua quanji*, vol. 6, 157. Several Yuan dynasty colophon writers responded to Zhao Mengfu's painting of a solitary figure in a landscape (collection Princeton University Art Museum), not with discussing the historical image of Xie Kun 謝琨, but with the cultural image of him that obviously circulated in the Yuan and had its source in the *Shishuo xinyu*. See discussion in Augustin, "Painting Authenticity," 149-167.



form or outward appearance, but in meaning. Not to emulate, as Ni Zhong said, but to capture the true intentions behind simple outwardness of form. In the eyes of his late Yuan fellows Zhao Mengfu had fended off the temptation to give in to plain vanity and succeeded in harboring both the ox and the dragon in his mind before putting brush to paper.

To be sure, the brevity of Wang Xizhi's letter probably quickly evoked the idea of *qingtian*; but it needs to be stressed that Duan Tianyou's mention of that concept whose genesis had begun in the Han (206 BCE-220 CE) and peaked in the Jin dynasty (265-420), is a remarkable extant *expressis verbis* manifest passed on from the Yuan, making it extremely valuable. Other authors also cite Wang Xizhi's conciseness, and they all agree in one point: Zhao Mengfu was not only able to re-examine the idea of *qingtian*, but to relive it, to capture Wang Xizhi's pictorial statement of an otherwise perhaps meaningless letter in its entirety, not only to emulate it superficially, but to recreate it and make it an authentic image of Wang Xizhi's idea and thus of Wang Xizhi himself. Wang had expressed in his short letter his astonishment over and the happiness about the clearing after sudden snow—a pristine picture conveying a sublimely peaceful image, deep insight and satisfaction. Zhao Mengfu successfully re-modeled that part of Wang Xizhi's persona, in the form of the four characters *kuai xue shi qing*, which were independent of purely superficial aspects such as size or form. Zhao Mengfu had become part of Wang Xizhi's Yuan persona.

By extension, Zhang Yu is also a critical constituent of that persona. His freehand copy echoes the intentions of Wang Xizhi as cast by Zhao Mengfu in his four large characters. Supposing only the Southern Scroll had survived (and not the *Neifu* Album), the principle of such a reimagining and reinvisioning of Wang's original intentions as Zhao and Zhang had successfully carried out would have been visibly preserved—at least for the Yuan dynasty *wenren*.

## Epilogue

The Qing emperor Gaozong's additions to his Tang copy of Wang Xizhi's letter,

the three Yuan appraisals, and the thoughts the later owners had brought in, suggest a further transmission of Wang Xizhi's persona and image originating in the Yuan dynasty, a transfer of the 'Yuan perception of Wang Xizhi' to more recent shores of art history. Gaozong responded to Six Dynasties ideas as expressed by Wang Xizhi in his *Kuaixue shiqing* letter using Yuan dynasty semantics and references and neither the semantics of the Six Dynasties directly, nor those of his own Qing dynasty. This observation may appear suspicious: Had not Gaozong honored Wang Xizhi's work by including it into his Sanxitang? And yet, Gaozong pictorially reimagined two Yuan creations despite having other choices. He could have plainly embedded *Kuaixue shiqing* into the visual environment of his own lifetime, a context readily available to him; this was done (probably by decree), for instance, by Dong Bangda and Zhang Ruo'ai (Figures 13, 14).

The two pictures from Gaozong's own hand tell a different story: that of an apparently dichotomous Yuan imagery of Six Dynasties narratives. One of these chosen realities is clearly understandable, the other one needs more thoughtful probing. His reference to Qian Xuan's work *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese* is an obvious one, albeit not as plain as it appears to be. His pairing of Ni Zan's voided spaces with Wang Xizhi's succinctness might remain elusive for some time.

In 1746 Gaozong owned and inscribed Qian Xuan's *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese* (Figure 15). Qian Xuan had already expressed his ideas about Wang Xizhi and one of Wang's legends in a colophon, separated from the picture, but on the same piece of paper:<sup>49</sup>

脩竹林間爽致多，閑亭坦腹意如何。  
為書道德遺方士，留得風流一愛鵝。  
吳興錢選舜舉。

Thin and long bamboo amid a grove of trees  
—how refreshing and delicate;  
Bare-bellied in a pavilion with a balustrade—what is [his] intention?  
To write out the *Daodejing* and leave it with an alchemist;

49 A second version without Qian Xuan's poem but with a colophon by Dong Qichang 董其昌 exists in the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei.

[Who] accepts it from someone 'talented in letters and with an unconventional lifestyle'<sup>50</sup> who wholeheartedly loves geese.

Qian Xuan Shunju from Wuxing

Qian Xuan's imagery is an unadorned recap of history, but on the other hand, it involves pure Six Dynasties thought: He calls Wang Xizhi "someone talented in letters and with an unconventional lifestyle" and describes Wang as bare bellied (much like in one of the *Shishuo* tales cited above, or recalling the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove; yet contradicted by Qian's own image). Qian also and specifically clarifies that Wang wrote the manifest of Daoism for a *fangshi* 方士 (or as usually translated, an alchemist), people who in Wang's time were the promoters of performing cosmological and esoteric arts.<sup>51</sup> Qian does not call the recipient of the Daodejing *daoshi* 道士, as is, for instance, stated in Wang Xizhi's biography in the *Jinshu* 晉書 and also calligraphed by Zhao Mengfu (Figure 16). The act of writing is one of the most deliberate acts in intellectual exchange, and hence Qian's fine linguistic distinction has to be taken seriously: Wang Xizhi as the progenitor of *wenren* culture in his time, exchanges fundamental theories with a practitioner, to receive, in return, living beings, perhaps thought as substitute for the quest of immortality. Central concepts of Six Dynasties culture appear in Qian's poem, and are also visible in his image. Wang Xizhi is dressed in a fine gown and wearing a scholar's hat gazing at a flock of geese. Strikingly aesthetic coloring of blue and green, silver and gold (Figure 17 detail), the atmosphere is laden with alchemist allusion, but foremost with Daoist essence.<sup>52</sup>

Gaozong's poem, seal and inscription appear as an endorsement of Qian Xuan's display and writing:

50 For the meaning of *fengliu* 風流 used here, see *Xin yi shi shuo xin yu* 新譯世說新語. Annotated by Liu Zhenghao 劉正浩. Taipei: Sanmin shuju, 2007, 282.

51 See Fabrizio Pregadio, *Great Clarity: Daoism and Alchemy in Early Medieval China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, 16-18, 28-29.

52 For a possible visual source of Qian Xuan's composition, see Birgitta Augustin, "Modern Views on Old Histories: Zhang Yu's and Huang Gongwang's Encounter with Qian Xuan." *Arts Asiatiques*, 67, (2012): 63-78.

誓墓高風有足多，獨推書聖卻云何。  
行雲流水參神韻，筆陣傳來祇白鵝。  
丙寅御題。[印]：幾暇怡情

An oath at the [parent's] grave how virtuous his noble character and moral integrity;

[That] alone indicates his merit as sage of calligraphy still what does this say?  
[A writing style] like floating clouds and flowing water joined by a romantic charm [in literature];

The *Bizhentu* was transmitted only by white geese.

In the cyclical year *bingyin* (1746) inscribed by the Emperor.

Gaozong seems to have not only endorsed Qian Xuan's image of Wang Xizhi by matching the rhymes in his poem on Qian's painting to Qian's original verses (and squeezed them right into Qian's image). He also "imitated Zhaxi's [Qian Xuan's] general layout" in a separate painting the inscription of which is dated the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of the second month of spring, 1746 (the year and lunar month of the naming of the Sanxitang),<sup>53</sup> and thus recreated with his monochrome ink painting showing only the left part of Qian Xuan's composition a condensed version of Qian's original image of Wang Xizhi (Figure 18), reduced by means of pictorial abbreviation to the essentials.

Quite different is Gaozong's choice to emulate the standard Ni Zan iconography. Writing on the upper left side of his own painting (Figure 19), in the first month of 1746 (possibly right upon completing the image) Gaozong inscribed:

乾隆丙寅（西元一七四六年）新正幾暇。因觀羲之快雪時晴。愛此側理。  
輒寫雲林大意。

In the year *bingyin* (1746) in the first month during leisurely time. Because I viewed [Wang] Xizhi's *Clearing after Sudden Snow*, and am fond of Celi-paper, I arbitrarily 'wrote' [a painting showing Ni] Yunlin's general idea.

From Gaozong's statement one can infer that only a few weeks before he imitated (*xiao*

53 左幅蘭紙。光潤可愛。即效雪溪體補空。仲春下浣之二日。長春書屋御識并書。Transcription by the National Palace Museum, Taipei.

效) Qian Xuan's composition, the viewing of Wang Xizhi's letter caused him to think of Ni Zan and what he calls Ni's "general idea." This Gaozong understood as exactly the typical setting he knew from other works by Ni Zan in his own collection (Figures 20, 21, 22), an idea that he transferred into his own image. The choice of *Celi*, a kind of paper originating in the Jin dynasty (265-420) seems more directly connected with Wang Xizhi's time and his *Kuaixue shiqing* letter.<sup>54</sup> Yet there is no indication why Gaozong associated Wang Xizhi or the letter (or both) with Ni and Ni's stereotypical image, leaving room for wider interpretation.

Another Yuan dynasty work, Huang Gongwang's *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, has also been linked to Wang Xizhi. Huang's monochrome masterpiece, which entered the Qing collection in 1746, was equated with Wang Xizhi's *Preface to the Poem Collection at the Orchid Pavilion* in 1650 by the painter Zou Zhilin 鄒之麟 (1610 *jinshi* degree).<sup>55</sup> In his long, horizontal composition, which was known to Gaozong in two versions—the Wuyong scroll and the Ziming scroll, the original as well as a copy—Huang included a scene that reminds of Qian Xuan's work of Wang Xizhi in his pavilion watching geese (Figure 23).

Obviously, Gaozong perceived the *Neifu* Album as being rooted partially in Yuan history, and thus he chose Yuan protagonists who, at least to him, stood for ideas originally going back to Wang Xizhi and his time.<sup>56</sup> Gaozong's emulating Qian Xuan's display of Wang and the geese might well serve as direct evidence. Ni Zan's sparse, monochrome works appear as an expression of 'pictorial brevity,' analogous to the clarity and succinctness of the thoughts of the Six Dynasties masters. Zhao Mengfu's

54 According to He Yan-chuan 何炎泉 ("Chengxintang zhi yu Qianlong huangdi: qian lun qi dui gudai jian zhi de shangjian guan," 澄心堂紙與乾隆皇帝：兼論其對古代箋紙的賞鑑觀, *The National Palace Museum Research Quarterly* 33:1 (2015): 339), it was not before the 1750's that Qing Gaozong was able to make a connection between *Celi* paper and the Eastern Jin dynasty and thus Wang Xizhi. Wen Zhengming and Zhang Zhu both mention paper in connection with copying: According to Wen Zhengming's colophon to Zhao's copies of Wang Xizhi's so-called *Guozha* letters Wen writes that Zhao Mengfu "grasps meaning in form" "although differing in ink and paper." Zhang Zhu speaks of Yinghuang paper used for the Tang copy of the *kuaixue shiqing* letter in Mo Chang's possession.

55 Ho Ch'uan-hsin 何傳馨, *Mingpin de xingcheng: Gugong shuhua diancang, yanjiu yu zhanlan* 名品的形成：故宮書畫典藏、研究與展覽 (*The Formation of Masterworks: The Collection of the National Palace Museum, Research and Exhibitions*). Taipei: National Palace Museum, 2016, 184.

56 This is also reflected in the arrangement of Qing Gaozong's two paintings in the *Neifu* Album, which are mounted to frame the *Kuaixue* letter and the Yuan colophons..

four large characters, however, and Zhang Yu's copy of Wang's letter were perceived as a clear expression of Wang Xizhi's true intentions, executed by the minds and hands of two Yuan *wenren* in the supreme realm of calligraphy.

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- Figure 23 Huang Gongwang, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, 1347-1350, detail, handscroll, ink on paper, entire scroll: 33×639.9 cm, National Palace Museum, Taipei.

# 王羲之〈快雪時晴帖〉在元代的 接受與認識

愛古心

柏林國家博物館亞洲藝術館

## 提 要

王羲之（約 301-361）〈快雪時晴帖〉傳世最早的兩件摹本與臨本，以及裝裱於前後的題跋、畫作，皆與元代有密切的關連。唐代（618-907）摹本〈快雪時晴帖〉（內府冊頁本），原為清高宗三希堂珍藏的書蹟之一，現已裝成冊頁型式藏於國立故宮博物院；此本後副葉有元仁宗（1311-1320 在位）命趙孟頫（1254-1322）及二位翰林學士所題跋文。另一本是由元代道士文人張雨（1283-1350）臨寫的王羲之〈快雪時晴帖〉（南卷本），現藏於北京故宮博物院；此一長卷引首有趙孟頫為黃公望（1269-1354）所書「快雪時晴」四大字，續接後代跋文，其中包含元人題跋七則。「南卷本」題跋似乎顯示尚有一本今日已亡佚的唐摹〈快雪時晴帖〉，題跋作者亦同意趙孟頫書「快雪時晴」四大字，能得王羲之書法意度。本文為首次針對「內府冊頁本」與「南卷本」〈快雪時晴帖〉進行討論，並藉由兩書蹟互相補證。文中認為元人不僅視王羲之為書聖，更將其奉為六朝（220-589）士大夫階級與思想文化之精神象徵。而趙孟頫與張雨又因能得王羲之精神，對形塑元人的王羲之認知頗有關聯。此外，清高宗繪於〈快雪時晴帖〉的兩幅畫作，即節臨錢選（約 1235-1307）〈羲之觀鵝圖〉與運用典型倪瓚（1307-1374）模式的山水畫，又與前述元人對王羲之的認識，有著密不可分的關係。這些畫作顯示，當清高宗觀賞三希堂〈快雪時晴帖〉時，其心中所見是既有字面上、也包含圖像上的元代雙重意象。

**關鍵詞：**王羲之、張雨、趙孟頫、清高宗、元代、六朝、清談

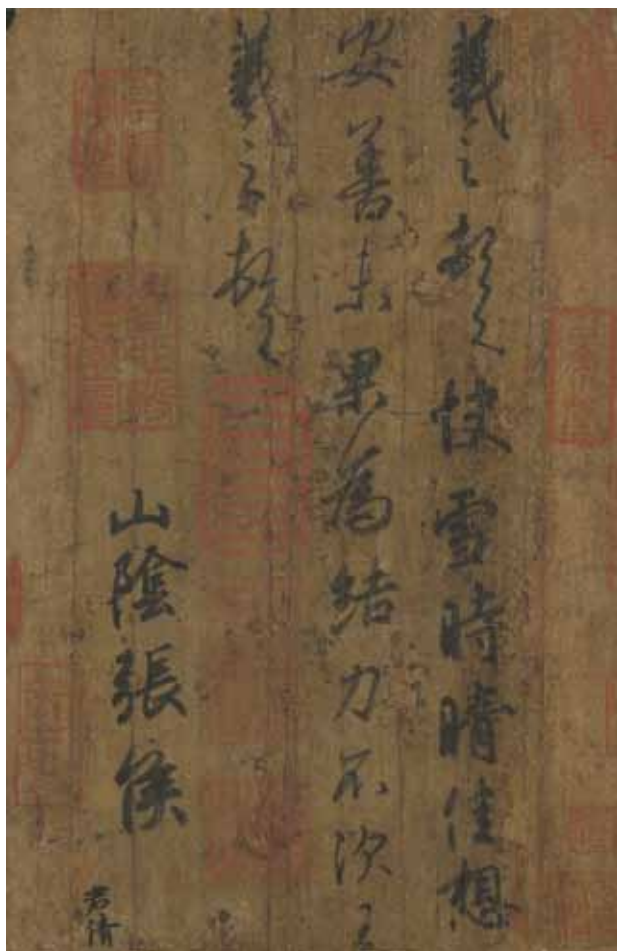


FIGURE 1 Wang Xizhi, *Kuaixue shiqing* letter, *Neifu* Album, Tang dynasty (618-907) tracing-copy, National Palace Museum, Taipei.

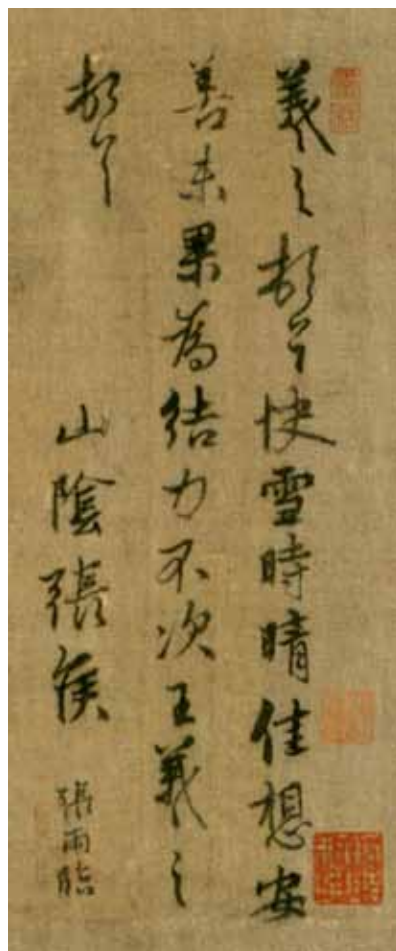


FIGURE 2 Zhang Yu, freehand-copy of Wang Xizhi's *Kuaixue* letter, written as colophon, Southern Scroll, Palace Museum Beijing.

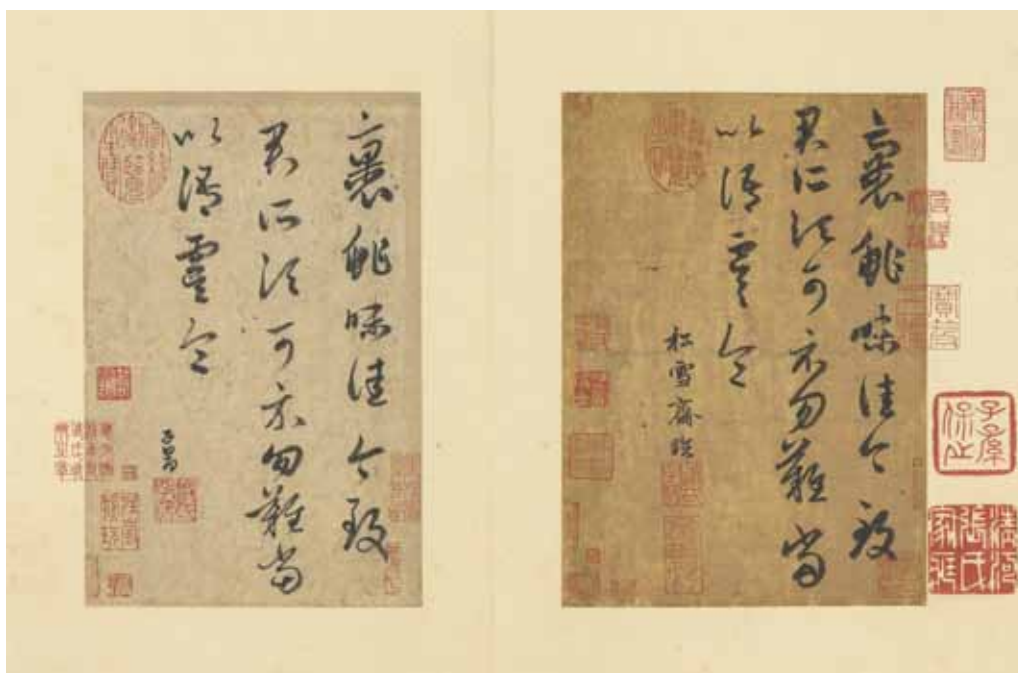


FIGURE 3 Zhao Mengfu, freehand-copy of Wang Xizhi's *Guozha* letter, National Palace Museum, Taipei.

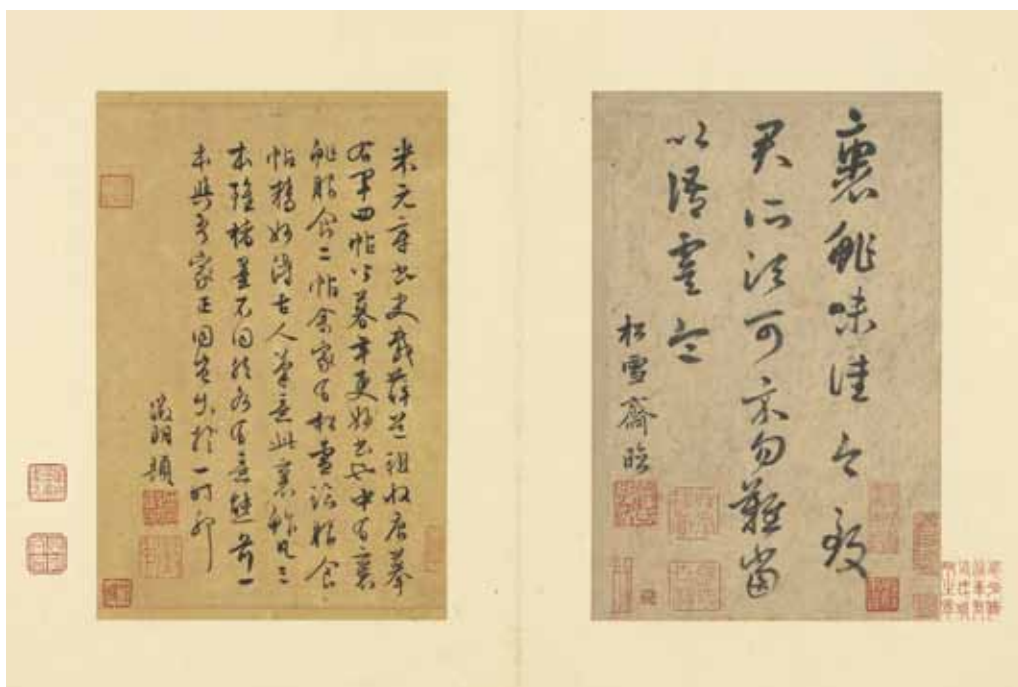


FIGURE 4 Wen Zhengming, colophon to Zhao Mengfu's freehand-copy of Wang Xizhi's *Guozha* letter, National Palace Museum, Taipei.



FIGURE 5 Zhao Mengfu, *kuai xue shi qing*, frontispiece, Southern Scroll, Palace Museum Beijing.



FIGURE 6 Southern Scroll with Zhao Mengfu's *kuai xue shi qing* frontispiece on paper, colophons by seven Yuan *wenren* on silk, and a snowscape painting attributed to Huang Gongwang on paper, Palace Museum Beijing.





FIGURE 7 Zhao Mengfu, colophon to Wang Xizhi's *Kuaixue* letter, *Neifu* Album, National Palace Museum, Taipei.



FIGURE 8 Liu Geng, colophon to Wang Xizhi's *Kuaixue* letter, *Neifu* Album, National Palace Museum, Taipei.

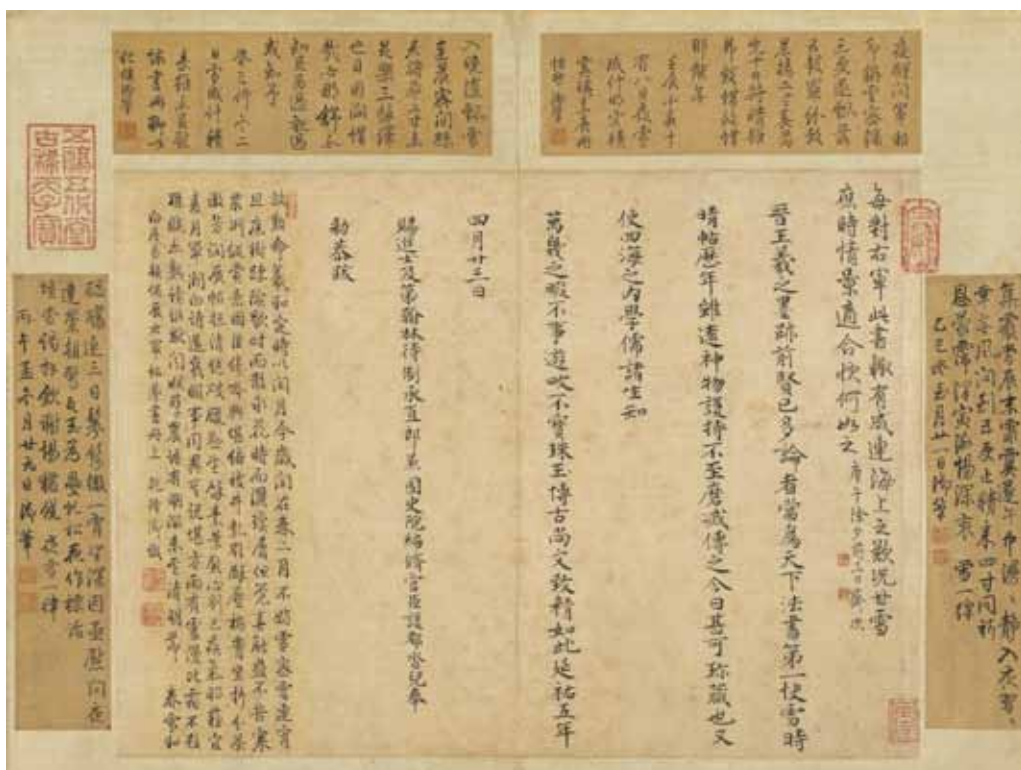


FIGURE 9 Hudu Ta'er, colophon to Wang Xizhi's *Kuaixue* letter, *Neifu* Album, National Palace Museum, Taipei.



FIGURE 10 Wang Zhideng, colophon to Wang Xizhi's *Kuaixue* letter, *Neifu* Album, National Palace Museum, Taipei.

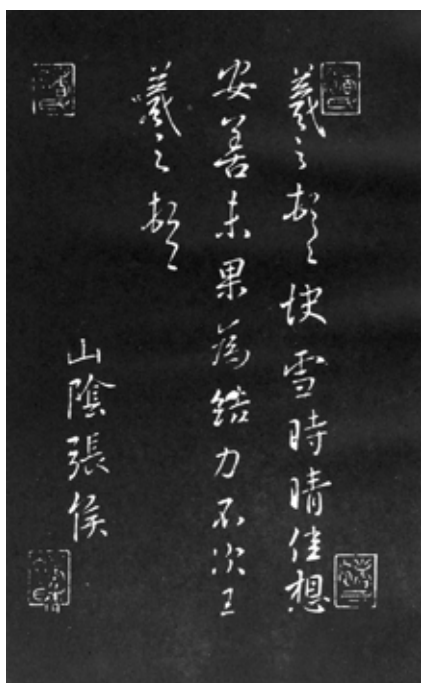


FIGURE 11 Rubbing of the *Kuaixue shiqing tie*, version 1, from the *Bao Jin Zhai fatie*.

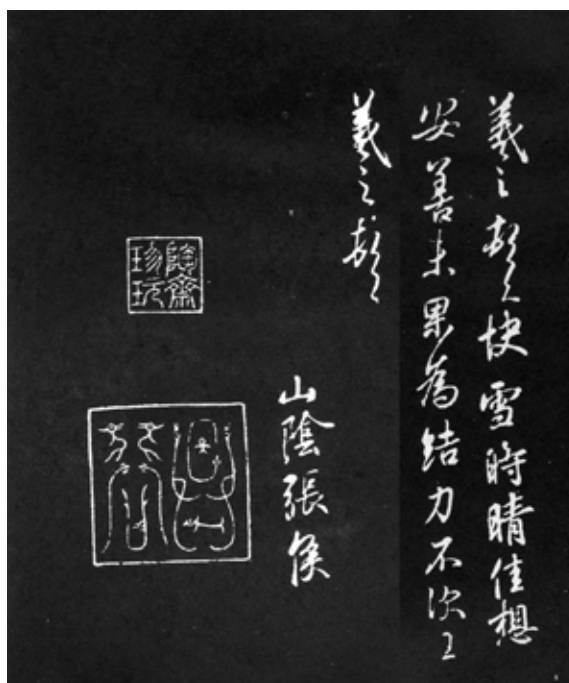


FIGURE 12 Rubbing of the *Kuaixue shiqing tie*, version 2, from the *Bao Jin Zhai fatie*.



FIGURE 13 Zhang Ruo'ai, *Plum Blossom*, *Neifu Album*, National Palace Museum, Taipei.





FIGURE 14 Dong Bangda, *Snow Landscape*, *Neifu* Album, National Palace Museum, Taipei.



FIGURE 15 Qian Xuan, *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

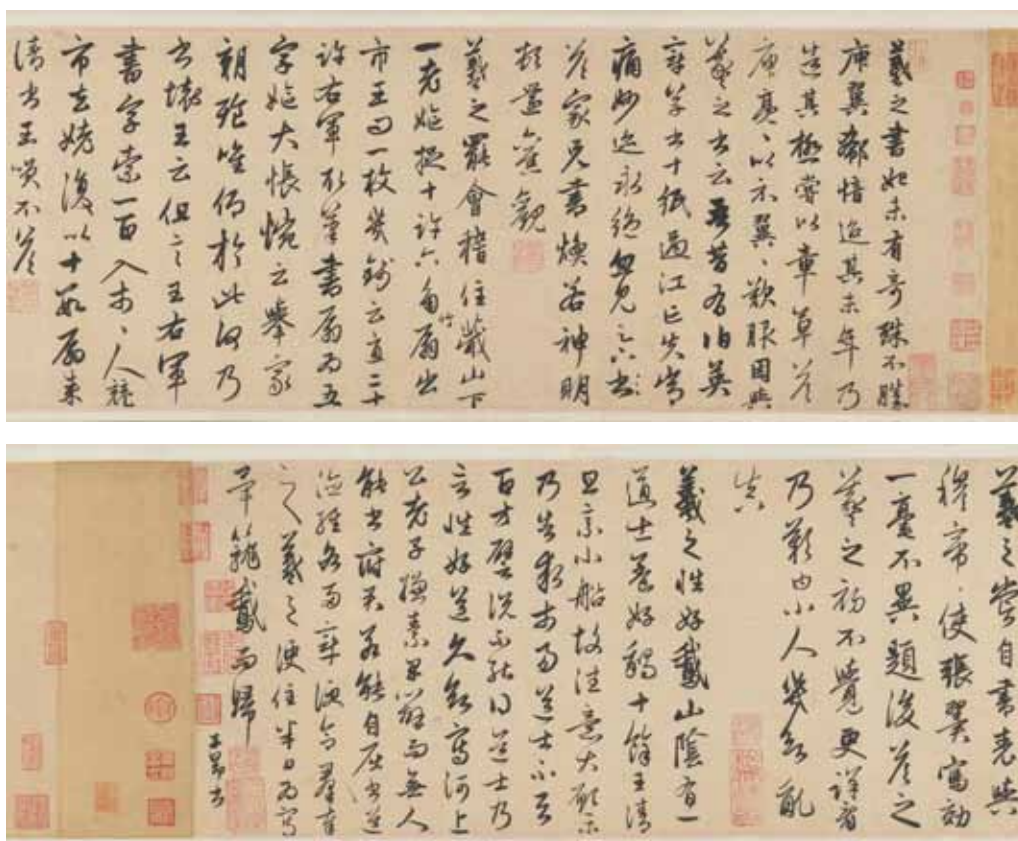


FIGURE 16 Zhao Mengfu, *Four Anecdotes from the Life of Wang Xizhi*. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



FIGURE 17 Qian Xuan, *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese*, detail. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



FIGURE 18 Qing Gaozong, *Imitating Qian Xuan*, *Neifu* Album, National Palace Museum, Taipei.



FIGURE 19 Qing Gaozong, *After Ni Zan's Idea*, *Neifu* Album, National Palace Museum, Taipei.





FIGURE 20  
Ni Zan, *Purple Mushroom Dwelling*, ca. 1370, National Palace Museum, Taipei.



FIGURE 21  
Ni Zan, *Rongxi Studio*, 1372, National Palace Museum, Taipei.



FIGURE 22  
Ni Zan, *Riverside Pavilion and Mountain Scenery*, 1372, National Palace Museum, Taipei.

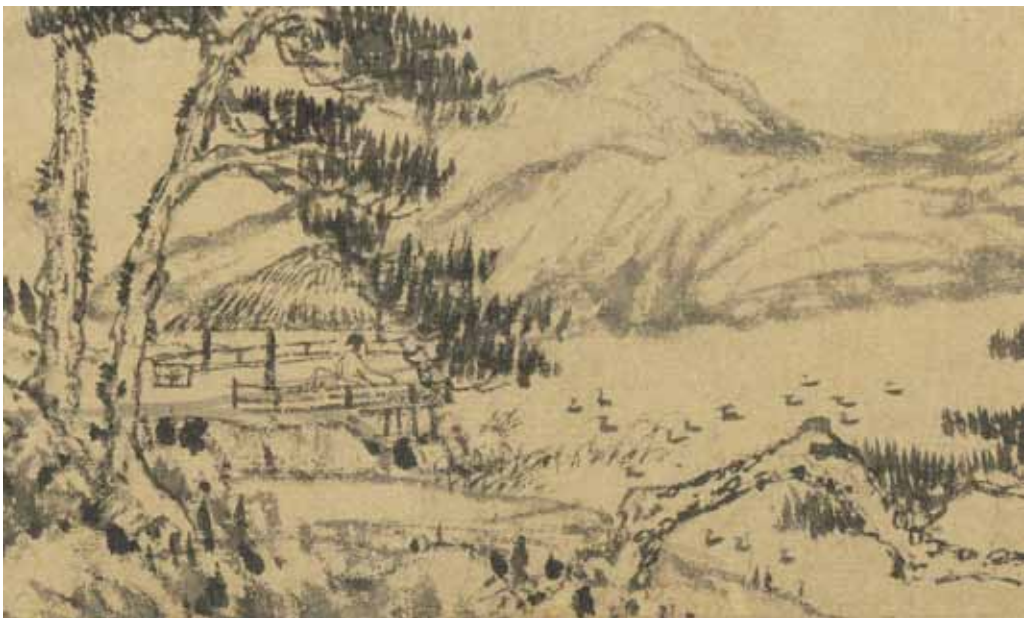


FIGURE 23 Huang Gongwang, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, detail. National Palace Museum, Taipei.