From the Primitive Image to Traditional Chinese Art:

The significance of Nature in the Development of Chinese Landscape Painting,

From Neolithic times to Imperial China

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This dissertation is presented as partial fulfilment of the degree of Masters (Fine Arts) of University of Western Australia

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July 2014
Abstract

This master’s dissertation studies of the development of traditional Chinese landscape painting. This dissertation traces the nature worship of Neolithic times in China and its influence upon the development of traditional Chinese landscape painting. The time frame analysed in this dissertation spans the beginning of agriculture to the maturity of the painting, from Neolithic China to the Song Dynasty (960 CE – 1279 CE). The development of Chinese landscape is used in this dissertation to demonstrate the continuity of nature in art over this time because: the history of Chinese landscape painting shows the continual development of natural images between the pre-agricultural and post-agricultural eras; Chinese civilization has been built upon on a close relationship with nature since remote antiquity time; and Chinese civilization and culture is one of the earlier cultures and civilizations. This dissertation argues depicting nature has been rooted in human intellectual faculties since the early stages of human history and that the persistence of nature as a theme in Chinese art suggests that landscape paintings in particular touch upon human innate responses to nature.
DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this dissertation is a product of my own work. I certify to the best of my knowledge, this dissertation does not contain any material previously written or published by another person other than that which has been referenced appropriately in the text.

I also certify that this dissertation does not contain any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma at UWA or any other educational institution.

Signature:

Date:
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my greatest thanks to my two supervisors. The completion of this Master dissertation would not have been possible without the assistance of my patient and supportive supervisor Dr Darren Jorgensen. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Ian McLean for his dedicated teaching during his time in University of Western Australia; he has inspired me to pursue my education. His supervision and encouragement in the beginning of this dissertation, along with continual support in this dissertation have motivated me to persist in finishing this dissertation.

Many friends have also given their encouragement and support during this journey. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation especially to Dr Cameron Ironside, Professor Thomas O’Neill, Ms Jennifer Wong and Dr Marissa Wettasinghe. In addition, I would like to thank all my employers, specifically, the Smarts and Williams, who have provided me with the part time jobs to enable me to support my son and my study during these years. Many thanks also to my neighbours, the Beckers, Beverly, Irene and Philip, Mei, the Swains, and Dr Frank Wilczynski and late Mrs Luba Wilczynski, for their invaluable friendship.

I also owe my interest in the field of Baroque arts to Professor Richard Read, who was the first to sow the seed love for landscape painting.

Finally, on a personal note, an enormous amount of gratitude to my son, Sam, as you have been my motivation to face all the challenges in my study and life. While my dissertation has grown in depth, you have grown into a fine young man. This dissertation is my gift to my son, Sam, who is the reason I could face all the challenges in my life.
# TABLE OF CONTENT

1. Abstract  
   Page 2

2. Declaration  
   Page 3

3. Acknowledgement  
   Page 4

4. Table of Content  
   Page 5 - 6

5. List of Plates  
   Page 7 - 11

6. Introduction  
   Page 12 - 18

   Part: I

7. Chapter One:  
   The Early Images of Nature: Pre-Agricultural Era  
   Page 19 - 27

9. Chapter Two:  
   Early Images of Nature in Ancient China and the Aegean  
   Page 28 - 39

10. Chapter Three:  
    The philosophical and Religious Influences on the Development of Chinese Landscape Painting  
    Page 40 - 57

   Part: II

   The Rise of the Artist-Scholars and the Development of Chinese Landscape Painting

11. Chapter Four:  
    The Imperial Dynasties, from the Qin Dynasty to the Three Kingdoms, the Jin Dynasty and the Northern and Southern Dynasties: (221 BCE - 581 BCE)  
    Page 58 - 71
12. Chapter Five
   The imperial Dynasties, from the Sui Dynasty and
   the Tang Dynasty (581 CE – 907 CE) Page 72 - 93

13. Chapter Six
   The Imperial Dynasties, from the Five Dynasties and
   Ten Kingdoms to Song Dynasty (907 CE – 1279 CE) Page 94 - 119

14. Conclusion Page 120 - 121

15. Bibliography (English) Page 122 - 133


17. Appendix I Page 139

18. Plates Page 140 - 234
LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1  Cleaver and hand axe

Plate 2  “Fighting rhinoceroses and four horse heads, charcoal drawing on rock”, Chauvet Cave, 35,000 BCE – 22,000 BCE

Plate 3  “Panel of owl, Engraving on rock,” Chauvet cave, 35,000 BCE – 22,000 BCE

Plate 4  “Landscape with volcanic eruption?”, Catal Huyuk, 6150 BCE

Plate 5  “Deer hunt”, Catal Huyk, 5750 BCE

Plate 6  “Ship Procession Frieze”, Thera, 1650 BCE

Plate 7  “Spring Fresco”, Thera, 16050 BCE

Plate 8  “Bull-leaping” Knossos, 1450 BCE – 1400 BCE

Plate 9  Image of bull on bronze vessel, Shang Dynasty

Plate 10  “Hall of the bull”, Lascaux, c 15,000 – 13,000 BCE

Plate 11  Wall painting I, Eastern Han, China

Plate 12  Wall painting II, Eastern Han, China

Plate 13  Wall painting III, Eastern Han, China

Plate 14  Image of Buddha I, India, Second century

Plate 15  Image of Buddha II, India, Second century

Plate 16  Journey in springtime, Zhan Ziqian

Plate 17  Emperor Minghuang’s journey into Shu, Attributed to Li Sixun

Plate 17A  Detail of Emperor Minghuang’s journey into Shu

Plate 18  Image of Buddha, early-Tang Dynasty, Dunhuang

Plate 19  Image of bodhisattva, early-Tang Dynasty, Dunhuang
Plate 20  Detail of Xuanzang’s journey to India in search of Buddhist scriptures, cave 103, late-Tang Dynasty
Plate 20A  “An Episode in the History of Chinese Buddhism, hight-Tang Dynasty, Dunhuang
Plate 20B  “Jing tu shi jie” hight-Tang, Dunhuang
Plate 20C  Detail of conflict between the Chinese and foreign troop during Tang Dynasty, cave 12, late-Tang Dynasty
Plate 21  Buddha and rocky landscape, cave 257, 386 CE – 532 CE in the Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties
Plate 21A  Story of Mahasattva Jataka, cave 428, c. 520 CE – 530 in the Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties
Plate 21B  Detail of the story of Mohasattva Jatakas, cave 285, c. 538 CE – 539 CE in the Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties
Plate 21C  Landscape of mountains, trees, a louts pond and bounding deer, cave 285, 538 CE – 539 CE in Three kingdoms and Six Dynasty
Plate 22  Images of clouds, late Zhou
Plate 23  Landscape images, Western Han
Plate 24  An image of a Daoist goddess on Fairy Mountain, Western Han
Plate 25  “Shooting and harvesting”, “Fishing at the lotus pool”, and “The Salt field”, Eastern Han
Plate 26  Image of landscape from an aerial perspective I, Han Dynasty
Plate 27  Image of landscape from an aerial perspective II, Han Dynasty
Plate 28  *The fairy of Lo River*, Gu Kaizhai, Eastern Jin Dynasty
Plate 29  *The seven sages of the bamboo grove*, wall-brick, c 380 CE – 420 CE
Plate 30  Lady playing polo, Tang Dynasty
Plate 31  Artefacts I, Tang Dynasty
Plate 32  Four-string pipa, early-Tang Dynasty
Plate 33  “Flour mill powered by a waterwheel”, anonymous, Song Dynasty
Plate 34  *Travelling up-river in midwinter*, Guo Zhongsui, Song Dynasty
Plate 35  *The snowy stream*, after Wang Wai,
Plate 36  *River under snow*, after Wang Wai
Plate 37  *Mount Kuanglu*, Jing Hao
Plate 38  *Autumn Mountains at Dusk*, Guan Tong
Plate 39  *A solitary temples amid clearing peaks*, Li Cheng
Plate 40  *Thick forests and distant peak*, Li Cheng
Plate 40A  *Mao lin yuan xix tu*, Li Cheng
Plate 41  *Travellers amid mountain and streams*, Fan Kuan
Plate 41A  Detail of *Travellers amid mountain and streams*
Plate 42  *Along the river bank*, Dong Yuan
Plate 43  *Long xiu jiao min tu*, Dong Yuan
Plate 44  *Xiao xiang tu*, Dong Yuan
Plate 45  *Distant mountain forests*, Juran
Plate 46  *Buddhist retreat by stream and mountain*, Juran
Plate 46A  *Qiu shan wen dao*, Juran
Plate 47  *Xue jiang gui dao tu*, Zhao Ji
Plate 48  *Jiang shan qiu se tu*, anonymous
Plate 49  *A Thousand li rivers and mountains*, Wang Ximeng
Plate 50  *Light Snow over Fishing Village*, Wang Shen
Plate 51  *Wind through the pine valley*, Li Tang
Plate 51A  \textit{River Temple in the Long Summer}, Li Tang

Plate 52  \textit{Shan yau lau guan tu}, Xia Zhao

Plate 53  \textit{Si jing shan shui}, Liu Sonhnsin

Plate 54 \textit{Pure and remote views of stream and mountains}, Xia Gui

Plate 55  \textit{Twelve landscape view}, Xia Gui

Plate 56  \textit{Ta ge tu}, Ma Yuan

Plate 57  \textit{Banquet by lantern light}, Ma Yuan

Plate 58  Landscape image on a Tang pingfung

Plate 59  \textit{Landscape with a storm}, Annibale Poussin

Plate 60  Temple of Athena Parthenos, Acropolis

Plate 61  Jade figures, Shang Dynasty

Plate 62  Double-edged sword, Zhou Dynasty

Plate 63  \“A woman, a phoenix, and a dragon``; ``A gentlemen riding on a dragon``, Zhou Dynasty

Plate 64  Oracular bones I, Xia Dynasty

Plate 65  Oracular bones II, Xia Dynasty

Plate 66  Buddhist art I, Secord century, Pakistani

Plate 67  Buddhist art II, Fourth century, Afghanistan

Plate 68  Buddhist art III, Third century, Pakistani

Plate 69  Buddhist relies containers, Second century, Afghanistan

Plate 70  Stone pillars, Third century BCE, India

Plate 71  Buddha image I, Fifth century, India

Plate 72  Buddha image II, Fifth century, India

Plate 73  \textit{A Pastoral landscape}, Claude Lorraine

Plate 74  \textit{Landscape with sacrifice to Apollo}, Claude Lorrain
Plate 75   The garden of Stourhead, Wiltshire
Plate 76   A Garden in Yunnan Province, Anna Chung
Plate 77   Plants with human faces, Palaeolithic period
Plate 78   “The god of the sun and a sun-priest”; “Dancing, herding, and war”
            painted in petroglyphs in Cangyuan, Neolithic era
Plate 79   Bull capital, Susa
Plate 80   *Detail of Odysseus in the underworld*, Rome
Plate 81   *Gardenscape*, Rome
Plate 82   *Peaceful city and Peaceful country*, detail from Allegory of Good
            Government in the country, Amrogio Lrezetti
Plate 83   Detail of *Along the river during the Qingming festival I*, Zhang Zeduan
Plate 83A  Detail of *Along the river during the Qingming festival II* Zhang Zeduan
Introduction

Since earliest records, in the writings of Plato (427 BCE - 347 BCE) and Zhuangzi (369 BCE - 286 BCE), there has been a debate between human instinct and cultural circumstance in art. The development of Chinese landscape painting development is no exception. This dissertation examines the tension between the two in the development of images of nature in Neolithic China through to Imperial China. The depiction of nature provides the continuity between the Neolithic and imperial China, from representations on rocks and tools to the blooming of landscape painting itself. The persistence of nature as a theme in Chinese art suggests that landscape paintings in particular touch upon human innate responses to nature.

The depiction of nature is ubiquitous in aesthetic expression across all cultures, from hunter-gatherer cultures to agricultural and urban ones. In all cultures the human experience of the natural world developed into the knowledge of science and also aesthetic expression (Dewey 2005). However, the nature that this aesthetic engagement takes does vary from culture to culture. In Landscape and Western Art (1999), Malcolm Andrews argues that land might seem the ‘raw material’ that is readily available to the artist to depict, and that landscape is also already an artefact before it becomes the subject of a work of art (Andrews 1999, p. 15). This is not just because the landscape being depicted is rarely in its original state of wildness. It has also been worked on symbolically, as a ‘cultural’ rather than ‘natural landscape’ (Andrews 1999, p. 15). The expanse of land is a subject and subjective field that permits artist to choose, edit, reduces or expand visual information to develop symbolic statements. This process allows freedom of choice in which artists can combine their imagination with visual facts they perceive. As representations of the physical and spatial qualities of nature, landscape paintings not only provide artists with a ‘frameable transcript, a
Augustin Berque in his article ‘At the Origin of Landscape’ (1999) also argues that concepts of ‘landscape’ are to a large extent cultural. They (landscapes) have not existed always and everywhere, and the landscape genres of Europe and China reflected their different cultural histories. Furthermore, as William Mitchell aptly point out, ‘Landscape is a natural scene mediated by culture. It is both a represented and presented space, both a signifier and signified, both a frame and what a frame contains, both a real place and its simulacrum, both a package and the commodity inside the package’ (Mitchell 1994, p. 5 ). Moreover, landscape art is a relatively recent genre in European art, and a slightly longer one in China. While accepting this deep cultural significance of landscape painting, however, the depiction of nature is ubiquitous in aesthetic expression across all cultures. In *Biophilia* (1984), Edward O Wilson argues that enjoyment of the forms of living things appear to be a universal human characteristic. Wilson further states that landscape with landmarks, paths and panoramic views, not only create a joyful and pleasurable reaction, but also a feeling of security.

Upon a close study of the European and Chinese landscape genres one realizes that although these cultures have distinctive notions of landscape and their own techniques to interpret their ideas, many perceptions and themes are relatively similar. For example, the motif of the four seasons in landscape paintings is found in many ancient Chinese as well as European landscape paintings. And many landscape paintings in both regions aim to evince feelings of tranquillity and liberty in nature, as well as a harmonize atmosphere between human and nature. Wang Wei’s (eighth century) and Claude Lorrain’s (seventeenth century)
works reflect these sentiments. In Wang’s *The Snowy stream* and *River under snow* (Plate 35 & 36) and Claude’s *A Pastoral landscape & Landscape with sacrifice to Apollo* (Plate 73 & 74) landscape paintings, nature is so well orchestrated and organized that it resonates with clarity and rhythm from which emanates a sense of harmonious balance and spatial order. On the other hand, both traditions also use landscape to depict more sublime emotions, as in paintings such as Poussin’s *Landscape with storm*, 1652 (Plate 59) and *The Emperor Ming-Huang’s journey to Shu*, Song Dynasty (Plate 17) where the human figures were portrayed as powerless and submissive to a huge and uninhabited landscape. Both of the paintings, coincidentally, evoke a sense of fear and uncertainty from the landscape. Further, in the process of representing the landscape in works of art, both European and Chinese artists often refer to sublime moments of the dynamic but ambivalent communication between artists and their environment. Many landscape paintings in both Europe and Chinese regions not only fulfil the painters’ aesthetic desires, the works also suggest a transcendental experience for the painters.

Even though European and Chinese landscape paintings did not share the same trend of stylistic development in both traditions the landscape genre emerged during a time of religious vacillation and social chaos, as if the development of landscape painting provided a refuge from these events. At the end of the sixteenth century Northern Europe was at war with the Spanish and the repressive iconoclasm of the Reformed Church. Many Northern painters moved to Rome in search a new working opportunities. It was then that a new concept of landscape painting emerged in Italy, and the landscape genre was further developed in Italy (Lagerlof 1990). This situation was not dissimilar to that in China, when following the collapse of the Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE) the country was thrown into chaos. Many of the Han officials and scholars migrated to the south, the Yangtze region,
where both polity and environment were more peaceful. In this genial environment a new awareness of the wonder of nature arose, and the scholar-painters began to eulogize nature. These actions are the inspiration of the beginning of Chinese landscape painting’s development.

In addition, the collapse of Confucianism at that time led to the rise in popularity of Daoism and Buddhism. Both Daoism and Buddhism share a similar love of nature and hence were conducive to the landscape genre. The collapse of Confucianism also freed painting from the Confucian canon which sparked off a sense of individualism and a truly revolutionary aesthetic attitude (Shaw 1988). Later, in the Song Dynasty (960 CE - 1279 CE), Yuan Dynasty (1271 CE - 1368 CE) and Qing Dynasty (1644 CE - 1911 CE) the Chinese scholars also spent their time marking landscape paintings to unburden political power and chaos. A large number of valuable and important landscape paintings were produced at the time. This is considered the golden ages of literati painting. This phenomenon was also evident in Europe. During the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, European painters were under the academy’s institutionalized power, as well as Church and State patronage. Many painters at the time also found refuge from political and institutional power in landscape painting (Lagerlof 1990). The seventeenth century Dutch landscape paintings are good examples of this.

Furthermore, in both Europe and China garden arts were understood to be a microcosm of the larger natural world. Since the time of Han the development of Chinese garden already has a close relationship and similar concept with Chinese landscape painting, water, paths, rocks/ artificial mountains, flora and architectures were the main elements in Chinese garden design, and animals, fishes and birds were inhabited in the gardens. This is
not dissimilar to the picturesque garden created in eighteenth century Europe. As a matter of fact, European picturesque (Plate 75) and ancient Chinese gardens (Plate 76) are one of the most popular garden themes in private and public garden designs around the world today.

Arguably, the above correspondences between the developments of landscape paintings in both traditions suggest a similar psychological appeal in European and Chinese that is cross-cultural. In addition, the similarity of perceptions and themes in European and Chinese landscape paintings, as well as gardens, also indicate that certain natural phenomena and geographic layouts have an innate emotional effect on humans. Human respond to nature not only appears in post-farming societies but were also shared among the pre-history societies around the globe. Images of the moon, the sun, animals and humans, mountains and rivers were ubiquitous found in Mesolithic rock art around the pre-agricultural era. It would seem depicting nature was rooted in human intellectual faculties since the early stages of human history.

This master’s dissertation traces the nature worship of Neolithic times of China and its influenced upon the development of traditional Chinese landscape painting. The time frame analysed in this dissertation spans the beginning of agriculture to the maturity of the painting, from Neolithic China to the Song Dynasty (960 CE – 1279 CE). The development of Chinese landscape painting is used in this dissertation to demonstrate the continuity of nature in art over this time because: the history of Chinese landscape painting shows the continual development of natural images between the pre-agricultural and post-agricultural eras; Chinese civilization has been built upon on a close relationship with nature since remote time; and Chinese civilization and culture is one of the earlier farming cultures and civilizations.
This dissertation will adopt the Darwinian approach that accepts the nature of art is rooted in human intellectual faculties, along with a study of ethnocentric notions of art development. This dissertation is divided into two sections.

The first includes three chapters, and demonstrate the relationship between hunter-gather representations of nature and early landscape imagery in post-agricultural civilization focusing on (Palaeolithic) rock art in Europe and China, and the early landscape images after the agricultural revolution. Chapter One begins with a brief study of development of stone tools to demonstrate that the abilities of imagination, judgment and reflection already existed in the earlier states of human development. Chapter Two is a study of the landscape wall-painting in the earlier farming civilization. The study will highlight the similarity among these images drawn from the natural word. Chapter Three is a study on the influence of Ice Age culture and nature worship in the development of Chinese culture and civilization, along with the influence of Buddhism and Buddhist art in the development of Chinese painting.

The second part of the paper is a study of the influence of Chinese history upon on the development of Chinese landscape painting during Imperial China, from the Qin Dynasty to Song Dynasty (221 BCE – 1279 CE). This part of the paper is divided into the three chapters, each of which traces the movement of artist-scholars from imperial courts into the countryside, and their return to the courts again. Through this movement artists development an intimacy with nature only to return to court life where painting would develop under the patronage of the ruling class. Throughout this history, artists maintained an interest in the natural world that was a popular subject matter in Chinese art and craft making.
The conclusion argues that the root of landscape images begins in the hunting and gathering societies’ earliest record or map-like images draw from the natural world such as the sun, the moon, mountains and rivers, and this natural interest continues in post-farming era China. The close relationship between Chinese civilization and nature was a pivotal factor in the development of Chinese landscape painting.
Humans think and know through observing nature, as if the basis of human thought processes is an emotional bond with nature (Dewey 2005). Human observation and codification of nature into a language type system — be it free drawing, ideographic, hieroglyphic or eventually writing — would seem rooted in human intellectual faculties. This human conversation with nature allows humans: 

(i) to recall their knowledge of geographic, geological and botanical features of a place; 
(ii) to recreate the emotional experience of a place and hence reinforce their knowledge of it; and perhaps profoundly, 
(iii) to find a place and meaning in the cosmos (Chen 2001; Dewey 2005; Lagerlof 1990; Sullivan 1979; Zhou 1996).

According to Dewey (2005), humans express these observations and thoughts in two forms, that of scientific knowledge and aesthetic expression. If Dewey is right, these concepts are mutually exclusive modes of articulation. Yet for much of human history, these dual modes of observing, knowing and representing nature were difficult to distinguish. Landscape art is a good example of this, as its potential for topographical accuracy made it a favoured genre of scientific explorations during the European Age of Discovery. The landscape genre, however, also emerged when science and art were developing into the autonomous disciplines which Dewey takes for granted. In short, the genre evolved from modes of articulation that were simultaneously scientific and artistic.

The fact that landscape painting developed in two highly urbanised empires on opposite sides of the globe, first in China and later in Europe, suggests that it responds to
some universal or paradigmatic experiences in the urban view of nature. However, the fact that each of the two landscape traditions developed different features suggests that these universal experiences are generic and have the potential to develop varied outcomes dependent on and expressive of local contexts.

If one adopts a Darwinian approach, to understand the morphological transformation of landscape art, it is best to begin with the earlier pre-landscape forms. During the Ice Age, art either arose with the emergence of the human species in Africa or developed simultaneously in diverse places around the world (Min 2007; Whitley 2005; Zhu 2007). In either case, art represents a universal and distinguishing feature of human existence. While the meaning of Ice Age painting will never be known with certainty, it featured representations of the natural world. Besides figural images of natural phenomena, including animals and humans, it featured natural geometric designs and abstract images of spirals, circles and wavy lines in many rock art locations around the globe (Bahn 2010; Zhu 2007). Thus, it appears that art represents not only the urge to depict the natural world but it also suggests that universal concepts and ideas were shared between numbers of ice-age societies.

The Palaeolithic period began 2 million years ago, ending around 11,000 BCE with the end of the Ice Age. Archaeologists subdivide it into three major eras (Camps 2009) the Lower Palaeolithic (2,000,000 million years ago – 24,000 years ago), the Middle Palaeolithic (24,000 years ago – 12,000 years ago) and the Upper Palaeolithic (12,000 years ago-6,000 years ago) time periods. The first indication of human art is estimated to have taken place around 30,000 BCE (Clottes 2008; Tansey & Kleiner 1996). Like many Darwinists, Paul Bahn argues that to understand the origins of art, we should extending back to ‘proto-art’ which dated back some 200,000 or 300,000 years ago (Bahn 1988, 2010; Min 2007; Zhu
During the Lower Palaeolithic era, humans were cave dwellers and lived in small communities. Migratory hunting and gathering were the way of life for these early humans around the world (Gamble 2007; Min 2007; Mithen 2004). The first stone tools found in Africa were in the areas of Ethiopia and Kenya, and were made around 2 million years ago from flaked stones, for limited functions (Min 2007; Mellars 1997; Mithen 1996, 2007).

Undoubtedly, these stone tools are remote and distant from the developed art in any civilizations, but these early stone tools do indicated that the tools’ creators have some understanding of the material, the tools to be created and the purpose of the tool to be made. In this case, these stone tools were made for chopping purposes. In addition, studies of the finished tools also indicated that during the process of making the tools a second stone tool was used (Powell 1966; Sandars 1968). It is possible to argue that the abilities of imagination, judgment and reflection already existed in the minds of these tools creators. Imagination and judgment are understood as an essential quality of art making (Kant 2000). The archaeological term for these earliest tools is the Omo Industrial Complex (Gamble 1997; Mithen 1996, 1997). Archaeologists believe these tools were made by *Homo habilis* (handy person) the earliest hominid, whose members were active in the regions of Kenya and Tanzania.

Some new tools were also being made in eastern and southern Africa between 2 to 1.5 million years ago. The appearances of these stone tools were more refined than the tools of the Omo industrial complex. These tools come in various shapes and sizes as heavy and light duty tools were used as choppers, scrapers and pounders. The tools were likely created by a later hominid family class, and the archaeologists’ term for these tools is the Oldowan industry complex. The development of the tools’ variety and appearances indicates that these
tools’ creators were more skilful in handling the material and had more knowledge of the environment they were living in. Arguably, different tools have revealed that these later tools makers had the ability to be more in control of the environment than the earlier tool makers (Min 2007). These new tools indicated a more complex mind had developed.

Around 1.4 million years ago other stone tools were developed across Africa. These stone tools an oval and pear-shaped with bifacial surfaces that demonstrated a clear symmetrical size and shape between the two halves of the tool (Plate 1). The appearance of these stone tools suggests balance and harmonious quantity. Archaeologists have identified these tools as hand axes and cleavers, which were not only discovered in the regions of Africa, but also found in parts of Europe and Asia (Mellars 2007; Min 2007; Mithen 1996; Morton & Lewis 2005; Zhu 2007). These later tools have indicated more reflection, judgement and technique skill were employed in their making. In Prehistoric art in Europe (1968), Nancy Sandars argues that these later stone tools can be understood as works of art. As Sandars aptly points out, these tools or weapons are ‘so performing a gratuitous act which changed a tool or weapon, an artefact pure and simple, into a tool or weapon that was also a work of art.’ (Sandars 1968, p. 2)

Undoubtedly, these later stone tools were created for specific purposes, but they also demonstrate an aesthetic quality in their structure possessing elements of balance and symmetry that create a sense of harmony. It is interesting to note that concepts of harmony, balance and rhythm are the essential elements, the principle, of classical Greek art and Chinese art. These elements are found in Classical Greek architectures and human sculpture (Gombrich 1998; Tansey & Kleiner 1996). The rhythm or movement of lines in Chinese painting is the essence of the painting, and deemed as the life of the painting (Chen 1961;
Chen 2001; Ley 2012). Furthermore, the principle of Chinese cosmology is basic on the dualism, the balance and harmony between the two opposite principle of yin and yang, and this concept of balance and harmony also applied in many Chinese art forms such as painting, music and dancing. The rhythm of nature is suggested in the circle of seasons as well as other nature phenomenon. Rhythm is also essential element in classical Greek architecture. The temple of Athena Pathos (Plate 60) is good example that has well-known harmonious structure of numerical relations.

Hand axes and cleavers were frequently used to cut animal carcasses and hammer animal bones to obtain the marrow. Use of the hand axe and the cleaver indicates that animal meats (proteins and fats) were consumed by the later African and European Palaeolithic communities. The appearance of these new stone tools suggests that hunting activity was engaged in this later Palaeolithic era. Hunting became the livelihood of Homo erectus and meats were their essential food sources for the later hominids to survive in the Pleistocene climate. Protein was also required to provide humans with the crucial nutrition for brain development. The enlargement in human brain capacity led to human intellectual development which in turn is linked to human behaviour (Donald 1991; Min 2007). Archaeological evidence has identified the link between human brain development and the consumption of meats and fats during the Palaeolithic era. The first sign of human brain enlargement appeared between 2 million to 1.5 million years ago. Archaeologists identified this phenomenon as the beginning of early modern human development.

On the other side of the world, stone hand axes have rarely been found in Southeast Asia and China (Mithen 1996). Some archaeologists argued that the stone hand axes were not ubiquitous in China, because different materials were used to create tools that had similar
functions to those found in Africa and Europe. For example, bamboo was used to make cutters for purposes such as the cutting of meat. Bamboo is a hard and durable rare material commonly found in China, and it has been a useful material in China since ancient times. Bamboo is also a significant cultural and religious material in China and many part of Southeast Asia.

The second enlargement of the early human brain occurred between 500,000 to 200,000 years ago (Mithen 1996). Although these early humans were already endowed with modern brains, they still continued their inherited hunting and gathering lifestyle, and there is no archaeological evidence to indicate that complex technologies, art and religious behaviours existed at that time (Mithen 2004). Around 100,000 years ago, the *Homo erectus* had developed into *Homo sapiens* in parts of Africa and Asia, and new prismatic shaped stone tools began to appear in these regions. The new tools showed a refined and carefully shaped blade edge, and indicate that the technique used to create these stone tools were more advanced than the previous stone tools of the Oldowan technology. The archaeological term of this technology is Blade technology, and it made its way to other parts of the world around 40,000 years ago (Gamble 1997; Mithen 1996).

Archaeological evidence indicates that between 60,000 years ago to 30,000 years ago complex technology began to coincide with religious behaviour in what is called the Mesolithic era in different parts of the world. During this period, images of animal hunting scenes appear on both sides of the world (Bahn 1998, 2010; Mithen 1996). The full meaning of these images is unknown. It is possible that these hunting images show the knowledge, memory and emotions of the earliest humans in nature. One can infer that the evidence of the development of technology and other material culture (logical thinking and problem solving)
alongside human emotional development (imagination and creativity thinking) was stronger by the time of Mesolithic era. Archaeologists identify this era as ‘the cultural explosion for the Homo sapiens’ (Mithen 1996, p. 12).

By 40,000 BEC to 35,000 BCE two major developments had taken place in Europe. The first was the replacement of Neanderthals who had been living in the regions for more than 200,000 years with the Cro-Magnon, modern humans. The second development was to human behaviour as Cro-Magnon migrated through Central and Eastern Europe from the Middle East where they originated (Clottes 2008; Janson 2006; Mellars 2007). Since the Cro-Magnon culture intermingled, or ‘acculturated’ into Neanderthals culture, the Neanderthals culture and communities gradually disappeared in Europe. Any tools and artefacts discovered after the Cro-Magnon communities took over Europe were no longer merely for practical purposes. These new tools and artefacts suggested the emergence of art (Mellars 2007; Tansey & Kieiner 1996). The development of Palaeolithic art in Europe spanned 20,000 – 25,000 and continued until the end of the last Ice Age, 11,000 BCE (Clottes 2008).

According to Jean Clottes’ book titled Cave Art (2008), the earlier (European) cave paintings began to appear in the region around 35,000 BCE. The cave painting of the Chauvet Cave (Ardeche, France) is deemed as one of the earlier cave paintings developed in Mesolithic Europe. Images of horses and bison are the most common animals found in the paintings at the time. Animals are depicted in herds and alone. Some animals are motionless, some animated and some are superimposed that other animals can still be seen underneath (Sandars 1968). (Plate 2 and 3) show two of the wall paintings found in the cave of Chauvet. These paintings were largely produced between 30,000 BEC - 35,000 BCE.
Around 17,000 BEC to 9,000 BCE during the time of Magdalenian culture, Palaeolithic art reached its golden era in the regions of Europe (Bahn 1998; 2010 Bradley 1997). Hunting scenes frequently appear in this period, such as that on ceiling of Altamira cave in Spain and the paintings of Lascaux (Powell 1966). Horse and bison were the most common animals depicted in cave paintings. Interestingly enough, these two species of animals have become a common breed of domestic animals in post-farming Europe, and the image of the ox was also a cult symbol in many earlier farming civilizations and societies in the Near East region and in Aegean civilization. In addition to the depictions of hunting and animals, many non-figural images, geometric signs and abstract patterns have also been discovered on European rock faces. A large number of open-air stone sites such as megalithic circles, tombs and monuments have also been found in Western Europe, as well as in England, Scotland and Ireland. Furthermore, dots in one or more colour and combinations of various lines with and without colours were also the popular subject matter in European cave paintings and open-air paintings at this time (Sandars 1968). The edges and cracks in the rocks as well as the stalagmite were also used to create three dimensional effects (Clottes 2008; Tansey and Fred 1996; Powell 1966).

Unlike Europe, where a large number of paintings sheltering inside caves have been discovered, many of the Palaeolithic arts found in China have been on the surface of megalithic cliff walls in the open-air (Plate 77 & 78). To date, only a handful of Palaeolithic cave paintings have been discovered in China (Li 2005). Due to Chinese Palaeolithic art being located largely on the surface of cliffs, the archaeological term for the Palaeolithic art in China is named cliff painting, ya hua, a term that already existed in early imperial China (Chen 2000). For records of Palaeolithic arts already existed in the time of ancient China. A large number of cliff painting sites were mentioned in a fourth century BCE ancient text the
Shan Hai Jing, Collection of the Mountains and Seas. This ancient text was created in the time of Zhou Dynasty, and the purpose of the text was to report the early geography and myth of remote antique China, the pre-history of China. In the text, besides the locations of the art, the text also illustrated the images of strange animals and anthropomorphic animals found on cliff walls and rocks (Min 2007). In some cases, the description of the techniques and the paints used were also mentioned in the text. According to the official records, the earliest record of (Chinese) Palaeolithic arts was written by an ancient philosopher, Han Fei, 280-233 BCE, in his Han Fei Zi (Chen 2000). Studies of ancient remains such as cliff paintings and other material culture (i.e., bone, bamboo, pottery) already took place in imperial China during the Han Dynasty 206 BCE – 220 CE (Cheng 1983). The technical term of ancient remains in China is Jin Shi Xui, the study of inscriptions on ancient bronzes and stone tables. In addition, a four stage history was created to account for these inscriptions the stone, jade, bronze and iron periods. Western archaeological science has confirmed the Chinese ancient four stage history in China (Cheng 1983; Craig 1997). Some examples of the artefacts from the ancient dynasties period are shown in (Plate 61 – 63).

From this brief study of the development of human and stones tools, one realizes that since the earliest hominid, humans were already equipped for creativity and had the ability to create. The art instinct and artistic behaviour are rooted in human intellectual faculties, including an interested in the qualities of symmetry, balance, rhythm and movement that are suggested in both European and Chinese arts. In addition, humans have the urge to depict nature, and have a common experience in nature. By the end of the last Ice Age, due to the change of climate and geological conditions in many part of the world, new experience and understandings of nature began to develop in different parts of the world, such as in the regions of Europe and China.
Chapter Two

Early Images of Nature in Ancient China and the Aegean

With the warming at the end of the last Ice Age, agriculture began to develop in some parts of the world. Even though this development changed the behaviour of the hunting and gathering societies in various ways and new farming cultures were established, many artefacts dated to this period have indicated that these early farming societies continued to maintain some of the Ice Age culture in their daily life. Many of these societies continued to express their spiritual and physical interest in their natural surroundings. Physical images of nature and the geographical features of the areas as well as spiritual images of nature worship and the entire process of ritual ceremony were depicted on the buildings and tombs of these early farming societies. The images also indicate that similar religious ceremonial practices and processions were created among the earlier farming societies (Zhang 2002; Ebrey 2010; Hood 1978; Morgan 1988). This is not coincidental. These images suggest that the close relationship between nature and nature worship were largely inherited from these earliest farmers’ predecessors, that is the hunter-gatherer.

It may be that the human relationship with nature, here evidenced in two different eras, and a great deal of religious behaviour (Insoll 2001) and understanding of nature are rooted in the human mind. This is supported by modern science: research in developmental psychology suggests that humans are born with intuitive knowledge about the world and its behaviours. According to William Mithen (1996) these intuitive knowledge include religion, psychology, physics, biology and language. Some studies on early childhood development have indicated that children respond to the natural world and learn about the natural
environment. Similarly, in Cognitive Foundations of Natural History (1990), Scott Atran points out that a similar classification of the natural world exists in most cultures, for example in the patterns of naming and grouping of plants and animals (Atran in Mithen 1996).

Chapter one of this thesis traced one change to essential behaviour of humans since the emergence of Homo sapiens, 100,000 years ago. This change encompassed the development of complex technology, religion and art. A second change to human behaviour appeared when humans’ settlement sites were established on both sides of the world, after the end of the Ice Age (Donald 1991; Min 2007; Mithen 1996, 2004; Zhu 2007). Since the last Ice Age ended around 13,000 BCE, many of the Mesolithic communities on both sides of the globe gradually ended their forefathers’ hunting and gathering culture and settled in permanent dwelling places. The communities started cultivating crops, using animal husbandry, and domesticating animals (Cunliffe 1994; Min 2007). The transition from migratory hunting and gathering behaviour to permanent settlement farming behaviour marked a new social moment in the evolution of modern human history. Archaeologists call this transition the agricultural revolution, and specify this time period as Neolithic. In addition, archaeological evidence indicates that the technology, arts and social structure of the Neolithic farming culture was far more comprehensive than the hunting and gathering culture at the pre-agricultural period (i.e., Palaeolithic and Mesolithic eras). Writing and sophisticated rites also began to develop in some of these earliest farming societies. As a result of this new materialistic culture (i.e. pottery and texture) and the development of farming, archaeologists have identified this period as the Creative Explosion (Lewis-Williams 2002).
Archaeological evidence shows that farming began in the ancient Near East, southwest Asia and Southeast Asia, in China between 12,500 BCE - 10,000 BCE (Chen 2002; Maisels 1999; Min 2007; Mithen 2004). By the end of the Neolithic era writing was invented in Egypt, the Levant, Mesopotamia, India and China. The development of writing in these societies indicates that complex languages existed within them. The development of writing and complex languages accelerated these societies’ societal and cultural establishments, leading to resulting social structures, systematic economic systems and sophisticated rituals. In addition, these early farming societies became the earliest advanced agricultural civilizations. Their culture, art and technology also directly influenced the cultural development of their neighbouring regions, for instance China in ancient Japan, Korea and Vietnam (Da 1979; Ebrery 2010; Loewe 2008; Morton & Lewis 2005) and ancient Near East and Egypt in Aegean culture (Mellars 2007; Morgan 1988).

Farming developed slightly later in Europe. The agricultural revolution began in some parts of Europe around 7,500 BCE and it took over much of Europe around 3,000 BCE (Whittle 1994). Archaeological evidence indicates that farming was introduced into Europe from neighbouring regions (Mellars 2007). It initially began in Central and Eastern Europe around Macedonia, Cyclades and Crete, and slowly reached the coast of Scotland after ships moved outward from the Aegean Sea (Bogucki 1996). There has been a long debate among archaeologists over the migration route of the first European farmers from neighbouring regions. In recent years, paleogenetics evidence has verified that many of the modern domesticated plants and animals in Europe, such as wheat and goats, originated from the ancient Near East. This suggests that the first European farmers were more likely to have migrated from the ancient Near East (Bramanti 2009; Cooper 2010). This is not the place to enter into a debate of the origins of European agriculture, for this paper is concerned only
with cultural development, specifically the representation of nature. Nevertheless, the new
evidence of paleogenetics raises attention on the substantial link between the Palaeolithic
European societies and their developed neighbouring regions. Together with the links
between the Aegean world culture, Pre-Classical Greece, ancient Egypt and the ancient Near
East, the recent excavation of Bronze Age Aegean sites have also provided evidence of the
relationships of Europe with other places (Morgan 2005; Tansey and Kleiner 1996).

The development of farming provided Neolithic agricultural communities with more
reliable food sources and supplies, and enabled these early farmers to have a more sedentary
and secure lifestyle. The development of farming also accelerated population growth at the
time (Ebrey 2010; Morton & Lewis 2005). Agricultural surpluses provided human societies
the resources to develop various other professional groups such as artists and scholars. New
and larger villages and towns were also built on both sides of the world to cope with the
population growth. The development of urban systems provided these farming societies a
new way of managing their environment and territory. The development of urbanisation and
complex social systems had also begun to establish themselves in farming societies. The self-
awareness of both community and individual, ‘consciousness of self’ became more
substantial (Min 2007; Sandars1968). In her book *Prehistoric art in Europe* (1968) Sandars
argues that the consciousness of self is the touchstone of humanity and probably the most
essential of all the pre-requisites of art (Sanders 1968, p. 3).

Although new farming culture was the concern of these early farmers, Neolithic and
Bronze Age artefacts and settlements sites have indicated that some of the cultural practices
at that time were similar to Ice Age cultural behaviours and included nature worshipping,
totemism and shamanism. Images of animals as well as images that suggest
anthropomorphism and fertility are commonly found in studies of Mesolithic and Palaeolithic art (Chen 2001; Mithen 1996; Min 2007; Zhu 2007). On the other hand, images of humans engaging in farming, humans gathering in the landscape, humans with domestic animals and religious rites begin to appear more commonly in the Bronze and Iron eras of these early farming civilizations. These early landscape images suggest that a new relationship between human and nature was developing (Clottes 2008; DeLue 2008).

Since ancient times in China, towns and architectures were built with regard to the relationship with nature to create a harmonious setting in the landscape. This attitude toward nature is reflected in the geomancy system, Feng Shui that is used to identify the universal spiritual breath or energy, qi, in order to help an individual or group to improve life and circumstances (Williams 2006; Yow 2006). The Feng Shui system involved the knowledge of metaphysics and cosmology, and the book of Change, Yi Jung. The Feng Shui system is one element of major concern of Chinese culture to develop a harmonious relationship between humans and nature (Brodrick 1949; Leys 2012; Mote 1989), and it is reflected in both the Chinese society and individuals. On the other hand, following the development of Christianity in Europe, a new monotheistic religious practice and culture was arose in the region and replaced the original belief of nature worship as religion. Since Christianity developed in the Levant region in the mid-first century CE, it quickly spread into near regions, and was later introduced by the Roman Empires. By the time of 380 CE, Christianity had become the official religion in most of Europe. Christianity led to a different relationship between humans and nature. This new relationship with nature was largely influenced by the Christian faith, Creationism.
By the time of 380 CE, Christianity had become the official religion in most Europe and Christian art become popular in the region (Janson 2006). Christian art became the dominant art form in many parts of Europe for the following centuries. Archaeological evidence has indicated that since Christianity took over Europe, cultural changes occurred in many parts of Europe (Whittle 1994). For example the urban environment became more systematic and controlled, as the cathedral become the focus of the landscape, and the Church’s authority become the central power of the landscape (Jellicoe 1995). This concept of an urban system reflected both the power of the Church towards the people and the Christianity attitude towards nature at the time.

With the development of towns and later cities, during the agricultural revolution, rock art gradually disappeared in many farming regions (Banh 1998; Bradley 1997). On the other hand, wall-paintings began to appear in some of the early agricultural societies. For example, wall-paintings were found in the Neolithic settlements in the ancient Near East region of Catal Huyuk, Djade al-Mughara, now modern Turkey. A wall-painting of a landscape with a volcano was discovered in an ancient shrine of Catal Huyuk (Plate 4). Archaeologists believe that this wall-painting is one of the earliest landscapes, depicting in the painting the town of Catal Huyuk itself (Highfield 2007; Tansey & Kleiner, 1996). A number of rectangular houses were depicted on the foreground of the wall-painting. In the background of image are two volcano peaks. Archaeologists identified these two peaks as the 10,600 foot Hasan Dag. Dots and lines are depicted on the top two peaks, and these dots and lines possibly indicate a volcanic eruption. Archaeologists believe that this wall-painting is related to some religious meaning in which a natural phenomenon is depicted, or many simply record a historical event at the time (Tansey & Kleiner 1996). Another wall-painting related to nature was also found in a later settlement of Catal Huyuk. This deer hunting wall-
painting was created around 5750 BCE, (Plate 5). More developed and elaborate wall-paintings were also discovered in neighbouring farming regions such as those from the tombs of Hierakonpolis, 3,500 BCE - 3,200 BCE and Nebamun, 1,400 BCE - 1,350 BEC, Egypt.

During the ensuing Aegean Bronze Age, 2,900 BCE - 2,000 BCE, sophisticated wall-paintings were also found in the agricultural societies of the Aegean regions such as Crete, Cyclades and main Greece. These wall-paintings indicate that the skill of the painters and the techniques used in paintings were well developed, and that the subject matter of the paintings is highly complex. Much of the narrative of the wall-paintings has indicated that the Aegean people had a close relationship with nature (Doumas 1992; Morgan 1988). The wall-painting discovered in the West House, Thera, which was entitled the “Ship Procession Frieze” (Plate 6) demonstrates the complexity and the high level of skills of the Aegean painters at that time. A ritual and the details of the island are depicted in the painting, evoking a joyful and harmonious atmosphere (Doumnas 1992; Hardy 1989; Morgan 1988, 2005). The painting suggests a close relationship between the Aegean people and nature. The nature-loving side of the humans is also suggested in the paintings the “Saffron-gatherers” where humans are celebrating the harvest of saffron and worshipping the Goddess of nature, and the “Spring Fresco” (Plate 7).

The painting “Toreador Fresco” also called “The Bull-leaping” (Plate 8), found in the palace at Knossos also highlights the close relationship between the Aegean people and nature, because the image of the bull symbolizes the Aegean cult (Hood 1978). Furthermore, nature worship and polytheism existed in these earliest European settlements. Interestingly enough, the bull images discovered in the Aegean cultures are analogous to the artistic artefacts found in the ancient Persian (Plate 79) and Indian (Plate 70) cultures. Undoubtedly,
the connection between ancient Greek, Persian and Indian societies were close during the ancient world era (McEvilly 2002). Additionally, it is worth noting that abstract images of the bull were commonly discovered in the Bronze Age China, the Shang Dynasty (Zhang 2002).

The bull plays an important role in Chinese folklore, as the emblem of spring and agriculture in the Chinese culture. (Plate 9) is an image of a bull depicted on the bronze artefact in the Shang Dynasty. Coincidentally, the bull was also associated with agriculture and spring in ancient Egypt and worshiped as a God (Tansey & Kleiner 1996; Williams 2006). These images of the bull in the ancient world recall the images of bison found in rock art for example the Bison in the Altamira cave, Sanander, Spain and the ‘Hall of the Bulls’, Lascaux, France, (Plate 10). The images of bison and bulls in rock art and bull images in the ancient world and early farming civilisations suggest a cultural or spiritual link between the hunting and gathering societies and these earliest farmer societies. The wall-paintings discovered in the Aegean civilizations indicate that polytheism and nature worshipping were predominate religious practices in pre-historic Europe. In addition, wall-paintings had continued to develop in the regions, for example in ancient Egypt and Greece, and had become more popular in the Roman Empire, as villas and palaces were decorated. Odysseus in the Underworld (Plate 80) and the Gardenscape (Plate 81) are two of the well-known earliest landscape paintings discovered in Rome and Primaporta of the Roman Empire, respectively. Wall-paintings continued to develop in Italy in the next millennium.

A large number of wall paintings and low reliefs also appeared in ancient and imperial China. Examples include the tomb wall-bricks of landscape and the natural world found in Eastern Han, 25 CE – 220 CE, (Plate 11 to 13). Wall-paintings have also been found in imperial Chinese palaces and temples, and a common practice since ancient times (Min 2007; Zhang 2002). In Chinese painting (1951) William Cohn points out that wall-painting is the
only art form shared by both Eastern and Western art cultures. However, due to the influence of Confucius the subject matter of the wall-paintings found in the imperial palaces were largely related to immortal legends, and history, stories of filial piety (Bi 2002; Da 1979; Pan 1983). Like Plato, Confucius believes that painting plays an education role in society. Landscape was only treated as the background setting of these paintings as preference was given to figurative painting until landscape painting became genre as its own right in the tenth century (Bi 2002; Chen 2001; Da 1979; Sullivan 1979; Zhou 1996).

These early post-farming wall-paintings suggest that the Ice Age practice of cave painting continued to develop in the post-agriculture urban environment, as the images resemble to some degree the cave painting and cliff painting of the past, Palaeolithic and Mesolithic eras. A probable explanation for these shared themes lies in the survival of mythology or religious rituals through time. For example, the subject of a large number of these wall-paintings is nature worshipping. Nature worship was the main religion of the early farming civilizations. Furthermore, these wall-paintings were also found in public edifices, private shrine, places of worship and gathering, or the palaces, houses and tombs of the prominent and wealthy individuals during the time, where religious and ceremonies were carried out. This association with religious contemplation is akin to that of rock arts which were associated with religious or shamanistic practices (Lewis-Williams 2002; Whitley 2000, 2009). One wonders the above evidence might has suggested that many of these farming wall-paintings have a similar function and concept as those in the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic cave paintings.

Human responses to nature can be tracked back to images such as the sun, the moon, mountains and rivers that have survived from the late Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic eras.
Images of hunting scenes also appear in the mid Mesolithic era Europe and China, and are found in the wall of caves and cliffs. One can argue that this similar approach to the landscape is rooted in human intellectual faculties, and is largely motivated by human innate response to nature and psychological needs (Dutton 2009; Wilson 1984). For example many of the earlier farming societies have indicated their interest on the physical feature of the natural environment, such as, the Aegean wall painting the “Ship procession frieze”.

According to archaeological evidence the detail of the geological feature of the island is depicted on the painting (Hardy 1990). However, the techniques and style of the painting “Ship procession frieze” has recalled some later paintings such as an earliest European landscape wall painting *Good government in the city, and good government in the county*, Ambrogio Lorenzetti, 1338 CE – 1340 CE (Plate 82), and the Song Dynasty architectural painting *Along the river during the Qingming festival* (Plate 83 and 83A) also known as “Peace reign over the river”, along with many seventeenth century Dutch landscape paintings. Although, the above named painting were produced at different eras and cultures, these paintings share some main features. These features included: the multi perspective technique is used; the panoramic view of the city or region; the detail of the geological feature of the landscape; and the detail of people daily life. The similar features of these different civilization (landscape) paintings suggest that humans have a certain way of understanding and enumerating landscape.

Even though the development of landscape painting can be understood in term of human psychological needs, the paintings are largely restricted by the conditions of local art practice and cultural circumstance, such as religion, that account for differences between European and Chinese traditional landscape painting. Although the traditional depictions of nature in Chinese and European landscape paintings are particular to their cultures, similar
perceptions and themes such as the four seasons, certain natural phenomena and geographical feature and phenomena are found in many Chinese and European landscape paintings throughout the history of both cultures. And many landscape paintings in both regions aim to evince feelings of tranquillity and liberty of nature, as well as a harmonious relationship between human and nature. Further, in the process of representing the landscape in works of art, both Chinese and European artists often refer to sublime moments of the dynamic but ambivalent communication between artists and their environment. Many landscape paintings in both Chinese and Europe regions also fulfil the painters’ aesthetic desires, and suggest a transcendental experience for the painters. These similar elements in both Chinese and European traditional landscape paintings suggest that both traditions do share some universal qualities. As Sandars argues ‘the more universal they are, the more likely to be vestiges of a common human experience.’ (Sandars, 1968 p. 23) However, there is not Christion break with nature in China, allowing a development of the Chinese interest in nature. Chinese culture and belief has continued to develop since the Neolithic era. Many Chinese cultural behaviour for example nature worshipping and shamanic practice were inherited from the hunter and gatherer culture. Nature worship has become the foundation of Daoist and Confucian doctrine. A long with the custom of nature worship evolves into ancestral worship by the time of Zhou Dynasty and becoming an essential feudal ethical code in Chinese civilization (Masiels 1999; Treustman 1972; Williams 1974). Arguably, this close relationship with nature inspired the earlier Chinese painters to develop landscape painting. On the other hand, it is believed that since the rise of Christianity in the first century CE in Europe, the Christian faith has changed the way European understand nature, and the relationship between humans and nature. In addition the concept of Creationism led the European to discontinue developing their close relationship with nature. The Christian
Churches’ authority also has alienated the European from nature. This alienation is also
reflected in many Medieval Christian paintings.
Chapter Three

The Philosophical and Religious Influences on the Development of Chinese Landscape Painting

The Influences of Confucius, Dao and Nature

As mentioned in Chapter two the close relationship between the ancient Chinese and nature continued to be maintained in imperial China. In addition, some of the ancient nature worship ceremonies were further developed and became essential customs in Chinese civilization. The focus here and the following chapters, Chapter Four to Chapter Six, is to study the development of Chinese landscape painting from eleventh century BCE – 1279 CE, this is from the Zhou Dynasty up to the Song Dynasty. This chapter will discuss the philosophical and religious influences upon early Chinese landscape painting as well as the role of nature in this period. Specifically, the chapter will discuss Chinese cosmology, Confucianism and Daoism and its influence upon Chinese art. The chapter also included the influence of primitive beliefs in Chinese cultural development, the concept of Chinese landscape painting, Shan Shui Hua, and the influence of Buddhism and the Silk Road on Chinese landscape painting.

In the previous chapter, it has mentioned that ancient China and many earlier farming societies adopted animistic and polytheistic culture and beliefs. Since remote times, the Chinese have maintained that humans and the world have no creator, and have believed in self-creating nature-centred cosmology (Ley 2012; Morton & Lewis 2005; Mote 1989; Yuen 2012). The Chinese believe that the entire cosmos is an organic unit and all the natural elements (within the cosmos) continue to interact with each other that in turn, create a self-generating life process. Chinese cosmogony is based upon the principle of dualism yin and
yang, and the universal life which together constitute the Dao, the principle of heaven and earth, the origin of all beings, including human, and the divines (Cheng 1983; Leys 2012; Mote, 1989; Williams, 1994). In addition, since ancient times the Chinese have recognized that the celestial bodies, mountains, rivers, vegetation, animals and humans are part of nature, and each has its own role in the universe, forming part of the cosmos, and to the Chinese both living and non-living beings are subjugated by the Universal Order that controls Heaven and Earth (Brodrick, 1949).

The concept of the universe with its ordered system is entirely different from the western concept of creationism and the anthropocentric culture which deem humans to be the measure of the Universe. The ancient Chinese affinity with nature motivated the Chinese to build a close and harmonious relationship with nature in ancient times. This closeness to nature continued to develop in imperial China, and was reflected in both the rural population and in the higher echelons of society (Cheng 1983; Leys 2012; Yow 2006). In Chinese mythology, the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors gave rise to human civilization by inventing writing, the skills of fishing, farming and textile production, the use of fire, flood control, irrigation systems and building (Yow, 2006; Yuen 2012). In addition, the wife of the Yellow emperor invented silk culture. According to legend these cultural heroes appeared between the end of the Neolithic era and the first ancient dynasty, the Xia Dynasty, 2,200 BCE-1,700 BCE. Furthermore the development of silk culture in China provided China with an international trade opportunity to the West during the early Han Dynasty. As well foreign cultures, religions and arts were brought into China through the Silk Road by foreign merchants, monks and diplomats. New concepts of arts and religions, especially Buddhism and Buddhist art, had a significantly influenced upon Chinese cultural development during imperial times.
During the time of the Zhou Dynasty there were two dominant native ancient Chinese philosophies, namely Confucianism and Daoism. Both of these philosophies advanced a theory of relativity of attributes and the necessity for human beings to remain in harmony with the Universal Natural Order (Brodrick 1949; Ley 2012; Silva 1964; Sullivan 1962). According to Confucius (551 BCE - 478 BCE), the harmonious relationship that exists between humans and the Universal Order must be achieved by the observance of rites and rules of conduct. Thus, since the Zhou Dynasty nature and ancestral worshiping ceremonies became essential activities. Confucius argues that everything has its li, ‘principle’; there is a li between father and son, a li of a good government, a li of the wind and the storm and a li of rock and bamboo. If people could understand the li of individual objects and phenomena, humans could eventually come to an understanding of the universe (Sullivan 1979). This concept of li inspired Confucius to develop the feudal ethical code that advocated moral law, filial piety and loyalty. To Confucius, the harmonious relationship between humans and the cosmos began in the family with the obligation of filial piety and loyalty, such as the li between father and son, and the relationship gradually extended to the community and society, to the government and the nation, and finally through the nation to the universe. Confucius urges that man should perform his duty towards both family and community. He advocated that all men should study the Five Classics and be skilled with the knowledge of music, archery, chariotry, calligraphy and painting. The scholars should engage in the four accomplishments namely music, chess, calligraphy and painting (Cohn 1951; Silva 1964). Confucius also established a public service examination system which was open to all scholars and which was used by the court to vet candidates for inclusion as officials at court, so that men skilled in the Five Classics and broad knowledge were allowed to become court officials. Since the Zhou Dynasty official-artists in China were largely Confucian scholars, and Confucianism has had an essential influence on Chinese art and literature. The concept of
the principle, li, was further developed in the tenth century through Neo-Confucianism, which led to an extended Confucian teaching and Chinese philosophy.

Unlike the li principle of Confucianism, which linked moral behaviour to traditional roles and hierarchies (Ebrey 2010; Morton & Lewis 2005), Daoism’s philosophy employs the Wu Wei, a concept advocated by Zhuangzi (369 BCE – 286 BCE), that lets things take their own course, and that is governed by doing nothing that goes against nature (Leys 2012; Morton & Lewis 2005). Zhuangzi argues that humans must discover the Universal Order within themselves by intuition and act in harmony with its laws rather than knowledge. To Zhuangzi, only through Dao can humans return to the state of primal bliss and innocence by purging themselves of desire and illusion (Shaw 1988; Silva 1964). To Zhuangzi, spiritual cultivation is not the result of lifelong learning and society’s erroneous values, but unlearning, and moving toward ignorance (Shaw 1988).

Zhuangzi also advocated that humans should live reclusively in unity with nature, and his attitude towards nature resulted in the Chinese becoming more inclined towards nature as the source of truth and wisdom. In addition, to the Daoists, Dao is a guide to the way of life, and to the art of living in the world, so Dao is life. Attempts were made to discover the order of nature by intuition, and to act in accordance with its laws rather than to recreate or to construct nature (Shaw 1988; Silva 1964). This Daoist attitude towards nature has influenced the development of the traditional Chinese landscape painting, and became one of the essential elements in traditional Chinese landscape painting.

Since Zhuangzi’s teaching, the concept of Dao has inspired Chinese scholars and officials to turn to nature and to withdraw from society, and many scholars and artists have
taken pleasure in nature and sought unity with nature. This attitude towards nature continued to inspired many scholar-painters in the imperial era to leave society and take refuge in nature, especially during the time of social chaos, such as the collapse of the Han Dynasty which led to the beginning of the development of Chinese landscape painting (Chen 2001; Show 1988; Sullivan 1962). Furthermore, the Daoists pursued fantasies of astrology, alchemy, geomancy and fortune telling, rather than social rites (Cheng 1983; Mote 1989; Sclafani 1977), which create a new pattern of magical worship of the local deities and (shamanistic) cult services that involve spirit mediums, by the rural population, the peasant farmer community (Min 2007; Morton & Lewis, 2005). The harmonious relationship between humans and nature has become the dogma of Confucianism and Daoism as a guideline to the Chinese life. Harmony with nature is the essential element in the Chinese culture and civilization (Leys 2012; Mote 1989; Silva 1964; Sullivan 1962).

In Chinese culture and belief, all animals, vegetation, mountains, rivers and other non-organic natural elements such as rocks are parts of the cosmos, and both living and non-living beings are subjugated by the Universal Order that controls Heaven and Earth (Brodrick 1949). The (ancient) Chinese worship nature spirits, believing all beings and natural elements are manifestations of the divine spirit and reincarnation (Morton & Lewis 2005; Silva 1964; Williams 1974; Yow 2006). To the remote antiquity Chinese a cosmic being is manifested in mountains and the elements associated with them. The body of the cosmos is the mountain itself, and the blood running through its veins is the water in the mountain. The rocks are its bones, its hair is the trees and grasses, and the chi, cosmic breath, vaporised and became the mists and clouds around the mountain (Chen 2001; Sullivan 1962).
The concept of anthropomorphic belief and animism became the foundation of many Chinese costumes, and are reflected in the Chinese daily life, art and literature throughout the history of China. It is common practice to the Chinese to depict a person’s character as animal and plant-like. For example to the Chinese scholar, Wen Ren, forthright and persevering characters were often described as bamboo-like: as having a simple and hollow heart, but able to stand firm in a difficult environment. Bamboo has been symbolised as the unbreakable spirit of the scholars (Sullivan 1979; Williams 2006; Yow 2006). As well as bamboo, the pine tree, the plum blossom, the orchid, and the chrysanthemum make up the four gentlemen to symbolize the different spirits of the Chinese scholars: the first three on this list are also deemed as the three friends of the scholars. The four gentlemen and scholar’s friends are commonly depicted in Chinese literature, poetry and painting (including landscape painting), as an allegory or a metaphor of a particular scholar at the time. These plants are also depicted as individual genres in their own right. One can imagines the images of four gentlemen can be interpreted as symbols of totem which represent particular groups of people. One will also further argues that the practice of totemism and shamanism, as mentioned in page 20, in early Chinese culture and civilization development is the continuity of Palaeolithic behaviour. As totemism and shamanism were common practice in early human communities (Lewis-Williams 2002, Min 2007, Mithen 1996, 2004), and the evidence of these early human behaviour is indicated in many artefacts and Palaeolithic suits.

By the time of the Zhou Dynasty Chinese civilisation was largely shaped (Treustman 1972). Nature and ancestral worship were the essential religious practice to these ancient Chinese. However, due to the social chaos at the end of the Zhou Dynasty the feeling of nostalgia (longing for the Xia Dynasty era), appeared in the Zhou society, and the Zhou people began to reconnect to the ancient landscape (Sullivan 1962), which led to new patterns
of nature worship. The ancient Chinese believe that all mountains were sacred and hallowed (Leys 2012; Sullivan 1962), and they began to build their temples on the mountains, and they climbed to the summit of the mountains to make their sacrifices to tian, heaven. Through the process of climbing the mountain the Chinese could feel the powers of the mountain. To the common people, climbing the mountain made them feel close to the natural world and so they felt that they were within the natural power of the cosmic being. To the poets, painters and philosophers, by observing the rhythm and the process of nature, they discovered the truth of the universe’s law and the human’s locus in the cosmos. To the scholars and thinkers wandering in the mountains was an act of meditation, even of adoration, of the natural world (Sullivan 1962).

The close relationship with nature became more transparent since writing developed. Strong evidence of nature worshipping and a close relationship with nature in texts was first suggested in the oracular bones found in the first ancient dynasty, Xia Dynasty. (Plate 64 & 65) are some of the oracular bones discovered during Xia Dynasty. The development of the Yi Jing in the Zhou Dynasty, and later landscape poems were also found in The Book of Song during Zhou Dynasty. Landscape poems continued to develop in China after Zhou Dynasty (Li 1966), and many later developed landscape poems have suggested strong bond between the poets and nature. Landscape painting also gradually develops in the coming dynasties, painters expressing transcendental experiences or sublime moments in nature through their paintings. Large numbers of the Chinese landscape arts show that artists were emotionally attached to the landscape, and at the same time, conveying a joyful and harmonious atmosphere between the painters and nature.
In contrast, the medieval European has a different attitude to nature, as many medieval literatures indicate the anxiety of the artists towards nature (Andrews 1999; Silva 1964). The fear of nature is also clearly shown in many Christian paintings. For instance, in medieval times in Europe, nature was portrayed as wilderness and chaos in Christian paintings. Cultivated land is largely symbolized by the garden (Clark 1976), and natural objects are perceived as symbolic of divine qualities rather than as objects in their own right (Pearsall 1973). This attitude to nature and its depictions in medieval Europe deems nature to be wilderness, while the motif of the enclosed garden was likely influenced by the Bible story in Genesis, about the way that Adam and Eve, humans, were exiled by God from the Garden into the wilderness. Along with Saint Augustin (350 CE – 430 CE) which he argues “…men go to admire the nature and the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, and they, men, neglect to look at themselves” (Berque 1999, pp. 42 – 49). Augustine’s proposition was based on his conviction that God created the earth, but only was created in God’s image. Augustine believed that “Creation” is good, since it is the work of God, but it is not symbolic of the divine power, and spiritual beauty (Berque 1999). Since the collapse of the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity, nature lost it central place in cosmological thinking in the Western world.

By contrast, the Chinese have their own way of understanding natural phenomena. Since remote antiquity the Chinese deemed natural disasters such as floods to have occurred because of an interruption in the harmonious relationship between nature and humans, and the downfall of a dynasty is understood as the sacrifices were interrupted (Morton & Lewis 2005). This interpretation of natural phenomena influenced the early Chinese to develop a close relationship with nature, along with establishing a cooperative society and a family-centred value culture. These social and family values became the essential elements in
Chinese culture and civilization reflected in the religious ceremonies and Confucius’s ethical code (Leys 2012; Mote 1989; Morton & Lewis 2005; Treistman 1972; Williams 2006). Along with Confucius’s moral law, concept of filial piety and loyalty it also has direct impact on the Chinese history development.

By and large, the close relationship with nature was maintained in imperial China, and influenced the development of traditional Chinese landscape painting. Shan Shui Hua, are the words for landscape painting in the Chinese language. The two words Shan Shui are formed from two ancient ideogram characters. The word Shan means mountain, Shui means water, and Hua mean painting. Shau Shui Hua means panting of mountain and water, and describes the purpose of Chinese landscape painting to eulogize the beauties and powers of nature. Not only mountains and water and things that are associated with mountains and water such as rivers, waterfalls, mists, rocks, flora, fauna and the four seasons are included in Shan Shui Hua (Chen 1961; Chen 2001; Cheng 1983; Li 1996; Pan 1983). The aims of the painting are: to manifest the way the Chinese understanding the relationship between themselves and the Universe (Sullivan 1962); to manifest the Chinese national consciousness: culture and ethos (Hu 2011); to manifest the Chinese nation spirit, truth and idea of compassion and justice (Sullivan 1962); to manifest the concept of Dao; to manifest the ideal landscape of the Daoist paradise (Clunas 1997); and to manifest the painter experience in nature.

Landscape painting is not only about philosophical and religious influences. It is also about the painters’ poetic experiences of nature (Chiang 1935). To the Chinese painters, in the process of wandering in the mountains, people experience a journey in space and time. Their aim is to convey this interweaving of the world of visual and psychic experience into painting. Since the early stages of Chinese landscape painting Chinese painters attempt to
capture the spiritual feature of nature. This evidence is suggested in the lu fa, the Six Principles established in the sixth century, which was a guide to Chinese pictorial art and its techniques. Later in the ninth century, Jing Hao’s landscape theory, the lu Yao, the Six Essential Elements (in landscape painting), also emphasise the spiritual features of the landscape. Arguably, the spiritual quality of nature is a substantial element in Chinese landscape painting.

The Influence of Buddhism and the Silk Road

The influence of foreign painting techniques, especially Buddhist art, played an important role in Chinese paintings development, especially figure painting. The influence of Buddhist art can be traced back as early as at the first century CE, in the Han Dynasty. Silk was highly demanded from western civilizations and nations, and people were willing to pay a high price for the dangerous journey through Central Asian desert to China to purchase this precious fibre. China’s extensive trade of silk and other luxurious items with the Near East, the kingdoms of the Central Asia, and the Western Asiatic which included the empires of Persia and Parthia at the shores of the Mediterranean, resulted in the establishment of a trade-route. This was the Silk Road between China and the Mediterranean (Li, Lin & Yen ROC 81; McEvilley 2002; Whitfield, Whitfield & Angew 2000; Silva, 1964). Since the Shang Dynasty, the Chinese were already using silk as clothing, for painting, carpets and other ornament materials. The silk was worth its weight in gold at the time in these societies (Clunas 1997; Ebrey 2010; Whitefield, Whitefield & Angew 2000). The exact time of the beginning of silk trade between China and the West is unclear, but archaeological evidence indicated that silk from China was already found in Egypt as early as 1,000 BCE (Whitfield, Whitfield & Angew 2000). This evidence suggested that trading between China and the West very much already in progress during the end of Western Zhou Dynasty. By the time of the first century CE, the Silk
Road was well-established, and trading between China and the Mediterranean was in the full swing (Li, Lin & Yen ROC 81; Silva 1964; Whitfield, Whitfield & Angew 2000). Trading between the nations in Central Asia and the Near East bought the Roman Empire into indirect contact to China (McEvilley 2002; Whitfield, Whitfield & Angew 2000). In addition to the exchange of merchandise, international diplomatic missions between China and the West along the Silk Road were also active during the time of Han Dynasty, such as the ancient Indian and the Arabian (Silva 1964). The Silk Road became the pathway for these diplomats to carry out their missions across the East and the West. At the same time, foreign arts, religions and philosophies also made their way into China through the Silk Road.

Dunhuang

Dunhuang is located in the western border of China at the end of the Great Wall. It has been a momentous place for the Chinese military history since the Qin Dynasty, 221 BCE – 207 BCE. It was the last fortalice town for the Chinese to defend the invasion of the Mongolian and Tibetans. Dunhuang became one of the main pathways to the trade-route and was one of the cultural metropolis cities along the Silk Road. Silk, gold and other luxury items were exported to the West from China. Along with cultivated plants, precious metals and glass artefacts from the Central Asia, India and Mediterranean included Greece were bought into China through the Silk Road and via Dunhuang (Silva 1964). Foreign merchants, government officials and pilgrim monks often remained in Dunhuang during their diplomatic or commercial missions. During the time these foreigners in Dunhuang they lived side by side with the local Han people. They shared and exchanged their own ideas and beliefs with the local Han people some of these foreign beliefs and arts have took roots in the Chinese culture. Han Dunhuang became the cultural receptacle, and the place of syncretism between
the Chinese and the west at the time (Brodrick 1949; Silva 1964; Whitfield, Whitfield & Agnew 2000).

Countless Zoroastraism, Byzantine, Iranian-Sassaina, and Buddhist paintings as well as ancient manuscripts along with Chinese paintings and manuscripts have been found in the caves of Dunhuang. The Han artists were inspired by the foreign artworks brought into China. Among all these artworks, the Buddhist paintings were the main inspiration for the Chinese painters (Brodrick 1949; Li, Lin & Yen ROC 81; Silva 1964; Sullivan 1980, 1979 &1962; Whitfield, Whitfield & Agnew 2000). The Han painters adopted Buddhist stories as their paintings’ new subject matter. The Chinese painters were also inspired by the Buddhist painting techniques, especially the human gesture and the technique of arrangement of space between human and landscape (Bi 2002; Da 1979; Silva 1962; Sullivan 1962, 1979, 1980; Li, Lin & Yen ROC 81).

Buddhism and Buddhist art have a significant influence on Chinese culture in both the development of Chinese belief and Chinese paintings. Buddhism began in fourth century BCE in India, and had travelled to the east and made its way to China in the first century CE, where it was adapted and developed by the Chinese to become part of the Chinese culture. By the time of the third century, Buddhism had become one of the classic Chinese belief systems, Sanjia, after Daoism and Confucianism (Maisels 1999). In the fifth century, the school of Chen was developed in China, and in the Tang Dynasty, Buddhism was the official religion of the Early -Tang and Mid-Tang court. Both Buddhism and Buddhist art bloomed between the late-fifth century to tenth century, in the Siu and Tang Dynasties. Although the painting techniques of Buddhist art had more influence on the development of Chinese figure painting than landscape painting, the attitude to Buddhism towards nature and the concept of
Chen in Chinese Buddhism’s teaching have played an essential role in the development of Chinese landscape painting. This especially with regard to the literati painting during the Song Dynasty, 907 CE – 1279 CE (Barnhart 1997; Chen 2001).

In the earlier stage of Buddhist art, Buddha was not portrayed in human form. A series of symbols such as the Bodhi tree, wheel, footsteps and stupa were used to represent the teachings and events of the Buddha. For example, the image of the Bodhi tree was commonly found in the early Buddhist art, symbolizing the enlightenment of the Buddha (Li, Lin & Yen ROC 81; Whitefield, Whitefied & Agnew 2000). By the time of the first century BCE, the images of Buddha in human form were developed in India and Gandharan, now Pakistani. Coincidentally, Buddhism was introduced into China roughly at the same time. (Plates 14 & 15) are two examples of the earlier image of Buddha produced in India and Ganharan. These two images of Budda suggest a strong influence of the early Greek sculpture: Hellenistic art. The artistic style is called Greco-Buddhist art an artistic style of a cultural syncretism between the Classical Greek culture and Buddhism.

The connection between the ancient Greek and the ancient Indian can be tracked all the way back to fourth century BCE. Since the conquests of Alexander the Great in the Western and Central Asia regions in the fourth century BCE, the people in the Central Asia regions began to associate with the ancient Greece (Whitfield, Whitfield & Agnew 2000). Scholars and artisans from Greece were sent to the Central Asian regions, especially India, to study art, medicine and philosophies. In like manner Indian scholars and artisans in Central Asia went to Greece studied Greek scholarship (McEvilley 2002). Archaeological evidence also discovered in Western Asian and Central Asia a progression of cultural influence between these two civilizations over a few centuries (McEvilley 2002). (Plate 66 & 70) are
four artefacts found in India, Pakistani and Afghanistan from the third century BCE to the fourth centuries. One cannot help to think that the development of Chinese figure painting during the time of Han Dynasty was indirect influenced by the ancient Greek art techniques. Like Daoism, Buddhism’s attitude to nature became an inspiration for Chinese painters. The disposition toward nature in Buddhism also upheld Zhuangzi’s belief, and inspired the Chinese intellectuals and the painters at that time to go wandering to experience nature. Both Zhuangzi and Buddhist teachings encourage people to live a solitary life to experience the nature and unified with the nature. To Zhuangzi, ‘by taking nature as a model, human beings seeking in effect to become one again a part of nature and to experience spiritual oneness with it’, and this is ‘natural in the sense of original, primal and innate’ (Shaw 1988). A similar approach to nature also appeared in Buddhism. The Buddhists considered the experience of nature to be an integral part of their spirituality (Sullivan 1963, 1979). Buddhists also advocated a solitary life to achieve a personal experience with the nature. To them, unity with nature represented a moment of a self-transcendence, a state of meditation and mindfulness. Throughout the history of China many scholars and painters were influenced by Daoism and Buddhism, withdrew from society and became mountain hermits. Some of these scholars and their influence on the development of traditional Chinese landscape painting will be discussed later chapters.

The concept of Chen also had extensive influence on the development of Chinese landscape painting (Barnhart 1997; Brodrick 1979; Chen 2001; Li, Lin & Yen ROC 81; Shaw 1988; Silva 1967). Chen is a school of thought in Chinese Buddhism. As mentioned it was developed in the fifth century CE. The concept of Chen had provided the Chinese elites and painters with a new depth and meaning of intellectual experience in nature. It is an abstract
concept used to understand the eternity of the universe. Chen is an art of living, and a concept of the aesthetic, like Dao. Both Chen and Dao are to be intuited rather than rationally understood. As Sullivan (1963) aptly writes, Chen art denies history, tradition, the intellect, poetry, literature, even style itself, and to the extent to which a painting concerns itself with these things it ceases to be Chen.

The fundamental concept of Chen parallels the earlier Daoist concept of Quietism (Shaw 1988; Silva 1967). Like Dao, Chen can be manifested through daily life and arts such as painting, music and dancing. Chen shared the same essential role of Dao in Chinese landscape painting. It is an essential element in Chinese landscape painting, especially literati painting (Barnhart 1997; Cahill 1960).

The concept of Chan in Chinese painting is embodied in the feeling of emptiness or spacious in the painting. To the Chinese painters “emptiness” is a positive agent rather than a negative element (Silva 1964). It is also essential part of the painting composition. Zhunagzi states ‘The great painter is able to occupy his mind not only with the part of the surface that is filled with brush and ink, but also with the part of from which brush and ink are absent; whoever can understand how this absence is realized can attain a divine quality in the painting. Thus space is like a musical pause, filled with mystery before the next phrase begins, giving it meaning and uniting it with what went before.’ (Silva 1967, p. 67) Tang painter Wu Daozi (active ca 710 CE – 760 CE) also expressed that the spirit of painting also reveal where the brush had not reached (Silva 1967).

In Chinese landscape painting, the empty spaces or unmarked spaces created a feeling of spaciousness in the painting, along with a feeling of eternity and tranquillity in the
painting’s atmosphere. The esoteric cosmos is unfolded through the emptiness of the painting. The viewer feels confronted in an open or spacious “landscape”, and feels infinitesimal in front of nature, which lead them to imagine themselves as part of nature. Subsequently, the emptiness of the painting also occur the concept of Dao in the mind of the viewers. The mind of the viewers is free from the physical world, and senses the freedom of the natural world that begins to wander in the landscape of the painting. By and large, a sense of spirit of nature, chi, and infinite energy of the universe is also suggested in this spacious atmosphere in the painting. Late in the West, the French impressionist painter Monet’s Water Lily series (1916 – 1926) and the American abstract painter Mark Rothko’s paintings also suggested similar profound appreciation of the concept of emptiness in their (landscape) painting. Even though different techniques were used in these painters’ works, the feeling of spaciousness /emptiness also arises in their works.

Since the last arrival of Buddhists art in the first century, in Han Dynasty, Buddhist art had gone through a number of developments in the following centuries in India and other Buddhist kingdoms, and by the time of the fifth century was the golden age of Buddhist art (Li, Lin & Yen ROC 81). The human images in these later Buddhist artworks suggest a more refined body, along with a feeling of serenity. Solemnity and gentleness are also evoked from Buddhist facial expression. Paintings in (Plate 71 & 72) are two examples of Buddhist images found in India during the fifth century. These elements and the techniques used by these later Buddhist painters have inspirit the Chinese figure painters in the Siu and early-Tang Dynasties to further develop these new painting techniques and style. Like the early Buddhist art in Han Dynasty, these new Buddhist paintings were still the main influence of
the Chinese figure painters of Siu and Tang Dynasty, as figure painting was still the dominant painting in China at the time.

Even though landscape images were largely deemed to be the backdrop of figure painting at the time of the Sui and Tang Dynasties, landscape painting was not the main concern of these Sui and early-Tang painters, however. These paintings indicated there was some breakthroughs in the Sui and Tang paintings. The paintings show that the image of human figure(s) in the landscape have reduced in scale, and the space among objects is more settled that the paintings developed in the Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties. This new transformation of landscape image in the paintings of Sui and early-Tang is clearly demonstrated in the paintings of Zhan Ziqian’s Journey in springtime and Emperor Minghuang’s Journey into Shu (Plate 16 & 17). These two paintings suggest that the painters of Sui and early-Tang were more skilful in handling the relationship between the human and landscape; the representation of spaces such as depth and height were also mature; and landscape had become an essential part of the painting.

During the time Buddhism was the official court religion in the Tang court, a new closer relationship between India and China was built (Yeung 2000). Pilgrims, monks and officials were sent to India to study Buddhism. One of the well-known scholar-monks sent by the Tang court to India to study Buddhism was named Xuan Zang, 602CE-664CE, also referred as Tang San Gang. He spent seventeen years in India before returned to the Tang court. Tang San Gang’s achievement in Buddhist scholarship made a great contribution to the Buddhism’s development in China and East Asia in the years to come. The popularity of Buddhism in China and the strong trade with the Buddhist kingdoms in the early-Tang
provided more opportunity for the newly developed Buddhist art to make its way to China through the Silk Road.

Like Sui era, the new images of the Buddha and Bodhisattva found in the early-Tang caves of Dunhuang continued to demonstrate a powerful emotion in facial expression and bodily gesture, suggesting a grave manner and noble appearance. Paintings in (Plate 18 & 19) are two examples of Buddha and bodhisattva images found in the caves of Dunhuang at the early-Tang era. At the same time, the space between the human figures and the landscape setting in many cave paintings also suggested a more mature and sophisticated manner that the earlier cave paintings such as Han Dynasty and Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties. Paintings such as (Plate 20 A to C) are some of the examples of Buddhist paintings found in Dunhuang at the time. The composition of these later Buddhist paintings has showed that these later painters were more dexterous in organizing space that their precursors in the Han Dynasty and Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties eras (Plate 21 A to C).

Although the technique of representing space in this newly developed Buddhist art provided the Tang painters a new way to represent space, figure painting was still the domain genre in Chinese painting during the time of Tang Dynasty. The development of new techniques in figure painting was still the main concern for the early-Tang painters, and the landscape painting development was maintained slowly in the early-Tang, seventh century. Even though the new developed Buddhist art arrived in the Tang Dynasty has a significant influence in Chinese figure painting development (Bi 2002; Da 1979; Silva 1967; Sullivan 1979, 1980) and Tang Dynasty was the golden age of Chinese figure painting (Wu, 1997), the development of figure painting will not be discussed in this paper.
Part II: Chapter Four

The Rise of the Artist-Scholars and the Development of Chinese Landscape Painting:

*The Imperial Dynasties, from the Qin Dynasty to the Three Kingdoms, the Jin Dynasty and the Northern and Southern Dynasties: (221 BCE AD - 581 AD)*

**Introduction**

In China, like many earlier farming civilizations, large and powerful States were formed on the surplus of agricultural products that created various independent professional groups including artists and poets. Since later Zhou Dynasty scholars were encouraged to take the civil service examination to become court officials. These Confucius scholars were schooled under the Confucius education system to become highly skilled in six arts, liu yi, namely ritual, music, archery, chariotry, calligraphy and calculation (Cohn 1951). Many of these scholars were employed by the court as official-scholars, official-painters, official-musicians and military personnel. Hence, during imperial China, court officials were knowledgeable about art, literature, and Confucius’s feudal ethical code, even though some of the scholars were Daoists and Buddhists.

The feudal ethical code was the main court rite in many dynasties and Confucius’s idea of filial piety and loyalty to the court was rooted in Chinese scholars’ mind. However, throughout imperial China during the downfall of dynasties and social struggles a large number of these officials withdrew from society and took refuge in nature to study art and literature, especially Daoists and Buddhist scholars. On one hand, these hermit scholars found solace in nature during the time of social chaos. On the other hand, time and again they were concerned for the safety of the people and well-being of the country. Under such
emotional struggles, art and literature became the main media for these desperate scholars to express their emotions and thoughts. Hence, large numbers of great landscape paintings were produced by these scholars at that time.

Within the courts themselves and since Zhou Dynasty the Chinese began to separate the professional artisan painters from the scholar-painters. Some of the scholar-painters became court officials and intellectual elites and were highly honoured by the court. However, the professional painters only had a low social status, and were largely employees of the court and upper echelons of society. In imperial China, painters and scholars presented their works within their own scholarly circle for study. These works were never treated as commodities for sale. It was considered an act of disgrace for painters or scholars to sell their paintings. Works were largely maintained in the scholarly circle, and passed down from generation to generation or from dynasty to dynasty.

Since the early stages of traditional Chinese landscape painting’s development, art theorists of the fifth century advocated that painters express their emotions and experiences of nature in their the paintings (Li 1996; Min 2007). Chinese art theorists also emphasized the spiritual quantity of nature as the essential element of the painting rather than the physical appearance of the landscape. In addition, because of the independence of Chinese painters, they had more freedom in their choice of subject matter. Due to the close relationship between the court and the painters in imperial China, the rise and downfall of a dynasty had a direct impact on these Chinese painters and their works. Therefore, a brief study of Chinese history and its influence on the history of Chinese landscape painting is essential to understand the development of the painting. Historically, the development of landscape was
slow from Qiu Dynasty to Mid-Tang Dynasty (221 BCE - 8th Century) but some of the historical events at the time had a directly influence on that development. To understand these influences it is important to understand these dynasties.

Before further discussing the influence of Chinese history on the development of Chinese landscape painting in the imperial China, one needs to be aware that Chinese landscape images began to take shape in Xia Dynasty (21th Century BCE – 16th Century BCE). Since Xia Dynasty, the Chinese developed a system of symbols which enclosed the language of metaphysic in both visual and abstract elements (Silva 1964; Sullivan 1962). This was further enhanced in the Shang and Zhou Dynasties. The symbols fulfilled the ancient Chinese imagination, and manifested their experience in nature, in the never-ending dialogue between themselves and the world around them. Furthermore, the symbols resonated a deep sense of passion, coupled with the poetic feelings and profound philosophical and metaphysical ideas of the painter.

To the ancient Chinese all the various species of things transform into one another by the process of variation in form. Their beginning and ending is like an unbroken ring (Show 1988). It expresses the variation of the unity in which all things are transformations of a universal substance moved by a single, unifying principle. The transformation of the universal cosmic forces found in rivers, rocks, and clouds, were considered to be alive and sentient. These cosmic forces were expressed in the concept of chi, cosmic breath (Chiang 2002; Mote 1989; Shaw 1988; Silva 1964; Sullivan 1962). The pictorial features of chi began to appear in some of the Zhou Dynasty paintings (Silva 1964; Sullivan 1962). Images of chi in landscape are suggested as the mists and clouds around the landscape, and this continued
to develop to be elaborated in the following centuries, become the most prevalent images found in Chinese landscape painting design (Sullivan 1962; Silva 1964).

Images of clouds already existed before Zhou Dynasty, and are found in some Shang artefacts (Silva 1964). Example of (Plate 22) are some images of clouds in late Zhou Dynasty. The painters of Shang Dynasty often portrayed the clouds as a dragon: it is largely because the people of Shang deem that both cloud and dragon are associated with humidity (Silva 1964). Later, the image of the dragon became a symbol of auspicious and productive force of moisture which relates to spring when all nature renews itself (Williams 2006).

Another image often depicted in traditional Chinese landscape painting, also appearing at the time of Shang Dynasty, as the cloud-breath, yun-chi. The image of cloud-breath emanating from a mountain peak expresses a vision of the unity of life in which all things are transformations of a universal substance moved by a single, unifying principle (Show 1988).

To the earliest Chinese, all life forms are beginning in the mountain. But this early image of cloud-breath was stylized at the time: with undulating mountains and about or below them, a zigzag line that curls into billowy, cloud-like swirls (Sullivan 1962). This Shang clouds-breath image continued to develop and elaborate in Zhou and Qin dynasties. By the time of the Han Dynasty, the cloud-breath image had further developed to the point it had become the main feature of Chinese landscape painting (Silva 1964; Sullivan 1962).

Since Zhou Dynasty, landscape images were commonly depicted on objects had long and narrow surfaces. Multi-perspectival techniques, and dynamic lines were used in the painting to suggest the flux, movement, rhythm and continuity of the natural world. Along
with the images were represented by simple waves, lines and volute forms, to create abstract images of the objects. The qualities and format found in the Zhou (landscape) images has recalled the similar elements in the later development Chinese landscape painting. One can infer that the main features of the traditional Chinese landscape painting have already taken shape in the Zhou Dynasty. Gradually, these elements evolved over the years and developed into the main features of traditional Chinese landscape painting.

The Qin Dynasty (221 BCE – 207 BCE)

The establishment of Qin Dynasty indicated the end of the ancient dynasty era and the beginning of the imperial dynasty era, and the advent of a period of feudalism period in Chinese history (Cheng 1983; Clunas 1997; Ebery 2010; Morton & Lewis 2005). The founder of Qin Dynasty, Ying Zheng, took over Zhou Dynasty during the chaotic time of the late Zhou Dynasty. Ying united the divided China and took control of all the states, and he declared himself as the first emperor of China, calling himself Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty.

Qin Shi Huang was the most brutal ruler in Chinese history, using force to have full control of his dynasty and prevent anyone from opposing his rulings. He ordered to killing the people who disagrees with his regime, including countless scholars. Innumerable ancient scripts were also burned. In addition, and for his personal pleasure, palaces and tombs were built, and endless of resources were spent regardless of expense and human life. To fulfil his ambitious projects the Qin economy was close to collapse at the end of the dynasty, and people began to rebel against the government. The rebellion of the people become stronger after his son, Emperor Qin Er Shi, took the throne after the sudden death of Qin Shi Huang. The rebellion of the Qin people and the ill-starred of economy situation in the Qin court have
provided an opportunity for the peasant rebel leader Liu Bang (256 BCE – 195 BCE) to attack the Qin regime. In 206 BCE, the Qin court has collapsed and was taken over by the Han Dynasty.

Despite Qin Shi Huang’s brutal behaviour, his rule did unite China from the chaotic period of Warring States of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty, and laid a foundation for the Han Dynasty to become one of golden eras in Chinese history as well as one of the powerful and influential empires in the ancient world. Qin Shi Huang’s achievements included constructing the Great Wall as a fortification to defend from foreign troops attacking China. He also standardized measurement, currency and writing to the benefit of the development of Chinese economics and politics in the coming millenniums. The standardisation of writing led to people being able to communicate through of the different dialects in use around the country. The standardising of Chinese writing also played an essential part in the development of Chinese landscape painting between northern and southern China, as painters in both regions shared the same goals and ideologies.

The Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE)

Han Dynasty is considered one of the golden ages in Chinese history, in order to honour the achievement of the dynasty the majority of Chinese people refers themselves as the Han people and the Chinese writing as Han character. The development of Han culture and art has reached its summit, only Tang Dynasty culture and art could measure up to Han Dynasty achievement. Han politics have reached to Central Asia and Lolang, now Korea, and Han economy extended to Mediterranean shores and reached the Roman Empire.
In the Western Han (206 BCE – 24 CE) images of landscape were only represented by a few trees or mountains and inhabited with animals, along with landscape images that served as the backdrop of paintings (Plate 23). Some examples of these landscape images are found on a lacquer bowl titled ‘Daoist Goddess on Fairy Mountain’ (Plate 24) and on the stele ‘The Ten Suns’ and ‘The lost Tripods of Zhou’. By the time of Eastern Han (25 CE – 220 CE) more complex and sophisticated landscape images began to appear in China, for instance the wall paintings titled ‘Shooting and harvesting’, ‘Fishing at the lotus pool’, and ‘The salt field’ (Plate 25). Interestingly enough, landscape paintings which suggested an aerial perspective were begin to take sharp in the Eastern Han (Plate 26 & 27). The discovery of these paintings indicated that the Han painters were already giving thought to representing different forms of perspective on a two dimension surface.

These Eastern Han paintings also indicate two significant developments in later paintings since Zhou Dynasty, as the motifs and the subject matter of the paintings became more animated that the Western Han and the Zhou paintings. The form and the composition of the paintings were determined by the landscapes and; the landscape image dominated the paintings. On the other hand, these Eastern Han (landscape) paintings have indicated that the Eastern Han painters were still struggling with the problem of form and space. For example the image of the human was as large as that of a mountain or house. Undoubtedly, the development of landscape imagery was slow in the Han dynasties (207 BCE - 220 BCE), it was due to the influence of Confucius. Preference continued to be given to figure painting that depicted myths, legends, history and stories of filial piety. Confucius sees filial piety as the supreme virtue, and art should serve the state to indoctrinate mortal virtues (Binyon 1959; Bi 2002; Da 1979). Hence, even though, the political power of Confucianism decreased after
the Han Dynasty, figure painting would be the dominate genre of painting in China until the maturity of the Chinese landscape painting in tenth century.

The Three Kingdoms, the Jin Dynasty and the Northern and Southern Dynasties (220 CE to 581 CE)

After the collapse of the Han Dynasty, China engaged in a number of civil wars which led to social and political unrest. China was once again divided and thrown into social chaos and political division. Northern China was controlled by non-Chinese rulers, and the south was ruled by the Han Dynasty émigré aristocrats (Morton & Lewis 2005). Trade with the west ceased. Diplomatic missions in these regions were abandoned. China’s economy was fragile. This situation continued in China for a few centuries, and China was engaged in one of the most complex and chaotic eras ever known in Chinese history (Ebery 2010; Silva 1967; Whitefield, Whitefield & Agnew 2000). This historical period is termed The Three Kingdoms, the Jin Dynasty and the Northern and Southern Dynasties, also known as Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties. However, literature, especially poetry, flourished at this time, and this chaotic era, inspired the development of traditional Chinese landscape painting. Throughout the history of Chinese landscape painting each new breakthrough occurred at a time of social disorder and confusion. One cannot help but wonder if the development of traditional Chinese landscape painting is related to the painters’ innate emotions and their paintings were therapeutic works of art for these painters.

After the collapse of the Han Dynasty, the Confucian view of the social and political order began to decline. Many Han official-scholars were released from Confucian orthodoxy and withdrew from the court. Confucian ideals of public service lost much of their hold on the elite. The absence of Confucian political moral values in both the court and society
provoked people to find hope in religion and other forms of spiritual enlightenment. Hence, it provided an opportunity for the rise of Daoism and Buddhism. Daoists and Buddhist religious ceremonies began to replace some of Confucian rites in the courts. Daoists and Buddhists began to have more control and influence in the courts’ decisions. Buddhism and Daoism were now largely practised in society and many temples were built as a result of this.

A large number of official-scholars influenced by the attitude of Buddhism and Daoism along with the teachings of Zhuangzi had left society, and some migrated to the south, to the Yangtze regions. Scholars began to take pleasure in art and nature, and enjoyed the company of other scholars. Scholarly circles were established with the main purpose of studying art and literature. A fourth century painting found on tomb wall-bricks titled The Seven sages of the bamboo grove depicted these scholars at the time with drawn from the official life and taking pleasure in nature and art. Nature inspired these scholars’ creative powers and motivated them to develop an interest in landscape paintings during the time of The Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties. Literature and countless poems were created, along with Chinese landscape paintings also began to develop.

In the genial Yangtze regions, a new awareness of nature began, inspire by a rebirth of nature worshipping. This Zhou tradition led to the beginning of the development of Chinese landscaping in these regions. Interest of garden also arose at this time (Sullivan 1974). To the Chinese, the garden is microcosm of the larger natural world, and so the Chinese gardens are generally imitative of the natural world. To Chinese scholars, the garden became an essential place for their creativity, and the traditional Chinese landscape paintings represented a paradise garden (Sullivan 1962, 1974). Indeed, traditional Chinese landscape
paintings and Chinese garden have a very close relationship and both were deemed as essential objects of nature worship (Shaw 1988).

The influence of Zhuangzi which noted that humans should live reclusively in unity with nature as the source of truth and wisdom inspired many Han official-scholars who had earlier left the court. To Zhuangzi, human perfection is to be found in primordial nature rather than through social nurturance. Humans should be free in nature to pursue individualism as well as a free human spirit rather than flow in a definitive social role. Zhuangzi further advocated scholars practice art rather than service the social order, and argues that nature serve as the source for self-cultivation (Sullivan 1962; Shaw 1988). Perceived as a mountain recluse, Zhuangzi influenced many official-scholars and painters as a symbol of unification with nature (Shaw 1988; Sullivan 1974).

Nature provided these elites and painters comfort and shelter for their souls, and fulfilled their urge for order and freedom. By being close to nature, they re-discovered the beauty of the natural world, naturalness, and the truth of the universe’s law and human’s locus in the cosmos. Indeed, the beauty and power of nature motivated these scholar-painters to express the emotions they have in nature, and their understanding of the cosmos. In addition, Zhuangzi’s attitude towards nature and art also sparked off a sense of individualism and a truly revolutionary aesthetic movement that fostered an “art for art’s sake” attitude.

Zhuangzi’s idea of painting is in contrast with the Confucian’s concept of painting as Confucius argues that painting should serve the state to indoctrinate moral virtues. With the influence of Zhuangzi, Chinese scholars gave rise to the form of ‘noble emotion’ and philosophic attitudes exalted in painting (Shaw 1988). Since then, Chinese scholars and
painters began to practise painting as an activity in its own right, and the spontaneity of works that led to burst of self-expression in painting (Ebery 2010; Show 1988; Sullivan 1962).

The origin of Chinese landscape painting proper is usually located at the time in the Eastern Jin Dynasty, 317AD-420 AD (Sullivan 1979, 1962). It began via a Daoist scholar-painter named Zong Bing (375 CE – 443 CE). In his essay on paintings, Hua Shau Shuo Hsu, Zong articulates the three main elements in landscape painting: first, the painter’s and the philosopher’s spiritual excitation of nature are both Dao; second, the painter is required to transfer nature onto his silk, and allow the viewers to re-experience the grandeur of nature in the same manner which affected the painter; and third, both painter and viewer experience through the painting the completeness of life implied by the freedom of spirit (Chen 2001).

The essence of Zong’s essay on landscape painting is an insistence on the spiritual element of nature more important than the physical features of landscape. Zong argues that only nature’s spiritual qualities are captured by the painter and manifested in the painting. Viewers’ emotional responses are aroused by the actual scenes in the painting. The aim of the painter is to re-create their experience of the landscape into the painting. Although (landscape) painting consists of matter, it must connect to the spiritual (Loehr 1980). As he aptly point out the value of landscape painting is in its capacity to make the viewers’ feel as if they are really in the place depicted (Cahill 1960).

Zong further argues that communing with nature was a way to commune with the souls of sages who had been inspired by the same mountains and rivers in the past (Shaw 1988). From Zong’s landscape painting theory, one can infer that since the early stages of the
development of traditional Chinese landscape painting, Chinese painters had already emphasised: the importance of the spiritual features of nature, the physical appearance of the landscape and that the painting is about the painter’s experiences of nature. Zong’s attitude towards nature and his concept of landscape painting makes one wonders if Zong’s views were influenced by the ancient polytheistic and animistic cultures which led him to advocate the importance of spiritual part of natural objects in his landscape theory. Whatever its sources, Zong’s landscape painting theory became the essential influence on Chinese landscape painting development in the years to come. As Arthur Waley aptly points out ‘(Chinese landscape) painting, guided by the heart-mind (hsin), by means of skilful handing of brush and ink should thus exhibit thought and reflection, sensibility and intuition’ (Waley in Silva 1967, p. 39)

Although Zong articulated the beginnings of pure landscape painting, it was an official-scholar, (figure) painter and calligrapher named Gu Kaizhi (345 CE – 406 CE) who is generally seen to have been the first Chinese landscape painter. His *The Fairy of Lo River* (Plate 28) is considered to be early example of Chinese landscape painting. Even though the subject matter of the painting is depicted as a Daoist Goddess crossing the Lo River, and the landscape in the painting is only the backdrop of the Goddess story, the painting suggests that Gu developed a way to handle the landscape image which includes making the landscape a dominant part of the painting’s composition, and depicting the elements of the landscape such as mountains, trees and rocks to be natural and convincing.

On the other hand, although the painting has demonstrated a new expression of nature, the painting also indicates that Gu was struggling with problem of form and space.
These problems include: the scale of the human figures in the painting that are too large in relation to the mountains and rivers; and the space between two objects, such as the Goddess and the landscape, that make it difficult to tell their distance from each other. Other landscape images created at the time, such as *The Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove* (Plate 29) present similar problems. In the ninth-century, art historians described some of the paintings during the Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties as the water that left no room to float a ship, and in which people were depicted larger than mountains (Sullivan 1979). In addition, Gu’s landscapes hardly inspire the viewers to have an emotional response to nature. Nevertheless, the image of *The Fairy of Lo River* and *The Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove* have recalled the form and style found in many primitive and naive images around the world which humans largely depicted in a scale that is bigger than the natural environment. Image of humans portrayed largely than their (natural) environment are also commonly found in many earlier farming societies art, the *Victory Stele of Naram-Sin*, Sumerian, c 2300 BCE – 2200 BCE, stone, and *The Sack of the City of Hamanu*, Iraq, c 650 BCE, Limestone, are two of the examples.

By the end of the Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties the development of Chinese landscape had a few major breakthroughs. The scale between the image of humans and objects size were more convincing in the painting, and the techniques used in landscape painting to depict height and depth were named gao yue and xian yue have also developed. In general the development of landscape paintings was slow, and landscape images were only treated as a background setting for immortal legends. As always preference was continued given to figure painting (Sullivan 1979; Binyon 1959). Since Zhou, figure painting was the dominant genre in China until the maturity of traditional Chinese landscape painting in the end of Northern Song Dynasty, in the tenth century (Hu 2011; Chen 2001; Cahill 1960; Da
1979; Loehr 1980; Sullivan, 1979; 1962;). Nevertheless, the development of landscape in paintings entered a new era in China in the time of Zong and Gu, the Jin Dynasty.
Chapter Five

The Rise of the Artist-Scholars and
the Development of Chinese Landscape Painting:

*The Imperial Dynasties, from the Sui Dynasty and the Tang Dynasty*

(581 CE – 907 CE)

The Historical Background

China was politically divided for a few centuries during the time of the Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties, leading the northern and southern regions to develop their own societies and cultures. As a result, different social environments, customs and dialects were developed in both areas at the time, but the standardisation of writing maintained the Confucius scholars among the elites in both regions (Morton & Lewis, 2005). So although they developed differently, by and large these northern and southern scholars and elites had similar ideologies and thoughts. Along with the development of Chinese landscape painting, painters from both regions were also able to access text records of the past. Even though different styles and techniques were found in the two regions, painters in both northern and southern regions were influenced by the same ideas.

The difference between the northern and southern regions lay in their different regimes. Many of the rulers in the northern region were non-Chinese in origin and non-Confucius scholars, so that even though Han Chinese and Confucius scholars were active in these courts, the main concerns of these northern rulers were in military affairs. They showed little interest in arts and letters. The development of art and literature in the northern area was then slow, and Chinese landscape painting developed little, if at all. To the contrary, literature was flourishing in the southern area and there was a strong development of Chinese
landscape painting. However, while the northern rulers were largely non-Confucius scholars and had limited interest in art and literature, the emperors of Sui were art collectors and powerful art patrons. The development of art was encouraged in this court.

The Sui Dynasty (581 CE – 618 CE)

After China was united in the Sui Dynasty, the first emperor established the capital in Chang’an, large numbers of scholars from the southern region began to return to the northern region, and active in the capital Chang’an, and the Sui court. Buddhist painters were honoured in the Sui court, politicized and secular paintings were also promoted by the court of Sui (Wu 1997). In addition, painters from around China were encouraged to return the court, painters from the Central Asia regions were also employed by Sui court. The process of Chinese art and literature development in the northern region once again accelerated in the short time of Sui, after few centuries inactive. The development of Chinese landscape painting also began to make progress in the northern region during Sui Dynasty. By the time of mid-Tang the development of Chinese landscape painting in the northern region was also in the full swing.

After a few centuries of economic decline during the time of Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties, China commercial economy was revived by the time of Sui Dynasty. The trade between north and south regions had reached a considerable level, and Sui Dynasty economy and politics also extended out into Central Asia, to nations such as Uighurs and Tanguts, along with Tibet that became the subjects of Sui (Sullivan 1980; Binyon 1959). The achievement of Sui Dynasty economy and politics in the Central Asia provided the Tang Dynasty a foundation to extend Chinese power to the southeast and neighbouring regions in the coming two centuries. The economic recovery of the Sui Dynasty led to a number of large
projects including immense Buddhist architectures and sculptures in the capital regions and in Dunhuang. This was largely because the ruler of Sui, Wendi and his wife were devolved Buddhists.

At the same time, Buddhism was used by Wendi to legitimise and make prestigious his dynasty (Sullivan1980; Silva 1964; Whitfield, Whitfield, & Agnew 2000). Buddhism began to influence the court politics, as a result Daoism lost its political strength in the court. The popularity of Buddhism in society also suppressed Daoism’s influence on the people, and Confucianism maintained only a subdued presence in the Chinese court. Since the collapse of Han Dynasty, Confucianism largely had lost its influence in the courts, not until the tenth century, the late-Tang, the Neo-Confucianism began to play an important role in the court. However, Scholars and monks were sent to the Buddhist kingdoms to study Buddhism by the Siu court. Pilgrimages to the west were popular among both court officials and individual.

Buddhism brought China and the people of Buddhist kingdoms into close contact, especially the Indians, during the time of Sui and the Tang Dynasty that followed it. Approximate three hundred Buddhist monks were at the Tang court and the religion became the official religion of the court (Binyon 1959). The new arts of Buddhism had a significant influence on Chinese painting’s development in the Sui and Tang Dynasties. Scholars study the cave paintings of Dunhuang to map out this transition period between old painting techniques to new painting techniques that were brought about to some extent through the influence of Buddhism (Cheng 1983, Silva 1964, Whitfield, Whitfield & Agnew, 2000). The development of Chinese painting between the Sui and Tang Dynasties can be largely classified as three priors (Wu 1997). These priors were: between the Sui and early-Tang (581
CE – 712 CE); the high Tang culture (712 CE – 765 CE); and between the middle and late Tang, 766 CE – 907 CE).

Other painting techniques were developed by the Sui painters, including the ‘Boneless painting technique’, mo-gu fa, and the ‘Dots painting technique’, tien fa (Chen 2001; Fan 2013; Sullivan 1980). Unlike the line techniques used by the early Chinese painters, these two new developed painting techniques allowed the Sui painters to create the image of the object without applying lines. The method of ‘Boneless painting technique’ uses colour wash rather than ink and lines to create the contours of the objects as sure as the shape of mountains and flowers. For the ‘Dots painting technique’ the painters used different sizes of coloured or ink dots to create the object. In addition, the images of mushroom-like trees and the wave-like or saw-toothed mountains found Han painters’ and Gu’s works disappeared in many Sui landscape images. The trees and mountains in Sui paintings become more naturalistic in style. The paintings *Journey in springtime* (Plate 16) and *Emperor Minghuang’s journey into Shu*, (Plate 17) show this stylistic change such as the mountains and the trees became lively.

Since the Grand Canal linked the northern and southern regions, the development of landscape painting took place in both northern and southern regions. Many northern painters travelled along the Canal to the south and were inspire by landscapes along the journey. The scenery of the southern region became a popular subject matter for Chinese painters. It is interesting to note according to court records that the concept of the Grand Canal project was inspired by one of the paintings in Wendi’s palace. The painting illustrated ‘roads were built along both side of the river banks planted with elms and willows. Over two thousand li, mile, shadows of trees overlapped each other’ (Bi 2002; Chen 2001; Silva 1967, p.105). Roads
were also built on both sides of the canal, and approximately 1,200 miles of trees were also
planted alongside the roads (Ebrey 2010; Clunas, 1997; Silva 1967). However, the over-
spending on projects besides the Grand Canal, along with the development of a second
capital, and the corruption of the court during the time of the second emperor led to down fall
of the dynasty (Sullivan 1980). By the end, the Sui court and economy collapsed, that then
provided an opportunity for established the Tang Dynasty in 618 CE.

The Tang Dynasty (618 CE – 907 CE)

In 618 CE, Li Yuan (566 CE – 635 CE), a Sui governor of Taiyan in the northern
province took over the Sui Dynasty and established the Tang Dynasty. Li Yuan declared
himself as the first emperor of Tang and called himself Gao Zu, establishing the capital in
Chang’an, now Xian. Historically the Tang Dynasty is divided into three periods: the early-
Tang (618 CE – 770 CE); the mid-Tang (770 CE – 820 CE); and the late Tang (820 CE – 907
CE). The achievement of the Tang Dynasty brought Chinese civilization to another summit,
and Tang’s accomplishment is often compared to the success of Han Dynasty.

The early-Tang is considered the zenith era of the dynasty, and the culture of early-
Tang is regarded as the high point of Chinese civilization (Bi 2002; Da 1979; Morton &
Lewis 2005; Zhang 2002). The well-developed Tang economy and the complex political
environment at the time had a significant impact on the development of art and literature in
Chinese culture and civilization. Thus, a brief historical study of Tang Dynasty is essential to
bring about a better understanding of Chinese painting’s development at the time. The
development of literature, arts and other genres of Chinese paintings bloomed under Tang
Dynasty’s rich and diversity environment.
The Tang’s first emperor Gao Zu ruled the court between (618 CE - 626 CE), before being forcefully deposed by his son Li Shi Min, also known as Tai Zong. The transition of power between the two regimes was violent. To gain his power of the throne, Tai Zong had killed his two brothers and a large number of the imperial family, but during the time as Tang emperor (626 CE - 649CE) Tai Zong had demonstrated he was a wise and capable leader. Tai Zong is praised as one of the greatest emperors in Chinese history and is well known of his great knowledge of military affairs, art and literature. Like Tai Zong, many later Tang emperors and imperial family were also well-versed in art and literature, and were strong patrons of art.

The development of art and literature was encouraged in court, and scholars were highly respected by the Tang emperors and the imperial family, many scholars and scholar-officials building a close relationship with the court.

The Tang Dynasty was the heyday of poetry. Countless poets and poetry were produced at the time. The most well-known poets of the Tang Dynasty were: Du Fu, Li Bo, and Wang Wei. Even though the subject matters of Tang poetry was diverse, a large number of the poems were personal sorrowful, relating to the tragic social situation in Tang Dynasty including the corruption of the court, the farewell of friends sent to the western boarder for official duty, and friends and family separated by wars (Sullivan 1980). The natural world was used as metaphor for these chaotic and sorrowful situations and the landscape played a role in the background of many Tang poems, in turn becoming the inspiration of mid-Tang landscape painters. The literati paintings, Wen Ren Hua, also so known as Gentlemen paintings, are well-known poetic conception in these paintings.

The Tang Dynasty was also the golden time of Chinese figure painting, ceramics, and other craftworks. The blooming of arts and crafts creativity in the early-Tang Dynasty was also
stimulated by economic growth of the time. Art and craft works were demanded by the upper echelons of society (Chen 2001; Clunas 1997; Zhang 2002). A new wave of foreign arts was also introduced to China in the early-Tang, arriving in China via the Silk Road that had re-opened once again (Ebery 2010; Silva 1967).

Since the Tang Dynasty was established, the Chinese economy and social order gradually recovered from the destruction Sui Dynasty. Tang’s rich culture attracted scholars, artists and students from neighbouring regions. Elites also travelled as far as Japan, Korea, Central Asia and Persia to expand Chinese scholarship, and as a result of this Tang culture had a strong influence upon on Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese cultural development. The strong influence of the foreign policy of the early-Tang provided China a powerful position to take control of the Silk Road in Central Asia. The Chinese had a close trade partnership with the Arabs and Romans, and trade activity along the Silk Road was in its full swing during the early-Tang (McEvilley 2002; Silva 1964; Li, Lin & Yen ROC 81; Whitfield, Whitfield & Agnew 2000).

Like the golden time of Han, during the Tang Dynasty Dunhuang became one of the important commercial and cultural exchange centres between the east and the west. In the time of the early-Tang, the cave painting, sculptures and architectures in Dunhuang bloomed, and the techniques of these art and crafts reached a high point (Lin & Yen ROC 81; Whitfield, Whitfield & Agnew 2000). A large number of designs in these early-Tang Dunhuang caves suggest a strong western design, and the painting and craft techniques used were then new to China. Archaeologists believe that these caves were largely the works of foreigners or created out of co-operation between Chinese and foreign artisans (Cheng 1983; Whitfield, Whitfield & Agnew, 2000).
The strong trade between China and the west, the Arab, Europe and Roman brought, in addition, Zoroastrians and Manicheans returned to China, Judaism, Nestorian Christianity, Christianity and Islam were also introduced to China at the time. The town of Dunhuang and Ch’ang-an, the capital of Tang, were inhabited by a large number of foreign travellers from across Asia, Central Asia and the Mediterranean. Some travellers continued to the southern provinces through the Grand Canal. Foreign merchants, diplomats, monks, artists, students and missionaries were commonly found in southern cities such as Guanghou and Hangshou. Official records indicate that over 120,000 foreigners were living in Guanghou alone during the times of Tang Dynasty (Morton & Lewis 2005; Silva 1967).

In the Tang cities, these foreign travellers lived side by side with the Chinese. Having a close relationship with foreigners provided the Tang people a good opportunity to experience new customs, ideas and arts. Foreign music, dancing, clothing and sports were popular in the Tang society and court (Plate 30) is figurine produced in Tang Dynasty depicting a Tang lady playing polo, and (Plate 31 & 32) are two artefacts found in Tang Dynasty, the design of these artefacts continued both Western and Chinese features. Tradition temples and places of worship of foreign religions were also built in the Tang cities (Ebrey 2010).

The Tang Chinese were remarkably opened to new foreign ideas, and like the Han artists, the Tang artists adopted the foreign ideas and techniques, and further developed the ideas and techniques to invent a new manner. The influence of Arab and Near East regions architecture in Tang buildings is another good example. These existing Tang building found in the present Xian are largely decorated with coloured stones walls, curved roofs and painted
with strong colours (Bi 2002). Zoroastrian, Manichean and Christian buildings were also found in Tang cities. Of all of the foreign arts and cultures, however, Buddhist art and culture was the main influence upon Chinese art’s development in Tang Dynasty.

When Tang culture, economics and politics reached its height in the early-Tang Dynasty, the corruption and moral chaos also developed in the Tang court. Gradually the court became more corrupted and immoral, and the corruption of the court affected the economic and political growth both domestically and internationally. The people began to resent the court. In addition, during the time of the third Emperor Gao Zong (650 CE-683 CE) the court was largely run by his wife, Wu Zetin. Wu continued to take control of the court during the reign of her two sons, the fourth Emperor, Zhong Zong (684 CE-684 CE) and fifth Emperor, Rui Zong (684 CE-690 CE). Finally, in 690 CE Wu exempted her son, Emperor Rui Zong from his throne and established a new dynasty. Wu declared herself the emperor and established a new dynasty named Zhou Dynasty. Wu was on throne between (690 CE – 705 CE) on her own right and she was the only female emperor in Chinese history to rule the court. Wu was a brutal ruler but an enthusiastic art collector. In her time painters were valued by her court. The figure painter General Li was highly honoured by Wu (Svllivan 1980). Li contribution to the development of Chinese landscape painting will be the subject of further study below, as it largely takes place in the mid-Tang era. For by the time Wu was in her eighties, she was deposed from her throne by her son Zhong Zong who recovered the name Tang Dynasty, became the Emperor and ruled the court between (705 CE-710 CE). His successor was his son, Li Chongmao, also named Shag Di, but was in power only a very short time (710 CE – 710 CE), never being throned.
Instead Emperor Rui Zong, the son of Wu and Emperor Gao Zong, was for the second time on the throne in (710 CE – 711 CE). A year later he abdicated his throne to his son Li Longji.

Li Longji also known as Emperor Xuan Zong, ruled the Tang court between (712 CE – 756 CE). Under the rule of Xuan Zong, the Chinese economy and politics were recovered and reached its heights. Xuan Zong was another talented poet. He was also a painter and musician himself. Large numbers of scholars were active in the court during the time of Xuan Zong. Xuan Zong enjoyed the company with the scholars to study art and literature, and Xuan Zong paintings and poems are highly prised by later art historians. After over thirty years of success under the regime of Xuan Zong, the zenith of early-Tang began to disappear. Xuan Zong gradually neglected state affairs, and by his sixties, Xuan Zong was only interested in leisure activities, being infatuated with one of his concubines Yang Guifei. Due to Xuan Zong’s negligence the Tang court was thrown into chaos and fragility which led to the decline of the Chinese economy and politics placed. Peasants and perfidious officials began to revolt and rebel against the court, and, at the same time foreign troops also began to attack China from the west and north boarders.

Many officials and intellectuals were heartbroken realizing the achievements of pervious emperors are fading away, and see a declining court. A large number of these distressed officials and intellectuals left the Tang court. In the state of confusion a foreign-born general named An Lushan took control of the Tang court (755 CE-763 CE). An Lushan was killed by his own son shortly after he came to power. His son fought with the Tang reign over the next eight years, weakening the Tang court, the Chinese economy and foreign policy providing an opportunity for foreign troops to invade northern China.
Many loyal officials and intellectual left the Tang court at the time of the An Shi Rebellion to escape service the new ruler, An Lushan. These Tang scholars-officials like the distressed official and intellectuals in the time of Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties, found refuge in the mountains and freed themselves from the society in nature. The poet Wang Wei is one example of such the scholar-officials who took refuge in nature. These scholars lived in the mountains as recluses and pursued the life of Dao or practice of Chen. Many of the scholar-officials never returned to public service and society. During their times in the mountains, these scholars spent most of their time contemplating art and literature. Nature was never far away from their creativity, and a large number of the subject matters of poetry and painting produced at the time were related to nature. The landscape poem was as well-developed that landscape painting in the early-Tang. The advance of the landscape poem at the time was largely because poetry related to landscape had already developed at the time of Zhou Dynasty (Li 1996). While, the development of landscape painting was suppressed by the development of figure painting until the mid-Tang, in the eight century, by the end of the mid-Tang, the development of Chinese landscape painting was in the full swing, along with many Tang landscape poems became the inspiration of these Tang landscape painters.

By 763, the Li’ family has gained control of the court and re-built the Tang Dynasty establishing the mid-Tang (763 CE – 904 CE). Although a new Tang court was developed, many of the officials who left the Tang court during the time of An Shi Rebellion continued to live as hermits in the mountains and spent their time studying art and literature, never returning to society.

The past glory of the early-Tang never returned. Tang economics and politics continued to decline, and the Chinese government also lost control of parts of the western territory in the
Silk Road route (Silva 1964; Sullivan 1980; Whitfield, Whitfield & Agnew 2000). A number of famines and floods also occurred during the times of mid-Tang, and corruption continued in the mid-Tang court. The people were facing natural disasters and hardship, while high taxes were being demanded by the court. In addition, Buddhism also began to lost power in the court, and the Buddhists also persecuted by the court.

By the end of mid-Tang, in the ninth century, popular dissatisfaction led to a number of rebellions and civil wars (Morton & Lewis 2005). Concurrently, attacks from the West become more frequent, and the invasion of foreign troops in the northern China led the Tang court to relocate the capital to Luouang in 904 CE. Finally, Tang Dynasty economics and politics were both bankrupted, and the Tang dynasty collapsed in 907 CE. After the collapse of Tang, China was again divided and thrown into chaos for half century. So that although, art and literature continued to blooming in this chaotic era, and the development of Chinese landscape painting was at its heigh.

The Development of Landscape Painting in the Tang Dynasty

The development of Chinese landscape painting became more active in the late early-Tang, as new landscape painting techniques developed. By the time of the late-Tang, there were two predominant schools of thought in Chinese landscape painting, the Northern and Southern.

The technique and style used by the painters of Northern school of thought are described as more “Realist” and the Southern school of thought as more “Idealist” by Western scholars (Brodrick 1949). Yet one cannot help but feels that employing the Western yardstick to measure Chinese landscape paintings only serves to frame Chinese landscape
paintings into stereotypical categories derived from European experiences. The terms Realistic and Idealistic only can be used as a very rough guide to understand the techniques used in these two schools of thought. Since the fifth century and the publication of Zong Bing’s landscape painting theory, Chinese painters have a different approach in landscape painting. Their goal was to interpret their understanding or experiences which they have in the landscape into the painting, rather than to recreate the physical likeness of the landscape. These painters wanted to capture the spiritual aspect their subject, to convey nature as a place of spiritual rest and a means to achieve transcendental experience.

In addition, since the ancient Dynasties, Chinese painting has had an abstract quality rather than a realistic quality. As Sullivan aptly points out, Chinese (landscape) painting have been deemed to acquire ‘from the very beginning an abstract quality that it never lost, and that ensured that, at the highest levels of art at least, the quality of the line come to be regarded as more important than likeness to the object’ (Sullivan 1962, p. 22). Sullivan further highlights this quality by noting that via the slight change in the context of the volutes and lines, as the forms of mountains, clouds and rivers were re-created. Sullivan elucidates the quality of these elements by arguing that combining rhythmic lines with abstract and formal forms were the most powerful and essential technique in Chinese painting. Chinese landscape paintings grew out of an abstract language, since lines, volutes and dots were used to create the early images found in the pre-faming era, never losing their place in Chinese art. The only exception to this Chinese painting style that abstract quality is not employed is in architectural painting. Paintings (Plate 33 & 34) are two examples of architectural painting created in Five Dynasty and Song Dynasty. This style of painting was not encouraged by the imperial Chinese painters, and was deemed as the works of artisan (Branhart 1997; Chen 2001; Sullivan 1979, 1980; Zhang 2002).
The Chinese Landscape Painting Northern School of Thought

The founder of the Northern School of landscape painting Li Sixun (651 CE – 715 CE), also called Senior General Li, was a member of the early Tang imperial clan. A grandson of the first Emperor Gao Zu’s nephew, his state position was the General of the Left imperial bodyguard. Like many Confucius scholar-officials in the imperial China, Li was knowledgeable of the Five Classics and six arts. Li was known as a poet and a court portrait painter. Although he was highly honoured, the influence of Daoism led Li to leave his official position and live a primordial life in the mountains for a period of time. Like other Daoists, during his time living in the mountains, Li spent his time wandering alone to enjoy the natural scenery. The beauty of nature inspired Li, and although he was a figure painter, and figure painting was at its golden time, Li began to dabble in landscape painting, and attempted to depict the landscape around him. In Li landscape paintings he used: rapid movement to mirror the running water; clouds and vapours around the mountains to suggest a hazy and uncertain atmosphere, and to create an animate world; architecture such as bridges over rivers, and lonely buildings in the far distance to create a poetic feeling; and cliffs and ranges to suggest a mysterious environment (Chen 2001; Silva 1967).

The brush marks of Li are strong and vigorous suggesting an intense and forceful power (Chen 2001; Loehr 1980). One cannot help to think the brush marks of Li are related to his brave confident and unyielding temperament as a General. The sixth century painter Xie Ho, the founder of the Six Principles of painting theory, argues that if a true painter is a noble person and as such nature will be revealed in his painting. Xie Ho further elaborated his view by indicating that no amount of technical skill would enable an ignoble painter to convey the refinement and grace, chi-yun, into the painting (Chen 2001).
After Li returned to the Tang court, he developed a new coloured painting technique, named Kung Po. The Kung Po technique is unlike the ancient Five colour painting technique used by the Chinese painters at the time. The Five colour technique contains the five basic colours: yellow, green, red, white and back, and these five colours are related to the ancient belief yin-yang and wu-hsing (Cheng 1983 p. 118). The yin-yang, the two forces, and wu-hsing is also known as the five elements in the universe: wood, fire, earth, metal and water, and these five elements are applied in many aspect in Chinese daily life such as Feng Shui. Li’s Kung Po technique uses a flamboyant and luxurious manner to depict the landscape scenery and its atmosphere, rather that philosophical attitude, and the technique includes: rich and vivid blue, green malachite colours; strong and vigorous brush marks; and firm, thick and delicate vigorous gold lines.

Li and his son Li Zhadao (670 CE – 730 CE) also known as little General Li, further developed the Kung-Pi technique into a style of landscape painting called Qing Lu Shan Shui Hua, Blue and Green Landscape painting. This technique has become the predominant technique and style used in the Chinese landscape painting Northern school of thought which developed in the later Mid-Tang. Unfortunately, none of Li’s paintings have survived, but the Song painting *Emperor Minghuang’ journey into Shu*, (Plate 17) is an example of the Blue and green landscape painting style. The painting narrative is about the emperor of Tang, Xuan Zong, who escaped to the Shu region during the Rebellion of Ah Lu Shan.
The Chinese Landscape Painting Southern School of Thought

Unlike Li, the founder of the Chinese landscape painting Southern school of landscape painting Wang Wei (700 AD – 760 AD) was neither a member of the imperial family, or a military person. Instead Wang was a bland and sentimental Buddhist Confucius scholar with a pessimistic nature. Wang was born at the golden age of Tang, and came from a socially eminent family (Bi 2002; Da 1979; Yang 2003). He was an official-scholar, a poet, musician, calligrapher and painter. His literary genius was recognized during his childhood (Chen 2001; Da 1979), and through the civil service examination earned a position in the Tang court as an assistant director of the Imperial Directorate of Music in his early age. Only after years of hard work and often frustrated advancement in the bureaucratic hierarchy of Tang court, Wang became the Right Executive Assistant of the Chief Minister later in life. During his time serving in the early-Tang court, Wang had witnessed both the glory and decay of the Tang court. Some of Wang poems produced at the time have suggested a sharp and virile sentiment which reflects his inner feelings upon seeing a decline Tang (Chen 2001; Yang 2003). Wang’s poems become more pessimistic after the death of his wife and mother in his late thirties. His poetry implied a sense of sadness, helpless and melancholy moods.

At the time of the rebellion, like many Tang officials, Wang was captured and enlisted to serve the new ruler. To show his personal loyalty to the emperor and the Tang court, Wang poisoned himself to escape working for the new ruler. He was saved, and left the court. Wang lived in the mountains as a hermit (Chen 2001; Dai 1979), and only returned to the court after the re-building of the mid-Tang. The corruption and chaos continued in the new court however, Wang was again heartbroken to see the failing and lack of morality. Wang was determined to leave his official position, never returning to the court. He became a devoted Buddhist and lived in the mountains for the rest of his life (Chen 2001; Da, 1979). During
the time in the mountains, Wang became a painter and his paintings largely related to the
natural environment. He once stated “I may have been recognized, all by mistake, as a poet in
this world, while I should have been a painter in my former life…” (Chen 2001; Sullivan,
1979, p. 45; Bi 2002).

The paintings Wang produced during his time in the mountains, elaborated a poetic
flare that was free, relaxed and spontaneous (Chen 2001; Da 1979). There are contrary to
many of his earlier poems which suggest instead a sorrowful feeling. His paintings evoke
dream-like nostalgic and proto-romantic qualities of the ancient landscape. His brush marks
suggest a soft and gentle movement that evoke a breeze-like and musical rhythm. The dream-
like, nostalgic and proto-romantic qualities in Wang landscape paintings are often praised as
‘poem without words’. At the same time Wang’s landscape poems were also described as
‘poem with a painting’. Su Dongpo, a great poet in Song commented on Wang’s on the way
that paintings encapsulated his poems. “Look carefully at Wang paintings and you will find
the paintings contain poems” (Dai 1979; Chen 2001; Sullivan 1979; Yang 2003). Wang was
the first person to develop the concept of combining literature, poetry, and art in China (Chen
2001; Da 1979; Sullivan, 1979; Yang 2003). Since Wong, the concept of Three perfection,
Sanjue, is began to develop in Chinese art and became an unique characteristic in Chinese
painting. The Three perfection included a physical combination of painting, poetry and
calligraphy in a single work (Barnhart 1997; Chen 2001).

As mentioned earlier, since the time of the Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties the
Buddhist scholar-painter Zong Bing (375 AD – 443 AD) argued that good (landscape)
painting is beyond a topographical rendering of the subject, and that painting should evoke a
poetic atmosphere. Since Zong, the aim of the Chinese painter is to express the inner life of
the object and to transmit the spirit of the landscape into the painting. Wang, being a poet and painter was able to project a strong poetic subjectivity into his pictorial art enabling his creation to a mirror the soul. Wang’s style had elevated painting to become a poetic movement, which has given rise to a more powerful expressive quality in Chinese landscape painting. Wang’s soft and gentle brush marks evoked a breeze-like and musical rhythm which added to a poetic flare that was free, relaxed and spontaneous (Chan 2001). Wang’s paintings recalled Zhuangzi’s statement that when the mind is responsive, it reflects the universe, the speculum of all creation (Chen 1961; Chen 2001). However, like Li’s paintings, none of Wang’s paintings has survived. Reports of the Tang court collection say that it held over forty pieces of Wang’s paintings, many of them snow scenery (Di 1979; Sullivan 1979, 1980). *The Snowy stream* (Plate 35) and, *River under snow* (Plate 36) are two of the paintings copied from Wang landscape paintings by later landscape painters.

Upon a closer scrutiny of these paintings, one can sense a nostalgic and proto-romantic element in the paintings which reflected Wang’s vision of a simple, pure and tranquil archaic world (Chen 2001). As a Buddhist himself the concept of “Emptiness”, the principle of Chen largely has influenced his experience in nature (Chen 2001; Shaw 1988). Wang’s landscape paintings reflected the spirit of a recluse who enjoyed an inner spiritual harmony with nature. One says that Wang’s landscape paintings are best described as a transcendental experience of quiet, *tabula rasa*, timelessness and unification with nature. Wang’s landscape paintings conceived as an attainment of harmony within the self and the natural setting. It other words, Wang see himself as part of nature, oneness with nature (Chen 2001; Da 1979). His intellect and emotions allowed him to reflect his inner visions, emancipation, autonomy, calm and love of nature. The painter’s nature is a powerful tool in the process of painter’s creativity, and Wang’s landscape paintings have achieved Zong
Bing’s idea of landscape painting: to express the transcendental experience of the painter in the landscape. Wang’s paintings provided a place of spiritual rest for him and his viewers.

Wang’s Chinese landscape paintings and the Southern school of thought also featured a new painting style and technique named Po Mo, “Broken ink”, which is developed by Wang himself. Wang’s new invention was a breakthrough in Chinese landscape painting’s development at the time. It involved using fine lines and a monochrome ink technique, rather than colours and hard lines. It was also painted on paper rather than silk. Wang’s choice of black and white colours, in a monochrome technique, was influenced by the technique used in the earlier Buddhist art (Waley 1923). Some art historians refer to Wang’s “broken ink” technique as a metaphor of Wang’s inner feelings about the Tang’s decline (Wong 1991). This is in contrast to Li used the luxurious, flamboyant and colourful Kung Po painting style that is largely influenced by the gaiety and glitter of the rich and wealthy court life (Da 1979; Loehr 1980; Waley 1923). Since Wang began to use a particle fine paper named Xuanzhi as painting material, many Tang scholars began to follow Wang’s idea. Paper had become a popular painting material and widely used by the many Tang scholar-painters even though silks have been the main painting material for the Chinese scholars since Zhen Dynasty (Ebery 2010). Paper gradually replaced silks after Tang and by the time of Song paper become the main material for traditional Chinese painting since.

Wang Wei also invented a new technique named the ground distance technique. This new technique suggested a view of a landscape from the level of the ground. The combination of Wang’s ground distance technique and technique to depict depth and height are referred as Three Distance Technique, San Yuan Fa. The technique is a unique way for Chinese landscape painters to depict the three different coordinates of space in a landscape.
The use of the three distance technique is demonstrated in (Plate 36A). The technique suggests more realistic views of space on a two-dimensional surface which allows the viewers a visual freedom “to wander” in the painting as if they are gazing through a real landscape in a moving vehicle which time and space are simultaneously moving forward, or viewing a panorama of photograph. The three distance technique suggests a feeling of freedom and a sense of wandering in a “landscape”, becoming an essence tool for Chinese landscape painters to depict the spaces in a natural world. Indeed, a good Chinese landscape painting should show the flux and animation of nature to suggest a feeling of freedom.

Since the full development of Three Distance Technique in the mid-Tang, Chinese landscape painters were able to depict a continuous landscape view on a flat two-dimensional surface without losing the qualities of flux, movement and rhythm in nature; and to suggest a three-dimensional volume effect on a two-dimensional surface. The maturity of the three distance technique ended the long struggle of Chinese painters had in representing the three different coordinates of space in a landscape, since the time of Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties. Before the three distance technique was developed, building or parts of the building were commonly used by the Chinese painters to suggest the three dimensional spaces of the nature environment on a two dimensional surface (Silva 1967).

Buildings in the landscape paintings of Sui and Tang Dynasties were used to suggest: the depth, the width and the high of the landscape in the painting; the space between the objects in the painting; and the view of the landscape such as bird eyes view. It was also a common practice for the Sui and Tang painters to use an open window and door, part of a roof, wall or stair to suggest space in the painting and the view of the painting. In one of the Han paintings, (Plate 26) the painter cleverly depicts a roof and part of the building at the low
part of the painting as an indicator to create a bird’s eyes view of the landscape. However, since the full development of the Three distance technique architecture is no longer used to suggest the space in paintings, but instead represents the building itself.

Finally, among the Tang landscape painters, some painters were known as yippin, untrammelled. These groups of painters were largely understood as bold and uninhibited characters, and their techniques were considered liberal (Chen 2002; Da 1979; Sullivan 1979; Wu 1997). At the time of Tang Dynasty, the techniques used by these untrammelled painters were not advanced by the scholar-painters, their techniques deemed ill-mannered. The technique used by Wang Mo, is a good example. Wang is also named Ink Wang, and the technique he used is known as splashed ink technique, (Bi 2002; Da 1979; Sullivan 1979). At his time, Wang was well known for his unique way of painting, and his landscape paintings were created in swift movements in the state of drunkenness. Wang began his painting by putting ink marks, light and dark, on the silk as he like using his hands and foot. He that splash ink and ink wash over the marked silk. Images of mountains, rivers, clouds and trees began to appear on the silk by itself as creation (Dai 1979; Sullivan 1979; Wu 1997).

Like Wang, some untrammelled painters painted with the rhythms of music and dance, and other used their hair, hands and foot as paint brush (Bi 2002; Da 1979; Sullivan 1979; Wu 1997). Largely numbers of these techniques gradually died out after Tang Dynasty because they were not accepted by the Confucian scholars (Sullivan 1979). Only Wang’s splashed ink technique was later re-discovered in the works of Zhongren, d. 1123, a Buddhist monk painter in the Song Dynasty era. The splashed ink technique was further developed in Ming Dynasty. These untrammelled Tang landscape painters and their techniques recalled the
twentieth century action painters and their techniques such as Jackson Pollock. However, they remained beyond the dominant Northern and Southern landscape schools of thought in the Tang Dynasty.
Chapter Six

The Rise of the Artist-Scholars and
the Development of Chinese Landscape Painting:

*The Imperial Dynasties, from the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms* to the Song Dynasty (907 CE – 1279 CE)

The Historical Background of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms

Following the collapse of the Tang Dynasty, China was again in a state of confusion and anarchy, during which different states and kingdoms were established. At the time, China was largely divided into the northern and the southern regions. Within a short period of time the northern region was governed by five dynasties, and the southern region was divided and controlled by twelve independents kingdoms, although traditionally only ten kingdoms are listed in the history of China (Sullivan 1977). This historical period is named the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907 CE- 960 CE) also known as the Five Dynasties.

Even though a new era had developed, the resentment of government since the mid-Tang continued into the Five Dynasties, especially in the northern region. The northern region was largely in a state of chaos throughout the Five Dynasties era. Civil wars, warlords, peasant rebellions and the invasion of foreign troops often took place at the same time. In addition, the northern rulers were largely military personnel, therefore, the transitions from one dynasty to another frequently led to conflict between the rulers, and war occurred in each transition. The northern people were consistently living in great hardship, and scholars were distressed by the social chaos. The southern region was divided and governed by twelve different kingdoms, and the political environment was less stressful than the northern region. Some of the southern rulers were Confucius scholars or former officials in the Tang court (Chen 2001). Wars and
conflicts between kingdoms were kept to a minimum, and most of the time, the transitions of
the power in these southern kingdoms were smooth and peaceful from the previous rulers to
their successors, who were largely kept within the family. Many of the southern rulers were
also art patrons, and some were also poets and painters themselves. Many of the Tang and Five
Dynasties scholars and scholar-officials migrated to the south to take refuge in these southern
kingdoms.

During this time three main artistic cultures developed in China, and each culture had
its own tradition (Barnhart 1997; Chen 2001). These were: the Sichuan culture of the Shu
kingdom, in the west; the Jiangnan culture of the Southern Tang kingdom, in the south; and the
Northern Heartland tradition, in the north. Among these three main cultures the Sichuan culture
was the most distinctive largely because it involved many Tang old imperial customs (Barnhart
1997; Sullivan 1979; 1980). The second main artistic culture was the Jiangnan culture that
developed from the local customs and art cultures of the region of Jiangnan. Even though; the
culture was less sophisticated than the Sichuan culture, Jiangnan culture was considered to be
a highly refined royal court tradition. The third main artistic culture was the Northern Heartland
tradition. The Northern Heartland tradition is understood to be less polished artistic tradition
among the three artistic cultures. Traditionally, the focus of Chinese art and literature
development were mainly in the dynasties’ capital where the scholars and élite were active.
However, many northern rulers at the time were non-Confucius scholars or even non-Han
Chinese and these rulers are understood as less cultured (Bi 2002; Chen 2001; Da 1979). To
these northern rulers their main concern was in military affairs rather the development of art
and literature.
The Development of Landscape Painting in the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms

The natural environment in the southern region enables the development of Chinese landscape painting in these areas. Like the Han painters, the picturesque scenery of the Yangtze region inspired the Five Dynasties painters’ creativity. The tranquil atmosphere and the geological features of the Yangtze region provided the painters from the north with a new landscape experience. Painters also took solace in the tranquil features and peaceful atmosphere of the Yangtze region, becoming hermits to take refuge in the mountains and rivers. The Yangtze region became a new subject matter for these northern painters, these northern painters began to depict the tranquil and poetic landscape features rather than their accustomed northern landscape scenery. Wang Wei’s landscape painting was wildly adopted by the painters in the southern region as their painting style, and his technique became the dominant technique used to depict the landscape of the Yangtze region.

By the end of the Five Dynasties, a new painting style was developed in the region, namely the Southern style landscape painting (Barnbart 1997; Sullivan 1980). Since the development of the style, it became the most popular style and technique used not only in the south but in the northern regions as well. Other paintings related to the natural world were also became popular subject matter to Chinese painters. A large number of paintings of flora, insects, and birds were produced at the time, and garden design was also a popular form in Five Dynasty (Bi 2002; Da 1979; Zhang 2002). The beauty of nature is never far away from the mind of these imperial painters, and nature had brought comfort and order to these distressed scholar-officials.

Chinese landscape painting also developed, though not to the same extent, in the northern region during the time of Five Dynasties. The style and technique developed by the
northern landscape painter maters is known as the Northern style landscape painting, and is largely influenced by the two Li’s. It features strong and vigorous brush marks to suggest the dry and hardy northern geography features. However, some of these Five Dynasties landscape master continued to produce their works during the Northern Song Dynasty.

The Five Dynasties Landscape Painting Masters

Since the development began to speed-up by the end of the Tang Dynasty, a number of landscape masters were emerged in the northern and southern China by the time of Five Dynasties.

In the northern region these masters included: Jing Hao (855 CE-915CE); Guo Tong (early 10th century); Li Cheng (919 CE – 967 CE); and Fan Kuan (967 CE – 1027). Along with there were also two landscape masters in the southern region, these masters were: Dong Yuan (907 CE - 960 CE); and Ju Ran (active ca. 960 CE – 985 CE).

The Northern Style

Jing Hao

The northern painter Jing Hao is known as the first landscape master in China (Barnhart 1997; Fu 1983). Jing is recalled as a landscape painting master and a great art theorist (Chen 2001; Dai 1979; Sullivan 1979). During the political chaos in the northern region, like many of the Confucius scholars influenced by Daoism, Jing left the society and become a mountain hermit pursued the life of Dao. He took refuge in the Taihang Mountain until his death. During his time as a hermit, Jing was inspirited by the scenery of the northern mountains, and developed a style to represent the mountainous regions which made him one of the great Northern style landscape painters (Chen 2001; Dai 1979). The subject matter of Jing’s landscape paintings largely depicted the cold misty feature of the grand mountains in the
region. *The Mount Kuanglu* (Plate 37) and *Travellers in a Snowy Landscape* are the only two Jing’s surviving landscape works.

In the painting of *Mount Kuanglu*, to emphasis the mountainous north, Jing used a number of big mountains and a series of sheer peaks in front of the mountains as the picture background. These mountains and peaks rise from a steep river valley. Clouds and mists are swirling on the mountain tops, the peaks and the valley. The depiction of the clouds and mists swirling on the mountain tops in the painting recalled the idea of the ancient concept of chi, cosmic breath. Among the mountains and peaks, Jing placed countless old pine trees to suggest a claim and living ancient landscape. He is known as a master of pine tree (Da 1979). At the same time, some waterfalls are plunging down from the high peaks to create dramatic scenery. In contrary to this ancient mountain scenery and Jing cleverly placed a small village at the foot of the big mountains to suggest the tranquil atmosphere of the present time in the painting. One cannot help to feel the power of nature through Jing’s big mountains and waterfalls in the painting, and the insignificant of human power in the universe from the small fishing village. On the other hand, the composition of the painting evokes a peaceful and harmonious coexistence environment between human and the natural world.

Due to geographically different between the northern region and southern region two difference techniques and styles were developed in the two regions. As mentioned earlier, Jing developed a new painting technique to depict this rocky northern landscape. In the painting of *Mount Kuanglu*, instead of using Li Shanxi’s vivid colures and strong lines as the dominant technique, Jing developed a technique base on Li’s technique, but contrary to Li’s vivid colures and strong line technique, Jing uses a slight touch of colours, ink washes and bold brush strokes. The technique Jing invested is known as cun fa (Chen 2001). This new technique of Jing has
suggested a more realistic feature of the northern environment: the cold (dry) misty northern atmosphere. In addition, to reduce the hardness of the object edges such as the mountains, Jing gradually changing the ink tones to create softer contour of the objects. At the same time, the depth and shallowness of the mountains also created by the different ink tones, along with the distance of the objects in the painting. Jing’s cun fa technique was popular used amount the Five Dynasties landscape painters, and his technique has a significant influenced on a number of Song landscape masters, especially his student Guan Tong (Chen 2001).

Jing’s landscape theory had equal importance and influence upon the Chinese painters of his time and the coming generations of landscape painters. In his book, Notes on Brushwork, Jing has emphasized that a great work of landscape painting should capture the true spirit of nature, rather than only the physical appearance of the landscape. At the same time, in his book, Jing also advocated a theory of six essential elements in landscape painting. In his theory of the Six Essential Elements in landscape painting, also known as the Six Essential, Jing wrote the essential of a great landscape are: first is spirit; second is rhythm; third is thought; fourth is scenery; fifth is brush; and sixth is ink.

Jing’s Six Essential Elements is largely understood as a continuation of the sixth century painter Xie He’s Six Principles of painting. However, Hsieh’s Six Principles referred to all paintings in general and mainly to figure painting as figure painting was the dominant genre at the time. In addition, the painting technique discussed in Xie’s Six Principles is barely related to ink-wash technique, as the ink-wash technique has not developed at the time of Xie. The monochrome ink-wash technique was developed three centuries later by Tang painter Wang Wei. Along with Xie’s painting technique is largely related to control of the lines, strokes and colours. But the use of ink-wash and the skill of using ink-wash is an essential element of
Jing’s Six Essential (Chen 2001). Furthermore, the main focus of Jing’s Six Essential Elements is on landscape painting technique only. However, in both theories, Xie and Jing emphasise the importance of capturing the spiritual element of object into the painting. In the case of a Chinese landscape painting, the soul of the painting is the spiritual aspect of nature rather than the physical appearance of the landscape.

Jing further urges the painters to transfer the spiritual element into the painting. The painter must distinguish between the “likeness” of nature and the “reality” of nature (Chen 2001). To Jing, landscape paintings that suggested the “reality” of the landscape scene are the paintings that suggest both the physical and spiritual features of nature. On the other hand, landscape paintings that only suggest the “likeness” of the landscape showing the physical geographical features of the landscape fail to suggest the spirit of nature (Fu 1983). To gain a full understanding of the landscape, Jing urges other landscape painters to observe the natural world and study it in different seasons and times of the year, and convey their knowledge of the landscape into the painting. Jing argues that the technique to transfer their knowledge of nature, such as flux, into the painting is through the skill of brushwork and ink.

Guan Tong

Jing’s painting technique and theory had a strong influenced upon his student Guan Tong who was active in the tenth century, during the early Five Dynasties. Jing and Guan is known as two representative painters of the Northern school of landscape painting. However, Guan hard work of leaning has also earned him as one of three great rival artists as his time, and praised by the Song art critics his paintings have surprised the works of his teacher Jing (Chen 2001; Da 1979). Although only a few Guan’s paintings were survived, Guan’s technique and style can be study in his two well-known landscape paintings: the Autumn mountains at
dusk (Plate 38); and the Road to Shu is hard, the Shudoa nan. Guan landscape paintings subject matter also included: scenery of autumn mountains; winner forest; and life as a mountain hermit.

Guan landscape paintings are described as ‘realism’, and contain rhyme and vigorous energy which embodied the elements of Jing’s Six Essential in his paintings (Chen 2001). His mountains are mighty and solid feeling, and his vegetation is lush, which suggests a realistic view of the northern mountain features which allows the viewer to feel that they are looking at the real scene (Chen 2001). In his later works, critics describe Guan works as “the technique of painting is simple but strong, the scenery is minimum but profound” (Da 1976, p. 61). After the establishment of the Song Dynasty in 960 CE, Guan continued to active in the Northern Song Dynasty in the northern region.

Li Cheng

Along with Jing Hao and Guan Tong, the landscape painters: Li Cheng (919 CE – 967 CE) and Fan Kuan (967 CE – 1027) were also known as great Five Dynasties painters. With Guan Tong, Li and Fan are known as the “Three great rival artists” in their time (Chen 2001). Li was scholar and born in aristocratic family, both Li’s grandfather and father were Tang high officials and scholars. Li was raised as scholar and painter but Li family fell out of power after the collapse of Tang, Li was never become an official himself, thus, his poems have suggested a hopeless sentiment in life (Barnhart 1997; Chen 2001). Li was active in the late Five Dynasties era, as Guan and Fan continued to be active in the Song Dynasty. Although Li only lived a few years, five years, into the Song Dynasty, his landscape style becomes Song national landscape style (Barnhart 1997).
Both Li and Fan landscape works have their own style and technique to depict the Northern mountainous scenery. Li’s landscape paintings are described as “wen”, having a refined and gentle style (Barnhart 1997; Chen 2001). The technique and style used by Li was his invention of combining the two styles Li Sixun’s Northern School of Thought and Wang Wei’s Southern School of Thought. Li Cheng make used of the Northern School of Thought traditional scene of high mountains, and blended it into the Southern School of Thought light mists tradition scene. By using the two traditional techniques and styles to depict nature, Li Cheng’s landscape suggested spacious environment and a foggy atmosphere, which evoked a dreamy and timeless feeling in the painting (Chen 2001). Li also used a technique known as “cloudlike texture” as his dominant painting manner in his landscape works. Even through, the mountains in the northern region are mostly dangerously steep, the round and turning centre-tip brushstroke creates a smooth rock edge. As a result, a gentle and less dangerously northern environment is created in the Li’s paintings. A Solitary temple amid clearing peaks (Plate 39) and Thick forests and distant peak (Plate 40) are two of examples Li’s style. The two paintings both evoked dreamlike, tranquil and timeless atmospheres. Li Cheng’s landscape style was popular in the Northern Song, and imitated by many of the Northern Song painters. Li landscape paintings in addition were value by many collectors and critics at his time, his landscape works being honoured as the style of Northern Song style (Barnhart, 1997; Chen, 2001)

Fan Kuan

In contrary to Li, critics depict the style of Fan Kuan’s landscape work as “wu”. His works are known for depicting valiant and fierce sensations. In the early landscape works of Fan, Fan’s landscape paintings were largely modelled after Li Cheng’s and Jing Hao’s works, but Li’s landscape style was the main influence on Fan’s early landscape works (Chen 2001).
However, Fan later realized that the best way to understand nature is learn from nature itself (Da 1979). In addition, Fan began to spend large number of his time in nature and tirelessly to observe all the wonders in nature to have a better understanding of nature. Fan also lived as a mountain recluse so to close the natural world. Rather than just replicate the techniques and styles of Jing and Li, Fan began to develop his own technique. At the same time, Fan made used of his understanding of northern region features to create his style.

Unlike Li’s use of the cloudlike texture technique, Fan used a raindrop like technique known as raindrop texture to suggest the northern mountainous feature (Chen 2001; Dai 1979). This technique created a rough feeling on the mountains’ and rocks’ surface, which suggest the age of the rocks and the erosion of wind and rain. At the same time, to suggest the dangerously steep mountain feature of the northern region, Fan depicted his mountains and rock with a rough and sharp edge. Fan’s landscape style has become an essential style in the Northern style landscape painting (Barnhart 1997), and his style continued to have a large influence in the Southern Song Dynasty and Yuan Dynasty eras. The Song critics described Fan’s landscape works as: “not only painting mountains and backbones, and also painting more vividly their soul” (Tang 2002, p. 174).

As a Dao mountain hermit, Fan’s landscape paintings were based on the Daoism principle of reclusion: become part of nature. At the same time, his landscape paintings also reflected the Chinese cosmology (Bi 2002; Chen 2001). Fan painting technique, style and ideology can be studied in his one of his well-known work: Travellers amid mountain and streams (Plate 41), the narrative of this work is depicted some merchants/ travellers making a journey through the mountain and streams. In the deeply sense, the painting subject matter is
like a metaphor to indicate the insignificance of human compared to nature. The painting also revealed some Chinese cosmology ideas the role human play in the cosmos, such as: the life journey of humans in the cosmos being is short and temporary related to timeless universe; the power of humans is minor related to the power of cosmos; and that humans are merely part of nature.

**Travellers Amid Mountain and Streams**

In this painting, a majestic mountain dominates the centre of the painting background. This northern monumental view has become the focus of the painting. A waterfall falls from the mountain which leads the viewers’ attention to the stream and the mists rise from the mid-ground of the painting. The stream continued to flow to foreground which a dense wood located. The mists setting in the mid-ground evoked a sense of an ancient, timeless and eternal atmosphere in the painting. At the same time, this misty scene and stream in the mid-ground also act as a bridge between the background of mountain and the dense wood in the foreground of the foothills.

A number of jutting boulders are depicted in the foreground of painting which dominate the front view of the painting. The roots of a huge architecture are lightly seen on a small hill at the right side of the foreground between the waterfall and a grove which suggest a dwelling, perhaps home to a recluse scholar. At the foot of the hill, a train of mule is depicted along a path, merchants walking and the donkeys bearing merchandise. The present of the humans and animals in the foreground of the painting is overpowered by the magnificent mountain in the background. The humans become insignificant who only play a small part in the cosmos compared to nature. It is interesting to note, in Chinese cosmological philosophy, humans are traditionally understood as visitors to the universe which temporarily dwell in the cosmos, only
nature is eternally and continuously in the cosmos being. In the painting Fan suggested that the
life journey of humans are like the travellers in the mountains and streams who briefly stay for
a time (Chen 2001).

The brushstrokes used by Fan in his painting are strong and the ink-wash tends to
thicken and darken. Different ink tones were also used by Fan to create the density of wood
and trees in the foreground. In the background, Fan depicted a number of the trees on the
mountain top to suggest nature’s vitality. Multi-focus perspectives are also used in the painting
to suggest the continuity of space and flux in nature.

The Southern Style

In contrary to the Northern Landscape Painting style a very different style of
landscape painting was emerging in the southern region at the same time. The name of the
style is known as the Southern Style Landscape Painting, also known as Jiangnan Landscape
style (Barnhart 1997). Unlike the northern landscape painters the southern landscape painters
employ gentle brush mark and ink wash painting techniques to image the wet and calm
southern atmosphere. The techniques used in the Southern style landscape painting create a
hazy and misty environment, along with a poetic, dreamlike and tranquil quality atmosphere.
It often features picturesque scenery of the Yangtzi village, in the Jiangnan region (Sullivan
1979; Willetts, 1965). In addition, the techniques used in the Southern style landscape
painting evoke calm and relaxed elements, in refined, tranquil and dreamlike sensations
which recalled Wang Wai’s landscape paintings.
By the time of late Northern Song era, the rise of the Southern style landscape painting the techniques and style of the painting had overhauled the Northern style landscape painting and Li’s Song national style. At the end of Northern Song Dynasty, the Southern style landscape painting is fully developed. The painting has become the pivot of Chinese landscape painting, and gained its position as the main stream of the Chinese landscape painting (Chen 2001).

Dong Yuan

Dong Yuan (934 CE – 962 CE) and Ju Ran (tenth century CE) are well recognised as the masters of the Southern Landscape painters. Dong’s landscape paintings have a significantly influenced in the landscape painters of Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties (Tong 2001). He was a Five Dynasties official of the Southern Tang Kingdom court in the southern region. Like many Confucius scholars, Dong studies the Five Classical along with the six arts. His artworks included figural painting and painting of ox and tiger, but he is well known of his landscape painting (Da 1979).

Dong’s official duty was to manage the court gardens, which provided him many opportunities to study nature. As mentioned before, Chinese garden are understood to a microcosm of nature, and play an important role the solitary life of Chinese scholars, thus, Chinese garden design and Chinese landscape painting also has very close relationship. In his leisure times, Dong spent most of his times studying landscape painting (Da 1979). Dong’s earlier landscape works have suggested the influence of both Li’s ‘Blue and green landscape painting technique’ and Wang’s ink wash techniques, but in Dong’s later works it has indicated that Wang’s Chinese landscape painting southern school of thought has become Dong’s main inspiration.
After the Southern Tang Kingdom was taken over by the Song court during the Northern Song era, Dong left the court. He took refuge in the mountains and became a mountain hermit. Being a mountain hermit has provided Dong more opportunity to observe nature and closer to nature. Like many (landscape) painters before him, Dong was inspired by the natural environment around him. At the same time, his interest of Wang’s painting style and ink wash technique also grown within his practice. In addition to Dong’s later works were dominated by ink wash paintings. His landscape works show three different stages of development.

In his earliest landscape works, Dong’s subject matter is largely related to high mountain and mountain ranges. The painting known as *Along the river bank* (Plate 42) is an example of his earliest landscape painting. Although this earlier work of Dong has a similar subject matter with many Northern landscape paintings, a close study of the painting, shown than different painting styles and techniques were employed in his paintings. The mountains appear less dangerous and smaller, which is a geographic character of the southern region, unlike many Northern landscape paintings, the composition of the painting is large dominated by a huge mountain. Dong’s painting also suggests a far distant landscape view, and evokes a gentle and peaceful atmosphere which invited the viewers to wander in the landscape. This gentle and peaceful atmosphere continued to be an essential feature of Dong’s landscape works.

In the second stage of Dong landscape works, the mountains in the painting become smooth terrain, rather than a sharp submit, and the woodland, green hill and clear water began to appear. An example of this stage is suggested in the painting *Long xiu jiao min tu* (Plate 43). In the later stage of his works, waters and rivers became the main elements in the painting,
along with some distant mountains at the background. Dong’s well known painting such as *Xiao xiang tu* (Plate 44) is a good example of this later stage. In this later landscape painting, Dong has captured the spirit of the southern region, and truly revealed the geographic environment of the lower Yangzi region in Nanjing (Barnhart 1997; Sullivan 1979; Tong 2001). The painting embodied both the physical element and the qualities of claim and peace that prevail in the region. Like many of Dong’s later landscape paintings, this painting also suggested a poetic and dream-like environment, which evoked nostalgic and proto-romantic qualities.

In sum, Dong’s landscape painting technique: use of loose thin ink and loose brushstrokes, rather than used of hard lines to depict the silhouette of the object, such as the mountains’ and rocks’ silhouette. The silhouette is created by loose thin ink brushstrokes manner; use of small ink block or light colour ink block technique, known as pointillism, such as green colour blocks are sued to create the foliage on the tree; use of small crosshatching lines technique, known as crosshatching technique, this small crosshatching lines are used to create the trunk and the branches, and use smooth and gentle round end brush marks. Furthermore, Dong’s brush marks suggested a smooth and gentle round end rather than hard sharp and hard end. These brush marks are clearly shown in many of Dong’s mountains and rocks. A mist and hazy atmosphere is often found in Dong’s landscape works. His mist and haze are largely rise from fishing villages, lakes, the foot of the mountains and the woodlands (Bi 2002; Chen 2001). Dong’s subject matters mainly smaller mountains and mountains with small rocks, and claim lakes, in contrast to the northern huge mountains, steep cliffs and high water landscape scenes. In addition, Dong’s mountains are largely used as a background of the painting, and many of the mountains are located on the side of the painting often only part of the mountains are depicted in the painting. Dong Yuan’s landscape works have played an
important role in the development of Southern style landscape painting during the Five Dynasties, and his painting style and techniques were further developed by his Buddhist monk student, Juran.

**Juran**

Like Dong, Juran (active ca. 960 CE - 985CE) made a significant contribution to the development of Southern style landscape painting. Dong and Juran are recognized as the founders of the Southern Style Landscape Painting (Barnhart 1997). The peaceful and tranquil elements in their landscape works also became the inspiration of the development of literati painting during Five Dynasties (Barnhart 1997; Tong 2001), and the literati painting development in Yuan Dynasty, 1271 CE – 1368 CE and Qing Dynasty, 1644 CE – 1911 CE (Chen 2001).

Limited information about Juran’s life is recorded. Even his birth name, Juran is only known by his Buddhist name: Juran (Ba 2001; Da 1979). As a Buddhist monk, Ju’s landscape paintings have evoked a strong quality of Chen. Chen and Dao both are the essential elements of Chinese landscape painting and literati painting, especially the concept of Chen in literati painting (Chen 2001; Shaw 1988). Juran has similar technique of handling ink and brushstroke as his teacher Dong. Both Juran’s and Dong’s brushstrokes are gentle and the ink is wet and light (Chen 2001). Juran’s landscape works are largely depicted close view of foggy big mountains and mountain ranges rather than distance cloudy mountain scene. Rich vegetation and deep forest are often found in Juran’s mountains, but, his mountain top and paths are largely rocky. Juran’s paintings evoked a quiet and solitary astrosphere. *Distant mountain forests* (Plate 45) and *Buddhist retreat by stream and mountain* (Plate 46) are two of example of Juran’s landscape works, both paintings have embodies the concept of Chen.
Zhao Kuangyin (927 CE – 976 CE) a military general of the Later Zhou Dynasty (951 CE – 960 CE) took over the northern region in 960 CE, ending the upheaval of the Five Dynasties era and establishing the Song Dynasty. Zhao established the capital of Song in Bianjing, now Kaifeng and became the first emperor of Song Dynasty, known as Tai Zu. Although the Song Dynasty was established in the northern region, it took Tai Zu another twenty years, until 980 CE, to have full control of China by incorporating the twenty kingdoms in the southern region. China was then unified and under one court, the Song Dynasty.

United China brought many of the official-scholars and mountain hermit scholars from both regions back to the capital and the court. The Song court began to rebuild a close relationship with the scholars, who then played an important role in the development of art and literature in Song Dynasty (Chen 2001; Da 1979). Like many Tang rulers, numerous Song emperors were poets, painters, calligraphers and musicians themselves. The eighth emperor of Song, Huizong, is remembered as one of distinguished artist-emperors in the imperial China.

Besides the influence of the court in art and literature’s development during the early Northern Song, by the time of mid Northern Song era, commerce and technology also speed up the development of art and craft. Like the early-Tang, the developing economy provided the Song people stability and prosperity, leading to a demand for art and craft. Many art and craft products were common household items and not just for made for collections (Bi 2002;
Historically the Song Dynasty is divided into two periods: the Northern Song (960 CE – 1126 CE) and the Southern Song (1127 CE – 1279 CE). The Northern Song was the golden time of the Song Dynasty when economic and political development was at its best, and as literature, art and craft were blooming. The achievement of the Song Dynasty in Chinese art laid the foundation for the coming years of art development in China (Barnhart 1997). However, even though the Song economy was still strong and stable in the late Northern Song era, the Song court and foreign politics began fall into a decline after Zhao Ji (1082 CE – 1135 CE) was crowned on the throne. Zhao Ji was lacked the ability to rule the country and the court (Chen 2001). In the year of 1126 CE the Jurchen took control of Northern China, and the economy in the northern region was also close to bankrupt. To rebuild court power and the economy the Song court relocated the capital in Lin’an, now Hangzhou, and established the Southern Song era.

The relocation of the Song capital to the south has encouraged the Song court to develop a stronger and powerful navy in the Indian Ocean, which stabilized both Song foreign affair and economic growth. China’s well-developed sea technology and sea routes in the regions provided less danger and a shorter journey for Chinese merchants to travel to the west. Chinese merchants took the adventure of this opportunity, thus, the sea trade to the west bloomed. As a result of this and because of unrest in the north the Silk Road began to decline, and was abandoned by the Chinese government (Silva 1964; Whitefield, Whitefield & Agnew, 2000). After a few decades of economic growth in the southern region, the
Chinese economy began to slow down and foreign affairs also declined. By the end of the Southern Song Dynasty, the Chinese economy was bankrupt and the Song court collapsed. Mongolia took this opportunity to take over China. The Chinese was under their rule for the next century.

Even though, Chinese landscape painting had matured at the end of Northern Song, the development of Chinese landscape painting continued into the Southern Song where new styles of landscape painting were developed. The development of literati painting in the Southern Song era reached its first summit in the history of Chinese landscape painting’s development. The Mongolian established Yuan Dynasty 1271 CE – 1368 CE after the occupation of China. The Chinese were lived under these brutal foreigner rulers. Chinese scholars and scholar-officials were distressed to comprehend the popular suffering and felt disgrace loss of the country. Like the distressed scholars before them, the Yuan scholars also took refuge in nature, art and literature, thus, the creative of literati painting was at its golden time.

The Development of Chinese Landscape Painting in the Northern Song

(960 CE – 1127 CE)

Since the establishment of Song Dynasty in 960 CE after years of chaos and division in China, peace began to develop in the capital Bianjing and the northern region. Chinese economy and foreign politics soon recovered, and the development of literature, art and craft was at the high point in the Northern Song era. In addition, Chinese civilization and culture regained its influence in the regions. These early Northern Song landscape painters adopted the Tang and Five Dynasties painters’ techniques and styles, and further developed their
methods to their own manner. By the end of the Northern Song, Chinese landscape painting was fully developed and completely independent from the figure painting (Bi 2002; Chen 1961; Chen 2001; Sullivan 1979, 1980). Chinese landscape painting became the higher art form in China, pursued as pure aesthetic form, gaining its own right place as a genre. Indeed, of the thirteen categories of Chinese pictorial art, Chinese landscape painting became the most respected, along with Chinese landscape painting represents as traditional Chinese art (Chen 1961; Chen 2001). In addition, the landscape painters were officially recognized by the Song court (Sullivan 1980), and the first academy of painting was established by the Song court in early eleventh century CE (Chen 2001; Da 1979).

On the other hand, the establishment of the academy of painting in the Northern Song era meant that the landscape painters’ creativity mainly took place in an academic environment (Chen 2001). These painters were no longer directly inspired by nature. As a result, the works of these academic landscape painters was largely to imitate the old masters’ works from the Five Dynasties and early Northern Song, such as Li Cheng (Chen 2001; Da 1979). Thus, art critics of the time considered the landscape works produced in mid and late Northern Song era to be conservative, restoring ancient technique and variation (Chen 2001).

The two Li’s Blue and green landscape painting technique was popular and the ancient Five Colours technique also employed in some painters’ works (Da 1979). Art critics at the time also criticised the rain drop technique created by the Northern Song landscape painter Mi Fu (1051CE – 1107 CE) as departure from Chinese landscape painting development (Chen 2001). Since ancient times, line marks are used as the main image making manner in Chinese painting. The use of line can tracked back to the cliff paintings
and the images on the Neolithic artefacts, and was maintain in the development of Chinese painting over few millennia since the cliff painting. Mi’s rain drop technique would, however, have a large influence in the later Chinese landscape painters such as Ming Dynasty landscape painters. Still it is considered a style rather than a landscape school of thought (Chen 2001). Paintings such as Xue jiang gui dao tu (Plate 47), Zhao Ji (1082 CE – 11350); Jiang shan qiu se tu (Plate 48), anonymous; A Thousand li rivers and mountains (Plate 49), Wang Ximeng (1096 CE – 1119 CE); and light snow over a fishing village (Plate 50), Wang Shen (ca 1048 CE – ca 1103 CE) are some examples of mid and late Northern Song era landscape paintings.

Painting and Craft Related to Landscape and Nature Images

The economic growth and development of technologies such as printing and craft during the Northern Song era provided the Song people more opportunity to engage in the active of art, craft and literature. Advance paper making provided the Chinese people with a more affordable painting and printing material, so that painting became everyday activity to many Song people in both court and society. The well-developed woodblock printing technology at the time also provided the Song people more opportunity to associate with literature and visual images. In Song, paintings and craft works became everyday items to the Song people not only for the upper echelons of society. To study the Five Classics also became possible to many ordinary people and no longer only for the aristocrats and the privileged. Paintings related to the natural world, including landscape painting, birds, insects and flowers were also well-developed in Northern Song era, and became popular subject matters for both scholar-painters and professional-painters (Bi 2002; Da 1979; Zhang 2002).
The advanced craft workmanship at the time also played a part as images of the natural world became commonly found on daily items such as hand fans, household utensils and furniture as a decoration. It is interesting to note, poems and images of landscape and other images of the natural world were commonly decorated on pingfeng during the Song era (Barnhart 1997). Pingfeng is a piece of furniture, and the function of this furniture is used to divide a big area into small compartments, the furniture can be used in both indoor and outdoor environments. The furniture is still commonly used in this present time, and landscape images are still popular subject matter depicted on the furniture. In the imperial China, pingfeng were largely made of silk and paper on a wooden frame. The original of the furniture can be tracked back a few dynasties from the Song Dynasty, images of pingfeng were found in before Sui Dynasty, and (Plate 58) is a Tang pingfeng decorated with a landscape image. One can imagine the furniture, pingfeng, which decorated with landscape images is like a moveable landscape wall-painting. The images on the furniture can created a sense of being in nature to enrich the atmosphere in the room at the same time. The poems on the furniture can also inspirit aesthetic and literary conceptions for the viewers.

Furthermore, the development of Chinese gardens was also at its peak and Chinese gardens were popular during the Song Dynasty (Morris 1983; Sullivan 1979, 1980). Countless gardens were built in many Song cities and the two capitals, Bianjing and HangZhou. Since the ancient dynasties era, Chinese gardens have played a significant role in Chinese culture and scholars’ creativity (Bi 2002; Chen 2001; Da 1979; Zhang 2002). Countless of poems and works of literature related to Chinese gardens were created and were the inspiration of a large number of Chinese landscape paintings (Da 1997). To the Chinese, the garden is understood as a microcosm of a natural world (Sullivan, 1979). Many features found in a Chinese garden for example rocks, water and bonsai are symbolized the
mountains, rivers and trees in nature (Morris 1983). Animals, fish and birds also inhabited in some gardens. These elements are also the essential elements in Chinese landscape painting. Since gardens were built in Zhou Dynasty, many nature and ancestor worshipping and ceremonial services were carried out in the court and residence gardens, and scholars often wandered alone in garden to meditate and be inspirit (Bi 2002; Da 1997; Zhang 2002).

Undoubtedly, the Song court interest in the development of art and literature has stimulated the production of art and literature in the Song era. After the Imperial Painting Academy, Huayuan Xuesheng, was established in the early eleventh century, the first catalogue of the imperial collection of art and antiquities also compiled by the early twelfth century. Over six thousands paintings alone were registered in the publication, these paintings included the works of the past masters and Song works (Chen 2001). Along with the stable Chinese economy in the early and mid-Northern Song and the advanced technologies in craft, paper and printing making art and craft were more accessible to the Northern Song people becoming a part of their daily life. However, just as art and literature bloomed throughout the Northern Song era, but Chinese economy and political affairs began to decline. By the time of 1127 CE it was the end of the Northern Song era, political regime began known as the Southern Song, 1127 CE – 1279 CE.

The Development of Chinese Landscape Painting in the Southern Song Dynasty
(1127 CE – 1279 CE)

Throughout the history of Song, the Song court was more interested in art and literature than military development (Chen 2001). Like many of the Song emperors, Hui Zong was also a scholar and artist, but he lacked military knowledge and leadership skills.
During his time on the throne (1100 CE – 1125 CE) the Northern Song court was corrupt and was in chaos, providing an opportunity for the Tartar Jin armies to attack China. After a few years of war with the Tartar Jin, in 1127 CE the Song armies lost the northern region. Hui Zong and his family fled the capture and relocated the Song court to the southern region to establish a new regime in Hang Zhou. This new regime is, known as Southern Song (1127 CE – 1279 CE). Hui Zong’s eldest son took the throne not long after the establishment of the Southern Song Dynasty, but it was Huizong’s sixth son, Gao Zong, who became the most significant ruler of this era. Emperor Gao Zong was well equipped with military knowledge and a capable leader, as well as being a scholar and artist himself. In his time, both the Chinese economy and foreign affairs re-covered, and the development of art and literature began again.

After twenty years of hiatus in landscape painting development in China, a new style of Chinese landscape painting was established by a painter named Li Tang, (ca 1066 CE – 1150 CE). Li’s landscape paintings suggest a sense of free, easy and simplicity, but his brush marks are strong and intense creating an energetic and powerful energy (Bi 2002; Chen 2001; Da 1979; Zhang 2002). Li’s landscape paintings brought a new idea in the Song landscape painting’s development and his paintings became the ideal style of the Southern Song (Bi 2002, Chen 2001; Da 1979; Zhang 2002). *Mo he song feng*, also known as *Wind through the pine valleys* (Plate 51) and *River temple in the long summer* (Plate 51A) paintings are two examples of Li’s landscape paintings. Li’s (coloured and monochrome) ink wash paintings have suggested a breakthrough from these mid and late Northern Song landscape paintings. Thus, Li’s landscape works represent a new and fresh beginning for the landscape painting in the Southern Song. Many of the landscape painters at the time became the followers of Li. Li influence also suggested in the landscape paintings of the four Southern landscape masters.
these masters included Xia Zhao (active ca 1130 CE – 1160 CE), Liu Sonhnsin (ca 1150 CE – after 1225 CE), Xia Gui (active early 13th century) and Ma Yuan (active before 1189 CE – after 1225 CE). Plate 52 to 57 are some of the works of these masters. Shan yau lau guan tu (Plate 52), Xia Zhao, Si jing shan shui (Plate 53), Liu Sonhnsin, Pure and remote views of stream and mountains (Plate 54), section of a hand scroll, Xia Gui, Twelve landscape views (Plate 55), Xia Gui and Ta ge tu (Plate 56), and Banquet by lantern light (Plate 57), Ma Yuan.

Li’s landscape works became the ideal Southern Song landscape painting. Li’s new technique and style were well developed were for two reasons. First, the landscape paintings produced in the Southern Song era were mainly from the painters in the Imperial Painting Academy. At the time a large number of Southern Song painters in the academy were employed by the court, thus the court has an influence on these Southern Song painters’ creativity. Li’s landscape paintings were always favoured by Gao Zong, becoming a popular style among academic painters (Chen 2001). Second, the political environment in the Southern Song also influenced the production of art and literature at the time. During the Southern Song era, the Song court was exercising a political system to unify the whole county, and this concept also applied in art and literature activities at the time (Chen 2001).

In addition, the influenced Li’s landscape paintings on the Southern Song painters were also because of the subjective factor (Chen 2001). As mentioned early, Li’s brush marks are strong and intense which means a strong physical strength is need to create the brush marks. To the Southern painters, the action of Li’s style of brush marks reflected their sadness, and resentment of the barbaric Tartar rulers took control of the northern region, and
continuously attacked by other nations at the time, since the late Northern Song era (Chen 2001). Along with a large number of territories, property and people were lost in the hands of these foreign rulers in the Southern Song era, but many of the Song emperors were terrified of by these nations and befriended with the rulers. Many Southern Song painters through their landscape works to express their disconcerted view of the political environment they were engaged in. Li’s landscape style and techniques have become one of channel to these depressed scholar-painters to relieve their strong patriotic spirit (Chen 2001). Thus, the Song landscape painters largely used an axe-cut brushstroke technique which created strong and intense brush marks. The mountains were largely depicted with sharp-edged cliffs and rocks, and trees were suggested twisting and angled gesture, and the paintings are hardly decorated (Barnhart 1997; Chen 2001). However, the Song economy and foreign affairs continue go into a decline, Chinese economy was bankrupt and the Song court lost the battle with the Mongolia, final the Song court collapsed in the year of 1271 CE. The Mongol nationality took over the whole China and established the Yuan Dynasty, and the Chinese were under the control of the foreign rulers for the next century, 1271 CE – 1368 CE.
Conclusion

This dissertation has argued for the continuity of nature in representations by Chinese artists, from pre-agricultural times to the Imperial dynasties of the twelfth century. It traces very early examples of images of nature in Chinese Neolithic societies. It also notes to significance of nature in the Chinese philosophies of Confucianism Daoism and Buddhism.

In the latter chapters this dissertation traces the persistence of nature in the growth of Chinese civilisation. It describes the way the artist-scholars moved from the court to life outside the courts in nature, and the significance of nature to artist-scholars. This describes a continuity with Neolithic times and testifies to Chinese interest in nature through the millennia.

The concept of Chinese landscape painting, Shan Shui Hua, means painting of mountains and water, and is used to describe the beauty of nature. In this dissertation the term landscape is used not only to include mountains and water, but the history of representing nature. While the term landscape is a Western concept, and is different from the Chinese way of thinking about nature. However, there are many perceptions and themes are relatively similar between Western and Chinese paintings of nature, leading to a comparison. The similarities include: the use of the four seasons as motif; panoramic views of cities or regions; the depiction of detail of the geological features of landscape; and the detail of people’s daily life. In addition, multi-perspective technique also found in some earlier Western (landscape) paintings. Furthermore, many landscape paintings in both regions also aim to evince feelings of tranquillity and liberty in nature, and a harmonious atmosphere between human and nature or depict more sublime emotions where human figures were portrayed as powerless and submissive to nature. This similar features between the Western and Chinese traditional
landscape paintings suggest that humans have a certain way understanding and enumerating landscape.

As Denis Dutton aptly points out, ‘…we forget how close we remain to the prehistoric women and men who first found beauty in the world. Their blood runs in our veins. Our art instinct is theirs.’ (Dutton 2009, p. 243) Human representations of nature appear not only in post-farming societies but are shared among the pre-historical societies around the globe. Images of the moon, the sun, animals and humans, mountains and rivers are found the pre-agricultural era. This suggests that depicting nature is rooted in human intellectual faculties since the early stages of human history.
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### Appendix 1

**A Brief Chinese Chronology**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dynasty</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xian</td>
<td>Shi Dynasty</td>
<td>约前 21 世纪—约前 10 世纪</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eastern Zhou Dynasty</td>
<td>约前 11 世纪—前 771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spring and Autumn</td>
<td>前 770—前 476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Period</td>
<td>前 475—前 221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qin Dynasty</td>
<td>前 221—前 207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Han Dynasty</td>
<td>前 206—公元 256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eastern Han</td>
<td>25—220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wei</td>
<td>220—265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shu</td>
<td>221—263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wu</td>
<td>222—280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three Kingdoms</td>
<td>265—316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eastern Jin Dynasty</td>
<td>317—420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Song Dynasty</td>
<td>960—1127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jin Dynasty</td>
<td>1115—1234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Northern Song Dynasty</td>
<td>907—936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Later Tang</td>
<td>936—946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Later Jin</td>
<td>947—900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Later Han</td>
<td>951—960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Northern Song Dynasty</td>
<td>1271—1280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republic of China</td>
<td>1912—1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
<td>1949 成立</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plate 1

Cleaver: three views of a flint cleaver, South Africa
From [http://www.wikipedia.org]

Hand axe, WinchesterFrom
[http://www.wikipedia.org]
Plate 2

"Fighting rhinoceroses and four horse heads, charcoal drawing on rock",
Chauvet Cave, 35,000 – 22,000 BCE

From [Clottes, J (ed.) 2003]
Plate 4

Landscape with volcanic eruption T. Cai and Bovik, Oil on BDCE.

From: "Aesthetic, 80.2 & 1st, 129" (1994)
"Deer hunt", 575 BC, Chalil Hoog.
From [Emery 2002: 131 & Kellner 1986: 190]
"The Procession Titian",
1564 BCE, Rome.
From Flavia 26, 1858.
1596
Plate 7

"Spring Fresco", 1600 B.C.E., Thera.
From [Messer, 86 & Stanes, F3 1990]
Plate 9

Image of bull on bronze vessel, Shang Dynasty

Detail of the image, the bull eyes
Plate 12

Wall painting E., Eastern Han, China
From [Zhang, D, 2002]
Wall painting III - Eastern Han

Feitian (Zhang, D. 2002)
Image of Buddha 1, 2nd century, India
From [Li, M., Lin, BY & Yun, CY, 1988]
Image of Buddha, 2nd century, India.
From [H. M., 1st; B.Y. & Yen, CY, ROCHE]
Plate 16.

Journey in springtime, Zhao Ziqin.
From [Zhang, D., 2002]
Plate 17

Emperor Minghuang's Journey into Shu, attributed to Li Shizhen, Song Dynasty

Penc (No. 11 1977)
Plate 17A

Detail of King's journey into Chin
From [Sollivari M 1979]
Plate 18

Image of Buddha, early Tang Dynasty, Dunhuang
From [Chao, ZK 2003]
Image of bodhisattva, early Tang Dynasty, Dunhuang.
From [Chao, ZC 2005].
Plate 20

Detail of Xuanzang's journey to India in search of Buddhist scriptures, cave 103, Longmen Grottoes (8th century).

Plate 20B

*Hang lo shi* (fig. 11) Tang, Dunhuang
From [Zhang, H., 2010]
Plate 28C

Detail of conflict between the Chinese and foreign troops during the Tang Dynasty, c. 712.
Buddha and rockier landscape, cave 257, 304 CE
-532 CE in the Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties
From [Sibata, Atsuko] 1964
Plate 21A

Story of Mahasukha, latika, cave 428, c. 120
CE. - 530 in the Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties

Fuzhou, AD 603.11964

Detail of the story
Plate 21B

Detail of the story of
Mahacana Jatakas, c. 420 CE –
500 CE in the Three Kingdoms and
Six Dynasties
From [Aker, A.Ø. (ed.) 1964]
Plate 21c

Landscape of mountains, trees, a boat on pond, and hoisting floor, cave 285, (378 CE - 395 CE) in Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties

From: Silva, AD 1987, Monks sit in meditation inside this cave.
Plate 22

Images of clouds, late Zhou
From: [Sullivan, M., 1983]
Plate 24

An image of a kneeling goddess.

Fifteen mounts, Western Han.

From [Sollner, M 1961].
Plate 25

"Fishing at the liang pool" Eastern Han
From [Shang, K. 2002]

"The Salt field" Eastern Han
From [Shang, K. 2002]
Plate 27

Landscape from an aerial perspective II, Han Dynasty
from [Wu, H. 1977]
Plate 19

The summer garden of the bamboo grove, wall-brick, c. 380 CE–420 CE

From [Chen, C. 1937]
Plate 30

A lady playing polo,
Tang Dynasty
From: [E6545, p. 2010]
Four-string pipa, early Tang
From [Sheng, p. 200]
Plate 33

Flour ship powered by a waterwheel, anonymous, Song Dynasty

From Shen, F.H. 2009
Plate 36 A

Height distance technique, gao yuan fa

Depth distance technique, shen yuan fa

Untitled, anonymous

Ground distance technique, ping yuan fa

Plate 39

Auxiliary temple and tributary rockery, Li Cheng
From [Chen, ZN 2003]
Plate 40

Thick forest and distant peak, Li Chang
From (Chen, L. & Zhang, W. 2000)
Plate 40 A

Miss liuyuan xi at Li Cheng
From [Chen, Li & Zhang, 1985: 2003]
Plate 41

Transience Amid Mountains and Streams,
From [NiByun, M 1909]
Plate 42

Along the river brink.
Long Yuans
From [Chen, ZK 2004]
Plate 42

Long Dajian and Su Dongpo
From [Chen, ZH 2014]
Plate 44

Xiao Xiang Tu, Dong Yuan
From [Sullivan, 1979]
Plate 45

Plaque en marbre blanc, Jirin
Familiar (Harut, 8:1997)
Plate 46

Buddhist retreat by stream and mountain. Jinmi
Tsam (Barakat, 8:1997)
Plate 47

Xue jiang gui dao m. Zhao H.
From [Chen, ZX. 2001]

196
Plate 48

Hanging scroll in ink, hanging scroll
From: Chen, L.S. & Zhang, W.S. 2000
Plate 59

Light Snow over Feixing Village. Wang Shen
From [Eshleman, R 1997]
Plate 51

Wind through the pine

Cao, J. Tang

From [Cao 2001]
Plate 51A

River Temple in the Long Summer, Li Tang
From: [Shenkart, R 1987]
Plate 54

Pure and remote views of streams and mountains. Xia Cei
From [Chen, ZH. 2001]
Plate 55

Twelve landscape views, Xi Gui
Tuan [Shanlun, P. 1997]
Plate 57

Banquet by Moonlight, Via Yuen
From [Bartholomew, R 1957]
Plate 58

Landscape image on a silk flag. Tang Dynasty

Peraui (84. W 2002)
Plate 50

Landscape with a storm, Prinsep
Franz Lugner ca. 1800
Plate 60

Temple of Athena Parthenos, Acropolis
From Turner, RG & Reissner F5 1596
Plate 61

Jade figure, Shang Dynasty
Yong [Zhang, C 2002]
Plate 62

Double-edged sword, Eastern Zhou
From [Ehre, P.2019]
Plate 63

A Woman, a phoenix, and a dragon. 
Tang Dynasty
From [Zhang, D 200]

A Centaur riding on a dragon. 
Tang Dynasty
From [Zhang, D 200]
Plate 64

Ceramic bone I, Xia Dynasty
Provenance: [Zhang 2002]
Plate 85

Buddhist art 1, 2nd century, Pakistan
From [Li, M., Lin, BY & Yen. CV ROC III]
Buddhist art II, fourth Century, Afghanistan
From [Li, M, Lin, B.Y & Ves, CV ROC 31]
Plate 68

Buddhist art, 3rd Century, Pakistan
From [Li, M., Lim, B.Y. & Yen, C.Y. ROCHE]
Plate 69

Buddhist reliquary container, 2nd century, Afghanistan
From [Li, M., Liu, BY. & Yan, CY ROC 45]
Plate 71

Buddha image, Fifth century, 1300s
From Li, M. Lin, BV & Yan, CV ROC '81
Plate 72

Buddha image, 5th century, India
From [L. M. I. R. B. V. & Y.].
Landscape with ruins to Apollo.
Chask Lozyn
From [Gerruffa, 311 1958]
Plate 75

The garden of Sherborne, Wilts
From [Kostoboh, EI 1994]
Plate 77

Plate with human faces;
Jongor Province,
Protohistoric period
From [Shanhur, A 1957]

227
Plate 78

The god of the sun and a sun priest, painted in petroglyphs in Congoua,
Mani province, Nebillibe era
From [Banakur, 1997]

Drawing, hunting, and war painted in petroglyphs in Congoua,
Mani province, Nebillibe era
From [Banakur, 1997]
Plate 79

Bull Capital, Susa
From: [names, RG & Keener, FN 1990]
Plate 80

Detail of Nilometer in the
Columns Hall, Rome

From: [Janot, RG &
Kleiner, FS 1996]
Plate 81

Greek storge: Room
Floor [Fig. 81:4]
Kleiner, IG 1946
Plate 92

Passigni Celli, detail from Allegory of Good Government in the city, Andrea del Sarto, 1516-1519, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy.

Passigni Country, detail from Allegory of Good Government in the countryside, Andrea del Sarto, 1516-1519, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy.
Plate 83

Detail of Along the river during the Qingming festival,
Zhang Zickian, Song Dynasty
From [Zhang, D 2002]