

MID-FOURTEENTH CENTURY PAINTING IN SUCHOU: SOME LESSER MASTERS *

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Since the sixteenth century, historians of Chinese painting have viewed the later decades of the Yüan dynasty (1279-1368) as a period dominated by the Four Great Masters: Huang Kung-wang, Wu Chen, Ni Tsan and Wang Meng. Modern art-historical studies published in the West have maintained, and even strengthened, this critical concept by assuming a more-or-less independent development of the four distinctly individual styles of the Great Masters in the midst of a cluster of imitative and derivative styles of the "Lesser Masters" — a group whose membership varies but generally includes among others Chao Yüan, Ch'en Ju-yen, and Hsü Pen.¹ A number of recent publications have treated the period in terms of a broader period style or series of styles, often taking into account social and geographical considerations as well,² but the nature of the artistic contribution of the Lesser Masters remains obscure. Too often they are portrayed one-dimensionally, as pale reflections of their bright and talented contemporaries who were immortalized in the enduring notion of the Four Great Masters of the Yüan dynasty.³ An objective look at a selection of paintings by the Lesser Masters of Suchou active under the regime of Chang Shih-ch'eng (1356-1367) and in the decade immediately following the establishment of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) forces a re-evaluation of these long neglected painters.

Two of the Great Masters, Huang Kung-wang and Wu Chen, died in 1354 — two years before Chang Shih-ch'eng took over the city of Suchou. The other two, Ni Tsan and Wang Meng, were active in and around Suchou well into the 1370's. Located in the

*This article is a revision of a paper read at the October 1978 meeting of the Western Conference of the Association for Asian Studies held at the University of Arizona, Tucson. The material presented here is drawn from research for my dissertation now in progress under the supervision of Prof. Chu-tsing Li, for whose continuing guidance and support I am grateful.



1 Chao Yüan, *Grass Pavilion at Ho-hsi*.
Shanghai Museum.



2 Ch'en Ju-yen, *Song of the Wanderer*. Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taiwan, Republic of China.

middle of the Yangtze delta and long known for its wealth and scholarship and its literary and artistic traditions, Suchou had become by late Yüan the leading cultural center in China.⁴ Economic reasons account in large part for this ascendancy — Suchou had become a wealthy commercial center for the agricultural products of the rich delta land — but political developments too were a major factor. By the mid-fourteenth century, the Mongol government had begun to disintegrate in the hands of leaders far less competent than Kubilai Khan, the founder of Mongol rule in China during the thirteenth century. Rebellions had sprung up in the south and the east. Among the more successful rebel leaders was Chang Shih-ch'eng, a former salt smuggler, who gained control of the city of Suchou and, in 1356, made it his capital. Well-disposed toward the city's intellectuals, Chang invited many scholar-painters to serve in his government. When in 1367 he was forced to surrender to Chu Yüan-chang, the barely literate monk who would found the Ming dynasty in 1368, Suchou lost its favored status. Suspicious of the wealthy citizenry of Suchou, Chu seized every opportunity to persecute its intellectuals. Of the many Suchou scholars who dutifully accepted official positions under the new Ming government, nearly all came eventually to tragic ends at the hands of the new Emperor.

From this politically turbulent period, four talented painters — Huang, Wu, Ni and Wang — were singled out by later critics as the Four Great Masters of the Yüan.⁵ The concept of the Four Masters was elaborated gradually during the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and reflects the tendency in traditional Chinese art-historical criticism to codify historical phenomena in terms of simple numerical patterns. But the concept is by no means universal in Ming criticism. In a well-known poem on the history of painting, Tu Ch'ung (1396-1474), an older contemporary and friend of Shen Chou, clearly ranks Chao Yüan as the equal of Wang Meng.⁶ Ho Liang-chün (1506-73), in his *Ssu-yu-chai hua lun*, used the term "Four Great Masters" in what is now standard usage. In that passage, however, a second list follows his enumeration of the Four Great Masters; here Ch'en Ju-yen, Chao Yüan, Ma Wan, Lu Kuang and Hsü Pen are described as painters whose expression is "also excellent."⁷ As late as the 1570's, Wang Shih-chen felt free to substitute Chao Meng-fu for Ni Tsan in his designation of "Four Great Masters of the Yüan." Ni he put into another category — the *i* or "untrammelled" class — along with Kao K'o-kung and Fang Ts'ung-i.⁸ In the writings of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555-1636), this casual grouping of four outstanding painters assumed a more formal quality, and the notion of "Four Great Masters of the Yüan" became a key element in his theory of the Northern and Southern schools of painting.⁹ Ku Fu, writing half a century after Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, seems nonetheless free of Tung's prejudices. Ku's *P'ing-sheng chuang kuan* (preface dated 1692) draws no such clear distinctions between these four painters and their contemporaries. The Lesser Masters Fang Ts'ung-i, Ch'en Ju-yen and Ma Wan, barely mentioned by Tung, here receive elaborate praise alongside their more famous colleagues.¹⁰

Clearly the Four Masters were the great painters of their day. Yet the emphasis on their accomplishments has unduly obscured the contributions of the many other artists of Suchou in the late Yüan whose stylistic experiments paralleled those of the better-known painters. The reputations of these Lesser Masters, nearly all of whom died during the reign of Chu Yüan-chang, declined considerably in the first century of the Ming dynasty and did not fully revive after Suchou regained its former status at the end of the fifteenth century. The Wu School, which arose in this newly flourishing Suchou, has been considered a re-establishment of the Yüan tradition of literati painting; indeed, the leading painters of the Wu School, Shen Chou and Wen Cheng-ming, have been seen as the direct stylistic heirs of the Four Great Masters. The nature of this inheritance, however, and the role played by the Lesser Masters in the transmission of the Yüan tradition awaits explanation.

Contemporary records of Suchou painters in the 1350's are filled with accounts of the activities of the Lesser Masters, many of whom frequented the villa of the



3 Ch'en Ju-yen, *Woodcutter of Mount Lo-fou*. Mr. and Mrs. A. Dean Perry Collection.



4 Hsü Pen, *Streams and Mountains*.
Mr. and Mrs. A. Dean Perry Collection.



5 Chao Yüan, *Farewell by a Stream on a Clear Day*. Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, by exchange, 1973.

wealthy gentleman-scholar Ku Ying (properly Ku A-ying or Ku Te-hui). Ku's literary gatherings, poetry contests, and outings to scenic spots around Suchou included some participants known specifically for their painting rather than for their poetry or calligraphy. Such less-known painters as Chao Yüan and Ch'en Ju-yen were often included. In 1351, for example, the young painter Ch'en Ju-yen — barely twenty-years-old at the time — accompanied Ku and two poets to Tiger Hill. Ch'en painted a picture for each of the poems composed and the poems were then inscribed on the paintings.¹¹

These painters were often called upon to make pictorial records of the country estates of local gentlemen-scholars. Chao Yüan's hanging scroll, *Grass Pavilion at Ho-hsi* (fig. 1),¹² depicts Ku's retreat and bears Ku's inscription of 1363. Ch'en Ju-yen too received such commissions. An inscription of 1359 by Ni Tsan on Ch'en's *Painting of Ching-hsi*, depicting a famous spot near Suchou, records that Ch'en had been specifically engaged to paint the family estate of Wang Yun-t'ung.¹³ The delight of recognizing familiar scenes which lies behind so many of these paintings¹⁴ belies the commonly accepted platitudes about the Yüan scholar-painter's lack of concern for subject matter in general and for nature as a specific source of inspiration. Sketchy and suggestive as they may be, these paintings reflect an interest in realistic subjects too often overlooked in current scholarship.¹⁵ Perhaps the most famous example of this genre is the painting of *The Lion Grove* (Shih-tzu-lin) in Suchou. Ni Tsan's inscription of 1373 implies he had discussed the conception of the work with Chao Yüan, but the passage does not clearly indicate which of the two artists had executed the painting. Wu Ch'i-chen, who saw the scroll in 1652, listed it as a cooperative work but argued that the painting itself was by Chao Yüan alone.¹⁶ Ku Fu, writing in the late seventeenth century, recorded the work as a painting by Chao Yüan with an inscription by Ni Tsan.¹⁷ Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, however, praised both the inscription and the painting as evidence of Ni's great talent and creativity.¹⁸ In the 1950's, Siren, relying heavily on Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, not only gave the painting to Ni Tsan but considered it a masterpiece of his later years.¹⁹ Recent publications²⁰ have revived the link to Chao Yüan, treating the work as a collaborative effort, but this has had the curious effect of diminishing the importance of the painting rather than increasing the status of the artist Chao Yüan. The very confusion over the authorship of the scroll suggests a need to re-examine the styles and inter-relationships of late Yüan painters.

Examples of collaboration between the Great Masters Ni Tsan or Wang Meng and various Lesser Masters are plentiful. One such effort resulted in *The Song of the Wanderer* (dated 1365) in the National Palace Museum (fig. 2). Here Ni Tsan inscribed a poem by Meng Chiao (751-814), and credited Ch'en Ju-yen with the painting, himself with the calligraphy. Mistakenly identified as a dull and didactic Confucian parable,²¹ the theme in fact is Meng Chiao's mournful ode to motherly love:

Thread in the hands of a doting mother:
Clothes on the body of a journeying son.
Upon his leaving, she adds one stitch after another,
Lest haply he may not return so soon.
Ah! How could the heart of an inch-long grass
Requite a whole Spring's infinite love and grace?²²

In the troubled times of the 1360's, when Chang Shih-ch'eng's regime had become increasingly corrupt, such a note of regret may have carried an allusion to the self-doubt of scholars like Ch'en who had agreed to serve the rebel government.

In spite of its turmoil and uncertainty, the mid-1360's saw the development of a new compositional formula in the work of Suchou painters. Professors Chu-ting Li and James Cahill independently have suggested that the landscapes by Wang Meng which can be dated within this decade are characterized by high mountains built up in densely packed masses — echoing the monumental mountain compositions of Northern Sung,

but described through repetition of long, dry texture strokes.²³ The interior drawing often follows the contours of forms; monotony is relieved by dark wet dots of vegetation. These authors have also cited related paintings by minor masters including Fang Ts'ung-i's *Divine Mountains and Luminous Woods* (1365, National Palace Museum, Taipei);²⁴ Ch'en Ju-yen's *Woodcutter of Mount Lo-fou* (1366, Perry Collection, Cleveland; fig. 3); Hsü Pen's *Streams and Mountains* (1372, Perry Collection; fig. 4); and Chao Yüan's *Farewell by a Stream on a Clear Day* (not dated, Metropolitan Museum, New York; fig. 5). Forming a group which also includes *Dwelling in the Ch'ing-pien Mountains* (1366, Shanghai Museum)²⁵ — Wang Meng's acclaimed masterpiece in this genre — these paintings show a striking homogeneity of composition but an equally striking diversity of brushwork and expressive effect.

After the founding of the Ming dynasty in 1368, painting in the Suchou circle, though less fully documented, may be even richer in complex artistic inter-relationships. During these years Ni Tsan reached his mature style in such works as the *Jung-hsi Studio* of 1372 (National Palace Museum, Taipei)²⁶ A painting now in Chicago called *The Hermitage* (fig. 6), signed by Ch'en Ju-yen and inscribed by Ni Tsan in 1371, though not as yet firmly authenticated, displays a dry, sparse brushwork which suggests that the Lesser Masters shared in the creation of the manner which later became associated exclusively with Ni Tsan. That Ni did not in fact dominate or lead the Suchou painters during this period has been remarked upon in recent publications;²⁷ and yet no serious attempt has been made to interpret Ni's work in light of that of his less famous friends.

Though the biographies of Ni Tsan and Wang Meng are rather well-known, our understanding of their work has been clouded by the vast number of paintings now attributed to them. Since their fame has remained unbroken since the fifteenth century, innumerable copies — ranging from exacting reproductions to free interpretations — have been made of their works. Such copies have swelled the number of attributions to unwieldy proportions. In this regard, the more easily authenticated works by the Lesser Masters can assist in the process of reconstructing the corpus of paintings of these two men.

The study of Wang Meng's late work is made even more difficult by the fact that none of the present attributions is dated between 1370 and 1383. *Forest Dwelling at Chü-ch'ü*,²⁸ often proposed as a late work, is a colored landscape in an archaistic manner. Wang's dynamic texture strokes which derive from the hemp-fiber manner of Tung Yüan and Chü-jan are not obscured by the autumn colors of the leaves, but the stylized pattern of the water, the two-dimensional arrangement of the trees and the screen of rocks stretching into the corners of the composition and allowing only isolated pockets of space suggest archaizing tendencies as strong as those of the so-called "blue-and-green" manner. Some have doubted the authenticity of the painting because of its strong color and unusual composition, but comparison with a late work by Ch'en Ju-yen (d. 1371), *Land of the Immortals* (fig. 7), provides evidence for accepting it. A landscape in the blue-and-green mode, this short handscroll in the Perry Collection is well-documented by early catalogue descriptions. In depicting the Taoist paradise as a birthday gift for his friend P'an Yüan-ming (son-in-law of Chang Shih-ch'eng), Ch'en chose to use an archaistic composition based ultimately on landscapes of the Six Dynasties and T'ang periods. As in the Chü-ch'ü scroll, the bright color is combined with soft brushstrokes which model the mountains in the Tung-Chü manner; here, however, the broad washes of flat color soften the effect of the brushwork. The most compelling similarity between the two paintings lies in the structure of the mountains which form an impenetrable mass — a mass fully contained in Ch'en's composition but boldly extending beyond the frame of Wang's. The inscription by Ni Tsan, dated 1371, not only identifies the immediate source — the paintings of Chao Meng-fu — for this colored manner, but also confirms that the colored landscape was a genre acceptable to the tastes of the fourteenth century Suchou literati.²⁹



惟允秀
坦然友舊作

在蘭幽人樂寺樂山白石
夜海之佳林無風萬籟靜
長蒲一琴山月寒

坦然友舊作
惟允秀
畫

從說登雲閣門人琴
吹如風林
及北流米出城河兩
溪商相富清
樹張如十上
說言此中
莫不不景
悅從總
五
七
月

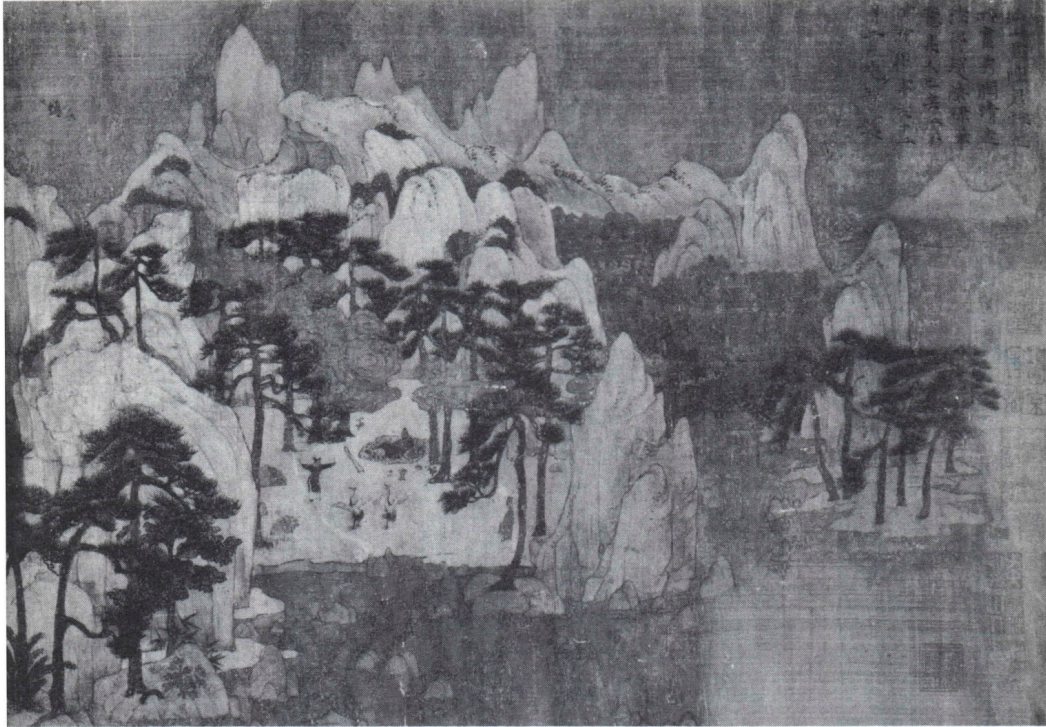
6 Ch'en Ju-yen, *Hermitage*. Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.

7 Ch'en Ju-yen, *Land of Immortals*. Mr. and Mrs. A. Dean Perry Collection.



Wang Meng and Ch'en Ju-yen may well have exchanged ideas during the first four years of the Ming. Both accepted official positions under the first Ming emperor, and both were sent to Shantung to serve in the provincial administration. Literary records indicate that the two visited several times and once even collaborated in finishing one of Wang Meng's colored landscapes.³⁰ It appears that Wang Meng and Ch'en Ju-yen had become interested in the colored landscape in the years following Chu Yüan-chang's conquest of the Suchou area in 1367. The blue-and-green manner had enjoyed great popularity among the frustrated literati painters at the beginning of the Yüan. Its reappearance in the closing years of the dynasty might once again be related to the disappointment and frustration of the scholar-painters of the South. Although they may have looked forward to the return of government to Chinese hands, under the tyrannical reign of Chu Yüan-chang they had to fear for their very lives.

Chu's prejudice against the Suchou literati who had supported Chang Shih-ch'eng led to reprisals which virtually destroyed the Suchou school. Chao Yüan and Ch'en Ju-yen were executed in the 1370's; Wang Meng and Hsü Pen died in prison in the 1380's.³¹ The biographies of the Lesser Masters are not well recorded, but clearly these were men younger than the Great Masters by as much as a generation. Ch'en and Hsü were too young to be recorded in Hsia Wen-yen's treatise of 1365, the *T'u-hui pao chien*. Their youth may account for their frequent inclusion in lists of Ming painters, despite the fact that they lived only a few years into the Ming. Indeed a double standard seems to have been at work: Wang Meng who lived until 1385, fully seventeen years into Ming, is invariably treated as a Yüan painter while Ch'en Ju-yen, who died within four years after the Ming conquest is listed in several sources as a Ming painter.³² These inconsis-



tencies have further contributed to the obscurity of the Lesser Masters.

In spite of their short lives — Ch'en was only forty when he died, Hsü only forty-five — the Lesser Masters undoubtedly left behind a number of works which later influenced the course of painting in Suchou.³³ Shen Chou's early work, often termed eclectic, might be better understood as the result of a broad knowledge of late Yüan paintings by major and minor artists. His famous *Lofty Mount Lu* of 1467 (National Palace Museum, Taipei) was painted for Ch'en K'uan, the grandson of Ch'en Ju-yen, as a birthday gift. Shen pictures Mt. Lu, the ancestral home of the Ch'en family, in much the same spirit as Ch'en Ju-yen had painted Ching-hsi. Though the resemblance to Wang Meng's work is clear, there are striking similarities of structure and composition to Ch'en Ju-yen's *Woodcutter of Mount Lo-fou*.

The "Four Masters" concept was most authoritatively stated during the seventeenth century by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang and other members of his circle, for whom it served in the art-historical theory which established the Northern or Professional School and the Southern or Scholarly School of painting. Huang, Wu, Ni and Wang became honored patriarchs in the lineage of the favored Southern School. It is widely recognized that Tung's preference for the paintings of the Southern School literati has persisted in the subtle prejudices which have informed modern histories of painting.³⁴ In the case of late Yüan painting, the arbitrary concept of Four Great Masters similarly continues to filter our perception of the artistic events. As a result, the Lesser Masters too often are looked upon as the earliest participants in a long tradition of copying the Four Great Masters. This approach has severely constrained our understanding of the Great Masters themselves as well as their less famous contemporaries.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹See, for example, James Cahill, *Hills Beyond a River*, (New York and Tokyo, 1976).
- ²See Chu-tsing Li, "The Development of Painting in Soochow during the Yüan Dynasty," *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Chinese Painting*, (Taipei, 1972); and "Stages of Development in Yüan Dynasty Landscape Painting," *National Palace Museum Bulletin*, IV/2, 1969, pp. 1-10 and IV/3, 1969, pp. 1-12.
- ³Note for example Professor Cahill's comment: "The works of the lesser masters who were active in the late Yüan offer, on the whole, slightly diluted versions of the styles of the great masters," Cahill, *Hills*, p. 28.
- ⁴For an excellent study of the intellectual climate of Suchou in the late Yüan, see Frederick Mote, *The Poet Kao Ch'i (1336-1374)*, (Princeton, 1962).
- ⁵In the wake of several publications on the early Yüan painters Chao Meng-fu and Ch'ien Hsüan, this appellation has been modified to the "Four Great Masters of the Late Yüan." The paradigm of four dominant figures nevertheless retains its hold for the later decades of the period. On Ch'ien, see Richard Edwards, "Ch'ien Hsüan and 'Early Autumn,'" *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America*, VII, 1953, pp. 71-83; James Cahill, "Ch'ien Hsüan and his Figure Paintings," *Archives*, XII, 1958, pp. 11-24; and Wen Fong, "The Problem of Ch'ien Hsüan," *Art Bulletin*, XLII, 1960, pp. 173-89. On Chao, see Chu-tsing Li, *The Autumn Colors on the Ch'iao and Hua Mountains*, (Ascona, 1965); and "The Freer Sheep and Goat and Chao Meng-fu's Horse Paintings," *Artibus Asiae*, XXX, 1968, pp. 279-326.
- ⁶The poem is cited in Yü Chien-hua, *Chung-kuo hua-lun lei-pien*, (Peking, 1957), I, p. 103; and translated in Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting*, (Cambridge, 1971), p. 164, and James Cahill, *Parting at the Shore*, (New York and Tokyo, 1978), p. 77.
- ⁷Ho Liang-chun, *Ssu-yu-chai hua-lun (Mei-shu ts'ung shu*, III, 3), p. 36. These remarks on painting were collected from *Ssu-yu-chai ts'ung-shuo* (preface dated 1569).
- ⁸Wang Shih-chen, *I-yuan chih-yen fu-lu*, in *Yen-chou shan-jen ssu-pu kao (Ming-tai lun-che ts'ung-k'an ed.)*, XIV, p. 7079. Translated in Siren, *The Chinese on the Art of Painting* (reprint of original 1936, Peiping edition), (New York and Hong Kong, 1963),

p. 128. See also National Palace Museum, *Yüan ssu ta chia* ("The Four Great Masters of the Yüan"), (Taipei, 1975), p. 11 (English text).

⁹Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, *Hua chih*, in Yü Chien-hua, *Chung-kuo hua-lun lei-pien*, II, p. 720; and *Hua yen*, in *ibid.*, II, p. 726. For translations, see Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting*, pp. 167-9; and Siren, *The Chinese on the Art of Painting*, pp. 133-6. See also the discussion of the evolution of the Four Masters concept in National Palace Museum, *Yüan ssu ta chia*, p. 8 (Chinese text), p. 11 (English text).

¹⁰Ku Fu, *P'ing-sheng chuang kuan* (*I-shu shang-chien hsüan-chen* ed.), II, *chüan* 9, 117.

¹¹David Sensabaugh, "Notes on Ku Te-hui: A Late Yüan Literatus" (unpublished paper given at the ACLS Research Conference on the Impact of Mongol Domination on Chinese Civilization, York, Maine, 1976), p. 6; cited with permission of the author.

¹²Chu-tsing Li has pointed out the close compositional tie between this painting and the works of Wu Chen and Ni Tsan ("Chao Yüan," in *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, ed. by L. Carrington Goodrich and Chao-ying Fang, New York, 1976, I, pp. 136-7).

¹³According to Ni's inscription, the patron later pointed to the painting and said nostalgically, "Those are the trees my grandfather planted and the hills my father roamed." (Translation after Karen Brock and Robert Thorp, in *Yüan ssu ta chia*, p. 73 English text.) The painting is illustrated in Li, *Proceedings*, pl. 22.

¹⁴Another painting in this genre is Scenery of I-hsing (dated 1356), by Chou Chih, now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (K. Tomita and Tseng Hsien-ch'i, *Portfolio of Chinese Paintings*, Vol. II: Yüan to Ch'ing, 1961, pls. 16-18). Chou Chih, another of the Lesser Masters who served Chang Shih-ch'eng, was highly praised by both contemporary and later critics. See Chu-tsing Li, "Chou Chih," *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, I, pp. 266.

¹⁵See John Hay's discussion of this problem in his review of Cahill, *Hills Beyond a River*, in the *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXXVII, 1978, p. 351.

¹⁶Wu Ch'i-chen, *Shu hua chi* (ca. 1677), Shanghai, 1962, 290-1. Li refers to this passage in his biography of Chao Yüan (*Dictionary of Ming Biography*, I, p. 137) but argues against this conclusion on stylistic grounds.

- ¹⁷Ku Fu, *P'ing-sheng chuang kuan*, *chüan* 9, 74.
- ¹⁸Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, *Hua yen (Mei-shu ts'ung-shu*, I, 3), p. 52.
- ¹⁹Osvold Siren, *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles*, (London, 1958), IV, p. 84.
- ²⁰Li, see note 16. Cahill, *Hills*, p. 129.
- ²¹This little painting has received unfair treatment by western scholars. Siren listed it under the ambiguous title, "A Scene of Filial Piety" (*Chinese Painting*, VII, p. 165). Cahill mistakenly identified the subject as Mencius and his mother (*Hills*, p. 154), specifically the incident in which Mencius, having left his studies to return home, was silently admonished by his mother who stopped her weaving to demonstrate the "unproductiveness of inactivity." Cahill goes on to say, "Ch'en Ju-yen represents her sewing instead of weaving — perhaps the depiction of a loom seemed too taxing for his limited powers as a draftsman." Such scoffing is of course inappropriate since the painting has nothing to do with the famous anecdote. Professor Cahill's estimation of the amateurish quality of Ch'en's painting is, however, undebatable. The tentative treatment of the horse and cart does contribute to the charm of the work but could never be termed of professional quality. Likewise Cahill's stylistic analysis is astute: he suggests as precedents the figure paintings of Li Kung-lin and Ma Ho-chih and cites in particular the latter's sentimental treatment of historical themes.
- ²²Translation after John C. H. Wu, *The Four Seasons of T'ang Poetry*, (Rutland, Vt. and Tokyo, 1972), p. 155. Meng Ch'iao's poem, "Song of the Wanderer" (*Yu-tzu yin*) can be found in *Meng Tung-yeh shih-chi*, in *Ssu-pu tsung k'an*, XL, *chüan* 1, 9.
- ²³Li, *National Palace Museum Bulletin*, pp. 9-11, and *Proceedings*, pp. 497-8. Cahill, *Hills*, pp. 122-4. Chang Kuang-pin presents the same interpretation in *National Palace Museum, Yüan ssu ta chia*, pp. 30-1 (Chinese text), pp. 36-7 (English text).
- ²⁴Cahill, *Hills*, pl. 59.
- ²⁵*Ibid.*, pl. 53.
- ²⁶*Ibid.*, pl. 50.
- ²⁷Sherman Lee and Wai-kam Ho, *Chinese Art Under the Mongols*, (Cleveland, 1968), p. 61. See also, Li, *Proceedings*, p. 499.
- ²⁸Cahill, *Hills*, pl. 58.
- ²⁹Ni's inscription states that Ch'en "succeeded profoundly in capturing the brush ideas of Chao Meng-fu." (Translation after Lee and Ho, *Chinese Art Under the Mongols*, pl. 264.) Moreover the inscription indicates Ni's own admiration for the work of one of the Lesser Masters. See *ibid.*, p. 60 and pl. 264.
- ³⁰Cited by Siren, *Chinese Painting*, IV, pp. 91-2. A relatively early account of the story which specifies that the painting was in color is given in Ho Liang-chun, *Ssu-yu-chai hua-lun*, p. 41.
- ³¹It was surely the loss of so many talented painters and not, as Professor Richard Barnhart has suggested ("Yao Yen-ching, T'ing-mei, of Wu Hsing," *Artibus Asiae*, XXXIX, 1977, p. 23), a cramped narrowness of taste, which brought about the decline of the Suchou School.
- ³²See for example, Hsü Ch'in, *Ming-hua lu* (colophon dated 1673; *Hua-shih ts'ung-shu* ed.), *chüan* 2, 19. Following that source, Siren lists Ch'en and Hsü in the Ming dynasty section of his lists (*Chinese Painting*, VII, p. 165 and pp. 193-4).
- ³³Cahill (*Parting at the Shore*, pp. 57-8 and p. 59) acknowledges the Wu school's debt to the Lesser Masters of late Yüan dynasty Suchou, but credits those fourteenth century artists only with setting a precedent for the eclecticism of fifteenth century painters.
- ³⁴Barnhart has cited the damaging effects of what he calls an "incestuous historiography" that has "distorted the complex truths of Yüan art" (*Artibus Asiae*, 1977, p. 122). A body of art criticism written largely by Southern scholar-painters has discredited the painters — many of them Northerners — who sought to maintain professional standards in painting. Tung Ch'i-ch'ang and earlier critics, including Hsia Wen-yen of fourteenth century Suchou, have contributed significantly to the obscurity of professional painters of the Yüan (*ibid.*, p. 106 and pp. 122-3).

A RE-EXAMINATION OF THE CULT OF DEMETER AND THE MEANING OF THE ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES

Sherly Farness

Scholarly research relating to the Eleusinian Mysteries is contradictory, ambiguous, confusing and, often, questionable. The polarities in approach seem best exemplified by Mylonas,¹ who insists that the Mysteries have remained mysterious, and Kerényi,² who maintains that the themes at Eleusis are basic to the religious experience of man and are penetrable. On the one hand there is a reasonable amount of exoteric material, on the other, the hidden means and meaning that is nowhere directly revealed.

The origin and antiquity of the Eleusinian Mysteries, like those of Dionysos and Orpheus, are not indisputably known. What is known tends to suggest extremely archaic rituals and beliefs, for the mysteries of Demeter and Kore were celebrated at Eleusis centuries before it became a Panhellenic religious center. Mircea Eliade states rather decisively that "the Eleusinian initiation descends directly from an agricultural ritual centered around the death and resurrection of a divinity controlling the fertility of the fields."³ On this point there seems to be general agreement, as well as recognition of the difficulty of tracing the stages by which an agricultural ritual was transformed into a mystery of regeneration bringing individual salvation. However, to attempt to assign an origin to the cult of Demeter is to plunge immediately into diverse opinions backed by what appears to be sound scholarship.

Nilsson, for example, assigns a Minoan origin to Demeter, for the myth does tell of her journey from Crete to search for her daughter Kore (Persephone), who had been gathering flowers on the plain of Nysa with the daughters of Oceanus, when she was carried off by Hades to the Underworld.⁴ When Kore disappears, Demeter causes the earth to become barren, and when she is released for a stipulated period of time each year, the earth produces abundantly. The idea of a goddess of fertility dying each year "is un-Greek; moreover, it does not occur in Asia in this form, and must therefore be considered an original product of Minoan religious genius."⁶ In the Near East, Sumerian mythology recounts the rape of the young goddess, Ninlil, and her subsequent descent to the underworld, but fragmentary cuneiform texts merely hint at possible seasonal meaning.⁷