



Li Yu (1783-after 1844)

李育

"Fighting in the Village" 1843

Fan painting, ink and color on paper
17 x 50.5 cm. (6 5/8 x 19 7/8 in.)

Inscription:

"During the beginning of summer of the year 1843, I followed a genuine work by Hsin-lo Shan-jen (Hua Yen) at the Autumn Waters Retreat to present to my elder brother Master Ch'ing-yun for his judgment. Copied by Li Yu, called Mei-sheng, from Chiang-tu."

Artist's seal:

Li

Within a stage setting defined by hut to right, rice-paddies to the rear, and imploring woman to the left, a village drama is played out. Two groups of three each are balanced by a figure between them who holds out his hands in an effort to bring the combatants together. Each of the two main figures is being held back and restrained by two others, presumably more cool-headed than the angry pair. Light colors and elegant brushwork create an idyllic mood that sets off by contrast the passions of the fighters who provide the dramatic center of the picture.

Li Yu, *tzu* Mei-sheng, *hao* Chu-hsi, was born

in Chiang-tu, the modern city of Yangchou. He is sometimes held to have been born in 1843 but Li studied with Chu Pen (1761-1819) and one of his own pupils was Hu Han (1796-1877), so he must have been born a cycle of sixty years before 1843. Li painted figures, flowers, trees, rocks and bamboo, many in the style of Hua Yen (1682-1756) but at least one was done after Chu Ta (1626-1705), the great individualist master of the early Ch'ing era. The present example, with strong narrative content and charming presentation, marks Li Yu as one of the best followers of Hua Yen during the 19th century.