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誼亭秦炳文并識

Ch'in Ping-wen (1803-73)　　秦炳文

"Landscape after Wang Meng"

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper
105 x 40 cm. (41 1/4 x 15 3/4 in.)

Inscription:

"Done in emulation of the surviving ideas of Huang-hao Shan-ch'iao (Wang Meng). Shu-ming (Wang Meng) and Yuan-chen (Ni Tsan) were friends. Shu-ming's density avoided the sparseness of Yuan-chen, but when complete, the brush and inkwork of Yuan-chen's sparse fields and by-ways were extremely dense, while the brush and inkwork of Shu-ming's dense fields and by-ways were very sparse. The two masters were still different while yet being the same. But those who haven't gone to the Yueh-yang Pavilion, and personally seen Immortal Lu playing his flute, should rein in and stop, cover and (put out) the lamp, for (otherwise) within mistakes there will be mistakes.
Painted and inscribed by Ch'in Ping-wen, called I-t'ing."

Artist's seals:

I-t'ing; Yen-yun Shih-hua

A scholar crossing a foreground bridge provides a focal point for the entire picture as we imagine joining him on his stroll, gazing across the stream to the houses beyond, looking upstream to where a boat appears, and then raising our eyes to the waterfall, village, and towering peaks above. This complex vision is matched by the technique, which features short and curving texture strokes and heavily-patterned dottings on the peaks to create visual tension and pictorial richness.

The source of the style is identified by the artist in his inscription as the Yuan master Wang Meng (1308-85) (fig. 1), and the correspondence in fact is quite clear. Interestingly, the artist then contrasted this dense style with the spare style of Ni Tsan (1301-74) (fig. 2), but then continued his discourse to find a great similarity between works by the two

Fig. 1. Wang Meng: "Thatched Cottage in Autumn Mountains," after *Ku-kung Shu-hua T'u-lu*, Taipei, 1990, vol. 5, p. 1.

Fig. 2. Ni Tsan: "Jung-hsi Pavilion" 1372, after *Ku-kung Shu-hua T'u-lu*, Taipei, 1990, vol. 4, p. 301.

14th century masters, with sparseness present in Wang Meng's work and density in Ni Tsan's. This concern with style and with art history marks the artist not just as a painter but as an art historian as well.

Ch'in Ping-wen, originally named Ch'in I, had *tzu* of Yen-yun ("inkstone of clouds"), and by-name of I-t'ing ("friendly pavilion"). Born in Wu-hsi, near Suchou on Lake T'ai, Ch'in earned a *chu-jen* degree in 1840 and subsequently held official office as Secretary in the Ministry of Revenue. However, he is best known today as an important collector and connoisseur, his collection of 339 paintings having been catalogued by his grandson, Ch'in Ch'ien, in the *P'u-hua Chi-yu* of 1929. Most of his paintings are inscribed as having been done after Yuan masters and such Ming artists as Shen Chou, but very often his works are closer in style to the early Ch'ing orthodox masters who preceded him, such as Wang Shih-min (1592-1680) (fig. 3). Ch'in's appreciation for the past was continued by his nephew Ch'in Tsu-yung (1825-1884), author of *T'ung-yin Lun-hua* and *Hua Chueh* as well as editor of *Hua-hsueh Hsin-yin*, all very important contributions to painting literature of the 19th century.

Fig. 3. Ch'in Ping-wen: "Landscape after Wang Shih-min" 1861, after Phoenix Art Museum: *Heritage of* the Brush, Phoenix, 1989, cat. 42, p. 120.