

# From Japan to Europe: Teng Gu ' s Internalization of Western Art Historical Ideas

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## From Japan to Europe: Teng Gu's Internalization of Western Art Historical Ideas

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The early decades of the twentieth century in China witnessed a period of intense artistic communication between China, Japan and Western countries. Chinese scholars started to internalize foreign theories of art history in order to (re)construct a history of art for China during the late Qing and Republican period. In this paper, I analyze Teng Gu's practice in the field of art history as a case study of Chinese responses to external stimuli to draft a new art history for China.

The discussion will focus on the impact of Western art historical practices on Chinese intellectual life during the 1920s and '30s. Japanese influence remained an important factor in art historical scholarship at that time, but the Western impact became dominant. I argue that a transition from an indirect connection with the West via Japan to a direct contact with Western thought brought about crucial changes. Most importantly, it encouraged a transformation in Chinese art historical writing from a more superficial adoption of Western patterns for ancient Chinese art to a more concrete and profound appropriation of Western theories. Teng Gu is an interesting case in point. He first studied in Japan in the 1920s and subsequently received professional training in art history in Germany at the beginning of the 1930s. Throughout his academic career, Teng introduced foreign art historical ideas to Chinese scholarly circles; he responded to Japanese and Western writings on Chinese art; he adapted foreign frameworks of art history to the Chinese context; and, he aimed to create a new Chinese art historical discourse for Chinese readers. The most important ideas that Teng Gu developed were style analysis of Chinese art, a Chinese history of artworks rather than artists, and a rejection of the traditional division of Chinese painting.

Teng Gu was born in 1901 at Baoshan county near Shanghai. He spent his childhood pursuing a traditional education in the Chinese classics. In 1918, he graduated from the Shanghai Art Academy. He went to Japan at the end of 1919, attending a private university in Tokyo. During his stay in Japan, Teng studied art theory and became acquainted with some important Chinese and Japanese literary figures, including Guo Moruo and Liang Qichao. Teng stated in a letter to one of his friends in China that his research then involved several subjects, namely, philosophy, literature, drama, and art criticism. (Andrews and Shen 2006: 23; Shen 2001: 37; Xue 2003: 1; Chen 2000: 219)

In the spring of 1930, Teng Gu started his European journey. He enrolled formally in the Department

of Philosophy at the Friedrich Wilhelm University of Berlin (now the Humboldt University of Berlin) in 1931. Founded in 1810, the university was one of the earliest in the world to establish a professorship for art history in 1844. The Swiss art historian, Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945), was Professor of Art History at the university between 1901 and 1912. Wölfflin's influence was still palpable during Teng Gu's residence. Teng's major was the art history of East Asia. His minors included archaeology, history, and philosophy. In June 1932, after three semesters, Teng submitted his thesis "Chinesische Malkunsttheorie in der T'ang und Sungzeit (Chinese Theory of Painting in Tang and Song Times)" and applied for an oral examination for the PhD degree. Otto Kümmer (1874–1952), Director of the Far Eastern Asiatic Museum of Berlin at that time, and Professor Albert Erich Brinckmann (1881–1958), an expert on Baroque art, graded Teng's dissertation respectively as "valde laudabile (very laudable)" and "laudabile (laudable)". Teng Gu's viva voce took place on 21st July, 1932. With a mediocre performance in the examination, Teng gained an overall grade of "laudabile". Subsequently, after the publication of his dissertation in the 10th and 11th issues of *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift: Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Kultur und Kunst des Fernen Ostens* (The Far East: an Illustrated Quarterly Review Dealing with the Art and Civilization of the Eastern Countries) between 1934 and 1935, Teng Gu officially received his PhD on 16th October, 1935. (Shen 2003)

At the end of 1932, Teng returned to China. He held a succession of governmental and social positions related to art, including administrative commissioner of the Central Antique Preservation Committee (Zhongyang guwu baoguan weiyuanhui) from 1933; trustee of the Palace Museum from 1934; and member of the Sino-German Institute (Zhongde xuehui) from 1935. He devoted his life to art historical research, archaeological investigation, art activities, and Sino-German cultural exchange. Teng Gu co-founded the Chinese Research Association of Art History (Zhongguo yishushi xuehui) with a group of scholars in May 1937. Between 1938 and 1940, he was assigned by the Ministry of Education to be principal of the National Art Academy, which combined the two national art schools in Beijing and Hangzhou. From the end of 1939, the academy moved inland, first to Yunnan and then to Sichuan. Teng Gu died in Chongqing on 20th May, 1941, without accomplishing his ambition to write a comprehensive history of art in China (Shen 2001; Andrews and Shen 2006: 23).

As Kao Mayching and Michael Sullivan have suggested, Chinese approaches to Western art theories were rather superficial in the 1920s and '30s. Both of them cite Lu Xun and agree with him on the confusion of "isms" in the Republican period (Kao 1981: 98-99; Sullivan 1996: 65). It is true that Chinese scholars were eager to publish anything about Western aesthetics and art from ancient Greece to modern Europe without making systematic choices at that time. However, Teng Gu was probably an exception. Here was a scholar who understood profoundly the contemporary field of art history in the West, and especially, the leading claims of German scholarship.

### **Translation of Western Works**

Teng Gu contributed three careful translations of Western works. In 1935, he published his translation

of an English essay “From Northern China to the Danube” (1930) which originally appeared in *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift*. Nothing is known of this essay's author Zoltán de Takács, but his three-page article discusses six bronze objects from Northern China housed in the Francis Hopp Museum of Eastern Asiatic Arts in Budapest. Using ten illustrations, the author showed the affinity between the forms of these artworks and items ascribed to the Avar Periods (375–720 CE) which had been discovered in the Danube valley in present-day Hungary. Takács deduced that these objects represented a Chinese influence imported to Eastern European art, following the immigration of the Huns in the fourth century (Teng 1935c). Teng Gu was particularly interested in this kind of research on artistic diffusion. The detailed analysis of patterns evident in this article converged closely with the research methods that Teng adopted for pre-Tang decorative patterns on tiles, tomb stones and sculptures. He mentioned his translation again in another article “The Animal Patterns on Eave Tiles in the Southern Capital of Yan (Yan xiadu bangui wangang shang de shouxing wenshi)” to draw parallels between ancient Chinese art and ancient European art (Teng 1936).

In the same year, Teng Gu began to translate “Methode (Methodology),” the first part of Oscar Montelius' (1843–1921) book entitled *Die älteren Kulturperioden im Orient und in Europa* (Ancient Cultural Periods in the Orient and Europe, 1903). Montelius was a Swedish antiquarian and archaeologist whose primary contribution to scholarship was the development of a relative chronological dating method based on typology and named seriation. When no evidence for clear dates of archaeological findings can be traced, and scientific methods, such as carbon dating, cannot be applied, seriation is useful. When formulating an evolutionary framework of artefact forms, it helps to arrange objects in a relative chronological sequence. These objects are usually attributed to the same cultural tradition or to comparable geographical regions. In this way, researchers can demonstrate a developmental sequence for the culture to which these items belong. The idea of evolution in human cultures influenced Montelius to elaborate this method of typology. For example, he arranged some unearthed Iron Age cloak pins in a developmental sequence. Montelius also established a concept of diffusion that helped to argue how certain characteristics of the early civilizations in the Near East had spread to Europe (Renfrew and Bahn 1996: 25, 34).

Teng Gu deliberately chose to translate this text in order to introduce Montelius' typological approach. Montelius provided detailed explanations for how to employ changes of patterns to date artefacts. Conscious of the difficulties in dating ancient objects recovered in China and the weaknesses in Chinese scholarship in relation to analyzing patterns, Teng believed that Montelius' theory could refine methodology for Chinese scholars to study ancient materials and relics. In his preface to the translated version, Teng also suggested five other treatises written by Montelius for Chinese scholars to consult. Most important were *Die Bronzezeit in Orient und Griechenland* (The Bronze Age in the Orient and Greece, 1890) and *Die vorclassische Chronologie Italiens* (The Pre-Classical Chronology of Italy, 1912). In his mind, these works provided the technique to help art historians scrutinize art pieces without corollary textual evidence. Teng Gu believed that Montelius' typological methodology would bring a fresh impetus to the study of objects' shapes and decorative patterns in the history of art in China (Teng 1937b).

Teng Gu's most important translation is "Art History (Meishushi)", which became part of an anthology *German Academia during the Past Fifty Years* (Wushinian lai de Deguo xueshu) published by the Commercial Press in 1937 (Teng 1937a). The author of the original text, Adolph Goldschmidt (1863–1944), was a German art historian who specialized in medieval art. When Teng Gu studied at the University of Berlin, Goldschmidt was head of the art history department. This article introduced the German field of art history from the second half of the nineteenth century to the 1920s. At the beginning of the article, Goldschmidt specified three different approaches to art history: to treat art as a historical fact which was consistent with the methodology of history; to envision that the history of art exposed a unique development of forms (Formnenentwicklung), a phenomenon that required its own methodology; and to allow art history to function as an explanation of artworks to the general public, in order to facilitate their appreciation of art. The author moved on to three basic requirements for art historical research: a wide knowledge of all kinds of objects and their histories; a penetrating virtuosity trained by different experiences with objects; and a Qualitätsgefühl which Teng Gu translated as "an intuitive response to material (zhigan)". A perpetual direct observation of objects, Goldschmidt considered, would prepare a scholar to achieve all these requirements. He claimed that researchers should take art history seriously and view it not as a leisure entertainment but as a scientific discipline. He applauded the institutional development of art history; especially in as far as it had overseen some technical improvements: the use of projectors to show images in art history courses and the dissemination of artworks through good-quality illustrations.

Goldschmidt went on to summarize the overall development of the discipline within the previous fifty years. He saw a transformation of emphasis from history to art and then back again to a slightly different conception of history. He listed eleven art historians from German-speaking countries as representatives of these three stages. He included Anton Springer (1825–1891), Carl Justi (1832–1912), Hermann Grimm (1828–1901), Jacob Burckhardt (1818–1897), and Henry Thode (1857–1920) in the first stage. According to Goldschmidt, these scholars either described an individual art master or an artistic school as the axis of their historical accounts. He suggested that the second stage, before the end of World War One, could be characterized by August Schmarsow (1853–1936), Heinrich Wölfflin, Alois Riegl (1858–1905), Franz Wickhoff (1853–1909), and Max Dvorak (1874–1921). His perception was that this group focused on art objects to narrate a history which "went beyond any individual artist (chao geren)". He classified Max Dvorak's research after World War One as a return to Gesamtgeschichte which Teng Gu interpreted as "an overall history (quanbu de lishi)". Inclined to a cultural analysis containing literature, religion and social practices, art historical studies were then different from the first stage. Goldschmidt believed that the future of art history would be a formal analysis (Formale Analyse) within an approach that he termed "history of spirit" (Geschichte des Geistes). He admitted that some scholars, such as Georg Dehio (1850–1932), could not be positioned in any of the groups mentioned above, for Dehio's work possessed characteristics from all three different stages. Ultimately, Goldschmidt urged art historians to create a field of art history whose primary value would be to inspire other disciplines of human knowledge.

Goldschmidt's points were exactly those about which Teng was eager to inform his Chinese colleagues. However, Goldschmidt's text was for a German audience familiar with the field of art history in Germany. Facing a Chinese reader with little background knowledge of the German art historical discipline, Teng Gu was forced to add several footnotes in his translation to aid the general reader's comprehension. He made brief biographical notes on Goldschmidt, the author of the article, and on the eleven art historians mentioned in the article. He listed major publications by these twelve scholars and made a few concise remarks on their publications to lead his readers through the vast German field of art history. For example, he wrote that Anton Springer's principal work on art *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* (The Handbook of Art History) was quite popular at that time, but after several versions edited by different scholars, the original text produced in the 1880s no longer survived. He confirmed for his readers the undeniable influence of Heinrich Wölfflin on the contemporary art history discipline. He thought that Wölfflin's treatises, for instance, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (The Principles of Art History, 1915) and *Italien und das deutsche Formgefühl: die Kunst der Renaissance* (Italy and the German Sense of Forms: The Renaissance Art, 1931), should be compulsory reading for art historians and even for scholars of other disciplines.

Teng Gu provided his Chinese readers with plenty of supplementary sources because the original text was very succinct and abstract. Every one of the eleven art historians listed by Goldschmidt merited lengthy discussion, but Goldschmidt simply mentioned the name of each scholar and added no more than a sentence to identify them. A Chinese reader at that time was unlikely to know who these scholars were, and even less about what they had published. Thus, Teng recommended his readers consult extra readings by two German art historians: Ernst Heidrich's (1880–1914) *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Methode der Kunstgeschichte* (Dealing with the History and Method of Art History, 1917) and Walter Passarge's (1898–1958) *Die Philosophie der Kunstgeschichte in der Gegenwart* (The Philosophy of Art History of the Present, 1930). We can deduce, from all the information he supplied to Chinese readers that Teng Gu had an unprecedented acquaintance with contemporary German developments in art history. While other Chinese scholars still understood Western art historical studies superficially, Teng Gu was the first Chinese researcher—probably the only one in Republican China—to possess such a comprehensive knowledge of modern German scholarship.

### **Absorption of Wölfflin's Style Analysis**

As Michael Podro has noted, the critical strengths of Heinrich Wölfflin's *The Principles of Art History* render it an irreplaceable model for the analysis of painting (Podro 1982: 98). Wölfflin's historical system of successive styles is exactly what traditional Chinese scholarship on the history of painting lacked. It is not surprising, therefore, that it was attractive to Teng Gu. He recognized that Wölfflin was a noted authority in the modern German field of art history who concentrated on style analysis (Teng 1931: 77). Teng applied the same method in the 1930s, hoping to elicit a breakthrough in his narrative of Chinese art: basically, that in terms of style, authenticity was not crucial to Chinese art history.

In his 1931 essay "An Investigation into the History of Academic Style Painting and Literati Painting

(Guanyu yuantihua he wenrenhua zhi shi de kaocha)”, Teng Gu cited the German writer on art Wilhelm Hausenstein’s (1882–1957) definition of style: “Style (also translated as “mode” or “form”), strictly speaking, is a synthesis that one form integrates from any other one”(Teng 1931: 76). Accepting this concept, Teng established his notion of style in the history of Chinese painting.

The impact of the term “style” on Teng Gu is also evident in his 1934 account of Chinese mural painting (Teng 1934a). The title of his article contains a rather jarring idiom “A Brief Investigation of Tang-Style Mural Paintings (Tangdai shi bihua kaolüe)”. The additional “style (shi)” in the title reflects his effort to draw on such Western terms as “Romanesque” and “Baroque”. Borrowing the Chinese translation of “Romanesque (luoma shi)” and “Baroque (baluoke shi)”, he established his idea of Tang style. He stated clearly that Tang-style artworks were not necessarily products of the Tang dynasty. As he wrote in the essay, Teng viewed more than twenty mural paintings belonging to two private collectors in Nanjing. It was unclear to him where and how these paintings had been discovered. Teng Gu thought that they were much likely to be Tang mural paintings based upon his understanding of Tang style. He analyzed the line management (Linienführung), colour, human representation, and subject-matter in these paintings to locate similarities between them and other existing paintings commonly accepted as Tang products. Only after an attentive study of every posture of each figure along with the various decorations on them and the objects held in their hands, did he dare to propose a definite conclusion for these paintings’ style. In fact, it was unimportant to Teng whether these paintings were the products of the Tang dynasty. He believed, nevertheless, that their style was close to the painting style of the Tang dynasty (Teng 1934a).

The search for a principle to “account for the transformation of style” remained crucial for Wölfflin throughout his career (Podro 1982: 100). Teng Gu too attempted to figure out the style transformation in the case of Chinese painting. In his introduction to *A History of Painting from Tang to Song Times*, he used the term Stilentwicklung and interpreted it as “the development/transformation of style (fengge fazhan/zhuanhuan)”. He considered the development of style in artworks to be the most important element of a history of art. He believed that the emergence, development, and transformation of one style was determined by its inner impetus, and that it was also influenced by its social context. He did not believe that a dynastic change in a history of politics caused the transformation of a style (Teng 1931: 65–67, 1933: 2). His discussion of style development stressed the Tang and Song centuries. The middle Tang period labelled as “High Tang” had long been considered the most prosperous period of Chinese art by Chinese intellectuals. Teng Gu cited Su Dongpo’s claim of unparalleled achievement in Tang art, including poetry, prose, calligraphy, and painting. In Teng’s opinion, the prosperity of the middle Tang contained special significance in the history of Chinese painting. He reiterated two epoch-making changes in the middle Tang period. During the flourishing years of the Tang dynasty, landscape became the dominant composition of painting, and, allegedly, an indigenous Chinese style replaced the foreign styles from Ancient India and Central Asia in Buddhist painting. Since then landscape painting had become the most important art genre in China; and art in China developed its own style rather than following Gandharan or Gupta styles. These two aspects, Teng envisioned, heralded a

new era in the development of Chinese painting (Teng 1931: 65, 1933: 23). Teng's narrative suggested that following the establishment of an indigenous style during the middle Tang period, later generations of artists experienced the weakness of this style, but subsequently improved it, and brought it to perfection. The crucial factors, he considered, were techniques in brush and ink as well as in the arrangement of painting space. He listed these new skills as bold stroke (*tubi*), ink wash (*pomo*), and balance between brush and ink (*bimo jiangou*) (Teng 1933: 39).

More innovatively, Teng Gu described various Tang painting styles with Western art historical notions. A comparison between his works and one influential contemporary text by the Japanese scholar Kinbara Seigo discloses Teng's direct application of some of Wölfflin's concepts to the Chinese field of art history.

According to Fu Baoshi's 1935 translation of Kinbara Seigo's work, Kinbara used three main diagnostic tools—line (*xian*), colour (*se*), and ink (*mo*)—in analysing different paintings. Clinging to these traditional terms in Chinese painting, such as raindrop texture stroke (*yudian cun*) and axe-cut texture stroke (*fupi cun*), Kinbara traced a systematic change in various painters. He reckoned that the artist Wu Daozi's (active ca. 710–760) paintings showed the characteristics of line in Tang painting; the painter Li Sixun's (651–716) artworks represented the feature of colour; and the poet and painter Wang Wei's (699–759) art indicated the quality of ink (Kinbara 1935: 29). Kinbara also traced the changes in painting lines as the art historical development of Chinese painting from the fourth century to the first half of the thirteenth century. He posited three stages of lines in Chinese painting: the Six Dynasties, the Tang dynasty, and the Song dynasty. He thought that Gu Kaizhi's "iron-wire line (*tiexian miao*)" was representative of the Six Dynasties and envisaged that Gu made no change in speed and pressure from the start to finish when he painted a line. Kinbara positioned Wu Daozi's lines at the centre of Tang painting. He analyzed a variation in the velocity of Wu's movement when Wu drew a line, which resulted in the shape of a line being altered at different parts of it. He discovered changes in both speed and pressure in lines in Song painting. Song painters, especially those who belonged to the Northern School (*beizong*), he suggested, sometimes pressed their brushes hard in the process of painting a line; yet at other times they lifted their brushes slightly. Consequently, these painters created a "pressing-lifting (*ya ca*)" effect in their lines (Kinbara 1935: 13–14). Kinbara still employed traditional Chinese terms of painting techniques to express his ideas. These terms were based on empirical experience of Chinese artists. Comparatively, Teng Gu's accounts of Tang and Song painting were more radical. Like Kinbara, Teng noted the differences in line and colour between Wu Daozi and Li Sixun. However, he not only quoted important ancient accounts of these Chinese notions, but he also borrowed terms from contemporary Western art historical theories to demonstrate the differences between various Tang painting styles. In this way, Teng started to change the long-fixed vocabulary of Chinese art and to renew the lexicon with specific Western terms.

One extraordinary example is Teng's usage of one of Wölfflin's five opposite pairs *Zeichnerisch* (linear) and *Malerisch* (painterly). As early as 1931, Teng Gu began to import new terms for Chinese painting. He mentioned this pair of terms "Zeichnerisch" and "Malerisch" in his essay entitled "An Investigation into the

History of Academic Style Painting and Literati Painting” (1931). He referred to Wölfflin’s *The Principles of Art History*, in which Wölfflin portrayed the style of the German painter and printmaker Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) to be “Zeichnerisch” and the style of the Dutch painter Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606–1669) to be “Malerisch”. In the context of Tang painting, Teng translated Zeichnerisch into xiede to address Wu Daozi’s painting style; and he used Malerisch as huade to define Li Sixun’s painting style. According to Teng, Wu Daozi’s amazing brush work demonstrated the linear style while Li Sixun’s brilliant usage of golden and green colours fitted the painterly style. Teng Gu considered the painting style of Wang Wei to be linear as well (Teng 1931: 68–71).

In *A History of Painting from Tang to Song Times* (1933), Teng Gu used different notions to characterize these early Tang painting masters. He applied three terms to distinguish their style: Wu as “bold (haoshuang de)”; Li as “ornamental (zhuangshi de)”; Wang as “lyric (shuqing de)”. For him, these were three equally significant approaches in Chinese painting. He offered no relatively superior or inferior judgment for any of them (Teng 1933: 36).

The aforementioned accounts of Tang and Song art exploited a biographical engagement with art history. In distinction to this period of his work, in his “The Characteristics of Tang Art (Tangdai yishu de tezheng)” (1935) Teng Gu no longer fixed his discussion on well-known artists. Instead, he added more examples from both sculptures and recently found paintings by unknown artists, such as mural paintings discovered in the Dunhuang caves. Meanwhile, Teng recognized a change in Chinese painting style of the Tang period, a shift that he attributed to the import of the painting skill he termed as “chiaroscuro (ming’an fa)” from Ancient India. He still described this process of change as one from the linear to the painterly, but his Chinese translations for both “linear” and “painterly” differed from those in his 1931 article. Now, he introduced “linear” and “painterly” respectively as “xianmiao de” and “xuanran de”. He demonstrated more caution in his application of these two formal categories than he had done previously. He explained in his endnotes that these two notions contained special connotations that could be traced in Heinrich Wölfflin’s book *The Principles of Art History*. He wrote:

“The German art historian Wölfflin has pointed out the difference between art in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, [and] he has referred to it as a change from ‘the linear’ to ‘the painterly’. The linear usually pursues the clarity in the edges of forms, while the painterly dispenses with the boundaries, and adopts blurred edges (see his book *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*. München. 1915). Of course, my borrowing of these two terms here is not so strict. What I mean is that stressing the lines in order to represent the clarity of forms can be considered as the ‘linear’; that emphasizing the colours and applying chiaroscuro in order to form the depth of objects can be considered as the ‘painterly’.”

He exemplified his claim in Wu Daozi’s painting. In his opinion, Wu was the vital link in the progres-

sion from the linear to the painterly. From the painting *Maharaja Deva of Child-Bearing* (Songzi tianwang tu), attributed to Wu, Teng claimed that Wu's brush lines were not simply the edges of forms; instead they expressed power and tension beyond the bodies and the clothes of human figures. He also mentioned pre-modern Chinese texts on art, such as *Painting History* (Huashi) by the calligrapher, painter, and connoisseur Mi Fu (1052–1107), from which he noted that the figures painted by Wu Daozi had a three-dimensional impression like sculptures. Both visual and textual evidence convinced Teng Gu that Wu Daozi represented a trend towards Wölfflin's "painterly". He believed that the change in lines was part of the important development which could not be neglected in the history of Chinese painting. Nevertheless, he admitted that under the technical conditions of painting in China, in which the aesthetic appeal of lines tends to be paramount, painting in China could not completely transform from the linear to the painterly. The thorough transition between the linear and the painterly, which meant eliminating the Chinese brush style, could never happen in China. Teng Gu explicitly stated that his application of these formal categories was based on a few "symptoms (zhengzhao)". Its correctness would need further confirmation, and would depend on more visual materials to furnish the necessary evidence of future studies (Teng 1935b).

Exploring the style development in late Song painting, Teng Gu again translated Wölfflin's words on the Italian Renaissance from *Die Klassische Kunst* (Classic Art; 1924) into Chinese:

"Usually, when a new style appears, people think that various objects which compose a painting change. However, viewing carefully, [we find that] not only the architecture in the background or the decorations vary, but also the postures of figures are different from former times. Only the new expression reflected by the depiction of the human body and its movement is the core of a new style. Thus, the notion of style carrying this special connotation, compared with its usual usage, is more significant." (Teng 1933: 92)

His use of Wölfflin's style transformation was important to his interpretation of Chinese painting development. It helped him to explain the core of style development in court painting of the late Song period. He realized the significant style transformation represented by ruled-line painting, which Teng called "gongshi louge hua" (commonly known as jiehua). In his opinion, this kind of court painting not only contained architecture drawn with the aid of a ruler, but also included mountains, rivers, plants, rocks, and human figures drawn without a ruler. In particular, he pointed out the style transformation of ruled-line painting in depictions of court beauties. The innovative ideas in the representation of court ladies' deportment and

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1 I located this paragraph in the 1968 edition of Wölfflin's *Die Klassische Kunst* as follows: "Wenn man sagt, es sei ein neuer Stil emporgekommen, so denkt man immer zuerst an eine Umformung der tektonischen Dinge. Sieht man aber näher zu, so ist es nicht nur die Umgebung des Menschen, die große und kleine Architektur, nicht nur sein Gerät und seine Kleidung, die eine Wandlung durchgemacht haben, der Mensch selbst nach seiner Körperlichkeit ist ein anderer geworden, und eben in der neuen Empfindung seines Körpers und in der neuen Art, ihm zu tragen und zu bewegen, steckt der eigentliche Kern eines Stiles. Dabei ist dem Begriff freilich mehr Gewicht zu geben, als er heutzutage hat." (Wölfflin 1968 (1924): 253)

movement appeared in late Song painting. According to Teng, this improvement which had changed court painting had not been given enough credit by traditional Chinese scholars who despised ruled-line painting. Teng Gu emphasized that change within this overlooked category of painting showed the key elements in style transformation (Teng 1931: 75–77, 1933: 91–93).

Teng Gu's practice of Chinese art history followed the ideas of Wölfflin closely. Wölfflin's approach was different from those of the pure formalists, because he linked style to history and culture (Adams 1996: 32). Teng, too, saw style as a fashion advocated by the taste of a whole society rather than a creation of an individual. Embracing Wölfflin, Teng Gu formulated a narrative of style to analyse a history of art in China which was closely related to a history of Chinese culture.

### **Originality in Chinese Art History**

Internalizing Japanese and Western art historical methods, Teng Gu made great efforts to write *Kunstgeschichte* (a history of artworks) rather than *Kunstlergeschichte* (a history of artists). Throughout his entire book of *A History of Painting from Tang to Song Times* (1933), he stressed the significance of *Kunstgeschichte*. He began the book with a statement on the importance of original artworks:

“A researcher on painting history, no matter whether he takes the positivist position or the ideological position, should draw conclusions from artworks. It is the correct direction. Unfortunately, Chinese writers of painting history through the ages have not taken this correct route. Nevertheless, they are blameless. China has lacked great museums to systematically display artworks from successive ages for viewers' appreciation and research. Also private collections dispersed at different locations are guarded in secret. Under these circumstances, scholars have no opportunity to conduct their research. As a result, they cannot produce a satisfactory history of painting.”

Focusing on art products, Teng fully acknowledged the difficulty in style analysis due to the lack of visual images and authentic works. Printed reproductions were not sufficient for detailed research. However, he determined to start his transformation of Chinese painting history using what he called “ice-cold written records” and reaching out to real art objects (Teng 1933: 1–2).

Teng Gu urged his readers to treat visual evidence seriously. He circulated information on recent publications which reproduced paintings, such as picture albums about sculptures and wall paintings from Dunhuang. He hoped that a reader could look at these sources and gain some visual impression of painting in Tang and Song times. He also recorded the locations of all the extant paintings that he knew of. He noted in his account of the figure painter Yan Liben (ca. 600–673) that Yan's scroll *Painting of Emperors* (*Diwang tu*) was then owned by Liang Hongzhi. Similarly, he recorded that the same artist's *Painting of Landscape* (*Shanshui tu*) was held by Guan Mianjun (Teng 1933: 19). Even in the case of paintings which he had no opportunity to view, he informed his readers of their probable location. For example, he cited Luo Zhenyu

to state that *Portrait of Maharaja Deva* (Tianwang tu) by Yuchi Yiseng (7th century), the early Tang painter, once in the hands of the Qing politician and collector Duan Fang (1861–1911), was now in America (Teng 1933: 21). This awareness of China's cultural heritage in an international setting was new.

In his accounts of works of art, in cases where he had seen a painting before, Teng Gu described as many details of the painting as he could. For instance, he provided a careful depiction of *Admonitions of the Court Instructress* picture scroll (Nüshi zhen tujian). He had probably seen reproductions of this painting if not the authentic image before. He was not concerned whether it was painted by Gu Kaizhi or not. He was more concerned with arguing that it was the only visual evidence of a fourth- and fifth-century style of Chinese painting. Teng highlighted the figures in the painting. He considered that the painted style in the faces of the court instructress had been developed by later artists into portraits of bodhisattvas. He adored the smooth lines representing drapery, which he claimed provided musical harmony for the painting surface. He saw no merits in other aspects. He disliked the stiffness of objects in the bedroom scene of the painting, which he noted had awkward shapes. He pointed out the disproportion between animals, mountains, and human figures in the mountain and hunter scene (Teng 1933: 13–14).

When no actual paintings were available to him, Teng Gu was forced to cite previous comments from different Chinese treatises. In such cases, he always reminded his readers of his reluctance to use these textual sources. He stated that most paintings during the period from the fifth century to the beginning of the seventh century no longer existed. He stressed that it was difficult to deduce the painting history of this period. He had no choice but to devise a brief outline of the painting development drawing entirely on textual documents (Teng 1933: 14). When referring to earlier written records, Teng Gu maintained a distance from them. In a typically critical attitude, after citing records on the painter Zhan Ziqian (mid-late 6th century), he claimed that he did not trust the ambiguous approval of Zhan by earlier generations of Chinese critics. Since none of Zhan's works had been handed down, Teng could not grasp the meaning of comments that claimed "Brush touch is full of emotions to its object, [and] the completeness is amazing" (Teng 1933: 17). In the case of Wang Wei, Teng Gu suggested that the influential art critic Dong Qichang (1555–1636) and his followers had exaggerated Wang's achievement in painting. He did not deny that a poetic flavour in Wang Wei's painting might have existed, but he doubted the technical invention by Wang in brush and ink that later enthusiasts claimed. Teng proposed that from the painting *The Snowy Landscape* (Jiangshan xueji tu), traditionally attributed to Wang, the artist had not invented "texture-ink (xuandan fa)" but remained at the stage of "outline drawing (gouzhuo)". Teng Gu suggested that art historians should distinguish "excessive flatteries" from "penetrating judgment" (Teng 1933: 35–36).

Teng Gu professed that the transformation from a history of artists to a history of artworks in Chinese art history would not be easy. He declared that even in Western scholarship it took time for such an essential change to happen. Given the various conditions in Chinese academia, Teng believed that it was nigh on impossible for him to accomplish a history of artworks (Teng 1933: 39). To promote such an art historical approach, Teng was eager to discover more visual materials. This is the major reason why he shifted his at-

attention to artistic materials in several archaeological findings during the 1930s.

After his return from Europe, Teng Gu turned to some relics from the Han and Tang periods for archaeological research. He was keen on acquiring as much visual evidence as possible for his historical accounts. He produced several essays on decorative patterns in tombs or on tiles. Since there was no way to ascertain who the creators of these patterns were, Teng focused solely on the pictorial aspect and its formal analysis. In his mind, style analysis was a powerful means of dealing with a tremendous number of Chinese artworks whose creators were unknown or uncertain, a fact that had previously disqualified these objects from any analytical treatment.

In his 1936 essay “The Animal Patterns on Eave Tiles in the Southern Capital of Yan”, Teng Gu analyzed decorative patterns on tiles discovered in the former southern capital of the State of Yan (roughly equivalent to Hebei province) during the Warring States period. Teng chose fifty samples with clear patterns from a few hundred Yan tiles. He photographed them and made rubbings of them, before dividing the patterns on these tiles into seven large categories and subsequently into sixteen sub-categories. He explored the origin and development of these decorative patterns, comparing them with the patterns on bronze vessels. In accounting for his decision to bring these two kinds of seemingly incompatible art production together, Teng Gu acknowledged the huge material differences between bronzes and tiles, citing also production procedures, function, and value. However, he argued, that since he could obtain no other ancient tiles with decorative patterns, he had no comparative recourse other than bronze vessels. He focused on the motif of taotie, a set of animal features which had long been a theriomorphic design on different media, including bronze and jade. Analyzing the horns, foreheads, eyebrows, eyes, noses, wings, and feet of taotie on different pieces, he suggested that, like the taotie pattern on bronze vessels, the same pattern had been stylized to its symmetrical extreme on these tiles. On the other hand, unlike on bronze vessels, it had lost its fierce expression, which meant that it became purely decorative and without religious connotation. He moved on to show that there was no influence from Scythian-Siberian zoomorphic patterns on the Yan tiles. Believing that the Scythian-Siberian influence on Chinese art dated to the Han dynasty, Teng suggested that the Yan tiles were produced later than the early bronze items of the Spring and Autumn period and earlier than objects from the Han dynasty. He therefore dated these Yan tiles to the Warring States period (Teng 1936).

Adopting the same method, Teng Gu investigated Han tomb sculpture and stone carving as well as sculptures in the tombs of the Six Dynasties (Teng 1934b, 1937c, 1935a). These valuable visual materials and his preliminary examination positioned him to write a promising new history of artworks in China, an ambition which his early death precluded.

Teng Gu's attitudes towards some conventional beliefs are also intriguing. Teng disregarded the traditional meanings of literati painting, which he termed scholar-bureaucrats' painting (*shidafu hua*). He summed up three different aims of literati painting commonly exploited to narrate the history of Chinese painting: 1) literati painting distinguished the literati as creators of painting in distinction to artisans who followed workshop instructions; 2) literati painting defined painting as a form of recreation for the literati;

3) literati painting adopted the subject of landscape in order to develop schools, such as the famous the Southern and Northern schools (nanbei zong). Teng took pains to avoid any of these topics, especially the third one which he considered an invention by Ming scholars purely to promote their own art theories. In fact, he proposed that all painters of the past who had left their names in history belonged to the literati group. He attributed the development in Chinese ink painting after the middle Tang period to the literati who struggled against the shackles imposed upon them by religion or political control (Teng 1933: 71–72). The differences in style between various examples of literati painting were caused by the different personalities and lifestyles of the literati. His examples included those who were actively involved with social issues, and others who preferred the life of a recluse (Teng 1933: 80). These diverse lifestyles created distinct tastes for literati painting. Using the same logic, he proposed that catering to court taste was the origin of the academic style in Chinese painting. In his opinion, this academic style fully developed into an independent style of its own in the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279). He replaced the term “academic style (yuanti)” with “pavilion style (guange ti)” because he felt that the bias contained in “academic style”, which had been misused for so long, was no longer apt for a more objective rationalization of historical painting experience (Teng 1933: 88–89, 109–10).

Teng Gu realized that the Ming separation of the Southern and Northern Schools was not a historical depiction of the real situation. According to Teng, this division was first proposed by the painter Mo Shilong (1537–1587). Dong Qichang accepted this claim and promoted it in his writing. Both theorists separated Chinese painting from the Tang dynasty into the Southern School whose founder was Wang Wei and the Northern School whose founder was Li Sixun. Teng Gu's critique of this claim was based upon the fact that during the Tang and Song centuries, an absolute division between the Southern and Northern Schools simply did not exist. According to him, Wang and Li's styles were not opposed to each other. Even in the Song period, the academic style emerged as one branch of literati painting and enriched the styles of literati painting (Teng 1933: 6–7). For instance, according to traditional views, Mi Fu was considered to be an artist with a strong preference for the Southern School tradition. However, Teng pointed out that Mi also practiced coloured landscape painting which possessed a more realistic style (Teng 1933: 97). Furthermore, Teng Gu strongly disagreed with any proposition to place one school over another. He suggested that the Northern School, which had been equated with more craftsmanship, was actually as full of literati spirit as the Southern School. Teng uses Zhao Boju (1119–1185) as an example to illustrate this revision. Zhao was representative of the academic painters at the Southern Song court, and Teng Gu cited the promoter of the Southern School Dong Qichang's admiration for Zhao. Dong had praised Zhao's meticulous fine brushwork as harmonious with a literati spirit. In Teng's eyes, not just Zhao, but all technically competent court painters were heir to literati painting (Teng 1933: 97–99). He realized that Dong Qichang's authoritative proposition closed the options for alternative ideas to develop Chinese painting history.

In the traditional narratives of Chinese painting, the painting masters in the early years of the Tang dynasty were considered as both the creators and unassailable paradigms of the Chinese painting tradition.

The later generations were described as followers and imitators. Teng Gu had his own opinion. He agreed that these early masters were the creators, but he did not believe in their paradigmatic status. Their followers not only imitated their styles, but also improved these styles and even gradually generated new styles. In this sense, he imagined that it was difficult to affirm the superiority of artists in the first half of the Tang dynasty. He asserted a claim that no Chinese scholar had dared before: painting from the late Tang period was superior to the early Tang dynasty. He stated that late Tang painting enriched every part of the style constructed during the previous ages. He believed that the art production from the Tang to Song centuries moved forward towards an ideal state of perfection (Teng 1933: 39, 46, 53). Teleology of this nature was a striking departure from the usual views of the past.

Teng Gu's untimely death prevented him from completing the entire process of revision that he embarked on, but he remained influential. His contemporaries accepted his ideas. Zheng Wuchang compiled a textbook entitled *A History of Chinese Art* in 1935. The first chapter of this book was a combination of Teng Gu's comments on Herbert Read's ideas and an abridged version of Teng Gu's *A Brief History of Chinese Art* (1926). Similarly, Pan Tianshou used Teng Gu's periodization in his 1935 article "A Brief History of Chinese Painting (Zhongguo huihua shilüe)". Fu Baoshi, too, in 1940, agreed with Teng's periodization of Chinese art (Fu 1986 [1940]: 287). Important art journals in Republican China published and reprinted Teng's creative writings. For example, after the publication of "An Investigation into the History of Academic Style Painting and Literati Painting" (1931) in the *Academic Journal of Furen University*, editors of *Art Tri-monthly* (Yishu xunkan) realized the importance of this article, and gained Teng Gu's permission to reprint this article in 1932 (Teng 1932).

Teng Gu's influence remains strong even today. Lothar Ledderose recalls that his own teachers in Germany are members of a generation whose age permits them to recall from memory that Teng Gu was an impressive art historian. Today, a group of leading Chinese art historians has rediscovered Teng Gu and has determined to follow Teng Gu's route to discuss the history of Chinese art. Chen Zhenlian, for example, has suggested writing a cultural history of Chinese calligraphy without using the name of any calligrapher (Chen 2002: 3), a proposition which is exactly what Teng Gu promoted. Fan Jingzhong has republished articles written by Teng Gu, which he considers to be valuable to current Chinese scholarship. Fan has singled out Teng Gu as the only Chinese art historian who mastered Western art historical studies, and entered an international academic world in the first half of the twentieth century. Fan plans to translate Teng's German writings including Teng's PhD thesis into Chinese. He agrees too that style analysis is a useful method with which to study the historical development of Chinese painting. Fan and his colleagues have started a project to adapt Western methods in the discussion of Chinese art history in a much wider scope. Not insignificantly, their starting point has been a serial publication of translations of the leading Western art historians' original texts with which Teng Gu began his academic research.

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2 Personal communication from Lothar Ledderose.

3 Personal communication from Fan Jingzhong.

GLOSSARY

- baluoke shi 巴洛克式  
beizong 北宗  
benxing 本性  
bimo jiangu 筆墨兼顧  
chao geren 超個人  
Diwang tu 帝王圖  
Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555–1636)  
Duan Fang 端方 (1861–1911)  
fengge fazhan/zhuanhuan 風格發展 / 轉換  
Fu Baoshi 傅抱石 (1904–1965)  
fupi cun 斧劈皴  
gongshi louge hua 宮室樓閣畫  
gouzhuo 勾斫  
Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (ca. 345–ca. 406)  
Guan Mianjun 關冕均  
guange ti 館閣體  
Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978)  
haoshuang de 豪爽的  
huade 畫的  
huaniao hua 花鳥畫  
Huashi 畫史  
Huo Qubing 霍去病 (140–117 BCE)  
Jiangshan xueji tu 江山雪霽圖  
jiehua 界畫  
Kinbara Seigo 金原省吾 (1888–1963)  
Li Sixun 李思訓 (651–716)  
Liang Hongzhi 梁鴻志 (1882–1946)  
Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929)  
Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936)  
Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 (1866–1940)  
luoma shi 羅馬式  
Mi Fu 米芾 (1052–1107)  
ming'an fa 明暗法  
mo 墨  
Mo Shilong 莫是龍 (1537–1587)  
nanbei zong 南北宗  
nanzong 南宗

ni fudiao de 擬浮雕的  
ni huihua de 擬繪畫的  
Nüshi zhen tujian 女史箴圖卷  
Pan Tianshou 潘天壽 (1886–1971)  
pomo 潑墨  
quanbu de lishi 全部的歷史  
se 色  
Shanshui tu 山水圖  
shi 式  
shidafu hua 士大夫畫  
shuqing de 抒情的  
Songzi tianwang tu 送子天王圖  
Su Dongpo 蘇東坡 (1037–1101)  
taotie 饕餮  
Teng Gu 滕固 (1901–1941)  
tiexian miao 鐵綫描  
tubi 秃筆  
Wang Wei 王維 (699–759)  
Wu Daozi 吳道子 (active ca. 710–760)  
xian 線  
xianmiao de 綫描的  
xiede 寫的  
xuandan fa 渲淡法  
xuanran de 渲染的  
ya ca 壓擦  
Yan Liben 閻立本 (ca. 600–673)  
yuanti 院體  
Yuchi Yiseng 尉遲乙僧 (7th century)  
yudian cun 雨點皴  
Zhan Ziqian 展子虔 (mid-late 6th century)  
Zhao Boju 趙伯駒 (1119–1185)  
Zheng Wuchang 鄭午昌 (1894–1952)  
zhengzhao 徵兆  
zhigan 質感  
Zhongde xuehui 中德學會  
Zhongguo yishushi xuehui 中國藝術史學會  
Zhongyang guwu baoguan weiyuanhui 中央古物保管委員會  
zhuangshi de 裝飾的

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