

Literary and Visual Interactions in Lo Chih-ch'uan's *Crows in Old Trees*

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FOR WAYNE HARTMAN, PASSIONATE ART CRITIC, MASTER ORNITHOLOGIST

At all times the crows are sociable, but in the winter are doubly so, assembling by the hundreds at some common roosting place. True to the traits of the *Corvidae* group throughout the world, this crow holds "caucuses" at which time crows from miles around assemble to participate in the discussion of weighty clan affairs. . . . One can almost read into the assemblage of crows, courts of justice, some kind of a military system and the maintaining of observation posts. There is no family of birds where society seems to come so nearly having an organization and a system for maintaining order as with the *Corvidae*. We brand the parson crow a thief, a brigand and a rascal, all of which he is, yet we must in fairness to facts, agree that the eggs and nestlings destroyed, and the destruction to various crops of the farmer folk are insignificant wrongs as compared with the good done in search for food with which to satisfy the demands at home.

Harry R. and John C. Caldwell,
South China Birds (Shanghai, 1931) pp. 3-4.

THIS ARTICLE IS an iconographic study of the Chinese landscape painting known as *Crows in Old Trees* by the Yüan dynasty (1280-1368) artist Lo Chih-ch'uan 羅稚川 (ca. 1265-ca. 1340) in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figure 1). Studies by modern art historians have confirmed the date of this work as early to mid-Yüan and placed its style securely within the Yüan continuation of the Li Ch'eng/Kuo Hsi tradition of Northern Sung dynasty (960-1126) landscape painting.¹ These studies have also hinted at possible meanings for the work. Wen Fong notes that the individual details "all convey a heavy sense of gloom and desolation."² Richard Barnhart writes that "it requires no great effort of the imagination to believe that this subject held symbolic meaning for the entire class of scholars living out the winter of Mongol occupation."³ The present article ex-

There is no doubt that these [Elliot's] pheasants are extremely local and not abundant anywhere. They are very timid birds, and to a certain extent this may account for their apparent scarcity. Their silence is another factor in keeping their presence from being known, and I have never heard these birds to utter a sound except under the provocation of extreme fear, or again when, feeding quietly, they give voice to the usual low phasianine murmur or chuckle.

William Beebe, *A Monograph of the Pheasant* (London, 1918-22) III, p. 192.

plores in detail the iconography of the painting in an effort to explain how the work articulates this perceived symbolic meaning. An examination of the painting in a series of cultural contexts, both literary and visual, will elucidate the symbolic value of the individual iconographic elements that make up *Crows in Old Trees*.

Lo Chih-ch'uan is not among the famous names in the history of Chinese painting. At present, only three of his works are known to survive. Of these, *Crows in Old Trees* is clearly the most impressive and interesting. The theme and composition of a second work entitled *Snowy River Bank* (*Hsüeh Chiang p'u t'u* 雪江浦圖) in the Tokyo National Museum are closely related to those of *Crows in Old Trees* (Figure 2).⁴ The third work, an album leaf in the Cleveland Museum of Art entitled *With Walking Staff Through the Cold Forest* (*Han-lin ts'e-chang* 寒林策杖), is related, albeit in a more distant way, to the first two works (Figure 3).⁵ With the exception of an old label set in the mounting of *Crows in Old Trees* there are

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宋李營五古木寒鴉圖真跡之二

Figure 1. Lo Chih-ch'uan (ca. 1265–ca. 1340), *Crows in Old Trees*. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk (131.5 x 80 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, by exchange, 1973, 1973.121.6

no signatures or inscriptions of any kind on these paintings, and their common attribution to Lo Chih-ch'uan rests on the presence of the artist's seals on each of the three works. There seems to be no question that the three works are genuine and from the hand of the same artist. A fourth painting, *Carrying a Lute on a Visit*, in the Cleveland Museum has been attributed to Lo on stylistic grounds, although there is no seal on the painting to strengthen this attribution (Figure 4).⁶

The Metropolitan's *Crows in Old Trees* is a hanging scroll 131.5 by 80 centimeters. The present mounting and restoration are modern, but the hosels on the roller are Ming dynasty red lacquer and, together with the old label, may survive from an earlier mounting. Fragments of a seal in the upper right-hand corner, unrecorded in previous scholarship, would also seem to indicate that the painting has been slightly trimmed during an earlier remounting. The old label reads *Sung Li Ying-ch'iu ku-mu han-ya t'u chen-chi shen-pin* 宋李營丘古木寒鴉圖真跡神品 "the painting *Jackdaws in Old Trees* by Li Ch'eng of the Sung dynasty. Genuine. A work of the inspired class." As we shall see, virtually every detail of this label is wrong, except perhaps the classification of the work as "inspired." The painting is also known in modern secondary literature as *Han-lin kuei-ya* 寒林歸鴉 (*Crows Returning to the Cold Forest*) and *Han-lin ch'ün-ya* 寒林羣鴉 (*Flocking Crows Over the Cold Forest*).⁷

Crows in Old Trees is indeed a painting of gloom and desolation. A frozen riverbed, covered with snow, enters the painting from behind a small promontory on the upper right and curves leftward around the promontory to exit again at the lower right. Mist weaves through a group of pine trees on the far shore at the upper left. In the foreground, two large deciduous trees rise from the eroded banks of the near shore and dominate the center of the painting. At the base of these trees, clumps of bamboo flank two male pheasants, one with his back to the viewer, the other partially hidden by the trunk of a smaller tree. A flock of crows (I count thirty-five) circles above the two trees. Eight have settled into the upper branches of the tallest tree, while several others remain on the opposite promontory. For reasons that will shortly become obvious, the painting almost certainly depicts an evening scene.

Traditional Chinese painting catalogues contain only one possible mention of the Metropolitan painting. In the winter of 1652 Wu Ch'i-chen 吳其

貞 saw a painting entitled *Li Ying-ch'iu Ku-mu han-ya t'u* 李營丘古木寒鴉圖 in the Su-chou residence of the younger brother of the painter Wang To 王鐸 (1592–1652). Wu commented on the work:

The style of the painting is elegant yet has the strength of age. There are rather many examples of this picture done by Sung artists, but here the tree branches are drawn with ease and maturity as when someone writes grass script. Only Li Ch'eng could have accomplished this.⁸

There is a good chance that the painting Wu Ch'i-chen saw was the Metropolitan *Crows in Old Trees*. Wu's attribution and title are identical to the old label, and his description of the style matches the painting. Wu usually recorded inscriptions in his catalogue, so his silence in this notice would indicate that, like the Metropolitan painting, the painting Wu saw was not inscribed. Wu unfortunately did not record seals. Finally, even though Wu does not question the attribution to Li Ch'eng, his high evaluation of this painting's quality tallies with his equally high evaluation of a signed Lo Chih-ch'uan painting he had seen, *Farmstead with Cattle and Sheep*, to which we shall return shortly.

The first part of this article collects and reviews references to Lo Chih-ch'uan and his paintings in Yüan dynasty literary collections. The publication of several new reference works has made it possible to expand considerably those references to Lo Chih-ch'uan first gathered by Shimada Shūjirō in his 1938 article.⁹ This enlarged body of texts affords a better view of the full range of Lo's artistic expression and presents a much wider context against which to understand his existing paintings, especially *Crows in Old Trees*.

The second part of the article examines the literary and visual associations of cold forests/old trees, pheasants, and crows—the work's major iconographic elements. Previous studies of the painting allude only in a general way to the presence of the birds—sometimes they are crows, sometimes jackdaws, sometimes pheasants, sometimes ducks. However, Chinese literate culture has from its very beginnings attached specific analogical values to the flora and fauna of the physical landscape, and in this system a pheasant is not a duck, and a jackdaw is not a crow. For a visual work of art to be part of this system of values, the viewer must be able to identify the fauna closely enough to link the visual representation with its corresponding literary parallels. Generic "birds" can never have analogic

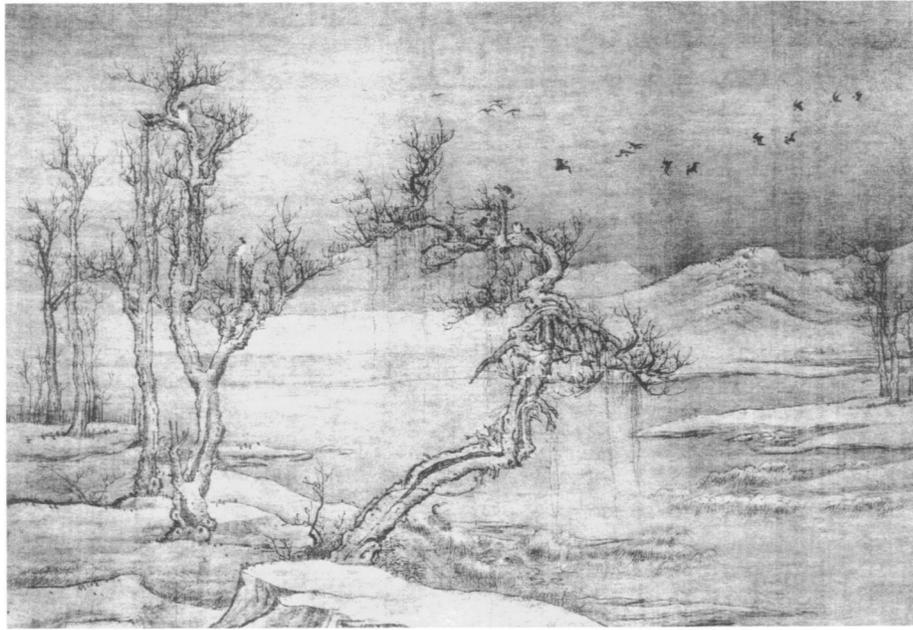


Figure 2. Lo Chih-ch'uan, *Snowy River Bank*. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk (53.4 x 78.5 cm). Tokyo National Museum collection



Figure 3. Lo Chih-ch'uan, *With Walking Stick Through the Cold Forest*. Album leaf, ink on silk, 23.4 x 25.1 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of the John Huntington Art and Polytechnic Trust, 15.536 (photo: The Cleveland Museum of Art)

value. Lo Chih-ch'uan has drawn his birds with such meticulous detail that in each case not only the genus but also their species can be precisely identified. The artist's detailed precision regarding ornithological characteristics is thus an important clue to the painting's symbolic meaning. The final section of the article will attempt to "read" the meaning of the painting in light of the analogic values of each iconographic element.

LO CHIH-CH'UAN, THE RECLUSE

A poem by Chieh Hsi-ssu 揭傒斯 (1274–1344) (text #7 below) identifies Lo Chih-ch'uan as a native of Lin-chiang 臨江; and this information is repeated in an early-sixteenth-century Japanese source (#21 below). In the Sung, Lin-chiang designated a military prefecture in the center of modern Kiangsi Province. A poem by Fu Jo-chin 傅若金 (1303–42) states that Lo Chih-ch'uan and the author were natives of the same district.¹⁰ Fu was a native of Hsin-yü 新喻 County, one of the constituent counties of Lin-chiang. Finally, Chao Wen's 趙文 (1239–1315) "Presented to Lo Chih-ch'uan for His Excellence in Painting," translated in full below, identifies Lo and his older brother as natives of Yü-ch'uan 渝川, the Yü River, an alternative name for the Yüan River 袁江 that flows through Lin-chiang Prefecture, joining the Kan River 贛江 at the Lin-chiang prefectural seat of Ch'ing-chiang 清江. The 1572 gazetteer of Lin-chiang notes about twenty-five miles downriver from Hsin-yü a "Lo Stream post station" 羅溪驛.¹¹ Although he is not mentioned in any of the Ming and Ch'ing gazetteers of Hsin-yü, and although I have been unable to determine his relation to the many Sung and Yüan dynasty Los mentioned in the same gazetteers, the three contemporary Yüan texts mentioned above strongly suggest that Lo Chih-ch'uan was a native of this area of the Yü River valley. The area was noted for the beauty of its landscape, and in the Southern Sung an important post road from the Sung capital to southwestern China ran through the valley of the Yü River.¹² This entire central Kiangsi region was an important cultural and economic center during the Sung and Yüan periods.¹³

I have to date discovered twenty-two references in literary sources to paintings by Lo Chih-ch'uan. Eighteen of these references are inscriptions on Lo Chih-ch'uan paintings preserved in the collected works of Yüan literary figures; four are mentions of



Figure 4. Unknown artist, Yüan dynasty (1280–1368), *Carrying a Lute on a Visit*. Style of the Li Ch'eng-Kuo Hsi school. Hanging scroll (non-paneled), ink on silk, 81.2 x 35.2 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase, General Income Fund, 19.974 (photo: The Cleveland Museum of Art)

his works in Chinese, Korean, or Japanese painting catalogues. The following list presents this information and contains the author of the inscription, his native place, and either a translation of the inscription or a summary of its contents. For natives of Kiangsi Province, I have given exact places of origin in relation to Lo Chih-ch'uan's native Hsin-yü; non-natives of Kiangsi are simply designated "non-native."¹⁴

1) Liu Shen 劉詵 (1268–1350), native of Chi-shui 吉水, Kiangsi, south of Hsin-yü, was a Confucian

recluse and private-school teacher who refused government appointment as an education official. “Inscribed on a Small Scene of Lo Chih-ch’uan” 題羅稚川小景:

The wind raps the small tree, the old tree has no leaves;
the near shore is half-covered in haze of evening clouds.
A man riding a donkey points to a high building and departs;
he does not know at whose house he will stay the night.¹⁵

2) Liu Shen. “Inscribed on a Small Scene of Lo Chih-ch’uan” 題羅稚川小景: In the distance is an island with hills, and then a closer flat island. There are tall trees with few leaves, smaller green trees, and a long stream with fishing boats. A waterside pavilion with balustrades leads to a house. A guest arrives and is met by the host, who leans on a staff. The last couplet compares the location to the T’ang dynasty poet Tu Fu’s residence at Ch’eng-tu and the figure to the famous recluse T’ao Ch’ien.¹⁶

3) Liu Shen. “Inscribed on Lo Chih-ch’uan’s *Painting of Palaces Amid Landscape* in the Collection of P’eng I-yüan” 題彭宜遠所藏羅稚川山水樓閣圖: The painting depicted a summer mountain landscape with fishermen, a poet, his servant, and a donkey crossing a bridge. There is a beautiful woman in a terraced building to the west of the mountains. The closing quatrain reads:

I have heard P’eng-lai has a place like this,
but flowing waters and falling flowers separate it
from the world of men.
Perhaps I could buy a pair of green straw sandals
and go there for a while to live a thousand years.¹⁷

4) Liu Shen. “Inscribed on the Painting *Village in the Mist* by Lo Chih-ch’uan in the Collection of T’ieh Chung-chien” 題鐵仲堅所藏羅稚川煙村圖 is translated in full below.¹⁸

5) Fan P’eng 范曄 (1272–1330), fellow native of Hsin-yü, was an official and major Yüan poet. “Inscribed on Chih-ch’uan’s *Painting of Rushes and a Goose*” 題稚川蘆鴈圖 is translated below.¹⁹

6) Chieh Hsi-ssu (1274–1344), native of Feng-ch’eng 豐城, Kiangsi, northeast of Hsin-yü, was a Yüan official and major poet. His “Inscribed on a *Painting by Lo Chih-ch’uan of the Chien Stream*

Residence of Lo I in Lin-ch’uan” 題羅稚川所畫臨川羅益謙溪居圖 describes a painting of a “scholar’s hut” beside a stream against a panorama of Lin-ch’uan Prefecture, the eastern neighbor of Lo Chih-ch’uan’s native Lin-chiang Prefecture.²⁰

7) Chieh Hsi-ssu. “Inscribed on *Autumn Reeds and a Flock of Geese*, a *Painting by Lo Chih-ch’uan Presented to Governor Li by Edict Attendant Chao of the Academy of Worthies*” 題集賢趙待制贈黎使君羅稚川所畫秋蘆羣鴈圖 opens with the following quatrain:

When the master painter Lo Chih-ch’uan of Lin-chiang
lowered his brush, he hoped to surpass Chao Ling-
jang.
This work that the Gentleman from the Academy
has acquired
shows the waters and skies of Lang-kuan Lake.²¹

The painting depicted a flock of geese against a panoramic landscape of the Lang-kuan Lake 郎官湖 area northeast of Han-yang 漢陽 County in Hupei Province.

8) Chieh Hsi-ssu. “Inscribed on Lo Chih-ch’uan’s *Evening Scene on an Autumn River* in the Collection of Ou-yang Lung-nan” 題歐陽龍南所藏羅稚川秋江晚景圖 first laments the frustrations of Chieh’s official career and the coming of old age. It goes on to describe a painting that depicted an evening autumn scene with a winding stream, leafless trees, and geese.²²

9) Yü Chi 虞集 (1272–1348), whose family took refuge in Lin-ch’uan, Kiangsi, at the end of the Sung and who retired there in 1333, was a major Yüan official and poet. His “Poem on Empty Mountain” 空山歌 was inscribed on a painting by Lo Chih-ch’uan of the retirement residence of a military official surnamed Nieh 聶 at Nan-ch’eng 南城, Lin-ch’uan Prefecture.²³

10) Chu Ssu-pen 朱思本 (1273–?) was a native of Lin-ch’uan Prefecture adjacent to Lin-chiang. His poem “Inscribed on a *Landscape Painting of I-ch’ün County Presented to Hsieh Ching-ch’u*” 題宜春山水圖贈謝景初 describes a panoramic landscape painting of I-ch’ün County, immediately upriver from Hsin-yü, by Lo Chih-ch’uan.²⁴

11) Ting Fu 丁復 (early Yüan dynasty), non-native, was recommended unsuccessfully for a Han-lin po-

sition in 1314. “Inscribed on a Landscape of Chih-ch’uan” 題稚川山水 is a long poem describing various scenes, perhaps on a handscroll. The life of a lonesome poet without wine or companion is contrasted to that of two fishermen who sell their fish for wine and sing themselves to sleep under the night moon. The place is compared to P’eng-lai, and the last couplet reads:

There where men will never grow old in a hundred years
laughing and sighing is Lo Chih-ch’uan.²⁵

12) Ch’en Lü 陳旅 (1287–1342), non-native, was recommended for government service by Yü Chi and entered the Han-lin in 1338. His “Inscribed on a Handscroll of Lo Chih-ch’uan” 題羅稚川畫卷 describes an autumn evening scene with river and rainy forest. A recluse (*tao-jen*) descends a mountain path to a thatched hut.²⁶

13) Hu Chu 胡助 (early 14th c.), non-native, went to the capital in 1330 and retired in 1345. “A Lo Chih-ch’uan Landscape” 羅稚川山水 reads:

The landscapes of Chih-ch’uan are deep and unusual,
detailed and distinct like those of Kuo Hsi.
Why does the boatman seem to hurry in his return?
The winds blow over the stream, the rains about to come.²⁷

14) Hu Chu. “A Lo Chih-ch’uan Snow Scene” 羅稚川雪景 reads:

A single fisherman alone on the cold river like a frozen fly,
five stories high, a thousand-year-old tree hung with dead creepers.
On the path to the north of the mountain there are no tracks,
around the houses beyond the forest snow fills the fishing nets.²⁸

15) Nasen 迺賢 (1309–?), non-native, was a Qarluq Turk, Chinese name Ma I-chih 馬易之, who settled in Honan and later Chekiang. He served in the Han-lin and in the military. His “Ten Rhymes on a Landscape of Lo Chih-ch’uan Inscribed for Ying K’o-li of Yung-tung” 羅稚川山水十韻為甬東應可立題 describes an evening scene in early autumn, a stream, an island covered with green vegetation, and tall trees. At the mouth of a valley is a small house; a fisherman in his boat approaches the shore, singing. The poem ends:

This bamboo path can detain the traveler;
in this peach-blossom spring, one can become a transcendent.

This painting is superlative,
with poetic inscriptions by famous men.
A recluse for his entire life,
full of emotion I think of Lo Chih-ch’uan.²⁹

16) Liu Jen-pen 劉仁本 (d. 1367), non-native. “Four Poems Inscribing Small Scenes by Lo Chih-ch’uan” 題羅稚川小景畫四首 are four *chüeh-chu* inscribed on scenes of the four seasons. The text of “winter” is translated below.³⁰

17) Lin Pi 林弼 (*chin-shih* 1347) was not a native of Kiangsi, but he served as magistrate of Feng-ch’eng, northeast of Hsin-yü. His poem “Inscribed on a Painting of Lo Chih-ch’uan” 題羅稚川畫 is translated below.³¹

18) Lin Pi. His Poem “Inscribed on a Painting *Fishing by the Autumn Bank*” 題秋浦捕漁圖 describes a fisherman preparing his catch for his wife and children. The painting by “old Chih-ch’uan” makes the author wish he could enter the painting and join the idyllic scene.³²

The remaining four references occur in painting catalogues:

19) Wu Ch’i-chen (17th c.) recorded his comments on a handscroll entitled *Farmstead with Cattle and Sheep* by Lo Chih-ch’uan, which he saw in 1638: “In his depiction of human figures, trees, and walls his brushwork is antique and elegant; but the cattle and sheep are extremely detailed. There is one steer that is crossing the water, its body submerged in the water with only its nose and the tips of its horns above water. The effect is very realistic. An inspired work.”³³ This is the only explicit mention of a painting by Lo Chih-ch’uan in a Chinese painting catalogue.

20) A Korean catalogue of 222 paintings in the collection of Yi Yong 李瑤, also known as Prince Anp’yöng 安平大君 (1418–53), compiled by Sin Sukchu 申叔舟 (1417–75) in 1445 records a single painting by Lo Chih-ch’uan entitled *Snowy Mountains* 雪山圖 and notes that the works of Lo “were famous for being unusual and subtle, their character refreshing and new.”³⁴

21) A Japanese catalogue published in 1511, the *Kundaikan-sayū-chōki* 君臺觀左右帳記, contains references to two paintings of Lo Chih-ch'uan. The first, a color painting of egrets and ducks, is likened by the catalogue to the work of Wang Yüan 王淵 (ca. 1280–after 1369).

22) The second painting mentioned in the Japanese catalogue is a monochrome landscape likened to the work of Chao Meng-fu 趙孟頫 (1254–1322) and Chao Yung 趙雍 (ca. 1289–ca. 1362).³⁵

Examined carefully, these sources yield a wide range of information about Lo Chih-ch'uan and his work. Items #1–18 are particularly valuable, since these texts have been transmitted in the collected works of contemporaries of Lo Chih-ch'uan and not as transcriptions from possibly spurious paintings recorded in later painting catalogues.³⁶ Although it is possible that several of the above references may apply to the same painting, a careful examination of the titles and contents of the inscriptions strongly suggests that these references refer to twenty-two different paintings. The following analysis divides the information from these inscriptions into four parts: (1) Lo's life and artistic activities, (2) his artistic affiliations as a painter, (3) his theories of art, and (4) information specifically helpful to the study of *Crows in Old Trees*.

The Yü Chi (1272–1348) inscription, item #9, is the only text that was obviously composed at the same time as the execution of the painting. Yü Chi writes that he first saw Lo Chih-ch'uan paint in Fu-chou when he (Yü) was about twenty, thus about 1292. The implication is that Lo was somewhat older than Yü at that time. The text also states that the painting and the colophon were executed after Yü Chi's retirement and return to the Fu-chou area in 1333. Shimada Shūjirō estimated Lo Chih-ch'uan's life span at "the end of the Sung to about 1340." In light of the Yü Chi colophon, I would tend to accept the 1340 date but suggest that his birth date should be moved back by about a decade. Lo Chih-ch'uan's probable life span was thus about 1265–1340. This difference is important, for it means that Lo Chih-ch'uan would have been in his impressionable teenage rather than childhood years during the fall of the Sung in 1279.

Items #1–10 were all composed by scholars native to the central Kiangsi region. However, Fan P'eng's inscription on a Lo Chih-ch'uan painting of a goose among rushes (#5) provides interesting in-

formation about the dissemination of Lo's works beyond Kiangsi:

I do not see Mr. Lo, and my heart is troubled;
but his paintings have spread widely in the North.
He withdrew long ago to the Land of the
Immortals, and no one acknowledges him now,
just like this goose settled down beside the cold
rushes.

Fan P'eng left Kiangsi for the capital in 1307 and held various posts there for about twenty years prior to his retirement to Hsin-yü. This inscription thus confirms that by the second decade of the fourteenth century Lo's paintings circulated and were known in northern China, by which Fan probably means the Yüan capital at modern Peking.

A comparison of the ages and native places of the writers of these inscriptions reveals four probable stages in the diffusion of Lo's paintings. Local Kiangsi scholars, like the young Yü Chi in 1292, were obviously the first to appreciate Lo's talents. Second, these scholars then carried their appreciation (and doubtless numerous examples of the paintings themselves) with them to the North when they accepted government positions at the Yüan capital in the first decade of the fourteenth century. Inscriptions by the younger group of non-Kiangsi scholars (#11–17) represent a third stage in the spread of Lo's works, when colleagues of these Kiangsi scholars took examples of Lo's works with them home to other regions of the country. Finally, it is probable that the popularity of Lo's paintings in the Yüan capital, referred to in Fan P'eng's inscription, resulted in their diffusion to Korea (#20) and ultimately to Japan (#21–22).³⁷

The inscriptions also give a good sense of the range of the subject matter of Lo's paintings; and they clearly define him as a provincial practitioner of "literati painting" (*shih ta-fu hua* 士大夫畫). For instance, items #6 and 9 reveal that he was active in painting the country estates of locally retired scholars, a genre that was among the earliest subjects of literati painters.³⁸ Likewise characteristic of literati painting is the metaphorical depiction of animals. Fan P'eng's inscription translated above, for instance, shows that he understood the goose as a symbol for the painter himself; and it is likely that Lo's other paintings of animals, like the Metropolitan *Crows*, functioned in similar ways (#5, 19, 21).³⁹

The largest group of inscriptions, however, was recorded on landscape scenes to which the inscriptions attribute eremitic values (#3, 4, 11, 12, 15, 18).

Although the vocabulary of these texts is superficially “Taoist”—standard references to P’eng-lai, T’ao Ch’ien—there can be no doubt that the major commitment of the painter, as reflected in these texts, was toward the values of a Confucian reclusion that are well documented in this period.⁴⁰ That four of the surviving inscriptions derive from the pen of Liu Shen, one of the best-known Kiangsi Confucian recluses of the period, argues for an affinity of values between the poet and the painter.

There are two major aspects to this group of inscriptions on eremitic paintings. First, admiration for Lo’s life-style is expressed through the poetic fiction that he has attained immortality (#5, 11) and that his landscapes are depictions of the dwelling places of the immortals, P’eng-lai or Ying-chou (#3, 5, 11). In the inscription of the Qarluq scholar Nasen (#15), however, this admiration is tinged with a strong expression of regret that a man of Lo’s talents did not lead a more conventionally successful life, a sentiment also found in Fan P’eng’s poem (#5).

Second, one also finds among these texts the indirect association of reclusion with political non-conformity, which is characteristic of Yüan eremitism. Liu Shen’s inscription on Lo’s painting entitled *Village in the Mist* (#4) is the clearest expression of these sentiments, as well as being the best among the examples at hand of the Yüan genre of descriptive poems inscribed on paintings.

The deserted village is silent,
 mists trail through the mountains;
 whose is that rustic shop
 between the two trees,
 its green flag just extending
 beyond the tips of the branches,
 as autumn winds destroy the leaves,
 cold and scattered?
 The road passes by white rocks
 where flowing waters tumble,
 a long bridge dim and distant
 hugs the mountain stream.
 A fisher-woman has gotten her wine
 and looks to be hurrying home;
 with child in hand, they descend to cross the bridge,
 looking like geese alighting.
 Cold creepers on an old tree,
 and then another stream,
 and on a fishing boat food is being prepared,
 the nets hanging up at angles.
 There is fish and there is wine
 and once again a guest—
 with such manner of life

there is no need to be able to write poems.
 A confusion of crows dots
 the evening sky,
 about to land but not yet landed,
 they circle the tall tree.
 Seven or eight small boats
 spread over the shallows,
 some using long oars
 to retrieve fishing gear.

Do you not see
 “the Old Wine Skin” in his single boat
 roaming the five lakes
 and Yen Kuang in his lambskin coat
 fishing at T’ung-lü—
 how do we know these people
 are not their disciples?

Most lines in the poem describe physical details in the painting, obviously a scene of a fishing village on an autumn evening. Yet the details are selected with great attention to their allusive force: the old trees, the rocks, the image of geese alighting, but especially the wine motif—all suggest the recluse theme of the painting. This attention, in turn, highlights the work’s implicit narrative element: a woman has just purchased wine in the village wine-shop and hurries home to join in the evening meal, whose preparation has already begun. The poet’s first authorial intrusion into this descriptive narrative hints strongly at his understanding of the painting: people who enjoy this idyllic life have no need of poetry to enhance their appreciation of existence. The contrast is between the natural ease of the fisher-folk, in their effortless attainment of wine, food, and company, versus the studied reserve of the scholar-poet.

The final two couplets of the poem, however, frame the scene in mild political terms. “The Old Wine Skin” refers to Fan Li 范蠡, a fifth-century B.C. minister of the state of Yüeh. After reviving the fortunes of king and kingdom, Fan Li retired against his sovereign’s wishes into private life and departed for the state of Ch’i. There he amassed a personal fortune and was made minister but resigned once again to preserve his independence and integrity. He moved again to a third state and died honored, wealthy, and free.⁴¹ Yen Kuang 嚴光 was a childhood classmate of the Han emperor Kuang-wu (r. 25–57), but when the latter became emperor, Yen Kuang took up the life of a reclusive fisherman. Discovered by the emperor, Yen eventually agreed to visit the capital, where his relationship to the sovereign was so close that he was even invited to share

the imperial bed. Despite the obvious political advantages to be derived from this intimacy, Yen refused to accept a court position and returned to the life of a fisherman in Tung-lü, Chekiang, where he died happy in old age.⁴²

These concluding references to Fan Li and Yen Kuang underscore the poem's emphasis on the positive values of eremitism. The poem is not specifically anti-Yüan; it lauds rather the integrity of these two worthies, who managed not only to maintain individual honor in spite of their close contact with ultimate power but also to escape that power with honor and integrity and life intact. It is of course impossible to know how well Liu Shen's poem reflects the values of Lo Chih-ch'uan's painting; but the poet's status as one of the premier recluses of his age and his obvious affection for the painter would suggest that his poem is a sympathetic and informed reading of the painting.

Other inscriptions (#7, 13, 17, 19, 21-22) provide opinions about Lo's painting style and artistic affiliations. The most detailed of these is the colophon of Lin Pi (#17):

In the painting to the right by Lo Chih-ch'uan, the sloping banks, the trees, and rocks all have the flavor of Ching Hao and Kuan T'ung; but the mountains and the human figures resemble those of Ma Yüan, perhaps because Lo combined the styles of many people. Two figures sit in a boat dressed in the great robes of scholars with kerchiefs; their writing brushes, holders, and tea stove are clear in all details. Could they be disciples of Chang Chih-ho? Indeed, Chih-ch'uan is a painter from whom one can obtain the taste of life in retirement.

Lin Pi seems to make two observations about Lo Chih-ch'uan's painting, the first about its style, the second about its content.

Stylistically, Lo was an eclectic and "combined the styles of many people." There are two major sources of this composite style: his banks, trees, and rocks derive from the Li Ch'eng/Kuo Hsi tradition, here represented by the tenth-century originators of that style, Ching Hao 荆浩 and Kuan T'ung 關同. On the other hand, both the floating, indistinct mountain silhouettes and the detailed, precisely drawn human figures derive from the style of the Southern Sung Academy painter Ma Yüan 馬遠. In connection with Lin Pi's description of Lo's composite style, one may recall two contrasting comparisons from the above inscriptions: (1) Chieh Hsi-ssu's (item #7) comparison of Lo Chih-ch'uan to the late Northern Sung

painter Chao Ling-jang 趙令穰 (active 1070-1100), known for the soft, indistinct quality of his misty river scenes, and (2) Hu Chu's (item #13) remark that Lo's paintings were "detailed and distinct (*tien-chui fen-ming* 點綴分明) like those of Kuo Hsi." Lin Pi's colophon resolves these seemingly contrary characterizations and well describes the composite style of *Crows in Old Trees*, and particularly the Cleveland album leaf (Figure 3).

The reference to Chang Chih-ho 張志和 does not refer to the style of the painting but rather to the life-style that Lin Pi imputes to the figures in the painting and ultimately to the values he perceives the painter himself to have held. Chang was a mid-T'ang landscape painter who first served in the Han-lin Academy but left his position to become a reclusive fisherman; but "he never baited his hook when he went fishing, for his mind was not on the fish." Interestingly, Li Te-yü 李德裕 (787-850) compared him directly to Yen Kuang and attributed to him the latter's combination of integrity in public life and fame in reclusion.⁴³ So understood, the references in the colophon all serve to underscore the independence of Lo Chih-ch'uan, both in the eclectic nature of his painting style and in the eremitic values of his life.

We are fortunate to possess another text (not included in the above list) that purports to record Lo's theory of painting and an analysis of his style in his own words. This is a free-style poem entitled "Presented to Lo Chih-ch'uan for His Excellence in Painting" 羅稚川善畫作此贈之 by Chao Wen, a Kiangsi native and early Yüan education official.⁴⁴

When I look between Heaven and Earth,
everything I see is a painting or a poem.

In Yü-ch'uan are two members of the Lo clan
whose paintings are among the most handsome in
the world.

The Elder Lo is known far and wide for his poetry;
the Junior Lo has artistic inspirations that well up
inside him,

and he has no choice but to express them through
painting:

when you wield your brush, the creative power of
nature is shattered;

when you moisten your ink, the primal energy flows
richly.

Ah! On one occasion my old eyes got to view your
paintings;

and as my hands held them, some questions came to
my mind,

so I asked you, "What painters have there been
since Antiquity?"

Which master have you followed for this painting today?"

And you answered, "I use my eyes as my hands; and the myriad things between Heaven and Earth are my teacher.

Thus I am able to attain their meaning and inner order.

For their forms, I take the visible manifestation but particularize the surface appearance.

When a painting is completed, I really don't know if it looks like an actual scene or not; everyone, after all, has eyes of his own, and cannot be deceived.

We may compare the process to the way Ch'an seeks deliverance, but attachment to the Buddhas and Patriarchs is not delusion."

I have composed this poem to call attention to these eyes of the future that shall sweep away Hsü Hsi and Kuo Hsi.

In light of Lin Pi's observations on the eclectic nature of Lo's style, it is surely significant that in this exchange Lo declines to name any former masters as his models. Rather, "the myriad things of Heaven and Earth" or the physical objects of the visible world are his models. His goal is to express in painting both the "meaning" (*i* 意) and "inner order" (*li* 理) of the objects he portrays. The first term refers to the deeper significance of an object, to the analogical or metaphorical values that individual objects of the physical world were thought to possess. The second refers to the relationship of objects to each other, to the principles that Sung Neo-Confucianism sought to discern in the flux of Heaven and Earth. Although Lo takes the visible world as his starting point, he "particularizes the surface appearance" (*'e ch'i pi* 特其皮). I understand this phrase to mean that, although Lo takes his models directly from nature, he does not paint nature directly: the surface appearance of any given tree, rock, or mountain in a specific painting is particularized from the sum total of all the real trees, rocks, or mountains he has directly observed from nature. Thus even when the work is completed he is unable to say whether the total resembles any actual scene or not. His concern is only to express "meaning" and "inner order."

To clarify his theory, Lo draws an analogy with Ch'an Buddhism. He focuses on the Ch'an contrast between "delusion" (*ch'ih* 癡, Sanskrit *moha*), "to be misled by appearances, taking the seeming for the real," and *t'ou-t'o* 透脫, "deliverance, escape from worldly attachments."⁴⁵ The latter term is a euphe-

mism for enlightenment and is often paired in Ch'an literature with terms for freedom and independence from reliance on perceived phenomena, thus *t'ou-t'o tzu-tsai* 自在, "delivered and independent" or *t'ou-t'o wu-i* 無依, "delivered and without reliance."⁴⁶ The phrase refers to the self-sustaining and independent quality of the enlightened mind. Attachment to the Buddhas and Patriarchs is a necessary first condition in the quest for a deliverance that ultimately frees the Ch'an adept of all attachments, including attachment to the delusion of perceived reality and attachment to the Buddhas and Patriarchs themselves. In Lo's metaphor, visible reality must always be the starting point for the painter, just as devotion (i.e., attachment) to the Buddhas and Patriarchs is essential for the Ch'an novice. But the goal of both the religious novice and the novice painter is to transcend this initial dependence and attain a higher order of perception. From this new vantage point they perceive the meaning and inner order behind the surface appearance of reality and are freed at the same time from their earlier dependence on that same reality. For the painter and for the Ch'an adept, visible reality is both a delusion and the starting point for escape from that delusion. Thus the Ch'an master Lin-chi (d. 867) advises his students to "kill the Buddhas and Patriarchs, for only then shall you attain escape, be free of the visible world, delivered and independent."⁴⁷ In a similar iconoclastic and paradoxical vein Chao Wen writes that Lo Chih-ch'uan's paintings "shattered the creative power of Nature," even though Lo himself could state that "the myriad things between Heaven and Earth are my teacher."

Finally, the inscriptions listed above allow us to determine that the image of crows circling or perching on a large tree was a common motif in the works of Lo Chih-ch'uan. A couplet from the colophon of Liu Shen translated above (#4) describes precisely the scene of the Metropolitan painting:

A confusion of crows dots
the evening sky,
about to land but not yet landed,
they circle the tall tree.

The quatrain of Liu Jen-pen (#16) on the winter scene of four album leaves by Lo Chih-ch'uan likewise featured a slightly different crow motif:

An unusual rock—a squatting salt-white tiger—
a leafless stump—a suspended jade-white dragon:
hungry crows perch in rows,
no place to peck out the cold crickets.

The rock that looks like a tiger in white salt and the stump that looks like a suspended white dragon are clichés that describe abundant snowfall. In this poem the snowfall prevents the crows from ferreting out and consuming the crickets upon which they usually feed.

THE COLD FOREST

We move now to a consideration of the major iconographic elements of *Crows in Old Trees* and begin with the trees.

The metaphorical equivalence of trees and human beings occurs in Chinese culture as early as the Chou period (1122–256 B.C.) and continues into modern times.⁴⁸ Unlike in the West, however, where such equivalence also exists, in China this basic analogy developed into a complex, interrelated system of motifs that forms the background not only to *Crows in Old Trees* but also to the subgenre of Chinese landscape painting known as “Cold Forest” (*Han-lin* 寒林).⁴⁹ Relevant aspects of this diverse system include: first, a series of specific analogies between various species of trees and differing moral qualities and abilities of human beings; second, the concept of the forest or grove as an assembly of human beings; and third, the concept of the perch or “spot” in a tree or grove as a “spot” or position, either generally in society or specifically in government service.

For Mencius (372–289 B.C.), both “tall trees” (*ch’iao-mu* 喬木) and families able to produce trusted ministers generation after generation distinguish a great and ancient state.⁵⁰ Mencius took this expression for lofty trees and lofty men from the famous Chou dynasty *Classic of Poetry* (*Shih-ching* 詩經), and *ch’iao-mu* retained this possibility of dual reference throughout the course of traditional Chinese culture. In painting, the term occurs in the titles of works that usually feature a massive central tree that dominates the composition, often with one or two smaller trees in attendance to suggest the durability of the “tall tree” across generations. Among the best-known examples is *Old Trees, Bamboo, and Rocks* attributed to Li K’an 李衍 (1245–1320) in the Indianapolis Museum of Art, a work that Richard Barnhart describes as perhaps “the starkest and most powerful image of old trees surviving from the Yuan period” (Figure 5).⁵¹ This work, and the other paintings related to it, focus on the majesty, dura-

bility, and reliability of the Mencian equivalence of the great tree and the great man.

Among the clearest expressions of this equivalence in the theoretical literature on Chinese painting is Kuo Ssu’s 郭思 (d. after 1123) account of his father Kuo Hsi’s 郭熙 (ca. 1000–ca. 1090) *Pines Fill the View* (*I wang sung* 一望松):

My father took over two feet of a narrow piece of silk and made an old man leaning on a staff in front of a precipice under a large pine. Behind this point he painted innumerable pines, large and small in relative sequence. In a gorge below a twisting range there were several thousand pines in one uninterrupted view. Throughout the past there never had been a compositional arrangement [*pu-chih* 布置] of this sort. This painting was made for the [60th or 80th?] birthday of Wen Yen-po [1006–97, a long-term minister, enfeoffed], duke of Lu. The idea was to express the wish that his sons and grandsons become dukes and ministers in unbroken succession. The duke of Lu was greatly pleased.⁵²

Although Kuo Hsi invented the specific compositional arrangement (*pu-chih*) of this work to honor the birthday of Wen Yen-po, the painter was drawing on long-established correspondences between the great tree and the great man and the great tree as father to the forest.

Certainly the most influential passage on trees in early Chinese literature is the dictum of Confucius (551–479 B.C.) in *Analects* 9.28: “Only when the year turns cold is the point brought home that the pine and the cypress are the last to fade.” The pre-T’ang commentaries to this passage spell out its various assumptions and implications. The pine and cypress stand for the inner virtues of the superior man (*chün-tzu* 君子); the “common trees” (*chung-mu* 衆木) stand for the inferior man (*hsiao-jen* 小人). The *yang* 陽 seasons of spring and summer represent the peaceful reign of a good ruler; the *yin* 陰 seasons of autumn and winter are the chaotic reign of the bad ruler. During the warm seasons, when all the trees of the forest flourish green together, it is difficult to distinguish the unequal qualities of each variety. But when the cold seasons come, the inferior man is the first to abandon principle, just as the common trees are the first to wither and fade. But the same cold brings out the inner qualities of the pine and cypress, the superior man who abides by his virtues in adverse times. Thus does the cold distinguish the superior from the inferior man.⁵³ *Analects* 9.28 was reformulated countless times throughout the course

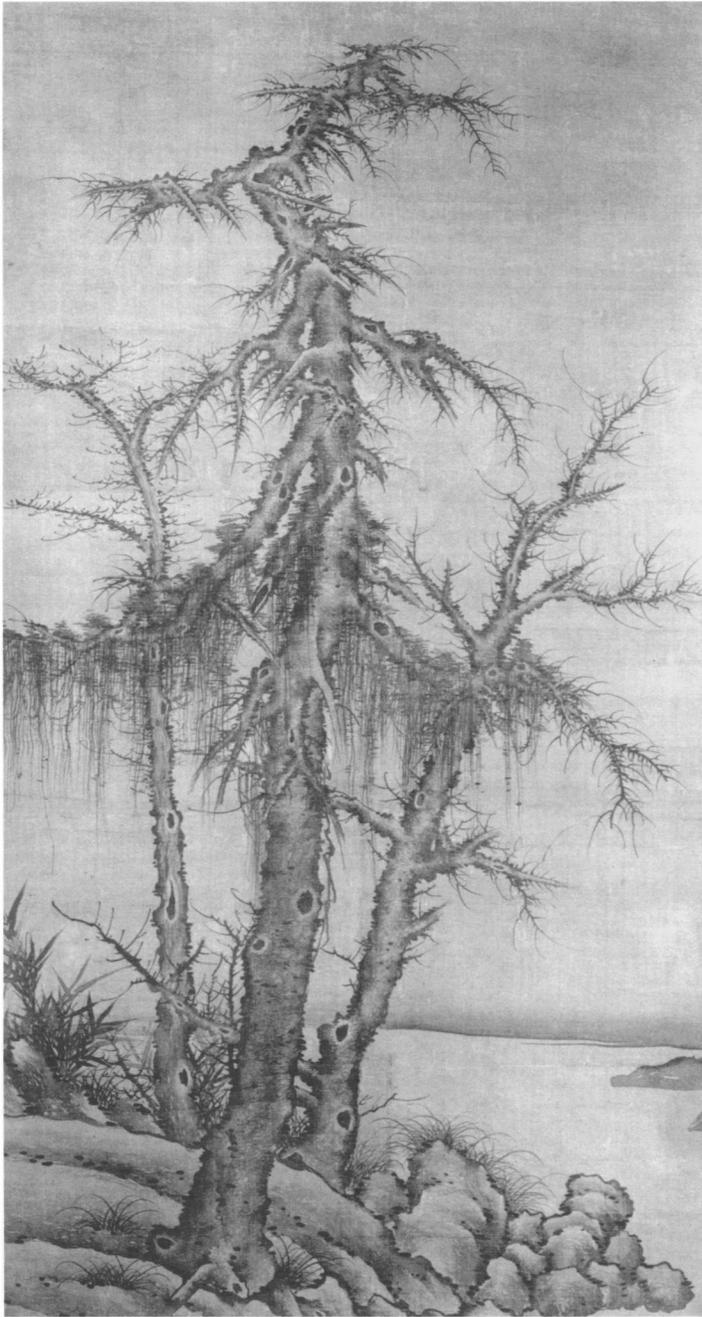


Figure 5. Attributed to Li K'an (1245–1320), *Old Trees, Bamboo, and Rocks*. Ink on silk, 159.4 x 85.7 cm. Indianapolis Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Eli Lilly (photo: Indianapolis Museum of Art)

of Chinese literature. Typical is the hope and consolation that the T'ang poet Ch'en Tzu-ang 陳子昂 (661–702) offered to a colleague dismissed into political exile: "The lone pine rights the close of year; but common trees love the fragrant spring" (*Ku sung i wan sui, chung-mu ai fang ch'ün* 孤松宜晚歲, 衆木愛芳春).⁵⁴

Paintings of large trees, especially pines, were often inscribed and presented as tokens of friendship. This symbolic import of the pine is most evi-

dent in the subgenre of paintings known as "Twin Pines" (*Shuang-sung* 雙松), where the doubling of the pine tree is clearly meant to suggest the indestructible union of the two parties. An early work of Wu Chen 吳鎮 (1280–1354), inscribed in the spring of 1328 and presented to a Taoist priest, is a classic example of the category (Figure 6).⁵⁵ Wu Chen has further reinforced the association of union by painting the two pines in a way that suggests an image of "trees with interlocking branches"



Figure 6. Wu Chen (1280–1354), *Twin Pines*, dated 1328. Hanging scroll, ink on silk, 180.1 x 111.4 cm. Taipei, Collection of the National Palace Museum (photo: National Palace Museum)



Figure 7. Ts'ao Chih-po (1272–1355), *Twin Pines*, dated 1329. Hanging scroll, ink on silk, 132.1 x 57.4 cm. Taipei, Collection of the National Palace Museum (photo: National Palace Museum)

(*lien-li mu* 連理木), a well-known omen of harmony and intimacy. This motif interacts with the open, springlike atmosphere of the background landscape to create a painting that expresses the strong, optimistic, and joyous character of the friendship.

The *Twin Pines* of Ts'ao Chih-po 曹知白 (1272–1355) creates a quite different impression (Figure 7).⁵⁶ Here the pines share a misty, autumnal forest with other, mostly deciduous and smaller trees. An oppressive and confining pall closes off the scene from the outside world, in stark contrast to the

openness and joy of Wu Chen's pines. Ts'ao's own inscription dates the painting to 1329 and records that it was "sent far away to Shih-mo Po-shan as an embodiment of my feelings for him" (*yüan chi Shih-mo Po-shan i yü hsiang ssu* 遠寄石末伯善以寓相思).⁵⁷ Three inscriptions by later scholars allow us to pinpoint the impression the work made on contemporary viewers. The opening couplet by Wang Ch'en 王臣 of Lü-ling reads: "The Han parks and Ch'in palaces are filled with rain and dew, / but these two people maintain their stand, embracing the

clean breeze" (*Han yüan Ch'in kung yü lu t'ung, shuang shen hsiu li pao ch'ing feng* 漢苑秦宮雨露通, 雙身修立抱清風). This couplet establishes both the metaphorical and the political context of the painting: Wang Ch'en saw the pines standing for Ts'ao Chih-po and Shih-mo Po-shan, and he saw the forest standing for the court or for government service in general, here referred to anachronistically as "Han parks and Ch'in palaces." The "clean breeze" refers to an official who has maintained his honesty and integrity until retirement. This idea is expressed again in the inscription of Sung Lien 宋濂 (1310–81), who writes that the painting

contains the idea of moral integrity that braves the year's cold (*sui han* 歲寒). I had received the honor of an official appointment but found the service too hectic, and so I returned home where I could savor this painting again.

Yet a third inscription refers to the "atmosphere of rectitude . . . that braves the snow and frost without bending and is no different from Po I and Shu Ch'i." This mention of the famous political recluses of antiquity completes the picture's frame of metaphorical references. Ts'ao is thus expressing his admiration for Shih-mo Chi-tsu, whose honesty and integrity during difficult times surpass that of his peers, and the painting becomes an expression of solidarity with Shih-mo Chi-tsu and an "embodiment" or, better, a "lodging" (*yü*) of Ts'ao's feelings for him. Although we do not know if the painting was given on the occasion of Shih-mo's retirement, or more likely sometime during his retirement, the writers of the three inscriptions clearly saw the painting as expressive of eremitic values.

Once one could talk about trees in the forest and at the same time refer to men, the image of the forest or grove (*lin* 林) soon followed as a metaphor for a collection of greater and lesser human talents. The *Shuo-wen* dictionary of the second century A.D. defines *lin* as "an assemblage of trees on level ground,"⁵⁸ but the term was routinely used to refer metaphorically to collections other than arboreal ones. Thus Ssu-ma Ch'ien writes of "the forest of errors made in our time."⁵⁹ In his famous "Letter to Jen An," he writes that "if a man possesses these five [inner moral] qualities, then he may entrust himself to the world and take his place among the forest of superior men [*chün-tzu chih lin*]."⁶⁰ So strongly did this metaphor appeal to Ssu-ma Ch'ien that he entitled his biographies of Confucian scholars the *Ju-lin* 儒林, a formulation that reappeared in

the T'ang as *Han-lin* 翰林, the "forest of brushes," to designate the emperor's personal collection of litterateurs, calligraphers, and painters.

There is little doubt that this conception of the forest as an assemblage of "brushes" goes back to the imperial hunting parks of antiquity, the most famous being the Shang-lin yüan 上林苑 of Ch'in and Han times. Edward Schafer has pointed out that the proper interpretation of *shang-lin* is "Supreme Forest" or "Forest of the High One" and that the attempt to include exotic flora and fauna from the far corners of the empire within the confines of "His Majesty's Forest" is best understood as an attempt metaphorically to represent the greater macrocosm of the empire in the microcosm of the park.⁶¹ The "forest" was a model of "all under Heaven."

Standard commentaries to the classic texts, principally to the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shih-ching*), reinforced such associations for traditional readers and viewers. For example, the ode Mao #192 contains the following couplet:

Look there to the middle of the forest,
there is only kindling and firewood.

Cheng Hsüan 鄭玄 (127–200), in his standard commentary, interprets this as follows: "The middle of the forest is the place of the great trees, but there is only kindling and firewood. This is a figure for the Court that should have men of worth but congregates only inferior men."⁶² In other words, the forest (Court) should have large trees (great men) at its center, but now has only brushwood (inferior men).

A similar allusive structure is behind the T'ang commentary to the following lines from the Han dynasty *Songs of the South* (*Ch'u-tzu*). These are among the most famous passages on autumn in Chinese literature:

August Heaven divides the four seasons equally,
but I grieve only at the frigid autumn,
when the white dew falls on the hundred grasses
and covers and wounds the *t'ung* and catalpa.

According to the T'ang commentary, "the hundred grasses have already faded, but these sorrows likewise afflict the *t'ung* and catalpa. The hundred grasses are a figure for the common people; the trees of the forest are a figure for worthy men."⁶³

There is also evidence that the metaphorical extension of trees to men was not limited to literature but formed a part of daily discourse. The Han official K'ung Kuang 孔光 (65–5 B.C.) was known for his reluctance to discuss government matters out-

side the office and even forbade the women of his household to gossip about the Court. One day someone tried to draw him out by asking, "What is the quality of the wood in the trees in the palace courtyard?" But K'ung Kuang refused the invitation even to speak in metaphors and quickly changed the subject.⁶⁴

We cannot enter here into a full discussion of the "Cold Forest" in Sung painting, except to stress that the theme is closely related to *Crows in Old Trees* and to the metaphorical systems of reference that have been examined above. As is well known, the origin of the theme is usually traced to the Five Dynasties painter Li Ch'eng 李成 (919–67); and indeed the *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u* 宣和畫譜, the 1120 catalogue of the Northern Sung imperial collection, lists twenty-one Li Ch'eng paintings variously titled *Han-lin*.⁶⁵ During the Sung there arose the tradition that Li Ch'eng had used the allegorical techniques of poetry to express in painting his frustration at failure in official life.⁶⁶ The fullest development of this idea occurs in the 1167 *Hua-chi* 畫繼 of Teng Ch'un 鄧椿, in which Li Ch'eng's frustrations are directly linked to the Cold Forest theme:

Li Ch'eng was a scholar of great talent and ample learning. He had great ambitions when young and took the examinations many times without passing. In the end he was not successful and so expressed this meaning through his painting. The Cold Forests that he painted were often set among crags and caves and showed signs of cutting and pruning, thereby to serve as a figure for the gentleman [*chün-tzu*] out of office. The remaining vegetation [he painted] entirely on level ground, thereby to serve as a figure for the inferior man [*hsiao-jen*] in office. His meanings were quite subtle.⁶⁷

Teng Ch'un's ideas about Li Ch'eng's *Han-lin* paintings seem clear enough: trees painted among "crags and caves," the last a common metaphor for the recluse, stand for the adversity experienced by the man of principle when out of government office; trees painted on level ground stand for the comfort of the inferior man in undeserved office.

One should also note that the *Pi-fa chi* 筆法記 by Ching Hao, an immediate predecessor of Li Ch'eng, contains a passage that contrasts the easy life of trees that "form groves" with the difficult but independent life of those that "crouch by themselves as if to keep their own creeds within themselves."⁶⁸ We can, of course, never know if Li Ch'eng actually

painted Cold Forests with such allegorical meanings in mind. However, most *Han-lin* paintings attributed to Li Ch'eng, those that are routinely used to reconstruct his style, postdate Teng Ch'un's comments on Li Ch'eng's Cold Forests. In other words, by the mid-twelfth century it had become part of the accepted lore about Li Ch'eng that his Cold Forests participated directly and specifically in that system of metaphorical values by which trees stood for men; and this belief then became fact for later followers of his style, such as Lo Chih-ch'uan.

Also part of this system of reference is the metaphorical extension of the image of the tree as a perch for birds. In this late-Chou conception, the great tree is not only the great official but also the state position he occupies and the protection or shelter that that position can provide for others. One touchstone passage is the opening of *Shih-ching*, Mao #165:

Ting, ting—they chop the trees;
ying, ying—the birds cry out.
From the dark valley
they move to the high trees.
Ying they cry out,
seeking the voice of their companions.

In the Han dynasty Mao/Cheng commentary this ode is a celebration of political friendship. Small birds, frightened by the noise of tree felling, flee the low valley for the safety of the higher trees, those that have made the journey first calling out to guide those that would follow: "thus the superior man, although he has been promoted to high office, does not forget his friends."⁶⁹ Mencius paraphrased the second couplet, using the image of the birds moving from the valley to the high trees to represent men who abandon barbarian mores for the loftier virtues of Chinese civilization: "I have heard of coming out of the dark ravine to settle on a tall tree, but not of forsaking the tall tree to descend into the dark ravine."⁷⁰

A similar conception stands behind another touchstone passage on perching. In 484 B.C. Confucius, upon being asked an inappropriate question by the ruler of Wei, decided to leave that state, saying, "It is the bird that should choose the tree; how can the tree choose the bird."⁷¹ Confucius, referring to himself, makes the bird a metaphor for a servitor with the freedom to choose his own country of service. From these early references there evolved the traditional correspondence between a large tree, as

a safe place for birds to roost or nest, and a politically secure position. Typical is the passage in P'an Yüeh's 潘岳 (247–300) “*Fu on My Westward Journey*,” in which the author describes his difficulties in a time of changing political fortunes: “Without choosing the right nest in which to roost, / Few birds can survive a forest fire.”⁷²

Proof that such conceptions could provide a flexible system of coded references can be found in a *Kuo yü* 國語 (*Conversations of the States*) narrative concerning the fortunes of Duke Hsien of Chin. The duke captured the daughter of a barbarian chief and made her his consort. She became known as Lady Li; they had a son named Hsi-ch'i. Lady Li slandered the existing heir, Shen-sheng, and then plotted to have the duke kill Shen-sheng and install her own son as heir. Of the duke's three ministers, one supported Lady Li, one was opposed, and the third, one Li K'o, was undecided. Lady Li enlisted the aid of Actor Shih to neutralize Li K'o. The actor invited Li K'o to a banquet, at which he sang the following song to him:

You, contented gentleman, aloof and solitary,
no match for the flock of crows:
while others gather in the flourishing trees,
you perch alone on a withered branch.

When Li K'o asked the meaning of “flourishing trees” and “withered branch,” the actor responded that Lady Li was the duke's favorite consort and her son was a lord, so that their situation was that of a “flourishing tree.” Shen-sheng, on the other hand, was in disgrace; his mother was dead. He was a “withered branch.” Naturally, the poem intends to warn Li K'o of the precariousness of his perch on the withered branch of Shen-sheng and urge upon him the wisdom of joining the flock of crows in the flourishing trees.⁷³ The structure of the system of metaphors employed here is similar to those of later texts: the body politic is seen as a forest or grove; officials and courtiers are birds that gather and nest in the grove; various perches are preferable to others. Actor Shih formulates the political alternatives facing Li K'o as a contrast between perching in flourishing trees (*yüan* 苑) or on a withered branch (*ku* 枯). The image of the withered tree (*ku-mu* 枯木, or *ku-mu* 古木, the two expressions being often interchangeable) is a universal symbol in traditional China both for personal or political decline or both and for moral resistance to that decline.⁷⁴

Modern ornithologists count about a dozen species of pheasants native to modern China; traditional Chinese lexicographers, covering a smaller geographical area but not aware of the identity of many subspecies, counted fourteen.⁷⁵ The most widespread of these is the common ring-necked pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*), an import from China well known in the eastern United States. The bird is often depicted in Chinese painting (Figure 10). From a literary point of view, the most important of the traditional Chinese pheasants was the golden pheasant (*Chrysolophus pictus*; Chinese *pieh* 鷩, *chin chi* 錦鷄, *chin chi* 金鷄, *shan chi* 山鷄).⁷⁶ From a cultural point of view, this most spectacularly colored of all the Chinese pheasants became the quintessential expression of qualities and virtues attributed to pheasants in general; and golden pheasants also are often so pictured in Chinese painting (see Figure 9).

As with trees and other members of the plant kingdom, various animals were also organized according to perceived characteristics into a complex and nuanced system of metaphorical reference. As readers of the *Shih-ching* know, birds played an especially prominent role in this system, perhaps because of the importance of avian totemism in early China. The *Tso-chuan* (*Commentary of Tso*), under the year 525 B.C., records that Shao Hao, a legendary sovereign, named the offices of his government after birds and arranged these offices after patterns of organization he observed from the avian world; Confucius is reported to have approved of the system.⁷⁷ In a slightly different vein, the philosopher Chuang-tzu (369–286 B.C.?) refers to the life of a court official as “playing in the bird cage,” an image that remained in later literature as a metaphor for the intellectually and often physically confining nature of official life.⁷⁸ For Chuang-tzu the pheasant personifies this reluctance to be caged:

The swamp pheasant has to walk ten paces for one peck and a hundred paces for one drink, but it doesn't want to be kept in a cage. Though you treat it like a king, its spirit won't be content.⁷⁹

The expression *keng-chieh* 耿介 “constant and firm,” a phrase that first occurs in the *Ch'u-tzu*, defines this pugnacious fighting spirit of the pheasant. It denotes there the upright official who stubbornly

adheres to a strict observance of the rites and opposes the popular compromises of smaller men. This tenacity is best exercised in the context of the loyalty to death of the servitor for his lord. *Keng-chieh* thus has overtones of aloofness, stubbornness, and unconventionality; and it is a prime character trait of the poetic voices in the *Ch'u-tz'u*. *Keng-chieh* is, in short, the personality of Ch'ü Yüan (340–278 B.C.?), the central figure of the *Ch'u-tz'u*, although the term is never applied to him directly in the text.⁸⁰

The association of a “constant and firm” personality with the pheasant occurs in a number of Han dynasty works, always as commentary on a passage in the ritual texts that specifies pheasants as the appropriate offering for a “gentleman” (*shih* 士) to take when presenting himself on a visit.⁸¹ Typical of these comments is that of the first-century A.D. *Po-hu t'ung* 白虎通:

The gentleman takes the pheasant as his present because the pheasant cannot be enticed with food [i.e., salary] nor intimidated with awesome might; it will die before consenting to being reared in captivity. [Just so] the conduct of the gentleman is constant and firm [*keng-chieh*]; he maintains his loyalty [*shou-chieh* 守節] unto death and does not transfer it.⁸²

The term *shou-chieh* used in this passage may also refer to the loyalty of a woman to the memory of her dead husband. These resonances establish a second metaphorical equivalent for the passage: just as a woman expresses loyalty to her deceased husband through her refusal to remarry, so the loyal servitor retires upon the death of his sovereign and is not enticed by salary or awed by might into the service of another master. As we shall shortly see, these implications of pheasant symbolism became widespread in medieval poetry and assumed an obvious and special significance during the Sung-Yüan transition.

The use of pheasants as insignia on the court robes of emperors and officials was a visual expression of the force of the metaphor that linked the steadfastness and constancy of the pheasant with the Chinese imperium. Thus the *Chou-li* records that at certain banquets and ceremonies the Son of Heaven wore robes decorated with images of the golden pheasant, a practice that continued through the early T'ang.⁸³ Also well established by T'ang times was the system that designated the rank of an official on the nine-tiered civil-service ladder (*chiu p'in* 九品) with images of different birds on their



Figure 8. Rank badge with golden pheasant insignia for a civil officer of the second class, Ch'ing dynasty, 18th–19th century. Tapestry weave in red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and wrapped-gold silks with painted stripes on the neck, 30.5 x 32 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Anonymous Gift, 1960, 60.98.8

official robes. Already in T'ang times, the golden pheasant indicated a second-class official, an equation that persisted through the famous “Mandarin squares” of late-imperial times into the twentieth century (Figure 8).⁸⁴

References to pheasants in Chinese poetry center on the “Music Bureau” (*Yüeh-fu* 樂府) title “Pheasants Fly at Dawn” (*Chih chao fei* 雉朝飛). There are two explanations of the origin of this title and both relate the pheasant to marital constancy. Tu Mu-tzu 犢牧子 was a recluse in the Warring States kingdom of Ch'i. Still unmarried at age fifty (some texts say seventy), he went out to gather firewood and saw pheasants flying together in pairs. The sight moved him to sorrow at his own loneliness; and he lamented that only he had failed to receive his sovereign's grace, which extended even to the plants and animals. He then composed the following lines:

Pheasants fly at dawn,
 their voices calling to each other,
 males and females together
 on the mountain slopes.
 It is my fate alone
 to be without a wife.
 Time moves on, and there is nothing I can do;
 Alas, there is nothing I can do.⁸⁵

The second explanation traces the origin of the title to the duenna of a daughter of the king of Wei. The girl had been betrothed to a prince of Ch'i, and, on the journey to her new home, she and her duenna learned that the prince had died. After attending his funeral in Ch'i, the girl committed suicide. While the duenna grieved at her tomb, a male and a female pheasant appeared, and the woman realized that her charge and the prince had been transformed into pheasants. The pheasants flew away, and the woman composed the song "Pheasants Fly at Dawn" to express her sorrow.⁸⁶ Both origins of this *yüeh-fu* title therefore link the images of pheasants in male-female pairs to aspects of marital fidelity. In the first of these two stories, the example is negative, and Tu Mu-tzu's loneliness is vaguely attributed to a fall from political grace. In the second case, the example is positive, the loyalty of the betrothed to her future husband's memory being the agent that transforms them into the blissful pheasant pair that so depressed Tu Mu-tzu.⁸⁷

The following poem by the Southern Sung official Ts'ao Hsün 曹勛 (1098–1174) calls upon the origin of the *yüeh-fu* title in Tu Mu-tzu's "Pheasants Fly at Dawn":

You pheasants fly at dawn,
the sounds of your voices follow one another.
In the morning you wash your feathers,
in the evening you feed your young.
Although there may be wind and rain,
never do you part in separation.
Alas for we humans
who have not done as you do.⁸⁸

The key to this poem is the lament in the last couplet and the term *p'i-li* 仳離 "to part, separate, divorce," a rare expression that also occurs in *Shih-ching* Mao #69, where it describes a woman forced by bad political conditions to separate from her husband.⁸⁹ Ts'ao's use of this phrase would have alerted contemporary readers toward possible Southern Sung parallels, wind and rain being a common metaphor for political disturbance. The last couplet implies that an application of some human initiative might end the separation: we have not behaved the way the pheasants do, but we could.⁹⁰

Naturally, the positive image of the pheasant as constant and firm was also turned into a counter-image, an "anti-pheasant," whose very virtues lead to his downfall. A beautiful expression of this sentiment is the first of an eight-poem series, "Moved to Incitation" (*Kan-hsing* 感興), by Fang K'uei 方夔.

Fang was a Chekiang native who, despite failed attempts to pass the examinations at the end of the Sung, remained loyal to the Sung cause and became a recluse in the early Yüan. He is an exact contemporary of Lo Chih-ch'uan.

Mottled and speckled are the pheasants of the forest,
cocks and hens together in morning sunlight.
Drumming their wings, they do not fly far
among the mountain fields, fertile with young wheat.

They eat and drink within a hundred paces
and return before dusk, following one another.
In spring they feed all the young chicks
till, full-grown, each flies off on its own.

In all the expanse of the wide world
I grieve for the smallness of your life:
till the end of the road you hold to a single track
and die among mushrooms and wild peas.⁹¹

The first two quatrains of this bitter poem ridicule the constant and firm virtues of the pheasant: the hundred paces of freedom that Chuang-tzu's pheasant preferred to the cage becomes here a metaphor for the smallness of the pheasant's world. It is the ambiguities of the last couplet, however, that express the depths of Fang K'uei's despair. Mushrooms are symbols of both imperial kindness and immortality; Po I and Shu Ch'i, the famous recluses of antiquity, starved to death on Shou-yang mountain gathering wild peas.⁹² In other words, the constant and firm imprison themselves by their narrow pursuit of a single track that leads only to death among ironized symbols of immortality and virtue.

Fang K'uei's poem is a variation on a long-standing tradition that views the pheasant as vulnerable because of the beautiful pattern of its coloration. And when pheasant qualities stand for human qualities, the outer beauty of the bird stands for the inner accomplishments of the man. The golden pheasant is sometimes called the "patterned avian" (*wen-ch'in* 文禽) with obvious connotations of "literary/cultured avian." This beauty can result in both self-pride and the envy of others. The *Po-wu chih* 博物志 of Chang Hua 張華 (232–300) records that golden pheasants could become so vain they would gaze at the beauty of their own reflection in the water until they became disoriented, fell into the water, and drowned. In a similar vein, the Reeves pheasant (*Syrnaticus reevesii*) could become so solicitous of his long tail that when there was snow on the



Figure 9. Attributed to Emperor Hui-tsung (1082–1135), *Golden Pheasant and Hibiscus*. Hanging scroll, ink on silk. Peking, Palace Museum (photo: Palace Museum)

ground he would roost only in tall trees, refusing to descend to eat, and so starve to death.⁹³ A Northern Sung commentator on this passage observes:

This is because *wen* [culture, literariness] is a thing that can drown you. We can see therefore that when a scholar becomes a man of the world he must disregard his own beauty and never allow his *wen* to destroy his *chih* [substance, content] and so become disoriented. The golden pheasant is the most beautifully colored of the birds. And yet he dies for this beauty because others despise the beauty that he has.⁹⁴

The tone here is cautionary: develop *wen* but do not imitate the error of the golden pheasant whose display of beauty attracts the envy of others.

Considering the centrality of the virtues represented by the pheasant to Chinese elite culture, it is hardly surprising that pheasants are among the species most often represented in “bird and flower”

painting. Among the best known of these paintings is the *Golden Pheasant and Hibiscus* (*Chin-chi fu-jung t'u* 錦鷄芙蓉圖) in the Palace Museum, Peking, attributed to the Sung emperor Hui-tsung (r. 1101–26) (Figure 9). The inscription on the painting, in the calligraphic style of the emperor, reads as follows:

His autumn strength wards off the fearsome frost,
with lofty cap, the brocade-feathered fowl:
his knowledge complete, perfect in the Five Virtues,
in ease and rest he surpasses the ducks and
widgeons.

This complex poem makes use of several polysemous references to establish the pheasant as a figure



Figure 10. Unknown artist, Sung dynasty (960–1279), *Flowers, Birds, and Two Pines*. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 182.2 x 106.3 cm. Taipei, Collection of the National Palace Museum (photo: National Palace Museum)

for a man whose unique moral virtue surpasses that of the common crowd (here “ducks and widgeons,” a reference to *Shih-ching*, Mao #248). “Lofty cap” (*e-kuan* 峩冠) refers both to the comb or crest of the pheasant and to the high-topped hats worn by government officials. The “Five Virtues” (*wu-te* 五德) refer both to the famous passage in chapter 31 of the *Chung-yung* 中庸 (*Doctrine of the Mean*) and to a *Han-shih wai-chuan* passage on the five virtues of the pheasant.⁹⁵ The inscription fixes the image of the pheasant as a figure of moral perfection, a symbol of the Five Virtues. One may well imagine this painting as a gift from Hui-tsung, painted either by the emperor himself or by an Academy artist, to a high official, perhaps on the occasion of promotion to second-class rank.⁹⁶

Pheasants in male and female pairs provided images of the marital constancy articulated in the *yüeh-fu* poetry. For example, an anonymous Sung painting depicts a male and female ring-necked pheasant in a composition with two large pines and a pair of azure-winged magpies (*Cyanopica cyanta*) (Figure 10). The magpie is a standard symbol of happiness, most often of marital happiness. Coupled as they are in this painting with the pheasants (as symbols of marital constancy) and the pines (as symbols of long life), one may easily imagine the painting as a wedding gift that says, “May your marriage bring you happiness and long life.”

CROWS—COLD, HUNGRY, AND MOURNFULLY CALLING

If the traditional symbolism of the pheasant was focused and unitary (variations on the single “constant and firm” theme), the traditional symbolism of the crow was fluid and ambiguous. As we have seen, the Chinese tended to view all species of pheasants as sharing the virtues of the golden pheasant, a tendency that prevented the attachment of unique characteristics to each species. Just the opposite happened with crows: some species were associated with the positive values of compassion and filial piety, others with the antitheses of these same values. One reason for this state of affairs was perhaps the existence of a system of divination whereby the cries of the crow were interpreted as either good or bad depending on the time and direction from which they came.⁹⁷

Another reason may have been the relative diver-

sity of the corvid family in China. Unlike in the United States, where the common crow and the raven, both entirely black, are virtually the only members of the genus, China has at least five species of crows. Three are totally black, but two are a combination of white and black. These are the Daurian jackdaw (*Corvus dauuricus*; Chinese *han-ya* 寒鴉, *tz'u ya* 慈鴉, *hsiao wu* 孝烏) and the collared crow (*Corvus torquatus*; Chinese *yen wu* 燕烏, *pai-ching ya* 白頸鴉, *kuei ch'üeh* 鬼雀).⁹⁸ A glance at the names—“filial crow” versus “the ghost bird”—will suffice to indicate how strongly the Chinese distinguished the personalities of these two corvids.

The association of crows with maternal and filial piety derives from the corvid practice of feeding the young from food carried in the gullet or sublingual pouch of the adults, from which it is then regurgitated into the throats of the chicks.⁹⁹ The Chinese believed the mother fed the young in this way for sixty days. When the young were older, they then “reverse regurgitated” (*fan-pu* 反哺), feeding the mother in turn for sixty days.¹⁰⁰ In the Han apocrypha the filial crow is linked to the appearance of albino crows and three-legged crows, which serve as omens of imperial virtue.¹⁰¹ A contrary reference is contained in the *Bird Classic* (*Ch'in ching* 禽經), possibly a Chou dynasty work with commentary by Chang Hua from the third century A.D., which relates that the “white necks [i.e., the collared crow] are not auspicious.” Chang Hua comments that in the southwest they are called “ghost birds” [*kuei ch'üeh*] and that their call portends evil.¹⁰²

This ambiguity and its relation to crow augury can be found in Chinese literature as early as the *Shih-ching*. In Mao #41, the “North Wind,” for example, the speaker urges a companion to flee with him (her?). The crux of the traditional interpretation that reads the poem as a satire against government cruelty centers on the following couplet: “They are all red these foxes,/ they are all black these crows.” The Han commentators understand that both the king and his ministers are equally evil. Chu Hsi elaborates: “Foxes and crows are both creatures of evil omen and things people despise seeing. When one sees only these creatures, then one can know the impending chaos of the state.”¹⁰³ A passage in the Chou dynasty *Kuan-tzu* underscores the sentiments behind these interpretations: “When the relationship between men involves frequent deceitfulness, lack of feeling for truth, and general larceny, it is called the relationship of a flock of crows.”¹⁰⁴

With even greater relevance to Lo's painting, the *Shih-ching* also contains two passages in which flocking crows stand in a political context for the common people. Mao #192, "First Month," is a long satire against government misrule. The third stanza ends with the couplet, "Look there where the crows would stop;/ on whose house will it be?" The Han and T'ang commentators state that crows prefer to roost on the house of a rich man in order to seek food, and "this is a figure for the common people who would take refuge under a sovereign of enlightened virtue in order to seek the blessings of Heaven. These lines mean that since the people have nowhere to take refuge the degree of evil [misrule] is made clear."¹⁰⁵

A second passage, this time specifying not generic "crows" but jackdaws (here called *yü-ssu* 鷲斯), occurs at the beginning of Mao #197, a lament spoken by a ruler's eldest son who has been replaced as heir apparent, sent into exile, and slated for execution:

Joyful are the jackdaws
as they fly home in flocks to rest.
All among the people are happy;
I alone am in misery.

To this the Han commentators write: "The joyful jackdaws that go out to eat their fill in the fields and fly home in flocks to rest are a figure for the fathers and sons, elder and younger brothers, who go in and out the palace, eating, drinking, and being joyful together. He laments that he, the eldest son, is not like that."¹⁰⁶

Summarizing the implications of these *Shih-ching* passages, we find that its ambiguous moral nature and its penchant for gathering in large flocks made the crow an obvious metaphor for the common people. Furthermore, the image of a flock of crows returning home to roost after a day of feeding in the fields expressed the flocks of middling servitors anxious for the security of their salary (i.e., food) and the stability of their office (i.e., perch), both provided through the good rule of the sovereign (i.e., the house of the rich man). In later literature, elements of this metaphor system were used to either positive or negative effect; the *Kuo yü* passage analyzed above, in which flocks of crows in a flourishing grove stand for a political majority that supports a morally expedient policy, is such an example.

One could assemble many examples of T'ang and Sung poems that make use of this metaphor system. One important such poem is Tu Fu's "Gazing Over



Figure 11. Liang K'ai (late 12th–early 13th century), Southern Sung dynasty (1127–1279), *Untitled*. Circular fan painting mounted as an album leaf, ink and light color on silk, 24.6 x 25 cm. Cambridge, Mass., Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Gift of Denman Waldo Ross (photo: Harvard University Art Museums)

the Wild Plain" (*Yeh wang* 野望), composed at Ch'in-chou in 759:

In the clear autumn my gaze has no limits;
on the horizon layers of haze rise up.
Distant waters blend with the clean sky;
a solitary town is hidden in the depths of the fog.

The wind returns and drops the remaining leaves
just as the sun sets behind the far mountain.
Why does the lone crane return so late
when the crows of dusk have already filled the
forest?¹⁰⁷

The early commentators of Tu Fu interpreted the last couplet to be a "criticism of the multitude of petty men" (*chi hsiao-jen chung to yeh* 譏小人衆多也), associating the crane with the superior man (*chün-tzu*) and Tu Fu and the crows with the inferior man (*hsiao-jen*). Although this interpretation was later challenged, the image of multitudes of flocking crows in contrast with single or paired birds of more noble species became a standard corvid association.

A painted fan now mounted as an album leaf in the Arthur M. Sackler Museum at Harvard University is perhaps a representation of the final couplet of Tu Fu's poem (Figure 11). Although the leaf is signed Liang K'ai 梁楷 (early 13th century), the



Figure 12. Hou Mao-kung (1522–1620), *Returning Crows*. Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper, 69.0 x 30.3 cm. Berlin, Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst (photo: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin)

work would seem to be an early imitation dating from the late Southern Sung, thus still slightly prior to Lo Chih-ch'uan.¹⁰⁸ In the winter scene a group of (five?) jackdaws clusters around the mound of an eroded bank from which the battered remains of a desiccated tree protrude. A single crane, visible through the central fork of the tree, descends into the scene, as if searching for a place to land. The carefully balanced composition uses the visual momentum of the horizontal tree as a connecting device to contrast the crane in the upper left against the jackdaws in the lower right, the same contrast as in the Tu Fu couplet.

The late Ming painter Hou Mao-kung 侯懋功 (1522–1620) also illustrated this couplet in a painting now in the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst in Berlin. Hou Mao-kung inscribed Tu Fu's couplet, adding that he had "sketched the idea of this couplet for my older brother Pai-ku" (*wei Pai-ku hsiung hsieh-i 為百谷兄寫意*) (Figure 12). One may well imagine the painting as a gift sent to console the recipient over a career disappointment, the analogy being drawn between the crane, the *chün-tzu*, Tu Fu, and Pai-ku beset by the multitudes of jackdaws and "petty men" who have already filled up the "forest."

Two examples of poems slightly posterior to Lo Chih-ch'uan also use an image of crows that is close to the spirit of its use in his painting. The great Yüan/Ming poet Kao Ch'i 高啓 (1336–74) has a poem entitled "Returning Crows" (*Kuei ya 歸鴉*) that echoes Tu Fu's poem:

Caw-cawing, they cry noisily in the evening light,
fighting to land for the night, not fighting to fly.
They do not follow the far-flying swan
and are always first before the wild crane to return.

Through the deserted village the waters flow far
away,
over the old ramparts the slight mist is thin.
I beg to ask of the trees in the cold forest
upon which branch is the best perch?¹⁰⁹

Absent a biographical context, it is difficult to read this poem with confidence. Yet the clear relation of the poem to elements of the metaphor systems discussed above suggests various possible readings. The ambitions of the far-flying swan and crane place them in a superior position to the crows that are content merely to return early to obtain a favorable perch for the night. When perches are understood as positions in the cold forest (*han-lin*), then the poem becomes either a satire against complacency or, more likely, a self-deprecating request for

just such a lowly yet comfortable position.

Another poem that portrays crows, this time jackdaws, against other birds in the setting of a political allegory is “On a Painting of Jackdaws in Old Trees” (*Ku-mu han-ya t'u* 古木寒鴉圖) by the Ming scholar Hsieh To 謝鐸 (1435–1510). One will note that this poem was inscribed on a painting with the same title as that on the existing label of the Metropolitan’s Lo Chih-ch’uan painting.

From hanging cliffs an old tree
like hanging creepers,
its dragon-scale branches, twisted iron,
layered on high.
Cold winds howl through the day
but make no rain,
a flock of birds recoils in retreat
and fights to flee down and away.

From whence come these jackdaws
with their tragic-heroic mien,
two-by-two on the ends of the branches
standing erect, face-to-face?
Heads risen to visit the vast and empty sky,
they have left indecision behind,
carefully watching the mist and clouds,
desiring to be proud and aloof.

From time to time they fly high
in the Ch’ao-yang Hall,
filled with resolve to chase
the swallows on the carved beams.
The old phoenix of Ch’ao-yang
is silent and does not speak,
while cranes and *yüan-ch’u* birds
in multitudes censure and upbraid them.

Do you not see
at Yang-chou in the evening sun
the poplars and willows
and until even now only dead grass
and the shameful cry of the crows?¹¹⁰

The lack of any historical context once again frustrates interpretation of this poem; yet the allegorical nature of the poem is unmistakable and its artistic impression powerful. The attribution of human qualities and actions to the birds—the jackdaws have a “tragic-heroic mien,” have “left indecision behind,” and are “proud and aloof”; the cranes “censure and upbraid” them—is a common device for alerting readers to the presence of allegory. It is probable that the first two stanzas describe the jackdaws as they were drawn in the painting. The last two stanzas would then elaborate on elements that were not visually present and contain perhaps

Hsieh To’s own sentiments or ideas as to the painting’s allusions.

The Ch’ao-yang Hall and the old phoenix are transparent metaphors for the court and the emperor, once again by virtue of *Shih-ching* exegesis.¹¹¹ As in Kao Ch’i’s poem, there is a contrast between the lowly jackdaws, on the one hand, and, on the other, the elevated cranes and *yüan-chu* birds (the great legendary bird in *Chuang-tzu*: an eminent person). But Hsieh To has reversed the moral associations of the two groups in order to satirize the lofty cranes and the inactive phoenix. The last lines are an allusion to a famous couplet in “Sui Palace” by the T’ang dynasty poet Li Shang-yin: “So now fireflies are gone from the dead grass, / and only the evening crows remain in the drooping willows.”¹¹² The couplet describes the ravages inflicted on the Yang-chou area by the misrule of Sui Yang-ti (r. 605–17), images Hsieh To has borrowed to express the political desolation caused by the situation described in the poem.

Hsieh To’s poem brings us to an examination of other poems and paintings that use the title *Ku-mu han-ya* “Jackdaws in Old Trees.” Though this title does not occur in the Northern Sung imperial collection catalogue (*Hsüan-ho hua-p’u*) of 1120, it is present in the titles of poems written on paintings by early Yüan scholars, and so doubtless came into use sometime during the Southern Sung. One such poem is “On Hui-ch’ung’s Jackdaws in Old Trees” 惠崇古木寒鴉 by the well-known poet Yang Tsai 楊載 (1271–1323). Hui-ch’ung (965–1017) was a monk-painter from Fukien.

Autumn clouds are thin over the river
where the jackdaws fly in scattered confusion.
Before dawn, they always compete in their
squawking;
toward dusk, they again fight to return.

It seems they fear the weight of the frost’s majesty,
and yet detest the sparseness of the tree’s shadow.
The old monk practiced cessation and meditation,
and sketching these things has surely caught their
essence.¹¹³

The phrase here translated “the frost’s majesty” (*shuang-wei* 霜威) is a common metaphor for the awe-inspiring demeanor of imperial authority.¹¹⁴ So understood, this poem may also be read as an allegory in which the jackdaws represent contentious, small-minded people, fearful of exerting themselves yet still disdainful of the sparseness of their “perch.” Absent evidence for the existence of *Ku-mu han-ya* as a title in the ninth century, we may

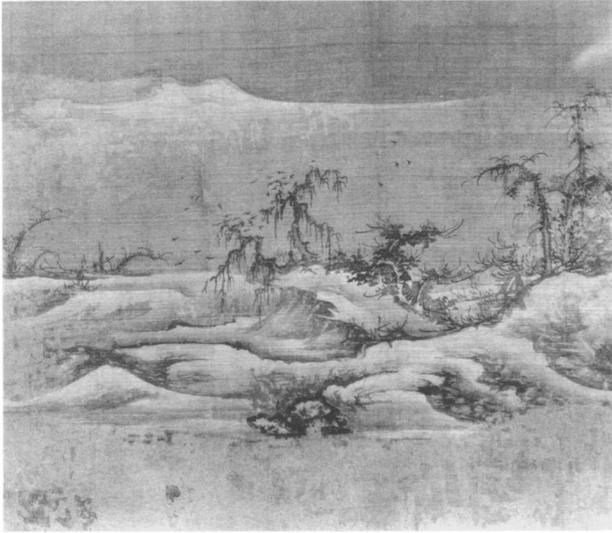


Figure 13. Attributed to Kuo Hsi (ca. 1001–ca. 1090), *Streams and Mountains After Snowfall* (detail). Handscroll, ink and opaque colors on silk, 55.2 x 480.7 cm. The Toledo Museum of Art, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey (photo: Toledo Museum of Art)

surmise that Yang Tsai himself applied this title to Hui-ch'ung's painting. It is also likely that other paintings similar to Lo Chih-ch'uan's *Crows in Old Trees* existed in the early Yüan and influenced both Yang's choice of this title as well as the tone of his poetic inscription and interpretation of the earlier painting.

In this context we should recall that Chieh Hsi-su linked Lo Chih-ch'uan to the late-eleventh-century painter Chao Ling-jang (item #7 above). Surviving works attributed (probably all falsely) to Hui-ch'ung are stylistically similar to the works of Chao, and later generations often mistakenly attributed works in the Chao manner to Hui-ch'ung.¹¹⁵ A surviving work in the Chao Ling-jang manner is the well-known painting entitled *River Landscape in Mist with Geese and Flocking Crows* in the Yamato Bunkakan.¹¹⁶ The early-spring scene in this painting has a different tone and feeling from the intense winter scene of Lo's work. Yet the two paintings share at least three iconographical elements: (1) the swirling crows, (2) the countervailing presence of another species of bird on the ground (geese, birds with positive metaphorical associations, in the Chao work), and (3) the mist-shrouded evergreens in the background.

Another example of the flocking-crow motif that may date back to a Northern Sung prototype occurs in a handscroll in the Toledo Museum of Art entitled *Streams and Mountains After Snowfall* (Figure 13).

The scroll, probably a Yüan or Ming work, is attributed to Kuo Hsi and thought by Max Loehr to approximate his later style.¹¹⁷ The birds in this scroll are clearly not the diminutive jackdaw; nor has the artist attempted to portray them with the distinctive white neckbands of the larger collared crow. Yet the presence of corvids in this winter landscape and their occupation of the desiccated tree suggest a possible prototype for Lo's crows within the earlier Li Ch'eng/Kuo Hsi tradition.

There is some slight evidence to suggest that paintings with a flocking-crow motif may have existed in the late Northern Sung. For example, one of the very few paintings of crows listed in the *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u* is *Crows Gather in the Snowy Forest* (*Lin hsüeh chü ya* 林雪聚鴉) by Chao Shih-lei 趙士雷, a fifth-generation descendant of the Sung founder.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, a *Ku-mu han-ya* attributed to Hui-tsung himself occurs in Ming lists of earlier collections.¹¹⁹ Likewise, a *Ku-mu han-ya* handscroll is attributed to the Academy painter Li T'ang 李唐 (ca. 1049–after 1130).¹²⁰ There is, of course, no way to know if these paintings were genuine or if the titles were originally those of the painters or were added by later connoisseurs.

An anonymous fan painting mounted as an album leaf entitled *Ku-mu han-ya* and now in The

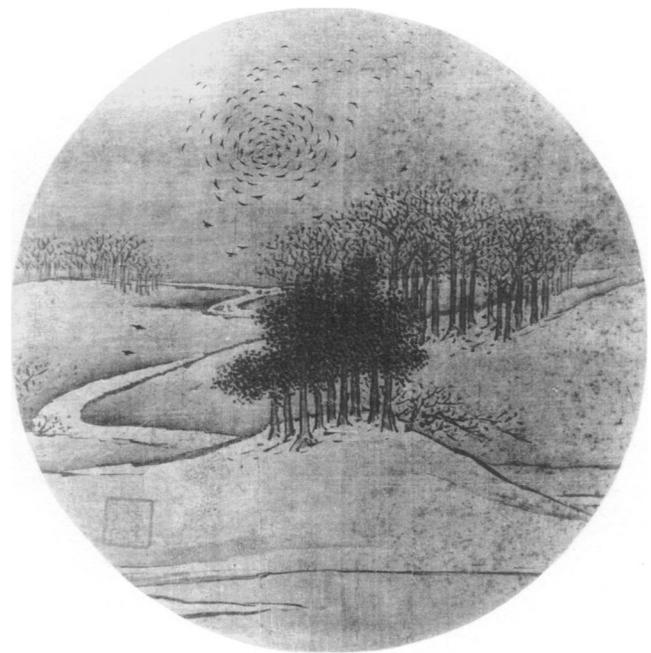


Figure 14. Unknown artist (late 13th–early 14th century), *Crows and Bare Trees in Winter*. Fan mounted as an album leaf, ink and color on silk, diam. 24.8 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1982, 1982.46

Metropolitan Museum of Art has been dated to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century (Figure 14). If the dating is correct, the fan would be contemporary with the works of Lo Chih-ch'uan. The late-autumn or early-winter scene shows a flock of crows swirling above a small grove of trees along a small stream. The crows are painted flying in a whirling pattern that creates a centrifugal motion perfectly in tune with the circular design of the fan. The effect is one of proportioned ease and coolness.¹²¹

A related painting, also known as *Ku-mu han-ya*, is the well-known album leaf by Pien Wu 邊武, active in Peking during the first half of the fourteenth century, in the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst in Berlin, a work that Sherman Lee sees as continuing in the tradition of the Southern Sung Academy (Figure 15).¹²² This leaf exhibits the same sense of charm and "cool" intimacy as the Metropolitan fan, and the two works share the iconographic motifs of crows or jackdaws, tree, and stream.

A work on a grander scale and one with a complex and subtle relationship to Lo Chih-ch'uan's *Crows in Old Trees* is the short handscroll traditionally attributed to Li Ch'eng and known as *Jackdaws (Han-ya t'u)* in the Liao-ning Provincial Museum (Figure 16). Both the Liao-ning curators and James Cahill accept this handscroll as a product of the Southern Sung Academy.¹²³ Formerly part of the Ch'ing imperial collection, the handscroll now has four colophons; there is also a poem and a frontispiece inscribed by Emperor Ch'ien-lung in 1782. These texts are the only inscriptions on an extant Sung or Yüan painting of crows and are of great value for the interpretation of Lo Chih-ch'uan's painting. Their translation follows:

When I look at this painting, the deep forest, the accumulated snows, and the cold atmosphere are oppressive. A flock of birds circles round and perches. They have the appearance of being hungry, cold, and mournfully calling. One can say this is a gifted painting.

[Chao Meng-fu] Tzu-ang

I cannot bear to look at their hunger,
cold, and mournful calling.
If I even look once,
my heart is sad.
But at the rich harvest next year
the spring winds will be warm,
and they will fly far and high
on the broad strength of their wings.

Inscribed by Kuan Yün-shih



Figure 15. Pien Wu (active first half of 14th century), *Jackdaws*. Album leaf, ink and slight color on silk, 24 x 25.5 cm. Berlin, Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst (photo: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin)

Over old trees and withered reeds
the skies have just cleared after snow;
the hungry crows fly and perch
in silence, their mouths clamped shut.
But when the flowers bloom early
on the caltrops in the sand,
then they shall share the spring wind
with the swallows and orioles.

1314, 7th month, Shan-ts'un jen Ch'iu Yüan

On the stream, by people's houses,
are fine trees
where flocks of crows come to roost
deep in the year.
But snowy skies clear, the clouds part,
and the spring breezes turn round,
and then we hear fine sounds
from the ends of the branches.

Inscribed in 1378, 12th month,
by Ch'en Yen-po in the Chen-cho Studio,
Ch'ien-t'ang

Finally, Ch'ien-lung's poem mounted before the painting reads:

Across the forest the leaves have fallen
and the branches of the trees are dry;
the crows perch, cry out in hunger,
and screech in the cold.
Ah! but my people are at peace
and are not like this;
around the warm brazier, I cannot bear
to open this painting and look.

1782, 12th month

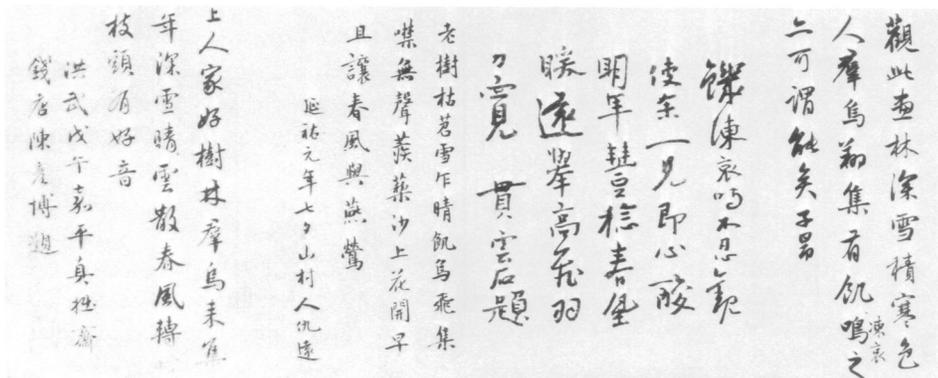


Figure 16. Unknown artist, Southern Sung dynasty (1127–1279), *Jackdaws*. Handscroll, ink and light color on silk, 27 x 113 cm; colophons 27.7 x 64.1 cm; colophons by Chao Meng-fu (1254–1322), Kuan Yün-shih (1286–1324), Ch'iu Yüan (1261–?), and Ch'en Yen-po (early Ming dynasty). Liao-ning Provincial Museum (photo: from *Liao-ning sheng po-we-kuan ts'ang-hua chi* [Beijing, 1962] pls. 64–66)

Before discussing the literary aspects of these colophons, it is first necessary to address several technical issues concerning their authenticity and connection to this painting.

The Liao-ning handscroll can be documented from the Ch'ing imperial catalogue of 1795 back to the collection of Sun Ch'eng-tse 孫承澤 (1592–1675); the collectors' seals confirm an unbroken rec-

ord of ownership back to the late Ming.¹²⁴ However, other catalogues mention another painting, a hanging scroll also entitled *Han-ya t'u*, and record five inscriptions. The first three of these inscriptions are identical to the first three colophons on the present Liao-ning handscroll. This hanging scroll seems no longer to exist, but there is a detailed description in Wu Sheng's 吳升 *Ta-kuan lu* 大觀錄 of 1712:

Painting on silk, five *ch'ih* high, two *ch'ih* three *ts'un* wide. At the top are three seal script characters, *Hanya t'u*. One grove of about five old trees, the ends of the branches are dried out, their roots twisted, their stumps intertwined together. Crows perch on the branches. Over the sloping ground there are three or four layers of trees[?]. From a fissure in the rocks there jumps forth a small footpath. The elevated and subtle tone is pure and beautiful. It is reputed to be by Li Ch'eng but is in truth the work of Kuo Hsi. The inscriptions are extremely appropriate and can be savored.¹²⁵

It is clear that this painting is not the Liao-ning handscroll. After recording the inscriptions of Chao Meng-fu, Kuan Yün-shih 貫雲士 (1286–1324), and Ch'iu Yüan 仇遠 (1261–?), the *Ta-kuan lu* also records the following two inscriptions:

Amid the lingering snow a flock of crows
drops to the grass and weeds,
their forest perches unsettled,
their cries mournful.
The inspiration of the artist's brush
is here mature,
there lacks only in the distant sky
the lone crane approaching.

Shu-chai P'an Wei-chih [late Yüan]

After snow, in the cold forest
the ice-jade presses down the branches;
hungry and crying, they circle round and perch,
but cannot fly off.
In this world, how many creatures
are without knowledge—
unlike this flock of crows
possessed of the secret of understanding.

Hsing-chai Ch'en Mai [early Ch'ing]¹²⁶

The relationship between the lost hanging scroll and its recorded inscriptions, on the one hand, and the extant Liao-ning handscroll and its colophons, on the other, is a highly complex problem the detailed investigation of which must await further research. However, several observations and a hypothesis seem possible.

Wu Sheng notes that the five inscriptions of the hanging scroll are extremely appropriate. Indeed, read in the order in which they occurred on the hanging scroll (Chao, Kuan, Ch'iu, P'an, Ch'en Mai), the inscriptions form a coherent set. Chao's description of the birds as "hungry, cold, and mournfully calling" (*chi-tung ai-ming* 饑凍哀鳴) is repeated verbatim in the first line of Kuan's poem, is alluded to again in P'an's poem, and again in Ch'en

Mai's poem. Furthermore, all five poems recorded from the hanging scroll seem to be describing the same painting. On the other hand, the fourth and last poem on the Liao-ning handscroll (by Ch'en Yen-po 陳彥博) is very different in tone from the first three, a point to which we shall return shortly. One will also note that in Chao Meng-fu's colophon on the Liao-ning handscroll the graphs *tung ai* in the phrase *chi-tung ai-ming* are written in a smaller hand to the right of the main text, as if they had been omitted and added later. Considering the construction of this phrase, it is highly unlikely Chao Meng-fu would have made such an omission during the writing of his original colophon.¹²⁷

The Liao-ning handscroll probably assumed its present form sometime in the sixteenth century, a supposition that would explain why the collectors' seals begin only in the late Ming. The hanging scroll was among the possessions confiscated in 1562 from the powerful and corrupt minister Yen Sung 嚴嵩 (1480–1565).¹²⁸ Sometime before Sun Ch'eng-tse acquired the Liao-ning scroll, the first three inscriptions from the hanging scroll were copied and added to the handscroll painting. The fourth poem on the hanging scroll (by the late Yüan calligrapher P'an Wei-chih 班惟志) with its reference to the desirability of adding "a long crane approaching in the distant sky" (a reference to the Tu Fu poem discussed above), does not pertain, since the handscroll view does not extend above the treetops. Instead, another poem, by Ch'en Yen-po, dated 1378, was either copied from another source or forged. (The fifth inscriber, Ch'en Mai 陳邁, was an early Ch'ing figure, so that his poem would not have been on the hanging scroll at this time.) This substitution may have been made not only on practical but also on political grounds. The first and second poems, by Kuan Yün-shih and Ch'iu Yüan, are evenly balanced between a negative first couplet that describes the rigors of winter and a more optimistic second couplet that alludes to better conditions in the coming spring. Ch'en Yen-po's early Ming poem, on the other hand, is totally positive and reads as an optimistic fulfillment of the expectations expressed in the first and second Yüan poems, namely, for easier days when spring returns. *Hao-yin* 好音, "fine sounds," in Ch'en's last line can refer, once again via *Shih-ching* exegesis, both to the carefree chirping of birds or to "good tidings" of a political nature. In this case *hao-yin* would refer to the establishment of the Ming and the end of the "winter" of Yüan rule.¹²⁹ This fourth poem thus controls the under-

standing of the previous colophons and of the painting itself. Whoever put together the present Liao-ning handscroll attached and manipulated the colophons so that the winter crows would be interpreted as symbols of Yüan oppression relieved by the coming of the Ming.¹³⁰

In summation, although the painting in the Liao-ning handscroll may be a genuine Southern Sung Academy work, the first three colophons were probably written for another work that has since disappeared. But both the painting and the three colophons by Chao Meng-fu, Kuan Yün-shih, and Ch'iu Yüan are directly relevant to Lo Chih-ch'uan's painting. All these colophons speak of the sufferings of the jackdaws during the winter. Chao Meng-fu finds the painting "oppressive" and sees the jackdaws as "hungry, cold, and mournfully calling." Remembering the literary association already established between flocking jackdaws and the common people, one can easily read the painting as an expression of human suffering caused by the ravages of either an actual or a political winter.

In this context, Ch'ien-lung's colophon is particularly revealing. Though his contributions are often viewed as defacements to the paintings on which they are so prominently inscribed, in this case Ch'ien-lung's poem abandons the metaphors and, thus, the subtleties of the earlier colophon writers and states the matter bluntly: this painting shows the sufferings of the common people under an earlier rule that was not as enlightened as mine. Similarly, Sun Ch'eng-tse, who owned the Liao-ning handscroll in the early Ch'ing, characterized it as "Li Ch'eng's Cold Forest" (*Li Ch'eng Han-lin t'u*). In his notes on the handscroll he quoted the passage from Teng Ch'un's *Hua-chi* of 1167 (see note 67) in which Teng opined that the "Cold Forest" paintings of Li Ch'eng were political allegories of the gentleman versus the inferior man. Sun Ch'eng-tse then continued:

Looking at the appearance of the flock of crows in this painting—how they are hungry and perch together!—could it be that they are a figure for the wanderings and fatigue of the common people in times of political disorder?¹³¹

It would seem unlikely that the artist of the painting in the Liao-ning handscroll, if he were indeed a member of the Southern Sung Academy, intended or perceived of the possibility of such a meaning. More likely, the Liao-ning scroll and such images as

those in the Metropolitan fan and the Berlin album leaf are best perceived as examples of the routine seasonal expressions that crowd the pages of the *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*. One can detect among Southern Sung Academy painters a strand of painting perhaps best described as "winter chic." Winter is portrayed in somewhat romantic terms, a temporary discomfort to be endured, perhaps even savored, until the coming of spring. The birds suffer no obvious discomfort, and the paintings, rather than dwelling on the real rigors of winter, exude a charm and delicacy that anticipate the coming of spring.

CROWS IN OLD TREES

It is now time to apply the information gathered above and to attempt an interpretation of *Crows in Old Trees*. The contemporary Yüan inscriptions on Lo Chih-ch'uan's paintings reveal a Confucian recluse and painter whose work local Kiangsi connoisseurs esteemed and whose reputation extended to the highest echelons of the Yüan literary establishment. These inscriptions, together with the three surviving examples of his work, document both his skill as a painter and his commitment to literati values. Lo's work and his concept of painting clearly relate to late Sung and early Yüan "literati painting." The inscriptions also reveal an artist personally very concerned with issues of integrity and independence both as an artist and as a human being. Lo Chih-ch'uan's use of the analogy between painting and Ch'an enlightenment in the dialogue with Chao Wen well illustrates his view of an art that is inclusive, transforming, and liberating.

Such a theory of artistic transcendence focuses on the combination of an object's significance (*i*) with the "inner order" (*li*) of that object and helps to confirm that Lo Chih-ch'uan valued a painting that explored and utilized the analogical values (meaning) and interactions (inner order) among the objects portrayed. Using analogical values associated with certain subjects in Chinese literature to express literati issues in visual form, his work thus depicts physical forms while expressing a meaning that transforms and transcends their physical appearance. A rather direct (some would say crass) articulation of similar views would be Teng Ch'un's contention that Li Ch'eng's *Cold Forests* expresses literati values as moral allegory. If *Crows in Old Trees* is a more nuanced expression of literati values, it

nevertheless arises from that same perceived relationship between literary and visual meaning.

Correlating in yet another way with Lo's artistic theory is the eclectic use in *Crows in Old Trees* of iconographic motifs that were common in previous painting, especially Southern Sung Academy painting—the winter scene, the flocking crows, the pheasants, trees, and bamboo—all combined in new ways and with careful attention to their analogical associations. The result both utilizes and transcends the prior use of these motifs and creates a highly individual work with a distinctive, personal meaning.

Compared with other works that contain the motif of flocking crows, such as the Toledo handscroll (Figure 13), the Metropolitan fan (Figure 14), the Pien Wu leaf (Figure 15), or the Liao-ning handscroll (Figure 16), Lo Chih-ch'uan's painting has a darker, more somber, almost sinister feeling. The pheasants at the base of the trees are central to the expression of this feeling. Their addition to the conventional *Ku-mu han-ya* formula draws a strong contrast between the pheasants and the crows, a contrast that is not present in paintings that depict only crows, and forces the observer to consider the very different and contrasting analogical associations of the two species. The poems examined above in which crows interact with other species all place the crows in stark contrast with other birds. The Tu Fu poem and its illustration in the Harvard leaf (Figure 11) and the Hou Mao-kung painting (Figure 12) are the clearest examples of this contrast.

Another painting that contrasts crows, in this case jackdaws, with another species is a fan mounted as an album leaf in the Cleveland Museum of Art and entitled *Birds and Ducks on a Snowy Islet* (Figure 17). Howard Rogers has linked this fan to the Hui-ch'ung and Chao Ling-jang tradition of "small scene" paintings and dated the work to the mid-thirteenth century.¹³² There is a marked similarity in compositional arrangement between this fan and Lo Chih-ch'uan's *Crows in Old Trees*. A river bisects the winter scene into a far promontory and a near shore; the tops of a tree group in the foreground are the gathering point for a flock of crows, while another species, in this case a male and female mandarin duck, huddles at the base of the trees. But the mood of the two works is totally different: Lo's painting is dark and sinister, while the fan is intimate, almost quaint. This fan is clearly a variation of the "small scene" *Ku-mu han-ya* formula of the Southern Sung: the mandarin ducks, a common symbol of marital bliss, and the "mandarin square"



Figure 17. Unknown artist, Southern Sung dynasty (1127–1279). *Birds and Ducks on a Snowy Islet*. Tradition of Chao Ling-jang. Fan-shaped album leaf, ink and slight color on silk, 24.6 x 25.9 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift from Junior Council (photo: Cleveland Museum of Art)

insignia of seventh-class rank, add poignancy and charm to the scene. The sinister power of *Crows in Old Trees* can best be understood when we recall that such iconologically conventional works as the Cleveland fan formed the background against which contemporary viewers would have understood Lo's work.

The full effects of this contrast can best be appreciated when one compares *Crows in Old Trees* with Lo Chih-ch'uan's *Snowy River Bank* in Tokyo (Figure 2). It is certainly remarkable that two of the three surviving works of Lo are so similar in motif, composition, and mood. This compositional arrangement clearly had special meaning for the artist. The frequent mention of flocking crows in the Yüan inscriptions also suggests the motif was a private symbol of some sort for Lo. A careful comparison of the two paintings indicates that the Tokyo painting may represent an earlier, less focused attempt at something like the Metropolitan painting. Iconographically speaking, the Tokyo painting may be seen as an intermediate step between a traditional Southern Sung winter composition like the Cleveland fan of Figure 17 and *Crows in Old Trees*. Cahill's conjecture that the Tokyo painting may be a fragment of a handscroll strengthens our perception of the Metropolitan painting as the culmination of a visual idea that the painter experimented with and perhaps painted many times.¹³³

First, the Metropolitan painting is conceived in a larger space than the Tokyo work: the horizon is farther away, the distance to that horizon greater, and the background more varied. The contrast in this regard with the Cleveland and Harvard fans, the Pien Wu leaf, and even the Liao-ning handscroll, all of which depict small, confined worlds, is especially striking. In terms of the overall scope of *Crows in Old Trees*, Lo was clearly thinking of paintings that depicted the great tree against a broad landscape, similar to the Li K'an (Figure 5) or Wu Chen (Figure 6) paintings discussed above. This conception is much better realized in *Crows in Old Trees* than in the Tokyo work.

Second, in the Metropolitan painting the central tree group consists of only two trees, a larger and a smaller one, in the center of the picture. This placement highlights the work's central vertical axis and allows the trees to dominate the composition without distracting from the avian activity at the top and bottom of the painting. In the Tokyo painting, on the other hand, the backward curve of the central tree diverts attention away from the crows toward the lesser trees along the receding shoreline to the left. Likewise, the Pien Wu leaf and the Liao-ning handscroll both manifest a basically horizontal orientation: the crows fly in horizontal lines to land in trees of diminutive stature, and the feeling created is one of closeness between the trees and the birds. On the other hand, the straight vertical axis through the middle of Lo's painting has the effect of drawing the birds down upon the trees in a threatening and menacing way. In this composition, the crows invade the trees.

Third, in the Metropolitan painting there is a much stronger opposition between the two banks of the river. In the Tokyo work the snow cover hides the bank of the far shore. In the Metropolitan painting the elevation of the promontory to the right creates a balance for the near shoreline and strengthens the opposition between promontory and shore. In this respect, *Crows in Old Trees* may be seen as an example of the "hills beyond a river" format typical of Yüan painting.

Fourth, the Metropolitan painting shows a much more focused treatment of the birds. The presence of three species (crows, pheasants, and ducks) in the Tokyo painting distracts from the possibility of opposition between any two. The positioning of the pheasants in the trees to the left is unnatural, and the flying motions of the crows seem helter-skelter and undirected. In the Metropolitan work, how-

ever, the focus on only two species (crows and pheasants) at the top and the bottom of the trees reinforces the opposition between the two species. The effect is similar to the contrast between the crane and the crows in the Harvard fan (Figure 11), with the important difference that the polarities in the two paintings are reversed: in the fan, the crows already hold the base of the tree, while the crane is about to land; in the Lo Chih-ch'uan work, the pheasants hold the base of the tree, while the majority of the crows are poised for an imminent landing in the top of the central tree.

The combined effect of these four features is to strengthen the contrast in the Metropolitan painting between the pheasants and the crows and to divide the painting into two groups of objects set against a neutral landscape of distant mountains and waters: (1) the near shore, the central tree group, the pheasants, and the bamboo at the base of the trees, and (2) the far promontory with its several crows and the crows swirling in the air. The two groups are linked by the imminent "invasion" of the crows into the top of the central tree. The large tree that so dominates the composition thus becomes an object of struggle between the two groups.

Crows in Old Trees skillfully combines elements from three distinct iconographic traditions: (1) the large tree derives from the tradition of Li Ch'eng/Kuo-hsi "Cold Forest" paintings, (2) the crows derive from the *Ku-mu han-ya* tradition of Southern Sung, and (3) the pheasants derive from the Southern Sung tradition of "bird and flower" painting. The trees in Lo's painting are clearly the *ch'iao-mu*, "tall trees," artistically linked to Li K'an's *Old Trees, Bamboo, and Rocks* (Figure 5) and the great desiccated trees of the Li Ch'eng/Kuo hsi tradition. Metaphorically, they may be traced to the *ch'iao-mu* of Mencius, for whom they stand for the state and perhaps even for civilization itself, as Mencius explains in his comments on *Shih-ching*, Mao #165 (see note 70). Lo's use of the leafless, desiccated tree as a symbol for political and cultural decay foreshadows Hsiang Sheng-mo's 項聖謨 (1597-1658) similar use after the collapse of the Ming.¹³⁴ In this connection one can perhaps better understand Lo's decision to expand the visible horizon and the scale of his painting beyond the narrow confines of the *Ku-mu han-ya* genre. *Crows in Old Trees* is thus not primarily a "bird and flower" painting but rather a landscape in which the "mountains and waters" are a synecdoche for "all under Heaven" (*t'ien-hsia* 天下). The

image of the trees here as symbols for the state and ultimately for the *t'ien-hsia* clearly links this painting to the twelfth-century tradition of allegorical “Cold Forests.”¹³⁵

The crows in the painting are also not the diminutive jackdaws of *Ku-mu han-ya*; they are the larger collared or parson’s crow. Jackdaws average about thirteen inches from bill to tail; the collared crow, on the other hand, can range up to twenty inches. In addition to this difference in size, not only the white collar around the neck but also the lower abdomen of the jackdaw is entirely white (Figure 18). These distinguishing features of the jackdaw can be clearly seen in the Liao-ning handscroll, the Pien Wu album leaf, and the other examples of Sung and Yüan *Ku-mu han-ya* painting. The white of the collared crow, on the other hand, extends only to the upper breast; the lower abdomen is black (Figure 19). Lo Chih-ch’uan’s crows, especially those on the far promontory, distinctly show these features of the collared crow (Figure 20).

As we have seen, the differences in metaphorical associations between jackdaws (*han-ya*) and “white-necks” are considerable. The former is a conventional symbol of the common people or of the lower ranks of officials, and is morally neutral: jackdaws may express either positive or negative values relative to other species. The “white-necks,” on the other hand, are a fully negative image of ill omen. It may be useful to remember that these associations are drawn from careful observations of the collared crow’s behavior. For instance, an early-twentieth-century Western observer writes that the collared crow is “a thief, a brigand and a rascal.”¹³⁶ By clearly drawing the “white-necks,” Lo Chih-ch’uan has subtly yet drastically heightened the negative associations of the crows in his painting and reinforced both their menacing posture toward the trees and their opposition to the morally positive pheasant. The effect of this subtle yet significant change is one of powerful irony: by carefully drawing the sinister collared crow, instead of the innocuous jackdaw as might be expected in a conventional formula, Lo Chih-ch’uan simultaneously draws upon and undermines the iconography of the traditional Southern Sung *Ku-mu han-ya* formula. This is clearly a case where Lo Chih-ch’uan has made good on his own theory to “use my eyes as my hands,” where he has “particularized the surface appearance” of objects in order to bring out their “meaning.”

Lo Chih-ch’uan’s careful attention to real-life detail also sharpens the existing analogical values

attached to the pheasant. The pheasants at the base of the Metropolitan painting are neither the common ring-necked nor the flamboyant golden pheasant. They are, I believe, Elliot’s pheasants (*Syrmaticus ellioti*), a long-tailed pheasant native to southeastern China, including Kiangsi Province. Unlike the ubiquitous ring-necked pheasant, the Elliot’s is an uncommon and reclusive bird that inhabits steep slopes and the tops of mountains. As the great naturalist William Beebe wrote of them, “Elliot’s Pheasants seem to keep to themselves, as independent as they are wary.”¹³⁷ By carefully drawing this particular pheasant, Lo has been able to draw upon the “constant and firm” qualities associated with pheasants in general and at the same time avoid the negative associations of the “patterned avian” (*wen-ch’in*). His pheasants are thus symbols not only of the constant and firm but also of independence and reclusion. They are clearly a self-image, and their pairing suggests that the painting may perhaps be understood as an expression of solidarity with an intended recipient. The pairing of the pheasants underscores the pairing of the trees and may perhaps be inspired by or allude to such images as the *Twin Pines* of Wu Chen and Ts’ao Chih-po (Figures 6 and 7).

There are two other relevant ornithological

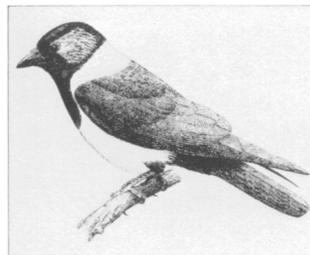


Figure 18. *Daurian Jackdaw* (*Corvus dauuricus*). (From Derek Goodwin, *Crows of the World* [2nd ed. London, 1986] p. 77)

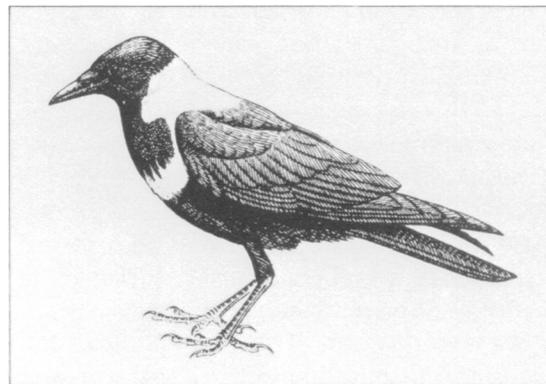


Figure 19. *Collared Crow* (*Corvus torquatus*). (From Goodwin, *Crows of the World*, p. 117)

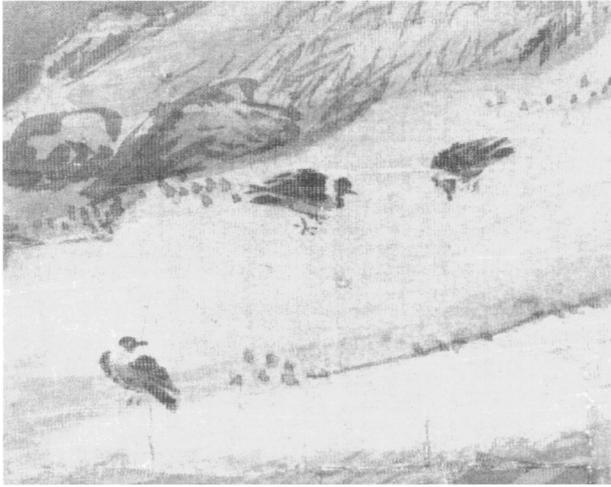


Figure 20. Detail of Figure 1

points. First, the Elliot's pheasant occurs in the mountains of southeast China and was never depicted in "bird and flower" painting, which preferred the ring-necked, golden, or Reeves pheasant. There is thus a possible local reference in Lo's clear depiction of this regional and reclusive bird of the Southeast—Kiangsi, Chekiang, and Fukien provinces—the stronghold of Southern Sung culture, a reference that would be understood by natives of the area but not by the invaders from the north. Second, the collared crow is essentially a bird of the plains. It does not normally occur above an elevation of sixty meters and is common in the cultivated fields of the highly populated lowlands. The Elliot's pheasant, on the other hand, is an upland bird that seeks out remote areas of uncultivated mountain slope. It would thus be highly unlikely for the two species to occur together in the same habitat. In short, although Lo Chih-ch'uan has been extremely faithful to reality in his attention to visual detail, the pairing of the birds and the overall compositional arrangement of the painting are a mental construct that emphasizes the "meaning" of the objects in the painting and highlights their "inner order" relative to each other. In this sense, the painting is an allegory, inspired by the contrast, common in the literary tradition, between crows and nobler species, such as cranes and swans.

Thus the artistic decision to divide the painting into a near shore versus a far promontory and the ensuing struggle for the central tree correspond to a moral divide between the raucous, invasive crows of the populated plains and the silent, reclusive

pheasant of the secluded mountains. Using the terms of the traditional literati, we might say that the moral divide is between the gentleman (*chün-tzu*) and the small man (*hsiao-jen*). The painting addresses the anguish of this moral struggle and hints darkly that the outcome may indeed remain in doubt. This message may be personal and psychological, or it may also be political. We have seen above that in the literary tradition the fidelity of male and female pheasants was a conventional symbol of political loyalty during periods of dynastic transition. Such a meaning is clearly possible in Lo's painting, especially if the pheasants are understood as a self-image or as an image of regional solidarity: they become an expression of loyalty to the fallen Sung dynasty. But, once again, Lo has altered conventional associations by altering detail: both pheasants in the painting are male (Figure 21). In connection with the previously mentioned Tu Mutzu and the origins of "Pheasants Fly at Dawn," the absence of these pheasants' mates serves to intensify the anguish of political separation from the fallen dynasty. Once again Lo Chih-ch'uan has used literary tradition to transform a routine image from



Figure 21. Detail of Figure 1

prior painting into one possessing great ironic power. Only if we understand that the visual prototypes of the two male pheasants at the base of Lo's painting were either the pomp and majesty of the emperor's golden pheasant (Figure 9) or a fulsome wish for marital bliss (Figure 10), can we then appreciate the irony of Lo's composition.

We may recall at this point the opening lines of *Shih-ching*, Mao #197:

Joyful are the jackdaws
as they fly home in flocks to rest.
All among the people are happy;
I alone am in misery.
What is my crime against Heaven?
What is my offense?
What shall be done
for the sadness of my heart?

Having contrasted the image of the contented jackdaws with his own political isolation and misery, the speaker continues:

The pheasant cries in the morning
still seeking his mate.
I am like that ruined tree,
sick and without branches.
Oh! the grief of my heart,
that no one understands it!¹³⁸

I am not suggesting that the painting is an illustration of these lines. But all of the major elements in the painting are present in the ode, and this *Shih-ching* text may have prompted Lo Chih-ch'uan consciously or unconsciously to experiment with this particular combination of images.

The doubling of the trees, the pheasants, and the two clumps of bamboo against the flocking multitude of crows may indicate solidarity with an intended recipient. Perhaps this work was painted as a present for a close, like-minded friend, perhaps for another recluse like Liu Shen, who could provide the understanding called for in the ode and comprehend the painting's dark insights. For *Crows in Old Trees* portrays not the conventional joy but the secret agony of the recluse. Its vision of the eremitic life is not the romantic P'eng-lai of the Yüan inscriptions on Lo's more conventional "Taoist" paintings but a real look into the dark winter of the soul: there is no hint of the coming of spring, but only loneliness and the relentless onslaught of "small men." The painting is a meditation not only on a subjugated nation but also on the arduous struggle toward personal independence and integrity, toward the inner battle for a state of

the soul that is "constant and firm," even in the depths of winter.

The lack of an inscription may indicate that the work was never presented. Perhaps Lo Chih-ch'uan decided this vision was too private after all. The scarcity of collectors' seals and the absence of inscriptions, together with the physical damage the painting has suffered from periods of neglect, may hint that the work was too disturbing to be displayed and appreciated in the polite social settings usual to Chinese connoisseurs. We may recall Emperor Ch'ien-lung's comments on the Liao-ning handscroll, a work with none of these darker overtones: "around the warm brazier, I cannot bear to open this painting and look."

ABBREVIATIONS

SKCS—*Wen-yüan ko Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* (repr. Taipei: Shang-wu, 1982).

SPPY—*Ssu-pu pei-yao* (repr. Taipei: Chung-hua, 1965).

SPTK—*Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an* (Shanghai: Shang-wu, 1919-36).

TSCC—*Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng hsin-pien* (Taipei: Hsin-wen-feng, 1986).

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NOTES

1. Formerly in the collection of C. C. Wang, the painting was first studied in Richard Barnhart, *Wintry Forests, Old Trees: Some Landscape Themes in Chinese Painting* (New York, 1972), p. 43. For subsequent studies see Wen Fong, *Sung and Yuan Painting* (New York, 1973) pp. 95-96, 104, 147, and Barnhart, *Along the Border of Heaven: Sung and Yuan Paintings from the C. C. Wang Family Collection* (New York, 1983) pp. 121-126.

2. Fong, *Sung and Yuan Painting*, p. 96.

3. Barnhart, *Wintry Forests, Old Trees*, p. 43.

4. Shimada Shūjirō, "Ra Chi-san 'Sekko hozō' ni tsuite," *Hōun* 22 (1938) pp. 41–52.
5. *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting*, exh. cat. (Cleveland, 1980) no. 101. The Chinese title of this leaf is taken from *Hai-wai i-chen* [Chinese Art in Overseas Collections: Paintings] (Taipei, 1988) II, no. 34. In *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting* the leaf is called *Ramblers over a Windy Stream*.
6. *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting*, no. 102. Cf. James Cahill, *An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings: Tang, Sung, and Yuan* (Berkeley, 1980) p. 305.
7. The former appellation is by Wai-kam Ho, followed by Wen Fong; the latter by Suzuki Kei, *Chūgoku kaiga sōgō zuroku* [Comprehensive Illustrated Catalogue of Chinese Paintings] (Tokyo, 1982) I, no. A1–002.
8. Wu Ch'i-chen, *Shu-hua chi* 書畫記, completed about 1677 (repr. Shanghai, 1963) p. 289.
9. For Shimada's article see note 4. The reference works in question are Ch'en Kao-hua 陳高華, *Yüan-tai hua-chia shih-liao* 元代畫家史料 [Historical Source Materials on Yuan Dynasty Painters] (Shanghai, 1980); and Igor de Rachewiltz and May Wang (Lou Chan-mei), *Repertory of Proper Names in Yuan Literary Sources* (Taipei, 1988).
10. *Fu Yü-li shih chi* 傅與礪詩集 (SKCS ed.) 3.28b.
11. *Lin-chiang fu chih*, 1572 edition (repr. Shanghai, 1962), Hsin-yü county map. Later Ch'ing dynasty gazetteers of Hsin-yü note a "Lo Village" 羅坊 in the same area, a predecessor of the modern Luofang. See *Hsin-yü hsien chih* (Hsin-yü, 1873) maps.
12. James M. Hargett, *On the Road in Twelfth Century China: The Travel Diaries of Fan Chengda (1126–1193)* (Stuttgart, 1989) pp. 192–193, 274.
13. For a detailed study of Fu-chou, the prefecture adjoining Lin-chiang, during the Sung see Robert P. Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen: The Elite of Fu-chou, Chiang-hsi, in Northern and Southern Sung* (Cambridge, 1986); for the local literary culture of the area see Jonathan Pease, "Lin-ch'uan and Fen-ning: Kiangsi Locales and Kiangsi Writers During the Sung," *Asia Major*, 4.1 (1991) pp. 39–85.
14. This list does not include the references to Lo Hsiao-ch'uan 羅小川 and Lo Jo-ch'uan 羅若川 mentioned in Ch'en Kao-hua, *Yüan-tai hua-chia shih-liao*, p. 332. It is probable both of these individuals were in some way related to the artist of *Crows in Old Trees*.
15. Liu Shen, *Kuei-yin shih chi* 桂隱詩集 (SKCS ed.) 4.67b; on Liu Shen, see *Yüan-shih* (repr. Peking: Chung-hua, 1976) 190.4341–4342.
16. Liu Shen, *Kuei-yin shih chi*, 2.26b–27a.
17. *Ibid.*, 2.1b–2a.
18. *Ibid.*, 2.30a.
19. *Fan Te-chi shih chi* 范德機詩集 (SKCS ed.) 6.24a; on Fan P'eng see Pao Ken-ti 包根弟, *Yüan-shih yen-chiu* (Taipei, 1977) pp. 100–101.
20. *Chieh Hsi-ssu ch'üan chi* 揭傒斯全集 (repr. Shanghai: Ku-chi, 1985) p. 81; on Chieh Hsi-ssu see the introduction to this 1985 edition of his works and Pao Ken-ti, pp. 102–103.
21. *Chieh Hsi-ssu ch'üan chi*, p. 89.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
23. *Tao-yüan hsiieh-ku lu* 道園學古錄 (SPTK ed.) 28.2ab; on Yü Chi see Pao Ken-ti, pp. 96–98.
24. *Chen-i chai shih kao* 貞一齋詩稿 (*Wan-wei pieh-tsang* 宛委別藏 ed.) 2.50b.
25. *Kuei-t'ing chi* 檜亭集 (SKCS ed.) 3.19ab; on Ting Fu see *Yüan-shih chi-shih* 元詩紀事 (repr. Shanghai: Ku-chi, 1987) 14.307–309.
26. *An-ya t'ang chi* 安雅堂集 (SKCS ed.) 2.8a.
27. *Ch'un-pai chai lei kao* 純白齋類稿 (SKCS ed.) 14.1b; on Hu Chu see *Yüan-shih chi-shih*, 17.401–408.
28. *Ch'un-pai chai lei kao*, 15.4b.
29. *Chin-t'ai chi* 金臺集 (SKCS ed.) 1.38b–39a; for Nasan see *Yüan-shih chi-shih*, 18.415–425.
30. *Yü-t'ing chi* 羽庭集 (SKCS ed.) 4.13a.
31. *Lin Teng-chou chi* 林登川集 (SKCS ed.) 23.21a.
32. *Ibid.*, 3.6a.
33. *Shu-hua chi*, pp. 98–99.
34. For the text see Ko Yu-söp 高裕燮 ed., *Chosön hwaron chip-söng* 朝鮮畫論集成 (Seoul: Kyongin munhwasa, 1976) I.263; on this catalogue and the importance of Yi Yong's collection see Ahn Hwi-joon 安輝濬, *Kankoku kaiga shi* 韓國繪畫史 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kobunkan, 1987) pp. 58–65.
35. Shimada Shūjirō, "Ra Chi-san 'Sekko hozō' ni tsuite," pp. 46–47. On this catalogue see R. H. van Gulik, *Chinese Pictorial Art as Viewed by the Connoisseur* (Rome, 1958) pp. 242–243, 499–500 and O. Kümmel, "Die chinesische Malerei im Kundaikwan Sayü-chöki," *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift* 1 (1912–13) pp. 14ff.
36. For this distinction and its importance see Ch'en Kao-hua, *Yüan-tai hua-chia shih-liao*, introduction, p. 1.
37. Both Ahn Hwi-joon and Shen Fu surmise that the Chinese paintings in Yi Yong's collection may have entered Korea in the dowries of Mongol princesses who during the Yuan period married into the Koryō royal house. Another conduit was the Koryō prince Ch'ungsön 忠宣 (1275–1325), who lived most of his life in the Yuan capital and was in close artistic contact with Chao Meng-fu, Yü Chi, and other scholar-painters. The prince and his principal artistic adviser, Chu Te-jun 朱德潤 (1294–1365), both favored the Li Ch'eng/Kuo Hsi landscape tradition in which Lo Chih-ch'uan practiced. See Shen Fu, *Yüan-tai huang-shih shu-hua shou-ts'ang shih-lüeh* [A Brief History of the Art Collection of the Yuan Royal Family] (Taipei, 1981) pp. 100–103; and Ahn Hwi-joon, "Korean Landscape Painting in the Early Yi Period: The Kuo Hsi Tradition," Ph.D. diss. (Harvard University, 1974), pp. 69–75.
38. Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting* (Cambridge, 1971) p. 89.
39. For a Yuan painting of a cattle herd similar to Lo's (item #19) and understood in metaphorical terms see Pao Ken-ti, *Yüan-shih yen-chiu*, pp. 55–56.
40. F. W. Mote, "Confucian Eremitism in the Yuan Period," in Arthur Wright, ed., *The Confucian Persuasion* (Stanford, 1960) pp. 202–240.

41. *Shih-chi* (repr. Peking: Chung-hua, 1959) 41.1751–1756; E. Chavannes, trans. *Mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien* (repr. Paris, 1967) IV.439–448.
42. *Hou Han-shu* (Peking: Chung-hua, 1965) 83.2763–64.
43. *Hsin T'ang-shu* (Peking: Chung-hua, 1975) 196.5608–5609.
44. Ch'ing-shan chi 青山集 (SKCS ed.) 7.22b–23a. Shimada Shūjirō, “Ra Chi-san ‘Sekko hozō’ ni tsuite,” pp. 50–51 first called attention to this poem, and Barnhart (*Along the Border of Heaven*, pp. 121–122) has translated the text into English. However, since the poem is not altogether easy and my interpretation differs from that of Barnhart in several places, I have attempted another translation and interpretation.
45. Komazawa Daigaku, *Zengaku daijiten* 禪學大辭典 (Tokyo, 1971) pp. 842a, 934cd.
46. Yanagida Seizan, ed., *Rinzai roku* (Tokyo, 1972) p. 139 (trans. Paul Demiéville, *Entretiens de Lin-tsi* [Paris, 1972] p. 118).
47. *Ibid.*
48. “Saplings can only grow and become timber if they are constantly under the care of the forester.” *Jen-min jih-pao*, May 31, 1963.
49. For Western examples see Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.626–631; Horace, *Odes* II.10.3; Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* I.viii.22; and Ben Jonson: “This Sejanus/ (Trust my divining soul) hath plots on all:/ No tree that stops his prospect but must fall” (*Sejanus His Fall* II.498–500). The figure is also common in Japan. For example, when Genji returns to the capital after a period of provincial exile, Murasaki writes that “he was restored to his former rank and made a supernumerary councillor. All his followers were similarly rehabilitated. It was as if spring had come to a withered tree” (Edward G. Seidensticker, trans., *The Tale of Genji* [New York, 1989] p. 269). Richard Barnhart has examined the Cold Forest theme in Chinese painting in *Wintry Forests, Old Trees*.
50. D. C. Lau, trans., *Mencius* (Harmondsworth, England, 1970) p. 67.
51. Barnhart, *Wintry Forests, Old Trees*, p. 42; see also Sherman E. Lee and Wai-kam Ho, *Chinese Art Under the Mongols* (Cleveland, 1968) no. 224. For other related works attributed either to Li K'an or to his son Li Shih-hsing (1283–1328) see *Chinese Art Under the Mongols*, no. 225; *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting*, no. 104; and *Ku-kung ming-hua san-pai chung* [Three Hundred Masterpieces of Chinese Painting in the Palace Museum] (Taichung, 1959) no. 155.
52. Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* (Cambridge, 1985) pp. 154–155, translation here slightly modified; see also James Cahill, *Three Alternative Histories of Chinese Painting* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1988) pp. 37–38.
53. Ch'eng Shu-te, *Lun yü chi-shih* (repr. Taipei: Ting-wen, 1973) I.540–541. Chuang-tzu (*A Concordance to Chuang Tzu*. Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series. Supplement No. 20 [repr. Cambridge, 1956], 79/28/65) links this passage to the troubles of Confucius and his disciples in Ch'en and Ts'ai and to similar expressions by Confucius of moral resolve during that difficult time (*Analects* 15.2). The Chuang-tzu text suggests that the original intention of the *Analects* pine and cypress passage may have been similar to the understanding of the later commentators.
54. *Hsin-chiao Ch'en Tzu-ang chi* (repr. Taipei, 1964) p. 33.
55. National Palace Museum, *Yüan ssu ta-chia* [Four Great Masters of the Yüan] (Taipei, 1975) no. 201.
56. National Palace Museum, *Ku-kung shu-hua t'u-lu* [An Illustrated Catalogue of Painting and Calligraphy in the National Palace Museum] (Taipei, 1990) IV, pp. 121–122. See also Chu-ting Li, “Rocks and Trees and the Art of Ts'ao Chih-po,” *Artibus Asiae* 23 (1960) pp. 153–208, esp. pp. 158–160; and James Cahill, *Hills Beyond a River: Chinese Painting of the Yüan Dynasty, 1279–1368* (New York, 1976) p. 81.
57. Shih-mo Po-shan is the Yüan official Shih-mo Chi-tsu 石抹繼祖 (1281–1347), a member of a prominent Yüan family descended from Liao Khitan stock.
58. Tuan Yü-tsai, *Shuo-wen chieh-tzu chu* (repr. Taipei: Shih-chieh, 1972) 6A.17b.
59. *Shih-chi*, 18.878 (Chavannes, *Mémoires historiques*, III.125).
60. *Han-shu* (Peking: Chung-hua, 1962) 62.2727 (Chavannes, *Mémoires historiques*, I.ccxxvii–ccxxviii).
61. Edward Schafer, “Hunting Parks and Animal Enclosures in Ancient China,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 11 (1968) pp. 325, 334–335.
62. *Mao-shih cheng-i* (*Shih-san ching chu-shu* ed., repr. 2 vols. Peking: Chung-hua, 1980) I.442c. Even Bernhard Karlgren, normally adverse to the metaphorical readings of traditional commentators, accepts their interpretation of this couplet, writing, “there are no really fine trees—a metaphor for the worthlessness of the men in office” (*The Book of Odes* [Stockholm, 1950] p. 138). See also James Robert Hightower, trans., *Han shih wai chuan: Han Ying's Illustrations of the Didactic Application of the Classic of Songs* (Cambridge, 1952) p. 233.
63. *Ch'u-tz'u* (*SPPY* ed.) 8.4a.
64. *Han-shu*, 81.3354.
65. Barnhart, *Wintry Forests, Old Trees*, pp. 15–18; *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u* (repr. Taipei: Shang-wu, 1971) pp. 288–290.
66. *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*, pp. 283–284. This suggestion does not occur in earlier accounts of the artist; see Charles Lachman, trans., *Evaluations of Sung Dynasty Painters of Renown* (Leiden, 1989) pp. 56–58.
67. *Hua-chi* (*Hua-shih ts'ung-shu* ed.) (repr. Taipei: Wen-shih-che ch'u-pan-she, 1983) 9.71.
68. Kiyohiko Munakata, *Ching Hao's Pi-fa-chi: A Note on the Art of the Brush* (Ascona, 1974) p. 11 and the excellent note on pp. 18–19.
69. *Mao-shih cheng-i* (*Shih-san ching chu-shu* ed.) I.410c–412a.
70. Lau, *Mencius*, p. 104.
71. *Ch'un-ch'iu Tso-chuan cheng-i* (*Shih-san ching chu-shu* ed.) II.2167b; cf. also D. C. Lau, *Analects* (Harmondsworth, England, 1979), p. 171.

72. *Wen hsüan* (repr. Shanghai: Ku-chi, 1986) 10.442; David R. Knechtges, trans., *Wen xuan or Selections of Refined Literature* (Princeton, 1987) II, p. 185.
73. *Kuo yü* (SPPY ed.) 8.1b–2a. Burton Watson has translated the entire account in Cyril Birch, ed., *Anthology of Chinese Literature* (New York, 1965) pp. 34–38.
74. For notes on the theme in medieval Chinese poetry see Stephen Owen, “Deadwood: The Barren Tree from Yü Hsin to Han Yü,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 1.2 (July 1979) pp. 157–179.
75. Cheng Tso-hsin, *A Synopsis of the Avifauna of China* (Beijing, 1987) pp. 162ff.; Lo Yüan 羅顥 (1136–84), *Erh-ya i* 爾雅翼 (TSCC ed.) 13.144.
76. Li Shih-chen, *Pen-ts’ao kang-mu* (repr. Peking: Jen-ming wei-sheng, 1982) pp. 2617–2618; Bernard E. Read, *Chinese Materia Medica: Avian Drugs* (repr. Taipei, 1982) pp. 40–41; Alfred Hoffmann, *Glossar der heute gültigen chinesischen Vogelnamen* (Wiesbaden, 1975) p. 211.
77. *Ch’un-ch’ü Tso-chuan cheng-i*, II.2083a–2084b; Lau, *Analects*, p. 165.
78. *Chuang-tzu*, 9/4/29–30 (trans. Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang-tzu* [New York, 1968] p. 58).
79. *Ibid.*, 8/3/14, p. 52.
80. *Ch’u-tz’u*, 1.6a, 8.10a, 8.12b, 13.15b; and especially the commentary for Li-sao distich 15–16, Yu Kuo-en, ed., *Li-sao tsuan-i* (Peking: Chung-hua, 1980) pp. 59–60.
81. *Li chi cheng-i* (Shih-san ching chu-shu ed.) I.1270b; *Chou-li chu-shu* (Shih-san ching chu-shu ed.) I.762ab; Edouard Biot, trans., *Le Tcheou-li, ou Rites des Tcheou* (Paris, 1851) I.432–433.
82. Pan Ku (32–92), *Po-hu t’ung* (SPTK ed.) 7.4a; for similar Han texts see *Shuo-yüan chiao-cheng* (repr. Peking: Chung-hua, 1987) pp. 485–486; and *Ch’un-ch’ü fan-lu* (repr. Taipei: Shang-wu, 1976) pp. 247–248. Quotation of this *Po-hu t’ung* passage in the K’ung Ying-ta (574–648) subcommentary to the *Li chi* (*Li chi cheng-i*, I.1270b) ensured its wide availability to scholars in the T’ang and Sung periods.
83. *Chou-li chu-shu*, I.781–782 (trans. Biot, *Le Tcheou-li, ou Rites des Tcheou*, II.6); *Hsin T’ang-shu* (Peking: Chung-hua, 1975) 24.515, 528.
84. *Hsin T’ang-shu*, 24.519; Schuyler Cammann, “Chinese Mandarin Squares: Brief Catalogue of the Letcher Collection,” *University of Pennsylvania Museum Bulletin* 17.3 (June 1953). In Ch’ing times, these equations were: crane (first class), golden pheasant (second), peacock (third), wild goose (fourth), silver pheasant (fifth), egret (sixth), mandarin duck (seventh), quail (eighth), paradise flycatcher (ninth). These are all birds with highly positive metaphorical connotations in Chinese literature. The list represents, furthermore, an amazing continuity of the legendary Emperor Shao Hao’s concept of an avian administration.
85. Ts’ui Pao (4th century A.D.), *Ku-chün chu* 古今注 (SPPY ed.), 2.1a; Wu Ching (early 8th century A.D.), *Yüeh-fu ku-t’i yao-chieh* 樂府古題要解 (*Pai-pu ts’ung-shu chi-ch’eng* ed.), 2.9b–10a.
86. The story is attributed to a lost work of Yang Hsiung (53 B.C.–18 A.D.) and first recorded in the *I-wen lei-chü* 藝文類聚 (repr. Shanghai: Ku-chi, 1965), 90.1570.
87. A rich symbolism deriving from the sport of pheasant shooting using trained decoys added to these early *yüeh-fu* images. The locus classicus is P’an Yüeh’s “*Fu* on Pheasant Shooting,” in *Wen hsüan*, 9.415–425. These images and conventions occur in a great number of Six Dynasties and T’ang poems on pheasants in which they are often reworked to serve as metaphors both for political and personal loyalty and for perseverance in these loyalties even to reclusion and death. I pass over these texts, however, to concentrate on several poems that are closer to the period of Lo Chih-ch’uan and his painting.
88. *Sung-yin chi* 松隱集 (SKCS ed.), 1.13b–14a.
89. *Mao-shih cheng-i*, I.332a; Chu Hsi, *Shih chi chuan* (repr. Hong Kong: Chung-hua, 1961) 4.44–45.
90. Ts’ao Hsün was among those K’ai-feng court officials captured by the Jurchen at the fall of Northern Sung in 1127 together with Emperor Hui-tsong and other members of the imperial family. He was ordered by Hui-tsong to escape and carry secret letters south to the court of the new emperor, Kao-tsung, where Ts’ao advocated a policy of strong opposition against the Jurchen, suggesting in 1128 that a naval mission be organized to rescue the captured imperial family. For this aggressiveness he was exiled for nine years from the court, a court that not only suffered the shame of Hui-tsong’s captivity but was also keenly aware that Hui-tsong’s return would mean the end of Kao-tsung’s rule. But Kao-tsung’s wife was among the northern captives, and against this historical background Ts’ao’s poem can be read as an expression of his frustration at the equivocation of a court that refused to take strong measures to end the “separation” of Kao-tsong from his mate and of the North from the South. On Ts’ao Hsün see *Sung-shih* (Peking: Chung-hua, 1975) 379.11700–11701; and Herbert Franke, ed., *Sung Biographies* (Wiesbaden, 1976) II, pp. 1048–1050. Ts’ao Hsün seems later in life to have reconciled his differences with Kao-tsong. See Julia K. Murray, “Ts’ao Hsün and Two Southern Sung History Scrolls,” *Ars Orientalis* 15 (1985) pp. 1–29 and “A Southern Sung Painting Regains Its Memory: Welcoming the Imperial Carriage (Ying-luan t’u) and Its Colophon,” *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies* 22 (1990–92) pp. 109–124.
91. *Yüan shih hsüan* 元詩選 (1st series, repr. Peking: Chung-hua, 1987) pp. 277, 288.
92. For mushrooms as imperial kindness see *Wen hsüan*, 6.285; Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, I, p. 461. On Po I and Shu Ch’i’s gathering of wild peas see *Shih-chi*, 61.2123.
93. *Po-wu chih* (SPPY ed.), 2.2b.
94. Lu Tien 陸田 (1042–1102), *P’i ya* 埤雅 (TSCC ed.) 9.5b–6a.
95. For the references see *Mao-shih cheng-i*, I.537b on the ease and comfort of the ducks and widgeons. The five virtues of the perfect Sage in the *Chung-yung* are natural endowment, benevolence, justice, propriety, and intelligence (*Li-chi cheng-i*, I.1634c). On the five virtues of the “cock” see James Robert Hightower,

trans., *Han shih wai chuan: Han Ying's Illustrations of the Didactic Application of the Classic of Songs*, p. 62: "On his head he wears a cap; he has civil culture [*wen*]. To his legs are attached spurs: he is possessed of martial qualities. Faced with an enemy, he dares fight; he has courage. When he gets food, he calls his companions; he has fellow-feeling [*jen*]. When he keeps watch at night, he does not miss the time; he is trustworthy. The cock is possessed of these five virtues. . . ."

96. For such gifts during a slightly later period see Julia K. Murray, "The Role of Art in the Southern Sung Dynastic Revival," *Bulletin of Sung-Yuan Studies* 18 (1986) pp. 41–59. A related use of the golden pheasant occurs in the famous Hsü Hsi 徐熙 (10th-century) attribution now entitled *Yü-t'ang fu-kuei* 玉堂富貴 in the National Palace Museum, Taipei (Sirén, *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles* [London, 1956] III. pl. 138). The placement of the pheasant at the bottom of a painting dominated by a luscious array of peonies, magnolias, and cherry-apples suggests the combination of the pheasant as a symbol of high office with the symbolism of New Year flower paintings. In short, the painting may express the following sentiment: "May your household achieve wealth and happiness through high office." At any rate, the bird is not, as Sirén (I, p. 179) incorrectly states, "a large Mandarin duck."

97. Carole Morgan, "La divination d'après les croassements des corbeaux dans les manuscrits de Dunhuang," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 3 (1987) pp. 55–76. For a useful review of ancient Chinese conceptions of the crow see Rémi Mathieu, "Le corbeau dans la mythologie de l'ancienne Chine," *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 201.3 (1984) pp. 281–309, esp. pp. 288–292.

98. Cheng Tso-hsin, *A Synopsis of the Avifauna of China*, pp. 552–557; Li Shih-chen, *Pen-ts'ao kang-mu*, pp. 2660–2662; Read, *Chinese Materia Medica: Avian Drugs*, p. 69; Derek Goodwin, *Crows of the World* (2nd ed. London, 1986) pp. 76–78, 117–118; Hoffmann, *Glossar der heute gültigen chinesischen Vogelnamen*, pp. 6, 41.

99. Goodwin, *Crows of the World*, pp. 27, 48.

100. Tuan Yü-tsai, *Shuo-wen chieh-tzu chu*, 4A.15a; *Erh-ya i*, p. 145. There is considerable discrepancy in Chinese sources as to which species of crows *fan-pu*. This issue is too complex to discuss here. For a Han sculpture representing crows nourishing their mother see Mathieu, "Le corbeau dans la mythologie de l'ancienne Chine," p. 291 n.58. For an anonymous Ming painting entitled *Hsiao-niao fan-pu* 孝鳥反哺 in the Yüji Eda collection see Suzuki Kei, *Chügoku kaiga sōgō zuroku*, IV, no. JP14–173.

101. *I-wen lei-chü*, 99.1710–1711; cf. also Michael Loewe, *Ways to Paradise* (London, 1979) pp. 127ff.

102. *Ch'in-ching* (*Po-ch'uan hsüeh-hai* ed.) 2a.

103. *Mao-shih cheng-i*, I.310ab; Chu Hsi, *Shih chi chuan*, p. 26.

104. *Kuan-tzu* (*Chu-tzu chi-ch'eng* ed., [repr. Shanghai: Shanghai shu-tien, 1986]) p. 333 (trans. W. Allyn Rickett, *Kuan-tzu: A Repository of Early Chinese Thought* [Hong Kong, 1965] p. 146).

105. *Mao-shih cheng-i*, I.442b; Chu Hsi, *Shih chi chuan*, p. 130.

106. *Mao-shih cheng-i*, I.452b; Chu Hsi, *Shih chi chuan*, p. 139.

107. Ch'ou Chao-ao, ed., *Tu shih hsiang-chu* (repr. Peking: Chung-hua, 1979) II.619–620; Erwin von Zach, trans., *Tu Fu's Gedichte* (Cambridge, 1952) I, p. 178.

108. James Cahill, *The Art of Southern Sung China* (New York, 1962) no. 25.

109. *Kao Ch'ing-ch'iu chi* 高青丘集 (repr. Shanghai: Ku-chi, 1985), II.508. Frederick W. Mote, *The Poet Kao Ch'i (1336–1374)* (Princeton, 1962), does not discuss this poem.

110. *Ku-chin t'u-shu chi-ch'eng* (repr. Taipei: Wen-hsing shu-tien, 1964) 56 *ts'e*, 54a. Hsieh To received the *chin-shih* degree about 1464 and was stationed in the Historiography Office before being appointed Rector of the Imperial University at Nanking in 1490. See *Ming-shih* (repr. Peking, 1974) 163.4431–4432 and *Ming-shih chi-shih* (*Kuo-hsüeh chi-pen ts'ung-shu* ed.) pp. 954–956.

111. Mao #152, stanza 9, *Mao-shih cheng-i*, I.547ab; Chu Hsi, *Shih chi chuan*, p. 199.

112. Yeh Ts'ung-ch'i, ed., *Li Shang-yin shih chi shu-chu* (Peking: Jen-min, 1981) I.121–123. The poem is included in the famous Ch'ing anthology *Three Hundred Tang Poems*; see Witter Bynner, trans., *The Jade Mountain* (repr. New York, 1964) p. 62.

113. *Han-lin Yang Chung-hung shih chi* (SPTK ed.) 3.6a. On Yang Tsai see Pao Ken-ti, *Yüan-shih yen-chiu*, pp. 98–100.

114. *Chin-shu* (repr. Peking: Chung-hua, 1974) 60.1652. Cf. *Tu shih hsiang-chu*, II.863–864; and Zach, *Tu Fu's Gedichte*, I, p. 273 where Tu Fu uses the term to refer to the authority of a censor.

115. Cahill, *Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings*, p. 98; see, for instance, the painting attributed to Hui-ch'ung entitled *Sandy Shore and Misty Trees in Liao-ning sheng po-wu-kuan ts'ang-hua chi* (Peking: Wen-wu, 1962) pl. 23, which Cahill describes as "a fine early work in Chao Ling-jang style."

116. Sirén, *Chinese Painting*, III, pl. 225.

117. Max Loehr, *The Great Painters of China* (Oxford, 1980) p. 147, fig. 75.

118. *Hsüan-ho hua-p'u*, p. 456.

119. John C. Ferguson, *Li-tai chu-lu hua mu* (repr. Taipei: Chung-hua, 1968), 112ab, 114b.

120. Wu Ch'i-chen, *Shu-hua chi*, p. 336; Wu saw the scroll in Shao-hsing in 1654.

121. This whirling flight pattern of crows is again utilized and heightened to great dramatic effect in Kao Feng-han's 高鳳翰 (1683–1749) *Army of Crows at Dusk* (*Hsi-yang ya chen* 夕陽鴉陣) in the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst in Berlin; see Suzuki Kei, *Chügoku kaiga sōgō zuroku*, II, no. E18–012.

122. Lee and Ho, *Chinese Art Under the Mongols*, p. 29, no. 182.

123. *Liao-ning sheng po-wu-kuan ts'ang-hua chi*, pls. 64–66; Cahill (*Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings*, p. 232) describes the birds as magpies.

124. *Shih-ch'ü pao-chi hsü-pien* (repr. Taipei: Ku-kung po-wu-yüan, 1971) p. 930; Fang Shih-shu 方士庶 (1692–1751), *T'ien-yung-an pi-chi* 天慵庵筆記 (TSCC ed.) pp. 13–14; Sun Ch'eng-tse, *Keng-tzu hsiao-hsia chi* 庚子消夏記 (Peking: Lung-wei-ko, late Ch'ing dynasty ed.) 3.12a–13a.

125. *Ta-kuan lu* (*I-shu shang-chien hsüan-chen* ed. Taipei: Han-hua, 1970) 12.11ab.

126. This same set of five colophons (Chao, Kuan, Ch'iu, P'an, Ch'en Mai) on a *Han-ya t'u* is also recorded in Chang Ch'ou (1577–1643), *Ch'ing-ho shu-hua fang* 清河書畫舫 (SKCS ed.) 6B.3b–4a; and Pien Yung-yü 卞永譽 (1645–1712), *Shih-ku-t'ang shu-hua hui-k'ao* 式古堂書畫彙考 (repr. Taipei: Cheng-chung, 1958) III.433.

127. The phrase *chi-tung ai-ming* is composed of two two-graph compounds (*chi-tung* “hungry and cold” and *ai-ming* “mournfully calling”). The copyist's omission of the graphs *tung* and *ai* in the middle of the four-graph phrase creates an unbalanced and awkward, albeit understandable, expression, *chi-ming* “hungrily calling.” Probably the copyist realized his omission when he encountered *chi-tung ai-ming* in the next poem, by Kuan Yün-shih, and then returned to emend the Chao Meng-fu text.

128. Wen Chia 文嘉 (1501–83), *Ch'ien-shan-t'ang shu-hua chi* 鈐山堂書畫記 (*Mei-shu ts'ung-shu* ed.) 7b.

129. See Mao #149 in which “fine sounds” refer to the governmental regulations of the Chou dynasty (*Mao-shih cheng-i*, I.383a) and the reference in Mao #299 to the “fine sounds” made by owls (birds of ill omen who usually screech) recently come under civilizing political influence (*Mao-shih cheng-i*, I.612b).

130. In their comments on the Liao-ning handscroll, the editors of the Ch'ing imperial catalogue (note 124) acknowledge the existence of the other painting and the conflicting colophons but tactfully allow the reader to draw his own conclusions, perhaps from political considerations, perhaps from some reluctance to question the integrity of the work.

131. *Keng-tzu hsiao-hsia chi*, 3.12b.

132. *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting*, no. 26.

133. Cahill, *Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings*, p. 305.

134. Barnhart, *Wintery Forests, Old Trees*, no. 18.

135. It is for this reason that the alternative titles of the Metropolitan painting as *Han-lin kwei-ya* and even better *Han-lin ch'ün-ya* are preferable to the *Ku-mu han-ya* of the old label. *Han-lin ch'ün-ya* correctly links the painting to the Cold Forest tradition, while *ch'ün* (“multitude; host; flock”) aptly implies the contrast between the flocking, garrulous crows and the reclusive pheasants, an implication lacking in the more neutral *kwei-ya* “returning crows.” *Han-lin ch'ün-ya* should best be translated into English as “Flocking Crows Over the Cold Forest.”

136. Harry R. and John C. Caldwell, *South China Birds* (Shanghai, 1931) pp. 3–4.

137. William Beebe, *A Monograph of the Pheasant* (London, 1918–22) III, p. 193.

138. *Mao-shih cheng-i*, I.453a; Chu Hsi, *Shih chi chuan*, p. 140.

The following references and recent publications relevant to *Crows in Old Trees* came to my attention after the completion of the text of this article.

page 136: For a reference in the writings of Liu Sung (1321–81) to Lo Chih-ch'uan as a “master of landscape painting from Ch'ing-chiang” in Kiangsi see Hou-mei Sung, “From the Min-Che Tradition to the Che School (Part 1). The Late Yuan Min-Che Tradition: Chang Shun-tze and Ch'en Shu-ch'i,” *Ku-kung hsiieh-shu chi-k'an* 6.4 (July 1989) pp. 2–3.

page 151: The Peking Palace Museum contains two fan paintings, each signed Liang K'ai, depicting a willow tree and jackdaws. See *Chung-kuo mei-shu ch'uan chi. Hui-hua pien* (Peking, 1988) IV, pl. 66–67. The first of these may be “possibly genuine” (Cahill, *Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings*, p. 129).

page 153: A handscroll in the Shanghai Museum entitled *Crows in a Willow Tree* is attributed to Emperor Hui-tsung, although the work is certainly much later. See *Chung-kuo mei-shu ch'uan chi. Hui-hua pien*, III, pl. 39.

page 154ff.: The Liao-ning handscroll has been reproduced in color along with a brief note by Lo Ch'ün-cheng in the periodical *I-yüan to-ying* 22 (1983) p. 28. Lo refutes the old attribution to Li Ch'eng and attributes the work to the Southern Sung Academy. He seems unaware, however, that the Liao-ning handscroll and the *Han-ya t'u* described by Wu Sheng in the *Ta-kuan lu* are different works.

page 157: In his catalogue for a recent exhibition of Ming painting (*Painters of the Great Ming: The Imperial Court and the Zhe School* [Dallas, 1993] pp. 23–25) Richard Barnhart describes Lo Chih-ch'uan as a “professional landscape painter.” This characterization may first seem at odds with my emphasis on Lo's status as a “literati painter.” As this paper has demonstrated, Lo was a literati painter in the sense that his works involve a deep awareness of the written literati tradition. At the same time, it is quite probable that during his years as a recluse following the fall of the Sung dynasty he supported himself from his work and was thus a “professional painter.” Lo was in this sense probably typical of those late-thirteenth-century scholar-painters whom the fall of Sung precluded from official careers, thus blurring the distinctions between their status as literati and professional painters.