

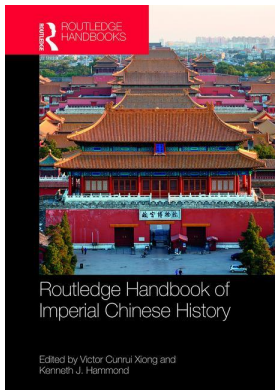
This article was downloaded by: 10.3.97.143

On: 05 Dec 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



Routledge Handbook of Imperial Chinese History

Victor Cunrui Xiong, Kenneth J. Hammond

Cultural history from the Yuan through the Ming

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315726878-23>

Kenneth J. Hammond

Published online on: 02 Oct 2018

How to cite :- Kenneth J. Hammond. 02 Oct 2018, *Cultural history from the Yuan through the Ming from*: Routledge Handbook of Imperial Chinese History Routledge

Accessed on: 05 Dec 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315726878-23>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

17

CULTURAL HISTORY FROM THE YUAN THROUGH THE MING

Kenneth J. Hammond

The cultural history of the Ming dynasty unfolds along a trajectory of revival and development, first in the reassertion of cultural hegemony by the Chinese literati elite in the wake of the fall of the Mongol Yuan dynasty, and then through a dialectic of transformation and persistence between the traditional concerns of literati intellectual and aesthetic production and the emergence of new modes of thought and artistic expression in the context of rapid expansion of the commercial economy and the social dynamism to which this contributed. Art, literature and thought all underwent significant changes in complex and sometimes contradictory movements. Toward the end of the dynasty, the intellectual and cultural sphere was further affected by the beginning of the period of ongoing contact and interaction between Europe and China, which brought ideas and information from Europe into sometimes fruitful interplay with established Chinese understandings and practices.

The Yuan-Ming transition

For the Chinese literati, especially in the south, the era of Mongol rule was a time of marginalization and/or accommodation. In the realm of thought and in the arts the establishment of a single state governing the whole of Chinese territory after the long period of north-south division led to a renewed interaction between scholars, writers and artists across the empire. The flourishing of Confucian thought in the Daoxue 道學 movement, often referred to as Neo-Confucianism, which had characterized southern China in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, had contrasted with the persistence in the north of intellectual concerns linking back to the Northern Song. While the Mongols called upon Chinese scholars in the north for assistance in the consolidation of their rule after the conquest of the Jurchen Jin state in 1234, southern literati were viewed with a much more jaundiced eye after the final extension of Yuan rule to the south in the 1270s. The suspension of the civil examinations until 1315 is perhaps the clearest sign of Mongol disregard for the Confucian elite and its intellectual and cultural concerns. Literati who did serve in official positions under the Yuan found themselves subject to supervision by non-Chinese overseers, the *darughachi* appointed to co-administer local and provincial level administration.

Nonetheless, the long century of Yuan rule saw growing convergence between the literati communities in northern and southern China, though regional distinctions

continued. Neo-Confucianism was increasingly embraced by the Mongols, and this facilitated the integration of northern and southern intellectual activity. In aesthetic culture, especially the classical arts of the brush, painting, calligraphy and literature, the Yuan saw a wide range of responses on the part of the Chinese elite. Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫, a scion of the Song imperial family, and his wife, the painter Guan Daosheng 管道昇, represented one pole of accommodation, accepting employment at the Mongol court and producing a corpus of painting, poetry and calligraphy which has been seen as embodying a literati orthodoxy, even while he was criticized for serving the alien regime. By contrast Qian Xuan 錢選, one of the “Eight Talents of Wuxing” declined to enter into an official position and devoted himself to a life of retirement, supporting himself through the sale of his art.

In the sphere of the arts of the brush, the Yuan saw an intensification of the “amateur” ideal, as Chinese painters and calligraphers produced works with strong personal and literary meanings and allusions which were directed at an audience of like-minded gentlemen (and a small number of women). Images of rocks and bamboo, embodying the qualities of persistence in adverse circumstances, proliferated. Painters such as Ni Zan 倪瓚 or Huang Gongwang 黃公望 created images of retreat and retirement from the world of official life which made a virtue of necessity. Much of this aesthetic activity was concentrated in the Jiangnan region, the wealthiest and most sophisticated area within the empire, which was also subject to punitive taxation under the Mongols.

Perhaps the most significant development in literary life under the Yuan was the flourishing of drama. While dramatic performance had antecedents going deep into the Chinese past, such as skits and acrobatic displays at the Tang court, it was under the conditions of Mongol rule that the writing and performance of plays became a major component of literary and popular culture. Members of the literati elite who were excluded from official employment could support themselves by writing and producing plays, and a dynamic world of theatrical productions emerged. Some 800 plays were written during the Yuan, about 200 of which survive. Writers such as Guan Hanqing 關漢卿, Wang Shifu 王實甫, Bai Pu 白朴 and others wrote tales of injustice and revenge, romance and other personal and social concerns. These often involved the use of historical allegories to criticize aspects of Mongol rule through the retelling of events from earlier times. Much of this activity took place in the Yuan capital Dadu 大都, where *sanqu* 散曲 (colloquial songs) and *zaju* 雜劇 (variety plays) were the most common forms. A separate tradition of *nanxi* 南戲 (Southern drama), with its origins in Wenzhou late in the Song, became prominent in Hangzhou later in the Yuan.

Another development in the literary field was the early stages of the rise of the novel. Late in the Yuan, two works which would become more fully elaborated during the Ming appeared: *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 (Romance of the Three Kingdoms) and *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (Water Margin). Attributed respectively to Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中 and Shi Nai'an 施耐庵, these works recounted tales of heroes and adventures from Chinese history in multiple chapter forms, and became widely popular in print editions. *Sanguo yanyi* was set in the third century, during a period of division following the collapse of the Han dynasty. It focused on military conflicts and strategy, with historical figures such as Cao Cao 曹操, Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 and Liu Bei 劉備 fighting and scheming to outwit each other. *Shuihu zhuan* was based on popular stories of outlaws in the Song dynasty whose exploits, set in the marshes and mountains of Shandong, expressed the frustrations of many Chinese under Mongol rule and created idealized fighters for justice.

Thought

The founding of the Ming dynasty by Zhu Yuanzhang in 1368 did not initially lead to new developments in intellectual culture and philosophy. Zhu Yuanzhang had assembled a team of Confucian scholars as advisors in the years immediately preceding his proclamation of the new dynasty, to legitimate his claims to be a worthy founding emperor. Song Lian 宋濂, Liu Ji 劉基 and others associated with the Jinhua area in Zhejiang continued the traditions of Daoxue orthodoxy which had developed during the Song and been further institutionalized under the Yuan. The new dynasty made the Cheng-Zhu interpretation of Confucianism the standard for the civil examinations which, after a brief interruption in the 1370s, remained the principal means of recruitment into government service and provided a center of gravity for literati intellectual culture. This Learning of the Way continued as the mainstream of elite thought throughout the dynasty.

New ideas did arise within the broad field of Confucian thought, however. The Ming was a period of great dynamism in China's commercial economy. By the later fifteenth century and through the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Chinese society was dramatically affected by the spread of market relations, commodity production and the increasing monetization of economic life, as Peter Ditmanson and Harrison Miller have discussed in their chapters. The growth of the commercial economy influenced developments in cultural life as well. As Miller has noted, the ideas of Wang Yangming 王陽明 launched a new phase of philosophical innovation at the turn of the sixteenth century. Yang's views on the innate knowledge of the good (*liangzhi* 良知), which he saw as part of every human's natural endowment, and the unity of knowledge and action (*zhixing weiyi* 知行合一) placed new emphasis on the subjectivity of the individual. Followers of Yangming's thought such as Wang Gen 王艮 and He Xinyin 何心隱, associated with the Taizhou School (*Taizhou xuepai* 泰州學派), elaborated these ideas in ways which foregrounded individual moral agency and responsibility. The life of Li Zhi 李贄 pushed these attitudes to the extreme. These developments in some ways parallel contemporary currents in European thought associated with the Protestant Reformation. The emergence of philosophical views emphasizing individual agency in Ming China and early modern Europe may be seen at least in part as comparable responses to the spread of market relationships and ideas of economic agency.

While Yangming's ideas became powerfully influential through the sixteenth century, and continued to form an important school within the broad stream of Confucian discourse thereafter, they were not universally embraced, and did not displace Cheng-Zhu thought as the foundation of examination orthodoxy. As the Ming weakened in the early seventeenth century and collapsed by the 1640s, some late Ming thinkers turned strongly against what they saw as the subjective speculations of Yangming's thought. Gu Yanwu 顧炎武, Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲, Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 and others began to emphasize the need for demonstrable evidence to support intellectual arguments, rather than what they viewed as Yangming's excessive reliance on intuition. This school of Evidential Scholarship (*kaozheng* 考證) would be much further developed in the Qing, as Richard Smith relates in his chapter. These late Ming thinkers developed powerful critiques of political institutions and practices, and pro-pounded sometimes radical solutions to the problems of government and society. Gu Yanwu argued for changes in the organization and function of the imperial state, while Wang Fuzhi and Huang Zongxi also emphasized different conceptions of political order.

Chinese scholars in the later Ming were not only concerned with philosophical endeavors, but were also often engaged with technological and scientific activities. Benjamin

Elman has explored the ways in which the Chinese concept of *gewu* 格物, the investigation of things, articulated an approach to knowledge not dissimilar to the “natural philosophy” of early modern Europe. Scholars such as Li Shizhen 李時珍 pursued studies based on the critical interrogation of received knowledge and the experimental verification of hypotheses. His encyclopedic treatise on pharmacology, the *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目 (General Pharmacopoeia), was published in the 1590s and remained a basic reference work into the nineteenth century. Others, such as Song Yingxing 宋應星, promoted the compilation and circulation of technical knowledge and innovation through publications such as his *Tiangong kaiwu* 天工開物 (Creations of Men and Nature). Both books circulated widely as part of the overall flourishing of commercial publishing in China from the late fifteenth century onward.

In the final decades of the Ming, Chinese intellectual life was also influenced to a certain degree by the expansion of regular contact with Europe. The arrival of missionaries, especially the Jesuits, in the late sixteenth century led to the introduction into China not only of their religious teachings, which did not gain much traction or become widespread in the Ming, but also of new repertoires of knowledge in fields from astronomy and cartography to painting and handicrafts. Jesuits like Matteo Ricci managed to find employment at the imperial court in Beijing largely through their deployment of Western knowledge. Ricci, for example, collaborated with Chinese cartographers to produce the first map of the world in China incorporating information from European explorations and portraying the Celestial Kingdom as one country among the many scattered around the planet. Jesuits at the Ming court became consultants on artillery for the imperial army, and competed with Chinese and Muslim astronomers in the prediction of eclipses. But Western knowledge did not assume a significant role in Chinese intellectual life overall, and the novelty of European artifacts and gadgets did not fundamentally transform scientific thought or material life.

Literature

Literati movements

The literary history of the Ming can reasonably be understood as a sequence of movements or groupings among writers who shared certain ideas and practices. These groupings sometimes competed with each other for prominence, and sometimes arose in reaction to the dominance of an established school of thought. Each period or movement in Ming literary life can be represented by key figures, but the field of cultural production was much larger than these few iconic individuals. All educated gentlemen, the members of the literati elite, aspirants to and holders of examination degrees, wrote poems, essays and other kinds of texts. Beyond the realm of literati poetry and prose, fiction, both short stories and longer novelistic works, also flourished in the Ming, as did forms of drama pioneered in the Yuan but raised to new heights in the expanding commercial theatrical world.

At the beginning of the dynasty, as in the realm of philosophy, there was continuity with the literary practices of the Yuan. Poets such as Gao Qi 高啟 from the Jiangnan commercial center Suzhou carried on the style of “townsman poetry” which had arisen in that region as long ago as the Southern Song. Song Lian and Liu Ji, already mentioned as part of Zhu Yuanzhang’s Confucian brain trust, were also noted poets who bridged the dynastic divide. Though these men were close to the founding emperor, they had to manage their relationships with him carefully. As the Hongwu emperor, Zhu was often suspicious of his scholarly officials, and the chronically tense relationship between the ruler and literary elites did not encourage new developments in written expression. As Ming political life stabilized after

the Yongle emperor usurped the throne in 1402, the literati began to reassert their role as the governing elite. One expression of this was the emergence of a literary grouping associated with the highest offices in the imperial administration.

Peter Ditmanson has mentioned the “Chancellery style” (*taige ti*) which arose in the early fifteenth century. This was characterized by the writings of the “Three Yangs”, the Grand Secretaries under Yongle and his immediate successors who happened to share surnames with similar pronunciations. Most prominent among them was Yang Shiqi 陽士奇, while Yang Rong 楊榮 and Yang Pu 楊溥 were somewhat lesser lights. The Japanese historian of Chinese poetry Yoshikawa Kojiro dismisses the works of the Chancellery style as “tedious” and appropriately “relegated to oblivion”, yet at the time their writings dominated Ming literary circles.

Poetry at the Ming court gained a new lease of life toward the end of the fifteenth century with the work of Li Dongyang 李東陽. Li was praised for combining a mastery of styles from earlier eras, including the Tang and the Song, with his own individual voice. This encapsulates what were to become key concerns in literary debates through the rest of the Ming. The period of his preeminence also saw important writings from the brushes of Shen Zhou 沈周 and Zhu Yunming 祝允明, each perhaps more famous as a painter, and who will be mentioned in that regard later in this chapter. But the group which came to dominate literary life at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century was the archaist movement known as the Former Seven Masters (*qian qizi* 前七子) of Old Phraseology (*gu wenci* 古文辭).

Old Phraseology as a literary movement promoted the emulation of poetry from the High Tang and prose from the Qin and Han periods. Works from after these idealized eras were considered to be decadent and unworthy of reproduction. The most prominent among these writers were Li Mengyang 李夢陽 and He Jingming 何景明. In essence, the advocates of Old Phraseology promoted writing that was energetic and straightforward. They held up the simplicity of exposition in the Han dynasty historical masterpiece *Shiji* 史記 as their ideal, and looked to the emotional directness of Tang poets such as Li Bai 李白 and Du Fu 杜甫.

A second generation of writers embracing the ideals of Old Phraseology, known as the Later Seven Masters (*hou qizi* 後七子), emerged in the middle and later years of the sixteenth century. The initial leader of this group, Li Panlong 李攀龍, was soon eclipsed by his protégé Wang Shizhen 王世貞, who was to become one of the most dominant literary figures of the Ming. Like their predecessors, these writers advocated emulation of Qin-Han prose and High Tang poetry. But Wang Shizhen also admired the writing of the Song literatus Su Shi 蘇軾, and wrote that what really mattered in literature was not the slavish imitation of certain models, but the creation of works which manifested a similar directness and simplicity, and did not become bogged down in stylistic fetishism and elaborate effects.

The Old Phraseology masters, especially during the later phase, explicitly positioned themselves in opposition to another literary grouping, the Tang-Song school (Tang-Song pai 唐宋派). Literati such as Tang Shunzhi 唐順之 and Wang Shenzhong 王慎中 held up figures such as the Tang scholar-official Han Yu 韓愈 and Song writers like Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 and Zeng Gong 曾鞏 as models for prose writing, while sharing the enthusiasm of the archaists for High Tang poetry. Wang Shizhen engaged in extended polemics against these men, dismissing their literary ideas as mere self-promotion, and accusing them of using excessively flowery language rather than the kind of direct style he endorsed.

The clashes between the archaists and the Tang-Song school were also embedded in contemporary political conflicts. The imperial court in the middle decades of the sixteenth century came to be dominated by the Grand Secretary Yan Song 嚴嵩. Tang Shunzhi was

an ally of Yan's, while Wang Shizhen and others in his circle opposed his policies and what they saw as his corrupt practices. Indeed, Wang's political career suffered significantly from his antagonism for Yan Song. Literary groupings were one means through which members of the scholarly elite could join forces to promote not only their intellectual concerns, but their political interests as well.

By the end of the sixteenth century, and into the early decades of the seventeenth, a reaction against the dominant position of Wang Shizhen and the archaists set in. The most important figures in this were the brothers Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道, Zongdao 宗道 and Zhongdao 中道, who became the core of the Gong'an school (Gong'an pai 公安派). The Yuan brothers and their followers came to view the Old Phraseology writers as mere imitators, perhaps even plagiarists, who simply copied the styles and techniques of their idealized models. By contrast, the Gong'an school advocated a literary style which emphasized "expression" (*shu* 抒) and "authenticity" (*zhen* 真), which basically meant the expression of individual, subjective feelings rather than the emulation of models. As the seventeenth century progressed and the Ming dynasty drew to a close, the ideas of the Gong'an school achieved a hegemonic position in literary thought, and the views of Wang Shizhen and the archaists were largely eclipsed.

Fiction

The poems, essays, occasional jottings and works of historical scholarship, which were the main concerns of the scholar-officials (*shidafu* 士大夫), were not the entirety of the Ming literary world. Fiction and drama both flourished and underwent significant development in the course of the dynasty. Popular works circulated widely as the commercial printing industry prospered and innovations in print technology made the range of publications available both greater in volume and more diverse in quality and cost. This process accelerated especially from the middle of the sixteenth century through the end of the dynasty in 1644.

Short stories (*xiaoshuo* 小說) were an important genre in the Ming. Such stories had been told and re-told by oral performers for many centuries, but in the Ming they were increasingly recorded in writing, which gave them fixed and stable forms. Toward the end of the dynasty, two writers and compilers of stories produced major collections that were published and assumed a dominant role in both popular and elite culture. Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 put together three large sets of stories, 120 altogether, collectively known as the *Sanyan* 三言 (lit. Three Words), while Ling Mengchu 凌濛初 produced two collections, including old tales as well as works of his own composition, known together as the *Er pai* 二拍 (Lit. *Two Claps*, perhaps from the use of clappers in recitation). These stories tell of people high and low, of the realm of spirits and ghosts, of intrigues at court and the complexities of romance. Scenes of everyday life in the streets and behind the walls of palaces, mansions and ordinary homes proved settings which made these stories resonate with the interests and concerns of ordinary folk as well as members of the elites.

Longer works of fiction also became more important, especially in the second half of the dynasty. Four great novels can represent this phenomenon. Two of these were further refined versions of works already evolving in the Yuan, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *Water Margin*. These books assumed more stable forms as they were published in large print runs from the mid-sixteenth century. Their stories of heroes and villains drawn from earlier times provided entertainment and offered strategic and moral insights into China's past which might also be relevant to contemporary concerns. Two new works appeared in the middle and late sixteenth century. *Journey to the West* (*Xiyou ji* 西遊記) was the story of a real pilgrimage to

India by the Tang dynasty Buddhist monk Xuanzang 玄奘, given exciting fictional expansion through the inclusion of a magic monkey, a talking pig and a flying horse. Written by Wu Cheng'en 吳承恩, this became one of the most popular books in Chinese history, and remains a staple of popular culture to this day. The exotic locations and heavenly excursions of the characters have been reproduced in plays, pictures and even comic books in the modern era.

The last of the great Ming novels was *Jinpingmei* 金瓶梅 (Plum in the Golden Vase), which appeared at the very beginning of the seventeenth century. Its authorship was long attributed to Wang Shizhen, but that has been discounted by modern scholarship. *Jinpingmei* is a powerful critique of the decadence of late Ming social and political life, which is portrayed as being thoroughly rotted by wealth and ambition. The novel is rich in the detailed description of things: food, clothing, jewelry, buildings and furnishings. It also contains scenes of sexual behavior rendered in pornographic detail. The story relates the prospering and ultimate destruction of Ximen Qing 西門慶, a corrupt merchant who rises to become a powerful official before succumbing to his destructive moral and physical weaknesses. It has been seen as a tale of karmic justice, enticing the reader with images of sensual indulgence and material opulence before revealing the ultimate emptiness of these things and the inevitability of a retributive reckoning.

Drama

Short stories and novels were paralleled by the continuing development of drama. Theatrical productions took place within the imperial palace as well as in popular venues in cities and towns, and were presented by traveling troupes across the empire. Local traditions of theater flourished in many areas, including the Jiangnan region, in Sichuan and in the capital. Two plays can serve to suggest the accomplishments of Ming drama. The *Pipa ji* 琵琶記 (Story of the Lute) was written late in the Yuan by Gao Ming 高明, who died in 1368, the year the Ming was founded. The play recounts the travails of Zhao Wuniang 趙五娘, a woman whose husband is forced to marry another woman and who is left destitute, then undertakes a multi-year quest to find her lost love. Set in the Han dynasty, and based on earlier versions of the tale in which Zhao and her husband both perish, Gao Ming gave the story a happy ending when the couple is finally reunited. The portrayal of Zhao Wuniang through the course of her wanderings and sufferings helped make the play popular among ordinary people, as it was spread both through theatrical performances and as a printed text. *Pipa ji* emerged from the tradition of Southern Drama, mentioned in the section on Yuan drama earlier in this chapter.

The other play to consider was in the *Kunqu* 崑曲 tradition in the Jiangnan region. *Mudan ting* 牡丹亭 (Peony Pavilion) was written by Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 in 1598. The story is an example of a motif called *Caizi jiarren* 才子佳人 (Scholar and Beauty), romances between young men of scholarly talent and beautiful young women. *Mudan ting* tells the story of Liu Mengmei 柳夢梅, a young man traveling to the imperial capital to take the Confucian examinations, and Du Liniang 杜麗娘, a lovely young woman living in seclusion at her father's home. They do not meet in real life, but encounter each other in dreams. After a series of dramatic misadventures, including Du Liniang's death and Liu Mengmei's arrest, the couple is finally united when Du is resurrected by the God of the Underworld, and Liu passes first in the imperial exams and is pardoned by the emperor. In its full form the play contains 55 scenes, and can take more than 20 hours to perform. Like many Chinese dramas it was later often presented in abridged form, with only select scenes being staged. Audiences were assumed to be familiar enough with the story to fill in the narrative gaps.

Art

Arts of the brush

Painting and calligraphy were the principal artistic forms pursued by educated gentlemen and a small number of elite women, throughout the Ming, as they had been in earlier periods. Professional painters were employed at the Ming court, but this was a much less dynamic and significant arena that it had been under the Song or the Yuan. Court painters were constrained by strict guidelines on how images should be produced, and could be punished or dismissed from office for even minor violations of these rules. A famous painter of landscapes, birds and flowers, Dai Jin 戴進 was rejected by the Xuande emperor for having painted the cloak of a fisherman red, a color reserved for officials at imperial audiences. After being dismissed from court, he returned to his home in Zhejiang province and pursued a highly successful career as an artist, becoming the focus of what was known as the Zhe school 浙派, which carried on traditions of landscape painting from the Southern Song. For court painters, the primary concern was not the expression of personal feelings or talents, but the careful following of proper technique. This essentially meant the emulation or imitation of the styles of court painters from the Song and Yuan.

The real dynamism in painting and calligraphy in the Ming was in the works of literati artists who espoused an ideal of amateur self-expression, even as they often worked to produce and sell their creations. Literati artists lived and worked in many places across the empire, but the center of gravity for this class was the Jiangnan region, with Suzhou as its heart. This is indicated in the use of the name Wu school 吳派 to characterize the most famous artists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Not all important artists can be subsumed under this heading, but most of the top talents have been grouped this way. Two painters are traditionally seen as the greatest representatives of these: Shen Zhou 沈周 and Wen Zhengming 文徵明. These artists produced long panoramic landscapes, tall scrolls of mountain scenes and small album leaves in ink monochrome or with the precise use of color. They were also calligraphers, with Wen Zhengming being especially renowned for his regular script (*kaishu* 開書).

Shen Zhou was noted for landscapes in the style of the Yuan master Ni Zan, though he developed these in ways which gave them his own distinctive flair. Wen Zhengming tried many times to pass the Confucian exams, but eventually settled into a comfortable life in his native Suzhou, where he produced ink paintings expressing some of the core values of literati culture. His works were so popular in the emerging art market of the middle Ming that he, like other artists of the time, sometimes employed a *daibi* 代筆 (substitute brush), in his case his son, to produce works in his style which were sold to eager collectors. Wen ran a kind of studio academy where many ambitious young painters trained. While in many ways embodying the amateur ideal of literati art, Wen was in many ways a consummate professional presiding over a large and successful enterprise.

Two other painters, Tang Yin 唐寅, like his friend Wen Zhenming, a pupil of Shen Zhou's, and Qiu Ying 仇英, fill out the ranks of the most important artists of the first half of the sixteenth century. Their work did not fall into either the Zhe or Wu schools, in some ways combining elements from both with the elaboration of their own styles. Both were known for large hanging landscape scrolls, and for the use of colored inks. Both also painted on commission, while managing to retain their status as literati artists and embodiments of the amateur ideal. Tang Yin had passed the imperial exams as a young man, but was later banned from official service because of a scandal. His poetic skills as well as his painting

allowed him to remain part of the gentlemanly elite in Suzhou. Qiu Ying, by contrast, came from humble origins and may have been illiterate. His success and entrée in to elite society was based entirely on the quality of his artistic production.

Toward the end of the sixteenth century and through the first third of the seventeenth century, one figure came to dominate the arts of the brush, not only in terms of his aesthetic creations but through his development of a theory of Chinese art history. This was Dong Qichang 董其昌. Dong achieved high office under the Wanli emperor, which gave him great prestige and visibility among the literati across the empire. His calligraphy was widely admired, and he painted large hanging landscapes in monochrome, deploying a mastery of the styles of many of the masters of earlier eras. But it was his elaboration of an understanding of the history of painting based on the persistence of Northern and Southern schools which gained him the most notice. These were not geographic categories, but derived from the division of Chan Buddhism into two schools with the same names. It was actually a fifteenth-century painter, Du Qiong 杜瓊, who had first proposed the recognition of Northern and Southern schools of painting, but Dong Qichang developed these ideas into a more complete system. He characterized the Southern School as including all the literati painters, those who espoused the amateur ideal and generally emulated the masters of the Song and Yuan landscape tradition. The Northern School encompassed court painters and other overtly professional artists. This conceptual framework became powerfully influential in the last 300 years of imperial history.

Dong Qichang was not the first thinker to address issues of art history. Wang Shizhen, who we have already encountered as a major literary figure, developed an account of the development of painting from the fourth-century master Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 in his *Yiyuan zhiyan* 藝苑卮言, written about 1560. Wang focused on presenting an overview of which painters he felt best exemplified various aspects of the development of painting, and did not use the Northern/Southern framework. His primary emphasis was on painting in the Ming, understood as the culmination of the contributions of masters from the long sweep of Chinese artistic history.

One final development of note in Ming painting was the increasing sophistication in portrait painting, and the emergence of self-portraiture, toward the end of the dynasty. The art historian Michael Sullivan has suggested that the influence of European images which were brought to China by Jesuit missionaries may have influenced the use of shading in the painting of faces, making portraits of officials, or images in ancestor scrolls, more subtle and nuanced. The artist Zeng Jing 曾鯨 was particularly noted for this in the early seventeenth century. Around the same time, painters such as Chen Hongshou 陳洪綬 began to produce self-portraits. Chen often painted himself in a state of inebriation, presenting an image of himself as a creative spirit worthy of recognition with all his personal foibles. Autobiography had also begun to be more common in the later Ming, both developments perhaps reflecting the influence of the market economy on cultural life, as we have seen earlier in the rise of Taizhou school individualism.

Decorative arts

Gentlemen of the literati elite not only produced and collected painting and calligraphy, but also were interested in decorative arts, including ceramics, cloisonné, lacquer and enamel wares. These kinds of objects had long been valued by wealthy sophisticates, but in the Ming, with the rapid expansion of the commercial economy, the collecting of rare and precious objects took on new intensity with the growth of an art market. Members of the traditional

shi 士 landed elite of educated gentlemen found themselves competing for purchases with art consumers from the merchant class, whose increasing wealth allowed them to build important collections of both arts of the brush and decorative objects. This competition gave rise to the publication of manuals of connoisseurship, setting out criteria by which potential buyers could evaluate the worth of the goods on offer by professional dealers.

The imperial kilns at Jingdezhen 景德鎮 produced many more pieces than were ordered for the court in Beijing. Blue and white wares were among the most highly prized ceramics sought by collectors. These wares were also major export objects, reaching markets in Southeast Asia, India, the Ottoman Empire and East Africa. Europeans came to value Jingdezhen blue and white ceramics most highly, but it was not until the eighteenth century that potters in Dresden were able to begin to produce porcelains themselves.

Dehua 德化 wares were also quite popular in the Ming. These were plain white porcelains produced in Fujian province. Especially desirable were figural objects such as representations of the bodhisattva Guanyin. By contrast, tea sets from the kilns at Yixing 宜興 in Jiangnan were especially prized by many scholarly gentlemen. These were often made in either geometric or organic forms, and considered to be more subtle and sophisticated than the imperial ceramics of Jingdezhen.

Cloisonné was a new product in the Ming. Colorful designs with enamel-filled spaces defined by raised metal edges included the imitation of ancient ritual objects or representations of birds or fantastic beasts. This art form became increasingly popular and underwent ongoing technological development throughout the dynasty. Lacquerware, an ancient craft dating at least from the Warring States period, was generally produced in red, with carved images, during the Ming. Japanese craftsmen became adept at imitating Chinese styles, and many lacquer pieces came into Chinese collections from Japanese manufacturers, often being presented as local Chinese goods.

Gardens

The construction of private gardens as both productive resources and as escapes from the concerns of official life and the outside world has origins going back to the Han dynasty. Emperors and high officials built important gardens in the Tang, and many literati had famous retreats at their homes in Luoyang or Kaifeng during the Northern Song. But it was in the Ming that literati gardens became what Joanna Handlin Smith has called “a veritable mania”. This activity was especially prominent in the Jiangnan region, with Suzhou becoming famous for the number and splendor of the gardens there. But gentlemen built gardens in many towns and cities across the empire, some of which survive to this day, though often with significant later additions and modifications.

Gardens were meant to create an idealized version of nature, yet everyone understood that they were human constructions. Indeed, during the Ming, designers and builders of gardens, what we would today call landscape architects, became famous and often wealthy through their efforts. The garden designer Zhang Nanyang 張南陽 was hired by patrons such as Pan Yunduan 潘允端, for whom he built the Yu Garden 豫園 in Shanghai, and Wang Shizhen, for whom he constructed the Yanshan Garden 弇山園 at Wang’s home in Taicang 太倉. Gardens incorporated natural elements like water and rocks, and were laid out with wandering paths which led the visitor or resident to scenic spots, often attuned to the seasons, to view blossoms or other vistas. Gardens were often relatively small enclosed spaces, and a practice known as “borrowing views” developed, through which designers took advantage of scene elements outside the garden itself, such as a nearby hill or pagoda, to create prospect which blended the built environment of the garden with outside attractions.

Gardens were generally portrayed, in poems and paintings, as places where the scholarly gentleman could find quiet and retreat from the concerns of the outside world, and this was no doubt one of the main motives for their construction. Yet gardens also served as places for social and even political gatherings. Groups of like-minded friends could gather to drink wine, gaze at the moon and write poems, collections of which form significant portions of the works of many literati. These gatherings could sometimes morph into conversations which concerned the political affairs of the day, and even for discussions of strategies for political actions and for the advancement of individual and collective ambitions. Wang Shizhen's literary circle, which has already been noted as involved in the political conflicts around Grand Secretary Yan Song in the 1550s, would have come together for such intersections of culture and politics in the Yanshan Garden.

The building and enjoyment of gardens was something which only the wealthy elites of China could afford. But on occasion, gardens were opened to the public, when ordinary people, at least those with modest resources which would allow them to pay a small entrance fee, could wander for a day in the elegant precincts of a space normally off limits to them. The display of wealth embodied in a garden could thus be extended beyond the view of other members of the social elite, and could serve as well to reinforce understandings of social hierarchy articulated through cultural vehicles.

Conclusion

Cultural life and cultural production in the Ming were not limited to members of the literati or newly rising commercial elites. Commercial publishing and innovations in print technology made both textual materials and graphic images more available and accessible to increasingly larger numbers of ordinary Chinese people. Urban theaters and traveling troupes brought dramatic performances to wide audiences. Popular culture was no doubt rich and varied in communities around the empire, with local forms and traditions that allowed farmers, artisans and others to express their feelings and yearnings in words and in the creation of images or other material forms. Much of this more popular material was ephemeral, and our understanding of Ming popular culture lags far behind our knowledge of the practices and products made by and for the wealthy and powerful.

The literati elite, whether scholarly gentlemen or gentry on their country estates or in their urban mansions, largely retained a hegemonic position in terms of cultural values, while they also faced increasing competition for status with *nouveau riche* elements eager to establish their cultural claims to elite legitimacy. The flourishing of the art market and the elaboration of a discourse of taste and connoisseurship testify to the dynamism of cultural production, especially in the second half of the dynasty. Culture in the Ming was a blend of continuity with earlier times and of great innovation, within established traditions, and in the context of China's dramatic early modern commercial transformation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Atwell, William S. "A Seventeenth-Century 'General Crisis' in East Asia?" *Modern Asian Studies* 24:4 (1990), 661–682.
- Beattie, Hilary J. *Land and Lineage in China: A Study of T'ung-Ch'eng County, Anhwei, in the Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Birge, Bettine. *Women, Property, and Confucian Reaction in Sung and Yüan China (960–1368)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Brokaw, Cynthia Joanne. *The Ledgers of Merit and Demerit: Social Change and Moral Order in Late Imperial China*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- Brook, Timothy. *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- . *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.
- Brose, Michael C. *Subjects and Masters: Uyghurs in the Mongol Empire*. Bellingham: Western Washington University Press, 2007.
- Buell, Paul D., and Eugene N. Anderson. *A Soup for the Qan: Introduction, Translation, Commentary and Chinese Text*. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 2000.
- Burnett, Katharine P. *Dimensions of Originality: Essays on Seventeenth-Century Chinese Art Theory and Criticism*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2013.
- Chaves, Jonathan. *Pilgrim of the Clouds: Poems and Essays from Ming Dynasty China*. New York: White Pine Press, 2005.
- Ch'en, Paul Heng-chao. *Chinese Legal Tradition under the Mongols*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979.
- Ch'en Yuan. *Western and Central Asians in China Under the Mongols: Their Transformation in Chinese*, tr. Ch'ien Hsing-hai and L. Carrington Goodrich. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966.
- Clunas, Craig. *Empire of Great Brightness: Visual and Material Cultures of Ming China*. London: Reaktion Books, 2007.
- . *Fruitful Sites: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996.
- . *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991.
- Dardess, John. *A Political Life in Ming China: A Grand Secretary and His Times*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013.
- . *Blood and History in China: The Donglin Faction and its Repression, 1620–1627*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002.
- de Bary, William Theodore, ed. *Self and Society in Ming Thought*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1970.
- de Heer, Phillip. *The Care-Taker Emperor: Aspects of the Imperial Institution in Fifteenth Century China as Reflected in the Political History of the Reign of Chu Ch'i-yü*. Leiden: Brill, 1986.

Bibliography

- Des Forges, Roger V. *Cultural Centrality and Political Change in Chinese History: Northeast Henan in the Fall of the Ming*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Dreyer, Edward L. *Early Ming China: A Political History, 1355–1435*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1982.
- . *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405–1433*. New York & London: Pearson Longman, 2007.
- Endicott-West, Elizabeth. *Mongolian Rule in China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Farmer, Edward L. *Early Ming Government: The Evolution of Dual Capitals*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976.
- . *Zhu Yuanzhang and Early Ming Legislation: The Reordering of Ming Society Following the Era of Mongol Rule*. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
- Goodrich, L. Carrington, and Chaoying Fang, eds. *Dictionary of Ming Biography*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1976.
- Hammond, Kenneth. “All that is Solid Melts into Air: Wang Shizhen, *Jinpingmei*, and the Taizhou School.” *Ming Studies* 71 (2015), 11–22.
- . *Pepper Mountain: The Life, Death, and Posthumous Career of Yang Jisheng*. London: Kegan Paul, 2007.
- Hanan, Patrick. *The Invention of Li Yu*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Ho, Ping-ti. *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China: Aspects of Social Mobility, 1368–1911*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1967.
- . *Studies on the Population of China, 1368–1953*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959.
- Hsiao Ch’i-ch’ing. *The Military Establishment of the Yuan Dynasty*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978.
- Huang, Ray. *1587: A Year of No Significance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981.
- Langlois, John D, Jr, ed. *China Under Mongol Rule*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981.
- Levathes, Louise. *When China Ruled the Seas: The Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne, 1405–1433*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Li, Guangbi. *A Short History of Ming China*. Minneapolis, MN: Society for Ming Studies, 2016.
- McLaren, Anne. *Chinese Popular Culture and Ming Chantefables*. Leiden: Brill, 1998.
- Meskill, John. *Gentlemanly Interests and Wealth on the Yangtze Delta*. Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies, 1994.
- Miller, Harry. *State versus Gentry in Early Qing Dynasty China, 1644–1699*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- . *State versus Gentry in Late Ming Dynasty China, 1572–1644*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Moloughney, Brian, and Xia Weizhong. “Silver and the Fall of the Ming: A Reassessment.” *Papers on Far Eastern History* 40 (1989), 51–78.
- Parsons, James B. *The Peasant Rebellions of the Late Ming Dynasty*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1970.
- Plaks, Andrew. *Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Rossabi, Morris. *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988.
- Rossabi, Morris, ed. *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and its Neighbors, 10th–14th Centuries*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983.
- Schneewind, Sarah. *A Tale of Two Melons: Emperor and Subject in Ming China*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2006.
- Sullivan, Michael. *The Arts of China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Tong, James. *Disorder Under Heaven: Collective Violence in the Ming Dynasty*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991.
- Twitchett, Denis, and Frederick W. Mote. *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 8. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- . *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 7. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Schurmann, Herbert Franz. *Economic Structure of the Yuan Dynasty*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956.
- Shinno, Reiko. *The Politics of Chinese Medicine Under Mongol Rule*. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Steinhardt, Nancy S. “Currency Issues of Yuan China.” *Bulletin of Sung and Yuan Studies* 16 (1980), 59–81.

Bibliography

- Swope, Kenneth. *The Military Collapse of China's Ming Dynasty*. London: Routledge, 2014.
- . *A Dragon's Head and a Serpent's Tail: Ming China and the First Great East Asian War, 1592–1598*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009.
- Wiens, Mi Chu. "Lord and Peasant: The Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century." *Modern China* 6:1 (1980), 3–29.
- Yuan, Zujie. "Dressing for Power: Rite, Costume, and State Authority in Ming Dynasty China." *Frontiers of History in China* 2:2 (2007): 1–32.

SECTION 6

The Qing Empire

In the final decades of the sixteenth century, a new political and military force arose to the northeast of the Ming frontier. Under the leadership of Nurhaci, a new ethnic identity was forged, bringing together several distinct groups, with the Jurchens forming the central component. This new entity, organized around eight military formations known as Banners, adopted the name Manchu. As the seventeenth century advanced, the Manchus challenged Ming power first in areas just outside the Great Wall, then along it. When the Ming collapsed in the early months of 1644, Manchu forces were allowed through the pass at Shanhaiguan 山海關 and advanced to Beijing. They routed the rebels who had seized the city, then proclaimed their intention to stay and establish their Qing 清 dynasty as the new rulers of all of China.

Under the rule of the three great emperors, Kangxi 康熙, Yongzheng 雍正 and Qianlong 乾隆, the dynasty subdued China proper and went on to expand its frontiers deep into Inner Asia, building a multi-ethnic empire double the size of the Ming. After the disruptions of the dynastic transition, the Qing oversaw a great revival and expansion in the economy. The imperial administration was well run, and the Manchu emperors sought to become true Confucian monarchs, patronizing literati learning and culture while also promoting Buddhism as a unifying force among the many ethnic communities within their borders.

By the late eighteenth century, this golden age began to wane. Unbeknownst to the Qing, the Industrial Revolution was giving rise to new dynamics of power and production in Britain and Europe, which soon brought the West into conflict with the existing Chinese conceptions of a properly ordered world. Western demands for greater trade and access to Chinese markets, exacerbated by the illegal importation of opium, led to war and humiliation for the Qing. Conditions worsened as massive rebellions shook the empire through the nineteenth century. Efforts at reform and adaptation to new realities were undertaken but were insufficient to overcome inertia in the political system. The Qing dynasty became the last of the imperial era, and was swept away in 1911–1912 by military mutinies and popular uprisings.

Chronology 6: The Qing Empire

1636–1912	Qing dynasty
1636–1661	Shunzhi 順治 reign.
1644	Fall of Beijing.
1662–1722	Kangxi 康熙 reign.
1673–1681	Rebellion of the Three Feudatories (Sanfan 三藩).
1689	Treaty of Nerchinsk (Nibuchu 尼布楚).
1723–1735	Yongzheng 雍正 reign.
1736–1795	Qianlong 乾隆 reign.
1757	Destruction of the Zhungars 準格爾.
1757–1842	The Canton system.
1785–1850	Life of Lin Zexu 林則徐.
1793	Macartney Mission.
1796–1820	Jiaqing 嘉慶 reign.
1796–1804	White Lotus (Bailian jiao 白蓮教) Rebellion.
1809–1874	Life of Feng Guifen 馮桂芬.
1811–1872	Life of Zeng Guofan 曾國藩.
1812–1885	Life of Zuo Zongtang 左宗棠.
1813–1864	Life of Hong Xiuquan 洪秀全.
1821–1850	Daoguang 道光 reign.
1823–1901	Life of Li Hongzhang 李鴻章.
1833–1898	Life of Prince Gong 恭親王.
1835–1908	Life of Cixi 慈禧.
1839–1842	Opium War (First Opium War).
1842	Treaty of Nanjing.
1856–1860	Arrow War (Second Opium War).
1851–1861	Xianfeng 咸豐 reign.
1851–1864	Taiping Rebellion.
1853–1868	Nian 捻 Rebellion.
1855–1873	Muslim Rebellion.
1858	Treaty of Tianjin 太平.
1858–1927	Life of Kang Youwei 康有為.
1862–1875	Tongzhi 同治 reign.
1860s–1870s	Self-Strengthening Movement
1866–1925	Life of Sun Yatsen 孫逸仙 (Sun Zhongshan 孫中山).
1873–1929	Life of Liang Qichao 梁啟超.
1875–1908	Guangxu 光緒 reign.
1894–1895	First Sino-Japanese War.
1895	Treaty of Shimonseki 下関.
1898	Hundred Days of Reform.
1898–1900	Boxer Uprising (Yihetuan 義和團).
1905	Abolition of the Confucian Examination system.
1909–1911	Xuantong 宣統 reign.
1911	Xinhai 辛亥 Revolution.
1912	Abdication of Puyi 溥儀.