

Painting Architecture

Jiehua in Yuan China, 1271–1368

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Introduction

One day in the tenth century, Yu Hao 喻皓, the most skilled craftsman of the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127), finalized the design for his architectural masterpiece: a thirteen-story pagoda for the Kaibao Monastery 開寶寺. However, the painter Guo Zhongshu 郭忠恕 (d. 977) warned him about an error in his design. Guo measured the miniature model, calculated the height from its lowermost story, and found that there was not enough space remaining to reasonably assemble the structural components of the framework. Yu spent several nights carefully measuring his design, and it turned out that Guo was right. It was said Yu knelt long in front of Guo, because Yu was extremely grateful that Guo had helped him prevent a disastrous mistake.¹ Guo Zhongshu, a painter, had not only mastered the practices of knowledgeable architects—he had even surpassed them. He was, in fact, one of the most prestigious specialists in *jiehua* 界畫.

Although the history of Chinese art privileges landscape and figure paintings as its objects of study, *jiehua*, or paintings that include architecture as a subject, holds a highly significant yet understudied position in this history. The *Summer Palace of Emperor Ming Huang* (fig. 0.1), traditionally attributed to Guo Zhongshu, is a representative example of *jiehua*. The subject of this painting is architectural, the artist uses tools such as rulers to create consistently even lines for architectural details, and the painting accurately represents the building's structure. All these factors reflected in this work, particularly its technical consideration and mechanical perfection, distinguish *jiehua* from other painting genres and link it to the builder's art. However, the limited scholarship on the subject has never perfectly clarified the relationship between *jiehua* and architectural painting, and has put forward various translations of *jiehua*, such as “boundary painting” and “ruled-line painting”—but unfortunately, none has been accepted with unanimous approval.²

The Concept of *Jiehua*

The variety of English translations, in my view, reflects the ambiguous nature of the *jiehua* concept. Indeed, in traditional Chinese literary texts, this complex term, *jiehua*, has been inextricably intertwined with architectural painting and widely used to refer to this subject. However, its invention was much later than the existence of architectural painting. *Jie hua* first appeared as a loosely defined verb in the Northern Song dynasty.³ In the Southern Song period (1127–1279), the noun *jiehua* began to designate a specific painting genre, which usually depicts architectural subjects and emphasizes the ruled-line technique. *Jiehua*, as a classificatory term, continued to be in widespread use during the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). Meanwhile, along with the increasing popularity of literati painting and ideals, literati scholars added another layer of meaning to this concept, rendering it a painting style with specific laws. Therefore, the term *jiehua* has accumulated more usages throughout time and has finally combined all these changing meanings into an integrated entity. Given this situation, all current translations of *jiehua* fail to capture its potential multiplicity of interpretations. Instead, each translation separately represents a certain way of thinking about this concept in the history of Chinese painting. At the beginning of this book, we will examine four major interpretations of *jiehua* and explore how key sources exemplify them.

“Boundary painting”: *Jiehua* as a verb

The character *jie* 界 is the key to any interpretation of *jiehua*. The basic meaning of *jie* 界 is “boundary.” The early second-century dictionary *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters) equates this character to *jie* 畧 and explains it as the boundary (*jing* 境).⁴ The Qing scholar Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735–1815) further comments on the entry of *jie* 界: “*Jie* 界 is *jing* 竟, written as *jing* 境 in the currently circulating editions and here corrected [as *jing* 竟]. *Jing* 竟 means the end of music, extending to mean all boundaries or limits. *Jie* 界 refers to *jie* 介. *Jie* 介 is *hua* 畫; *hua* 畫 is *jie* 介, like holding a brush and dividing a field into four plots.” (界, 竟也。竟俗本作境, 今正。樂曲盡為竟, 引申為凡邊竟之偶。界之言介也。介者, 畫也; 畫者, 介也, 象田四界, 聿所以畫之。)⁵ Duan’s interpretation of *jie* 界 not only stresses its association with boundaries but also introduces a more active association with division as essential to the meaning of this character.

Clearly, the translation of *jiehua* into English as “boundary painting” largely depends on the basic meaning of *jie* 界. However, when *jie* is simply translated as the noun “boundary,” its verbal function is unavoidably missing. Proponents of such a translation have recognized this weakness and supplemented it with further explanations. For example, the art historian Anita Chung suggests that

the phrase “boundary painting” means “painting done by marking out the exact proportions by means of lines.”⁶ The British sinologist Herbert A. Giles (1845–1935) regards *jiehua* as “pictures drawn in prescribed spaces.”⁷ Giles also provides an example, which comes from the Ming scholar Chen Jiru’s 陳繼儒 (1558–1639) *Nigu lu* 妮古錄 (Record of Fondness for Antiquity): “This picture contains only three or four scattered trunks of trees, with boundary-lines drawn on all four sides. The first stanza of poetry outside the boundary begins with certain words, *Tiewang shanhu*, from which the picture has been named.” (其畫止散樹三四株，四面界畫之，其界畫外第一首詩有鐵網珊瑚起句者，故名。) ⁸ In this entry, the term *jie hua* appears in a description of a landscape painting (not architectural painting) by the Yuan master Wang Meng 王蒙 (1308–1385). Giles’ main purpose is to contest the scholar J. C. Ferguson’s (1866–1945) statement that *jiehua* referred to drawing buildings.⁹ However, on further exploration, we would find that the term *jie hua* in this example could not be treated as a general designation for a painting genre. This term appears twice: the first one simply refers to a specific act of drawing boundaries (*jie hua zhi* 界畫之), and the second one only points to the boundary of a certain picture (*qi jie hua wai* 其界畫外). In either case, the two characters *jie* and *hua* are loosely combined as a whole, which cannot convey the twofold meaning of *jie*—namely “the boundary” and “drawing boundaries”—at the same time. In fact, Giles’ example could prove only that the basic meanings of *jie*, suggested by *Shuowen* and Duan Yucai, contribute to the formation of the classificatory term *jiehua* but do not necessarily dominate its interpretation.

The slippage between *jie*’s basic meanings and the painting genre *jiehua* emphasizes their interaction as much as their divergence. Nearly all modern scholars specializing in architectural painting agree that the first appearance of the term *jiehua* (or *jie hua*) in Chinese art texts is in the Northern Song scholar Guo Ruoxu’s 郭若虛 *Tuhua jianwenzhi* 圖畫見聞志 (Experiences in Painting, 1074):¹⁰

畫屋木者，折算無虧，筆畫勻壯，深遠透空，一去百斜。如隋唐五代已前，及國初郭忠恕王士元之流，畫樓閣多見四角，其斗拱逐鋪作為之向背分明，不失繩墨。今之畫者，多用直尺，一就界畫，分成斗拱，筆迹繁雜，無壯麗閒雅之意。¹¹

When one paints wooden constructions (*wumu*), calculations should be faultless, and the linear brushwork should be robust. [The architecture] should deeply penetrate space. When one [line] goes, a hundred [lines] slant. This was true of the work of painters of the Sui [581–618], Tang [618–907], and Five Dynasties [907–960] down to Guo Zhongshu and Wang Shiyuan [tenth century] at the beginning of this dynasty. Their paintings of towers and pavilions usually show all four corners with brackets arranged in order. They made clear distinctions between front and back without violating the rules. Painters nowadays mainly use a ruler to mark out the boundaries (*jiehua*) right away. In the differentiation of bracketing, their brushwork is too intricate and confusing, and fails to impart any grandeur and easy elegance.¹²

In this paragraph, Guo Ruoxu focuses on the category of *wumu* 屋木 (wooden constructions). The term *jiehua* (or *jie hua*) appears in the phrase *yi jiu jie hua* 一就界畫, in which Guo discusses contemporary painters' technique for depicting *wumu*. Modern scholars have different views on this phrase. Robert J. Maeda, Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih translate *jiu* 就 as the verb "accomplish" and *jiehua* as a noun referring to the painting genre "ruled-line painting."¹³ This interpretation erroneously historicizes the term *jiehua*'s appearance as a genre. In the original paragraph, Guo Ruoxu consistently employs the term *wumu* to designate the painting genre of architectural subjects and man-made objects. It is unlikely that he would have suddenly inserted a sentence about another genre, *jiehua*, without transitions and explanations. Moreover, there are no other extant Northern Song or earlier texts that could support the use of the term *jiehua* as a painting genre. It would be odd if such a use had appeared only once in *Tuhua jianwenzhi* at that time.

Translations by Anita Chung and by Jerome Silbergeld, in my view, better historicize the term.¹⁴ They both treat the term *jie hua* as a verb that means "to mark out the boundaries" or "to mark off their outlines." However, it is misleading for them to combine *jie* and *hua* into a compound word, as they do in their parenthetical notes. After all, the usage of *jie hua* here is very similar to a random act described in *si mian jie hua zhi* 四面界畫之 in Giles' example, which could not be generalized as a specific technique or genre. Moreover, the juxtaposition of *jiu* 就 and *jie hua* 界畫 in *Tuhua jianwenzhi* might contribute to the uncertain connection between *jie* and *hua*. For *jiu*, some scholars translate it as "accomplish" (such as Robert J. Maeda), and Anita Chung curtly translates it as "right away." Apart from these possibilities, the word *jiu* could also serve as a preposition, "along/from," to show position.¹⁵ If so, *jiu jie hua* should be interpreted together as "drawing along the boundaries." In any case, the juxtaposition of *jie* and *hua* did not serve as a fixed classificatory term here.

In fact, if we treat *jie hua* in *Tuhua jianwenzhi* as a loosely defined verb instead of a painting genre, we can find similar examples in other contemporary texts. As the modern scholar Chen Yunru 陳韻如 has noted, in the builder's manual *Yingzao fashi* 營造法式 (State Building Standards, 1103), Li Jie 李誡 (d. 1110) writes: "If you paint *songwen* (a complicated pattern of wood texture), you need to thoroughly brush ochre into its body; you first mark off their boundaries with an ink brush, and then brush between them with purple sandalwood color." (若畫松文，即身內通刷土黃，先以墨筆界畫，次以紫檀間刷。) ¹⁶ Here, the phrase *yi mobi jie hua* 以墨筆界畫 corresponds to *yi zitan jian shua* 以紫檀間刷. While the first three characters of the two phrases work as adverbial ornaments, the latter *jie hua* 界畫 and *jian shua* 間刷 are both verbs that indicate specific actions. Like *jian shua*, *jie hua* had not yet achieved a special position in the history of Chinese painting. As a common verb, it does not refer to a general technique or a painting genre here.

In summary, *jie hua* has long been used as a verb that means “to mark off boundaries,” its usage beginning in the Northern Song period and continuing at least to the Ming period (1368–1644). While this initial usage strongly supports the translation of *jiehua* as “boundary painting,” it also implies the tremendous gap between a verb and a classificatory term—particularly when these two usages coexisted in the same Ming-Qing period (1368–1911). Was the verb directly transformed into a designation of a painting genre? If so, when and how did this happen? If not, what became the decisive meaning of the classificatory term *jiehua*? In order to answer these questions, we need to first make clear the context of *jiehua* as a painting genre.

“Architectural painting”: *Jiehua* as a subject category

In fact, it is in the Southern Song period—not in the Northern Song—that the term *jiehua* emerged as a noun referring to a specific painting genre. In Deng Chun’s 鄧椿 *Hua ji* 畫繼 (A Continuation of the History of Painting, preface dated 1167), the term *jiehua* appears in two painters’ biographies: “Guo Daizhao, from Zhao county, always boasted about his *jiehua*” (郭待詔，趙州人。每以界畫自矜。) and “Ren An, from the capital, entered the Painting Academy and specialized in *jiehua*” (任安，京師人。入畫院，工界畫。).¹⁷ Both entries suggest that *jiehua*, a noun here, refers to an independent painting genre; since Deng does not spend time explaining this term, its definition must have been widely understood by contemporary audiences. It is worth noting that both Guo Daizhao and Ren An are listed in the painting category *wumu zhouchu* 屋木舟車 (wooden constructions, boats, and carts), implying that the meaning of *jiehua* is closely linked with such subject matter. In fact, some modern scholars, such as J. C. Ferguson, directly claimed that *jiehua* referred to drawing buildings.¹⁸ Could *jiehua* be equated with the painting of architecture?

The painting of architecture has a long history in Chinese art. It can be traced to the Eastern Zhou period (770–221 BCE). Jingjun 敬君, from the Qi state of that time, might be the earliest recorded painter who depicted this subject matter.¹⁹ A lacquerware fragment excavated at Linzi, Shandong, includes an architectural image and gives us a hint about the Eastern Zhou representation of architecture. It includes four elevations of a three-bay building with columns and bracketing arms. This image is drawn in abstract forms and repetitive patterns to create a decorative effect. Chinese artists’ ability to make more accurate renderings of architecture took many centuries to develop. The architectural mural from the Tang tomb of Crown Prince Yide 懿德 (682–701), for instance, achieves depth and a three-dimensional effect to some extent. These timber-frame gate towers have inverted V-shaped braces, hip-gable roofs, and high foundations, all reflecting features of contemporary

buildings. In fact, during the Tang dynasty (618–907), architectural painting had already been established as an independent subject category but had not yet been given a unified name. In *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記 (Record of Famous Paintings of Successive Dynasties, preface dated 847), Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠 writes: “It is not necessary [for the painter] to cover all six elements; he will be selected if skilled in just one technique. This is to say [a painter] should specialize in either figures, architecture (*wuyu*), landscape, horses, ghosts and gods, or flowers and birds; everyone has his specialty.” (何必六法俱全，但取一技可采。謂或人物、或屋宇、或山水、或鞍馬、或鬼神、或花鳥，各有所長。) ²⁰ Here, Zhang treats architectural painting as one of the six painting elements (*liu fa* 六法) and uses the term *wuyu* 屋宇 (houses and covered buildings) to designate it. However, in other passages, Zhang also uses alternative names such as *taige* 臺閣 (terraces and pavilions), *gongguan* 宮觀 (palaces and towers), and *wumu*. ²¹ In *Tangchao minghua lu* 唐朝名畫錄 (Record of Famous Painters of the Tang Dynasty), Zhu Jingxuan 朱景玄 (fl. 840) points out: “For painting, priority should be given to human subjects, and thereafter rank in descending order: birds and beasts, landscapes, and architectural subjects (*loudian wumu*) . . . Lu Tanwei of the previous dynasty ranks first in architectural painting (*wumu*).” (夫畫者以人物居先，禽獸次之，山水次之，樓殿屋木次之……前朝陸探微屋木居第一。) ²² Zhu also juxtaposes architectural painting with other painting motifs, such as landscapes, and interchangeably uses terms like *loudian wumu* 樓殿屋木 (storied buildings, palace halls, and wooden constructions) and *wumu*.

It is the Northern Song period that witnessed the elevation of architectural subjects to one of the most important painting genres. For example, Liu Daochun’s 劉道醇 painting classification—both in his *Shengchao minghua ping* 聖朝名畫評 (Evaluations of Song Dynasty Painters of Renown, ca. 1059) and *Wudai minghua buyi* 五代名畫補遺 (A Supplement on the Famous Painters of the Five Dynasties, preface dated 1059)—includes *wumu men* 屋木門 (wooden-structure genre). ²³ Guo Ruoxu arranged contemporary masters into four groups, and the *wumu* category occupies a place in the fourth group. ²⁴ During the reign of Huizong 徽宗 (1082–1135, r. 1100–1126), *wumu* had become an indispensable discipline in the curricula of the Painting Academy. ²⁵ *Xuanhe huapu* 宣和畫譜 (Xuanhe Catalogue of Paintings, ca. 1120), commissioned by Huizong, also contains architectural paintings as one of the ten painting genres. ²⁶ Although other names for architectural painting—such as *gongshi* 宮室 (palatial chambers) in *Xuanhe huapu*—continued to show up in Song art texts, the term *wumu* was more and more frequently used, and eventually came to predominate.

As mentioned earlier, the noun *jiehua* initially appeared in the Southern Song catalog *Hua ji* and was closely associated with the architectural subject *wumu*. From the subsequent Yuan dynasty on, *jiehua* had replaced older terms such as *wumu* in the classification of painting genres. For example, Tang Hou

湯屋 (active ca. 1320–1330) writes in his *Gujin huajian* 古今畫鑒 (Examination of Past and Present Painting, preface dated 1328):

世俗論畫，必曰畫有十三科，山水打頭，界畫打底……古人畫諸科各有其人，界畫則唐絕無作者，歷五代始得郭忠恕一人，其他如王士元、趙忠義三數人而已。如衛賢、高克明抑又次焉。²⁷

In discussing painting, ordinary people will certainly say that it has thirteen categories, with landscape at the top and *jiehua* at the bottom . . . Each of the various categories of the ancients' paintings had its masters. There was no one in *jiehua* during the Tang. In the succeeding Five Dynasties there was only one man, Guo Zhongshu, and a few others such as Wang Shiyuan and Zhao Zhongyi. As for Wei Xian and Gao Keming [eleventh century], they are still lower.²⁸

In Tang Hou's painting system, *jiehua* is emphatically placed together with painting genres such as landscape painting. *Jiehua* specialists mentioned here, such as Guo Zhongshu and Wei Xian 衛賢, are in fact those famous architectural painters listed in previous Song catalogs like *Xuanhe huapu*.²⁹ It seems to confirm the equivalence between *jiehua* and architectural painting. In another Yuan text, *Nancun chuogeng lu* 南村輟耕錄 (Respite from Plowing in the Southern Village, 1366), Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (active 1360–1368) makes a list of these thirteen painting categories, where the architectural painting is directly named as *jiehua louge* 界畫樓臺 (*jiehua*, storied buildings, and *louge*, terraces).³⁰ All these examples confirm the connection between *jiehua* and architectural subjects, but we are compelled to ask: does it mean that the categorizing term *jiehua* could be generally interpreted as an architectural subject classification?

The answer, I believe, is no. A comparison between the term *wumu* and *jiehua* is enlightening. *Wumu* literally describes the specific subject "wooden constructions" and has an obscure relationship with man-made constructions. Although building is the usual subject matter of *wumu*, several *wumu* specialists recorded by Liu Daochun were not famous for this subject. Cai Run 蔡潤, for example, was skilled in painting boats (*zhouchuan* 舟船), and Wang Daozhen 王道真 specialized in painting traveling bullock carts (*panche* 盤車).³¹ It suggests that boats and carts are also subordinate to *wumu*. Nevertheless, the Southern Song catalog *Hua ji* names a painting category as *wumu zhouche* 屋木舟車 (wooden constructions, boats, and carts), where the juxtaposition of *wumu* (wooden constructions) and *zhouche* (boats and carts) implies the distinction between these motifs.³²

Distinguished from *wumu*, we could not literally recognize the subject matter from the term *jiehua* itself, but traditional literati have never suspected that *jiehua* could cover all these subjects, ranging from buildings, boats, and carts to other wooden man-made constructions. For instance, both Guo Zhongshu's *Xueji jiangxing tu* 雪霽江行圖 ("Travelling on the River in Clearing

text *Hua ji*. Deng Chun introduces *jiezu* 界作, a term associated with *jiehua*, as follows:

畫院界作最工，專以新意相尚……祖宗舊制，凡待詔出身者，止有六種，如模勒、書丹、裝背、界作種、飛白筆、描畫欄界是也。³⁴

In the Painting Academy, *jiezu* is the most elaborate [category], especially admired for its new ideas . . . According to ancestors' old regulations, all painters of the in-attendance status served only in the following six categories: copying by engraving, drawing in color, mounting, *jiezu* category, the "flying white" brushwork, and drawing borders.³⁵

Here, the term *jiezu* is put together with five other painting techniques such as drawing in color, which, in turn, proves its role as a specific technique (not a subject). Similarly, the term *jiehua* has been associated with a technical definition, an aspect stressed by its English translation "ruled-line painting."

"Ruled-line painting": *Jiehua* and the ruler

"Ruled-line painting" is another popular translation of *jiehua* among Western scholars. Its leading proponents, including Robert J. Maeda, indicate that the term *jiehua* is the abbreviated form of *jiechi hua* 界尺畫 ("painting done with the ruler").³⁶ These scholars make their case with evidence from traditional Chinese texts. For instance, when the late-Ming scholar Wu Qizhen 吳其貞 (fl. 1635–1677) praises an architectural painting by Wang Zhenpeng, he claims: "[it] is a *jiechi hua* of a divine order, unmatched by other painters." (為界尺畫之神品者人莫能及。)³⁷ Here, Wu's term for architectural painting is directly written as *jiechi hua*.

Even before the creation of the term *jiehua*, there had existed textual evidence that could support the intimate association between architectural painting and its undisguised use of rulers. The earliest known reference seems to be the Tang text *Lidai minghua ji*, where Zhang Yanyuan describes the brushwork of the painter Wu Daozi 吳道子 (active ca. 710–760) in this way:

或問余曰：“吳生何以不用界筆直尺而能彎弧挺刃，植柱構梁？”對曰：“……夫用界筆直尺，界筆是死畫也，守其神，專其一，是真畫也……不滯於手，不凝於心，不知然而然，雖彎弧挺刃，植柱構梁，則界筆直尺，豈得入於其間矣。”³⁸

Someone asked me: "How was it that Master Wu could curve his bows, straighten his blades, and make vertical his pillars and horizontal his beams, without the use of line-brush and ruler?" I answered: "if one makes use of line-brush and ruler, the result will be dead painting. But if one guards the spirit and concentrates upon unity, there will be real painting . . . [Painting] is not stopped in the hand, nor frozen in the mind, but becomes what it is without conscious realization. Though one may bend bows, straighten blades,

蘇東坡見一家有界尺筆槽而破者，向其主人曰：“韓直木如常，孤竹君無恙，但半面之交，忽然折事矣。”⁴¹

In someone's home, Su Dongpo saw a parallel ruler, a brush, and a groove ruler, and [accidentally] broke them. Su said to their owner: "Han Zhimu is as usual, the Lord of Guzhu is unharmed, but the one with the half-face friendship is suddenly broken."

Su Shi compares the three basic tools of *jiehua* to three persons: First, Han Zhimu 韓直木 (which literally means "Han Straight Wood") alludes to the appearance of the parallel ruler. Second, Guzhu Jun 孤竹君 (which literally means "the Lord of Wood and Bamboo") indicates the material of the brush. Third, *Banmian zhi jiao* 半面之交, always referring to an unfamiliar friend, literally means "attached to a half face," and thus matches the way the groove ruler is used; after all, the groove ruler is only attached to the brush or the parallel ruler at one end (or one side), just like a reserved friend to them. Meanwhile, *Banmian zhi jiao* could also describe a superficial friendship between the parallel ruler and the brush—when the groove ruler is broken, their connection is immediately cut off. Su Shi's metaphors perfectly represent the features of these *jiehua* tools.

The *jiehua* genre's association with the use of tools makes the traditional interpretation of this term as *jiechi hua* exceptionally persuasive. If so, shouldn't the translation "ruled-line painting" take precedence over others? The biggest criticism proposed by modern scholars like Anita Chung is that the translation "ruled-line painting" indicates a conflict between *jiehua* and freehand drawing, and the fact is that several *jiehua* specialists are famous for their freehand technique rather than ruled-line technique.⁴² For instance, when the Northern Song writer Guo Ruoxu discussed architectural subjects in his *Tuhua jianwen-zhi*, he disapproved of contemporaries' reliance on rulers and suggested that earlier masters like Guo Zhongshu and Wang Shiyuan did not resort to rulers, which was more admirable.⁴³ But in Yuan and later periods, both Guo and Wang were treated as representatives of *jiehua* painters. A great example is the Yuan catalog *Gujin huajian*: "There was no one doing *jiehua* during the Tang. In the succeeding Five Dynasties there was only one man, Guo Zhongshu, and a few others such as Wang Shiyuan, and Zhao Zhongyi." (界畫則唐絕無作者，歷五代始得郭忠恕一人，其他如王士元、趙忠義三數人而已。)⁴⁴ In Anita Chung's opinion, the inclusion of freehand-drawing painters in the category of ruled-line painting seems odd, so the translation of *jiehua* as "ruled-line painting" should be discarded.⁴⁵ To solve the problem, Marsha Smith Weidner proposes that *jiehua*, interpreted in a stricter sense as "ruled-line painting," could only be used for "later (twelfth century and later) painters" while "earlier artists might still be described as painters of architectural subjects."⁴⁶ In other words, Weidner suggests that we must apply different translations of *jiehua* to masters

from different periods—for instance, the *jiehua* master Guo Zhongshu could only be translated as an architectural painter instead of a ruled-line painter.

In my opinion, “ruled-line painting” is still a relatively appropriate translation—even though it does not exploit the full potential of *jiehua*. The biggest mistake made by its opponents is that they deliberately exaggerate the contradiction between ruled-line painter and freehand style. Although traditional Chinese writers closely linked the *jiehua* genre with rulers, they never thought there was an irreconcilable conflict between ruled-line technique and freehand drawing. For example, in *Nansong yuanhua lu* 南宋院畫錄 (Records on Paintings of the Southern Song Academy), the Qing author Li E 厲鶚 (1692–1752) indicates that Li Song 李嵩 (active late twelfth century) “was particularly skilled in *jiehua*” (尤精於界畫) and his dragon boat and palace scenes “did not use rulers but achieved both actual rules and measurements” (不用界尺，而規矩準繩皆備).⁴⁷ Li Song’s extant album leaf *Tianzhong shuixi tu* 天中水戲圖 (“Dragon Boat”) (plate 1) might support Li E’s statement. The painter offers meticulous details within a narrow space. In the boat’s superstructure, both the short lines shaping the complex bracket clusters and the curved lines marking out the dense roof tiles demonstrate the painter’s mastery of freehand drawing in *jiehua*. Li E’s text explains why this kind of drawing could be regarded as *jiehua*: it is because without mechanical aids, the painter still achieves a similar effect of ruled-line technique—namely, to follow “actual rules and measurements.” It hints that for *jiehua*, it is more important to evaluate a painting’s effect than the tools used. When the Yuan scholar Rao Ziran 饒自然 (1312–1365) discusses *jiehua*, he more clearly expresses this idea: “Even if you do not use rulers, you should still consistently use the law of *jiehua* to accomplish it.” (雖不用尺，其制一以界畫之法為之。)⁴⁸ Rao distinguishes the law of *jiehua* from the use of rulers, and thus makes the meaning of *jiehua* go beyond its translation “ruled-line painting.” In other words, although the genre of *jiehua* stresses mechanical aids and subject category, it is recognized foremost as a painting style with specific laws or principles.

***Jiehua* as a stylistic entity: Craftsmanship and literati ideals**

As mentioned previously, the phrase *gui ju zhun sheng* 規矩準繩 (“actual rules and measurements”), intertwined with the law of *jiehua*, plays a significant role in shaping the *jiehua* style. This phrase could be literally translated as “compass” (*gui* 規), “set square” (*ju* 矩), “spirit level” (*zhun* 準) and “plumb-string” (*sheng* 繩), all carpenters’ tools, thus linking *jiehua* with the craftsmen’s art. An understanding of Chinese construction techniques and standards is required to produce a *jiehua* painting, a feature that also makes this genre more difficult to execute than other types of painting.

This feature has been repeatedly emphasized in art historians' descriptions of *jiehua* style. For instance, when the Yuan master Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254–1322) teaches his son Zhao Yong 趙雍 (b. 1289) to paint *jiehua*, he frankly says: "All of painting is perhaps fabrication to deceive people; but with regard to *jiehua*, no painter could do this without using technique in accordance with the laws." (諸畫或可杜撰瞞人，至界畫未有不用工合法度者。) ⁴⁹ When *Xuanhe huapu* deals with architectural subjects—the usual themes of *jiehua*—it also reads:

畫者取此而備之形容，豈徒為是臺榭戶牖之壯觀者哉，雖一點一筆，必求諸繩矩，比他畫為難工，故自晉宋迄于梁隋，未聞其工者。⁵⁰

When painters took up these subjects and completely described their formal appearance, how could it have been simply a question of making a grand spectacle of terraces and pavilions, or doors and windows? In each dot or stroke, one must seek agreement with actual measurements and rules (*sheng ju*). In comparison with other types of paintings, it is a difficult field in which to gain skill. Consequently, from the Jin through the Sui Dynasties, there are no known masters.⁵¹

The term *sheng ju* 繩矩, here, recalls *gui ju zhun sheng*, and alludes to architectural procedures and principles.

Art critics describe in detail the basic principles of *jiehua* style.⁵² The first principle is faultless calculation, just as *Tuhua jianwenzhi* records: "calculations should be faultless, and brushstrokes of even strength should deeply penetrate space, receding in a hundred diagonal lines." (折算無虧，筆畫勻壯，深遠透空，一去百斜。)⁵³ The second is structural clarity, also described in *Tuhua jianwenzhi*: "their paintings of towers and pavilions usually showed all four corners with their brackets arranged in order; they made clear distinctions between front and back without error in the marking lines." (畫樓閣多見四角，其斗拱逐鋪作為之向背分明，不失繩墨。)⁵⁴ The third principle is correct scale. For example, when the Song scholar Li Zhi 李廌 (1059–1109) praises Guo Zhongshu in his *Deyutang huapin* 德隅堂畫品 (Evaluations of Painters from the Deyu Studio, preface dated 1098), Li writes: "He used an infinitesimal unit to mark off an inch, a tenth of an inch to mark off a foot, a foot to mark off ten feet; increasing thus with every multiple, so that when he did a large building, everything was to scale and there were no small discrepancies." (以毫計寸，以分計尺，以寸計丈，增而倍之以作大字，皆中規度，曾無小差。)⁵⁵ Guo Zhongshu's measurements are to scale. Fourth, the *jiehua* masters are required to acquire mathematical and other architectural knowledge. For instance, *Xuanhe huapu* indicates that architectural paintings by the late-Tang artist Yin Jizhao 尹繼昭 reveal "the methods of multiplication and division of a mathematician" (隱算學家乘除法於其間).⁵⁶ *Minghua lu* 明畫錄 (Records of Ming Painting, preface dated 1673) points out that "a painter who depicts palaces and chambers must

first have a volume of *Carpenters' Manuals* in mind and then could paint.” (畫宮室者，胸中先有一卷木經，始堪落筆。) ⁵⁷ Guo Ruoxu also thinks mastery in architectural painting cannot be separated from the painter's building knowledge:

設或未識漢殿吳殿，梁柱斗拱，叉手替木，熟柱駝峯，方莖額道，抱間昂頭，羅花羅幔，暗制綽幕，獼猴頭，琥珀枋，龜頭虎座，飛簷撲水，膊風化廢，垂魚惹草，當鉤曲脊之類，憑何以畫屋木也？⁵⁸

How could one paint *wumu* if he did not understand the great halls of Han and Wu, beams, columns, brackets, trusses, cushion timbers, king-posts, camel's humps, square architectures, *e'dao*, *baojian*, cantilever-heads, perpendicular and longitudinal bracket arms, *anzhi*, *chuomu*, *husun* timber ends, *hupo* timbers, tortoise-heads, tiger seats, flying eaves, water-repelling boards, barge-boards, *huafei*, suspended fish, stirring grass, ridge-supporting tiles, convex and concave roof tiles, and so on?⁵⁹

Guo uses a lot of architectural terminology in this text, proving *jiehua*'s intimate involvement with the procedures of building construction.

Excellent *jiehua* masters are able to produce works that meet building and other construction standards or even surpass experienced craftsmen. In *Yizhou minghua lu* 益州名畫錄 (Records of Famous Painters of Yizhou), the Song scholar Huang Xiufu 黃休復 (eleventh century) recorded an anecdote about the court painter Zhao Zhongyi 趙忠義. Zhao was commanded to draw a picture of *Guan jiangjun qi Yuquan si tu* 關將軍起玉泉寺圖 (“General Guan Erecting the Jade Spring Temple”). The result is as follows:

蜀王令內作都料看此畫圖，枋栱有準的否？都料對曰：“此畫復較一座，分明無欠。”其妙如此。⁶⁰

[When the picture was done] the Shu King ordered his Palace Chief Carpenter to scrutinize the painting and asked if the square columns and the brackets were drawn correctly. The Chief Carpenter replied: “In this painting of the building, all are accurate without a single flaw.” Such was the excellence [of his painting].⁶¹

Zhao's painting could pass the inspection of a skilled architect. It proves that he had fully mastered the actual practices of craftsmen.

However, the interaction between *jiehua* and craftsmanship leads to two negative consequences, which are perfectly summarized by the early Yuan scholar Hu Zhiyu 胡祇遹 (1227–1295): “[the *jiehua* genre] is too difficult to master so few decide to learn it” (難工而學者寡) and “[people] do not think [this genre] is lofty and elegant, so they disdain doing it” (非畫史之高致而不屑為).⁶² Indeed, literati always held pejorative attitudes towards the *jiehua* or architectural category. As early as the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420), Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (ca. 345–406) said: “In painting, human figures are the most difficult, followed by mountains and water, then followed by dogs and horses.

Towers and pavilions are just fixed objects, [too hard] to make and [too] easy to appreciate, and devoid of the virtue of conveying ideas.” (凡畫，人最難，次山水，次狗馬，臺榭一定器耳，難成而易好，不待遷想妙得也。) ⁶³ Gu regarded architectural subjects as fixed objects that lack expressive ideas. In the Tang period, the catalog *Tangchao minghua lu* also put architectural subjects at the bottom of the painting system. ⁶⁴ During the Yuan period, after the establishment of the thirteen painting categories by Tang Hou, the *jiehua* genre was widely accepted as the least important one. ⁶⁵ The Ming scholar Xu Qin 徐沁 (seventeenth century) offers a reason for *jiehua*'s low status after the Yuan:

有明以此擅場者益少，近人喜尚元筆，目界畫者鄙為匠氣，此派日就漸滅矣。 ⁶⁶

There were only a few painters who specialized in this genre during the Ming. Recently, people favored the brushwork of the Yuan (i.e., the calligraphic styles of the great Yuan masters) and viewed *jiehua* practitioners as lowly artisans. Sooner or later, *jiehua* will completely disappear. ⁶⁷

From this text, we can see that due to the dominance of literati ideology and literati painting, the *jiehua*, entangled with craftsmanship, was naturally and widely treated as an inferior art and minor category.

Nevertheless, traditional literati still made efforts to bring *jiehua* into the mainstream of painting traditions. For instance, the Qing writer Zheng Ji 鄭績 (nineteenth century) transforms the meaning of *jiechi* from carpenter's tools into abstract laws, in order to eliminate the opposition between *jiehua* and literati painting:

文人之畫，筆墨形景之外，須明界尺者，乃畫法界限尺度，非匠習所用間格方直之木間尺也……此文人作畫界尺，即前後遠近大小之法度也。 ⁶⁸

Literati painting is beyond brushed ink and form; one should be aware that *jiechi* means limits and measures in painting method and does not refer to craftsmen's wooden straight rulers used to divide square and straight forms . . . *jiechi* used by literati painters refers to laws of front and back (location), distant and near (perspective), and large and small (scale).

We could infer from this text that *jiehua*, short for *jiechi hua*, does not reveal this genre's dependence upon rulers, but instead emphasizes its abidance by rules or laws. In this sense, this genre could be translated as “rule (or regulated) painting.” As early as the Tang, art historians had already made attempts to emancipate architectural paintings from mechanical aids. For example, *Lidai minghua ji* reads: “Now, if one makes use of marking line and ruler, the result will be dead painting. But if one guards the spirit and concentrates upon unity, there will be real painting.” (夫用界筆直尺，界筆是死畫也，守其神，專其一，是真畫也。) ⁶⁹ By comparing real and dead painting, the author Zhang Yanyuan stresses the significance of abstract spirit and unity, instead of tools, in architectural painting. *Xuanhe huapu* takes a different strategy:

信夫畫之中，規矩準繩者為難工，游規矩準繩之內，而不為所窘，如忠恕之高古者，豈復有斯人之徒歟。⁷⁰

Among these paintings, it is indeed difficult to follow actual measurements and rules. If one's paintings freely wander within these rules and are not confined by them—just like Guo Zhongshu's lofty and antique paintings—how could there exist such painters [as Guo] again?

The text differentiates between two subtypes of architectural painting: while the inferior one simply follows rules, the superior one is not restricted by them. In this way, the contradiction between *jiehua* and *jiehua* specialists known for freehand drawing, brought forward by modern scholars like Anita Chung and Marsha Smith Weidner, is naturally resolved. We can see that although *jiehua*'s connection with rulers came into being at the very beginning—which makes it impossible to separate this genre from craftsmanship—literati always attempted to change *jiehua* into a style commensurate with orthodox literati tastes.

To sum up, *jiehua*, an evolving term, reflects different meanings in different contexts and periods. It first appeared as a verb that means “to mark off boundaries” in the Northern Song dynasty, and this usage continued to exist throughout the history of painting. During the Southern Song period, *jiehua* began to designate a specific painting genre. From the Yuan dynasty onwards, this term largely replaced other names of depictions of architectural subjects and man-made objects. However, this does not mean that the genre *jiehua* is solely determined by its subject matter. In contrast, the introduction of the classificatory term *jiehua* reflected special features of architectural painting, mainly its ruled-line technique. *Jiehua*'s close relation with craftsmanship, a quality antithetical to literati ideals, led to scholars' disparagement of this genre; meanwhile, literati scholars wanted to release *jiehua* from mechanical aids and to redefine it as a painting style that follows or even goes beyond laws. Therefore, translations such as “boundary painting” and “ruled-line painting” emphasize certain aspects of *jiehua*, but obscure other potential meanings of this term. It is the untranslatability of the term *jiehua* that helps unfold multiple layers of this painting genre all at once.

Why the Mongol Yuan?

Jiehua, the unique painting genre, has not attracted the scholarly attention it deserves. Ever since William Trousdale and Robert J. Maeda made their preliminary investigation in the 1960s and 1970s, this topic has remained relatively dormant among Western scholars.⁷¹ Apart from Anita Chung's 2004 monograph, only a handful of dissertations and short articles have touched upon it, and few of them have provided any technical analysis.⁷² While Western

Painting and Painter

The theme of the “Prince Teng Pavilion” was popular among *jiehua* masters of the Five Dynasties and Song periods. In traditional painting catalogues, there are considerable clues of these paintings’ existence. For instance, it is recorded that the Northern Song Xuanhe imperial collection held one *Tengwang ge yanhui tu* 滕王閣宴會圖 (“Banquet at the Prince Teng Pavilion”) and five copies of *Prince Teng Pavilion*—by the Former Shu artist Li Sheng—as well as four versions of *Tengwang ge Wang Bo huihao tu* 滕王閣王勃揮毫圖 (“Wang Bo Taking Up His Brush at the Prince Teng Pavilion”) by the Song painter Guo Zhongshu.¹ It is not surprising that Xia Yong, the painter known for his *jiehua*, also favored this theme and left us three miniature paintings of this subject matter. They are perfectly representative of Xia Yong’s “intaglio-like painting technique,” all using barely modulated lines to depict similarly thin structures and extravagant architectural details. These paintings, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, share the same composition. Their most noticeable difference is the arrangement of human figures: in the Shanghai and Boston versions (plate 4), there are three scholars chatting in the courtyard, while there are only two in the Freer version (fig. 1.12).

Despite Xia’s easily recognizable style and composition, two of these three *Prince Teng Pavilion* paintings have been traditionally attributed to Wang Zhenpeng. While a previous label slip mistakenly ascribed the Boston version to Wang, a faked Wang seal was deliberately added to the Freer copy. In fact, one-third of Xia’s extant paintings were formerly treated by owners or viewers as Wang’s works, suggesting an uncanny resemblance between these two painters’ *jiehua*.² Perhaps due to this resemblance, modern scholars such as Robert J. Maeda and Yu Hui 余輝 often regard Wang Zhenpeng as Xia Yong’s teacher—although to my knowledge, there is no documentary proof to support this claim.³

In order to clarify the complex relationship between Xia and Wang, it is necessary for us to compare their *jiehua* styles in detail. Here, a handscroll *Prince Teng Pavilion* (plate 10), held by the Princeton University Art Museum, provides us with an unparalleled example of Wang’s style. This painting bears

the signature and creation date, “Wang Zhenpeng, the Recluse of the Lonely Clouds, inscribed and painted during the Mid-Autumn Festival of the first year of the Huangqing reign (1312)” (皇慶元年中秋孤雲處士王振鵬書畫). In addition, there are three seals—a gourd-shaped one that reads “Imperial Designated Sobriquet, Recluse of the Lonely Clouds” (賜號孤雲處士) and two squared ones that separately read “Wang Zhenpeng” (王振鵬) and “Pengmei” (朋梅)—all connecting this painting to the artist Wang Zhenpeng. This painting is rarely published and studied. In addition, while the sinologist Berthold Laufer (1874–1934) directly ascribes it to Wang, James Cahill queries its genuineness, and Cary Liu dates it to the late-Yuan or early Ming period.⁴ However, all these scholars confirm its association with Wang, and there is no doubt that this painting exhibits Wang’s style. In contrast to Xia’s small-scale album leaves, this artist adopts Wang’s preferred large-scale format of handscroll. This *Prince Teng Pavilion* also represents a much more complex architectural structure, and some of its architectural details are clearly distinguished from Xia’s. For example, the corners of its buildings’ roofs, decorated with mythical beasts marching along their ridges, are gently raised up; by contrast, Xia’s roofs do not slope up but instead use more straight lines than curves to depict their corners. However, the left portion of the handscroll echoes that of Xia’s *Prince Teng Pavilion*: a tiny boat floating in the water, layered distant mountains, and a block of Wang Bo’s text “Tengwang ge xu” in minute calligraphy. All these elements of the handscroll make its comparison with Xia’s paintings productive.

It is also worth examining another *Prince Teng Pavilion* (fig. 2.1), the one painted by the scholar-official Tang Di 唐棣 (1287–1355) and now housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Even though Xia Yong’s exact dates have not yet been established, he was active during the reign of the last Yuan Emperor Shundi and worked after the time of Wang Zhenpeng, whose reputation was more closely tied to Renzong’s mid-Yuan court. The southern scholar Tang Di,



Figure 2.1: Tang Di (1287–1355). *Prince Teng Pavilion*. 1352. Handscroll, ink on paper, 27.5 cm × 84.5 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art: Bequest of John M. Crawford Jr., 1988 (1989. 363.36). Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.

however, came to the Yuan capital around 1310, was recommended to paint for Renzong, and almost continuously served as a Yuan official either in the capital or in Jiangnan from the time of Renzong to that of Shundi.⁵ This means that Tang Di worked concurrently with Wang Zhenpeng for Renzong and was likely connected with Jiangnan painters like Xia Yong during his later years. It is worth noting that his painting in the Metropolitan Museum, the *Prince Teng Pavilion*, is signed and dated to “the first decade of the eighth lunar month in the Renchen year of the Zhizheng reign (1352)” (至正壬辰八月上澣), which is close to Xia Yong’s time. In our discussion, Tang Di’s *Prince Teng Pavilion* promises to bridge the gap between Xia’s copies and the Princeton version.

Therefore, this chapter will take these three versions of the *Prince Teng Pavilion*—one by the professional painter Xia Yong (his Boston version is taken as a representative, plate 4), one in the style of the court painter Wang Zhenpeng (plate 10), and one by the scholar-official Tang Di (fig. 2.1)—as clues to clarify Xia Yong’s relations with other Yuan *jiehua* masters. Although Wang Zhenpeng did not serve as Xia’s direct master, did Wang’s style deeply influence Xia’s *jiehua*? If so, in what aspect and to what extent? Does it mean that Xia should be considered in connection with the Yuan court like Wang Zhenpeng and Tang Di? If not, why? Before exploring these questions, it is necessary to analyze reliable documents and reconstruct the “real” Wang Zhenpeng—not the figure mythologized by numerous fakes—and then to evaluate the possibility of overlap between Xia’s and Wang’s life.⁶

Wang Zhenpeng and His Lineage

As the most celebrated *jiehua* master of the Yuan court, Wang Zhenpeng made his presence felt by contemporary official chronicles and literary writings. The late-Yuan art historian Xia Wenyan 夏文彥 provides a brief biography of Wang in his catalogue *Tuhui baojian* (1365):

王振鵬，字朋梅，永嘉人，官至漕運千戶。界畫極工緻，仁宗眷愛之，賜號孤雲處士。⁷

Wang Zhenpeng, with the courtesy name Pengmei, came from Yongjia. His highest official title is the Chief of “A Thousand Households” to Supervise Sea Transport of Tax Grains (*Caoyun qianhu*). His *jiehua* is very exquisite. The Emperor Renzong liked him and thus granted him the pseudonym “Recluse of the Lonely Clouds.”

This entry provides some well-known facts about Wang’s life, including his name, hometown, official position, specialization, and his close association with the Emperor Renzong. This record forms the basic image of Wang Zhenpeng in the history of Chinese painting and is frequently cited by later writers.

For our understanding of Wang's life, equally if not more important is an epitaph written by Yu Ji 虞集 (1272–1348), Wang's colleague at Renzong's court and a leading literary figure of the Yuan. According to this document, during the summer of the fourth year of Taiding 泰定 (1327), Wang Zhenpeng, with a grade-five official rank at that time, commissioned Yu Ji to write this epitaph for his father Wang You 王由.⁸ Yu provides a great deal of data about Wang Zhenpeng's official career, activities, and art:

昔我仁宗皇帝，天下太平，文物大備。自其在東宮時，賢能材藝之士，固已盡在其左右。文章則有翰林學士清河元公復初，發揚蹈厲，藐視秦漢。書翰則有翰林承旨吳興趙公子昂，精審流麗，度越魏晉。前集賢侍讀學士左山商公德符，以世家高材游藝筆墨，偏妙山水，尤被眷遇。蓋上於繪事天縱神識，是以一時名藝，莫不見知。而永嘉王振鵬其一人也。振鵬之學，妙在界畫，運筆和墨，毫分縷析，左右高下，俯仰曲折，方圓平直，曲盡其體，而神氣飛動，不爲法拘。嘗爲《大明宮圖》以獻，世稱爲絕。延祐中得官，稍遷祕書監典簿，得一徧觀古圖書，其識更進，蓋仁宗意也。累官數遷，遂佩金符，拜千戶，總海運於江陰、常熟之間焉。⁹

Previously, during the reign of our Emperor Renzong, the country was at peace and the arts flourished. Even as early as the time that the Emperor was heir-apparent, scholars of high character and great talents had already gathered around him. In literature there was the Hanlin Academician, Yuan Fuchu of Qinghe, whose compositions were evocative and forceful, surpassing even those of the Qin and Han periods. In calligraphy there was the chief of the Hanlin Academicians, Zhao Zi'ang of Wuxing, whose writings were of great precision and elegance, surpassing those of the Wei and Jin periods. In painting there was the former Reader-in-Attendance of the Jixian Academy, Shang Defu of Zuoshan, who, being a gifted member of a socially eminent family, enjoyed himself with the brush and ink, and won Imperial approval and favor particularly for his specialization, landscape. Indeed, since the Emperor was endowed by heaven with divine insight in painting, all the famous artists of the time were able to obtain his Imperial recognition, and among these Wang Zhenpeng of Yongjia was one of the most outstanding. The art of Wang Zhenpeng is especially distinguished in the category of *jiehua*. His use of the brush and ink in depicting the most minute architectural details—left and right, high and low, up and down, curve and angle, square and round, plane and straight—is accurate to the last detail, exhausting every representational possibility. But at the same time, the paintings are animated by an inner spirit which uplifts his art beyond the restrictions of rules. He once presented a picture of the Daming Palace to the throne which has been acclaimed in the world as the supreme masterpiece. He was given an official position in the period of Yanyou (1314–1320). He was shortly afterward transferred to the post of the Registrar of the Imperial Library where he was able to examine all the ancient paintings in its inventory. As a result, his knowledge in painting was greatly advanced. This was believed to be an intentional arrangement initiated by the Emperor Renzong himself. After a few more promotions, he became privileged to carry the “golden certificate” and was appointed Chief

of “A Thousand Households,” supervising the sea transportation of tax grains between the cities of Jiangyin and Changshu.¹⁰

This epitaph serves as a useful supplement to Wang’s biography in Xia Wenyan’s catalogue. First, it outlines Wang’s career trajectory in detail. The time when Wang Zhenpeng first received the imperial favor is pushed back to the period when Renzong was still the heir apparent. The epitaph also records that Wang Zhenpeng was first “given an official position in the period of Yanyou 延祐 (1314–1320)” and “shortly afterward transferred to the post of the Registrar of the Imperial Library.” As stated in the Yuan-period *Mishu jian zhi* 秘書監志 (Annals of the Imperial Library), Wang Zhenpeng was assigned as the Registrar (*dianbu* 典簿), a secondary-seventh-grade sinecure, on the twenty-fifth day of the third lunar month of the first Yanyou year (1314).¹¹ This epitaph confirms Xia Wenyan’s claim that Wang Zhenpeng finally became the Thousand-Household Chief to Supervise Sea Transport of Tax Grains (*caoyun qianhu* 漕運千戶) and provides more details about Wang’s responsibilities in Jiangyin and Changshu. According to *Yuanshi* 元史 (The Yuan History), the Thousand-Household Chief to Supervise Sea Transport of Tax Grains in Jiangyin and Changshu is a grade-five post.¹² It should be noted that Yu’s epitaph also points out Wang had already held a grade-five post in 1327. In other words, it took Wang no more than thirteen years to be promoted from a secondary-seventh-grade post in 1314 to a fifth-grade one in 1327. His main period of activity and career extended through the first decades of the fourteenth century, ranging from the reign of Renzong to those of Yingzong 英宗 (Shidebala, 1303–1323; r. 1320–1323) and Taidingdi 泰定帝 (Yesün Temür, 1293–1328; r. 1323–1328).

Second, the epitaph by Yu Ji hints at Wang Zhenpeng’s date of birth. It mentions that Wang Zhenpeng’s father died at the age of thirty-five in the twenty-fifth year of Zhiyuan 至元 (1288) and that Wang Zhenpeng had an elder brother. This means that Wang Zhenpeng’s father was born in the year 1254. So, if he had his second son Wang Zhenpeng at around the age of twenty-five, one can infer that Wang Zhenpeng’s date of birth was around 1280.¹³ The epitaph also suggests that Wang Zhenpeng arrived in Beijing in 1327 to ask Yu Ji to write this text. It was exactly on the eve of the court intrigues and succession struggles that ran from 1328 to 1329.¹⁴ I agree with Weidner’s speculation that “Wang may have died before Wenzong 文宗 (Tugh Temür, 1304–1332; r. 1328–1332) ascended the throne” or “retired during the power struggles” at that time.¹⁵ It is not only because “no mention has yet been found of Wang’s activities after 1327”—as Weidner realizes—but also because a poem written by the fourteenth-century scholar Yu Kan 虞堪 clearly points out: “The Recluse of the Lonely Clouds rode on a whale and left; the Emperor Wen hoped to appoint him but could not urge him to stay.” (孤雲處士騎鯨去，文皇欲官挽不住。)¹⁶ The Emperor Wen means Wenzong, and Wang’s act of riding on a

whale (*qi jing* 騎鯨) refers either to his death or to his pursuit of immortality or reclusion. At any rate, Wang Zhenpeng's period of activity did not extend to Wenzong's reign, which began in 1328.

In addition to the catalogue *Tuhui baojian* and the epitaph by Yu Ji, there is also fragmentary evidence of Wang Zhenpeng's activities remaining in his painting colophons. For instance, Wang inscribes two colophons on his *Weimo bu'er tu* 維摩不二圖 ("Vimalakirti and the Doctrine of Nonduality"), now held by the Metropolitan Museum, as follows:

至大元年二月初一日，拜住怯薛第二日，隆福宮花園山子西荷葉殿內，臣王振鵬特奉仁宗皇帝潛邸聖旨，臨金馬雲卿畫《維摩不二圖》草本。

至大戊申二月，仁宗皇帝在春宮，出張子有平章所進故金馬雲卿紙畫《維摩不二圖》，俾臣振鵬臨於東絹，更敘說“不二”之因。¹⁷

On the first day of the second lunar month in the first year of the Zhida reign (1308), also a second day of the *kesig* of Baizhu (1298–1323) in command, in Xihey Hall on the hill in the garden at the Longfu Palace, I, the official Wang Zhenpeng, received an imperial decree from the Emperor Renzong, [who at that time lived] in the residence of the heir-apparent, to copy the draft of the Jin-period artist Ma Yunqing's *Vimalakirti and the Doctrine of Nonduality*.

In the second lunar month of the *wushen* year of the Zhida reign (1308), [the future] Emperor Renzong was at the palace of the heir apparent. He showed me a painting on paper, *Vimalakirti and the Doctrine of Nonduality*, by Ma Yunqing of the Jin dynasty that had been presented to him by the Grand Councilor Zhang Ziyou. The humble subject Zhenpeng copied it on silk to describe again the cause of nonduality.¹⁸

These colophons provide 1308 as the date of the painting's execution, offering an example of Wang's art activities during the period when Renzong was the heir apparent.¹⁹ Apart from Renzong, the Grand Princess Sengge Ragi was also partial towards Wang Zhenpeng's art. There are several surviving *Dragon Boat Regatta* handscrolls, which claim to be Wang Zhenpeng's works.²⁰ Although all their authenticity is questionable, four of them bear a similar inscription that fully describes the circumstances surrounding their execution.²¹ The artist's inscription on the New York version can be taken as an example:

崇寧閏三月三日開放金明池，出錦標與萬民同樂，詳見《夢華錄》。至大庚戌欽遇仁廟青宮千春節嘗作此圖進呈……恭惟大長公主嘗覽此圖，閱一紀餘，今奉教再作，但目力減如曩昔，勉而為之，深懼不足呈獻。時至癸亥春莫廩給令王振朋百拜敬畫謹書。

In the Chongning period [of the Northern Song dynasty, 1102–1106], the Golden Bright Pond used to be opened on the third day of the third month, and prizes were offered so that citizens could share its pleasure with the monarch. This is described in detail in the [*Dongjing*] *Menghua lu* (*Dreams of the Splendor of the Eastern Capital* by Meng Yuanlao). In the year *gengxu* of

the Zhida period (1310), these happened to be the “Festival of a Thousand Springs” (the royal birthday) of His Imperial Highness, the heir-apparent, the future emperor Renzong, when I did a painting depicting this subject for presentation [as a birthday gift] . . . I respectfully recall that on that occasion Her Imperial Highness, the Grand Elder Princess, had seen my painting. Now after a lapse of more than twelve years, I am instructed to make another version of the same composition. My eyesight, however, is not as good as before. Even though I have tried my best to comply, I am still deeply afraid that the painting is unworthy of presentation for her royal scrutiny. In the late spring of the year *guihai* of the Zhizhi (1323), Linjiling (Charge of the granary), Wang Zhenpeng, prostrating himself, respectfully painted and wrote this.²²

The inscription indicates that Wang Zhenpeng painted at least two versions of the Dragon Boat Regatta subject, one for Renzong in 1310 and the other for Princess Sengge in 1323. The striking resemblance of the extant versions’ inscriptions and designs strongly suggests the existence of an original painted by Wang Zhenpeng previously. Yuan Jue 袁桷 (1266–1327), a scholar in Princess Sengge’s orbit, left us a record about Wang Zhenpeng’s *Jingbiao tu* 錦標圖 (“The Championship”), which was displayed at the princess’ elegant gathering in 1323 and might have served as the original model for today’s Dragon Boat Regatta copies.²³

Perhaps due to imperial recognition, Wang Zhenpeng also received considerable attention from the period’s scholar-officials and literati, who wrote a great number of colophons and poems on Wang’s lost paintings. Poems such as the one by Yuan Jue on Wang’s *Linu* 狸奴 (“Cat”) and the one by Feng Zizhen 馮子振 (1253–1348) on Wang’s *Zimo jiaodi tu* 漬墨角抵圖 (“[Demon] Wrestlers in Puddled Ink”) prove that Wang was skilled in a variety of painting categories.²⁴ However, Wang’s specialty in *jiehua* has been demonstrated beyond controversy. For instance, Yu Ji wrote about Wang’s *Daming Palace, Da’an ge tu* 大安閣圖 (“Da’an Pavilion”), and *Dong liangting tu* 東涼亭圖 (“East Pavilion”); Zhang Guangbi 張光弼 composed a poem about Wang’s *Dadu chiguan tuyang* 大都池館圖樣 (“A Sketch of the Dadu Pond Lodge”); Zhang Gui 張珪, Deng Wenyan 鄧文原 (1258–1328), Wu Quanjie 吳全節 (1269–1346), Feng Zizhen, and Li Yuandao 李源道 all mentioned Wang’s *Jinming Pond*; and Ke Jiushi 柯九思 (1290–1343) also wrote a poem about Wang’s picture of *jiehua* and landscape.²⁵

Unfortunately, Wang Zhenpeng’s authentic works that survive today are extremely rare, and not a single *jiehua*—including the Princeton version of the *Prince Teng Pavilion* to be discussed in this chapter—can be confidently attributed to his hand.²⁶ To my knowledge, only three or four figure paintings, such as the Beijing *Boya Plays the Zither*, the Boston *Yimu yufo tu* 姨母育佛圖

(“Mahaprajapati Nursing the Infant Buddha”), and the New York *Vimalakirti and the Doctrine of Nonduality*, are relatively reliable.

In sum, all aforementioned historical documents and texts on paintings manifest Wang Zhenpeng’s deep involvement with the imperial patronage networks of the mid-Yuan court, particularly with that of Renzong’s period. Even after Wang gradually disappeared from the stage of art during Wenzong’s reign, his pupils and followers continued to carry forward his *jiehua* style. In the history of Chinese painting, three Yuan *jiehua* artists—Li Rongjin, Wei Jiuding, and Zhu Yu (1292–1365, also known as Zhu Bao 朱琮)—are clearly identified as Wang’s pupils. Xia Wenyan cursorily mentions Li and Wei in his *Tuhui baojian*:²⁷

李容瑾，字公琰。畫界畫山水，師王孤雲。
衛九鼎，字明鉉，天台人。畫界畫，師王孤雲。²⁸

Li Rongjin, with the courtesy name Gongyan, painted *jiehua* and landscape and learned from Wang Guyun (Wang Zhenpeng).

Wei Jiuding, with the courtesy name Mingxuan, came from Tiantai. He painted *jiehua* and learned from Wang Guyun (Wang Zhenpeng).

Compared with Li and Wei, Zhu Yu is better represented by historical documents. The most detailed one is Zhu’s epitaph in the Ming-period *Qiangzhai ji* 強齋集 (Qiangzhai Collection):

徵士諱玉，字君璧，姓朱氏。先世自江西來吳，今為崑山人……永嘉王振鵬在仁宗朝以界畫稱旨，拜官榮顯，徵士從之遊，盡其技，王君亟稱許之。至順庚午中，奉中宮教金圖藏經佛像引首以進，方不盈矩，曲極其狀，而意度橫生，不束於繩墨。²⁹ 人言王君蓋不之過云。至正十有五年，清寧殿成，勅畫史圖其壁。吳興趙雍以徵士輩六人聞，使使召之家，道阻弗果上，徵士亦既老矣，偃蹇一室，以圖史自娛……廿有五年十一月七日卒，春秋七十有四。³⁰

The Recluse had the given name Yu, the courtesy name Junbi, and the family name Zhu. His ancestors came from Jiangxi to Wu, and now his family is from Kunshan . . . During Renzong’s reign, Wang Zhenpeng of Yongjia created *jiehua* to the satisfaction of the emperor and earned glorious official ranks. The Recluse followed him and learned all his skills, and Wang highly praised the Recluse. In the *gengwu* year of the Zhishun period (1330), the Recluse accepted the commission of the Inner Court (Empress) to paint in gold the Buddha-image frontispieces of a sutra collection and presented the work. His angles did not go beyond that of a set-square, and his curves perfectly attained the form. Also, the figures’ bearing was extraordinary, which made his art unconstrained by rules and measurements. People said that even Wang Zhenpeng might not surpass him. In the fifteenth year of the Zhizheng reign (1355), Qingning Hall was finally built, and artisans were commanded to depict its walls. Zhao Yong of Wuxing recommended six persons, including the Recluse Zhu, to the emperor. Officials were sent to their homes to recruit them. Because of the difficult trip, Zhu did not depart for it. Also, the

Conclusion

In order to comprehensively investigate Yuan's unique role in China's *jiehua* history, this book has considered how significant issues like modularity, craftsmanship, literati ideals, and imperial patronage influenced the development of this art form. In addition to the professional artist Xia Yong, this book has emphasized how *jiehua* masters interacted with the mid-Yuan court in northern China and beyond. Now it may be helpful to add a few brief remarks at the end and shift our perspective to the trends and developments of the post-1350 art in the south.

The city Suzhou became the most significant art center of the southeast in the late Yuan period. The Yuan provincial district circuit *Jiangzhe xingsheng* 江浙行省, which consisted of today's Zhejiang, Fujian, Shanghai, and the lower Yangtze River regions of Anhui and Jiangsu, had long been the wealthiest part of the country, and thus became a major focus of contention between Mongol rulers and rebels.¹ Although Suzhou, like other cities of this district, suffered greatly during rebellions and uprisings, it attained great prosperity under the domination of the rebel leader Zhang Shicheng 張士誠 (1321–1367) in the 1350s and 1360s. Zhang's nominal submission to the Yuan, effective agricultural and economic strategies, and active recruitment of intellectuals encouraged a significant number of southern literati to make the city their home. Literati artists in Suzhou and its nearby regions—such as Huang Gongwang 黃公望 (1259–1354) and Ni Zan, both members of the Four Masters of the Yuan—pioneered new artistic styles with expressive brushwork and paved the way for the southern style of landscape painting identified in the work of the artist Dong Yuan to dominate the later history of literati painting. The flowering of Suzhou's artists—particularly in their landscape paintings—overshadowed artistic trends developed in the other cities of the late Yuan Jiangnan. Evidence of painting and collecting practices in these areas is scattered and cannot rival the tradition associated with Suzhou.

Xia Yong's *jiehua* provide us with an unparalleled opportunity to examine how art other than landscape was produced and received in these ignored areas. Xia Yong came from Qiantang, a district of the Southern Song capital

Lin'an (today's Hangzhou). After the fall of this city to the Mongols, Hangzhou preserved its infrastructure and long remained a major hub of commerce in south China. In the field of art, the Southern Song Academic styles prevailed in this region, and brilliant artists from its neighboring city Wuxing—like Zhao Mengfu—brought in new art ideas, making Hangzhou a leading art center of the early Yuan, a position superseded by Suzhou later in the mid-fourteenth century. Despite Hangzhou's decline, many characteristics of Xia Yong's *jiehua* demonstrate his inheritance of the Southern Song legacy. Xia's surviving works retain the rendering of broad blank space and diagonal composition, two features typical of Southern Song Academic landscape paintings. In addition, the diagonal arrangement is always strengthened by a solid block of literary text in minute calligraphy placed at the top, a feature that sets Xia's *jiehua* apart from those made by contemporary court painters. Xia Yong's combination of painting, calligraphy, and literature also reflects a significant artistic trend in Song Academic painting and literati art. When we discuss Xia Yong's art in this book, the emphasis has been put on his multiple versions of the same composition and subject matter. His calligraphic inscriptions have only been treated as clues to the subject matter. It has never been explained how Xia Yong considered the relationship of texts to images and why he selected these literary sources. These questions will be answered in the following sections.

The Professional Atelier: An Alternative Interpretation of Xia Yong's *Jiehua*

In traditional Chinese connoisseurship, determining the authorship of a painting is absolutely central to determining its value. Signatures and seals form the basis of such an authentication process, because they are relatively difficult to forge and remain the customary form of identification among Chinese painters. It is safer for us to identify a painter who signed their work like Xia Yong or had access to Xia's own seal as Xia himself. Similarly, it can explain why we spent so much time analyzing the faked signature of Xia Yong in the *Palace by the River* (fig. 0.9) to decide the authenticity of this work.

Despite the significance of signatures and seals, it is the painter's original style that plays the decisive role in connoisseurs' judgements. For Xia Yong's authentic works listed at the beginning of the book, only some include his signatures or seals, but all their architectural images reflect Xia's style and thus should be from his hand. This makes us tend to take it for granted that the calligraphy of literary texts on Xia's paintings is also Xia Yong's. For connoisseurs, these calligraphic inscriptions draw less attention than signatures and are too small to allow for easy reading. However, after comparing literary texts on Xia Yong's *Yueyang Pavilion* paintings, the modern scholar Zhao Yang 趙陽 has proposed that they were inscribed by different calligraphers.² For example, when

the calligrapher of the Beijing fan wrote “ancient paragons of humanness,” a phrase from Fan Zhongyan’s “Yueyang lou ji,” he used the characters “gu ren ren” 古人仁, completely different from the “gu ren ren” 古仁人 inscribed on the other five versions of Xia’s *Yueyang Pavilion*. Since the calligraphic inscription on the Beijing fan contains Xia’s signature and offers us the sole piece of information for Xia’s dates, we might conclude that Xia Yong himself wrote this and simply made a clerical error here. However, this is not an isolated case. In three of Xia’s *Yueyang Pavilion* paintings—namely, the Yunnan version, the Freer copy, and the Beijing album leaf—the first two characters of the sentence “regrets intensify and turn to melancholy” (感激/極而悲者矣) are written as “gan ji” 感激, but the other three versions—namely, the Taipei copy, the Beijing fan, and the Japan one—use the different characters “gan ji” 感極; as for the sentence “First feel concern for the concerns of the world. Defer pleasure until the world can take pleasure” (先天下之/知憂而憂，後天下之/知樂而樂), its two phrases “zhi you” 之憂 and “zhi le” 之樂, which appear in the Yunnan version, the Japan version, and the Freer version, differ from the “zhi you” 知憂 and “zhi le” 知樂 transcribed in the Beijing fan, the Beijing album leaf, and the Taipei one.³ It is almost impossible that a calligrapher wrote all these texts and frequently made such clerical errors. Because all these *Yueyang Pavilions* show Xia Yong’s superb *jiehua* skill and five even contain Xia’s signatures or seals, it means that these paintings are indeed Xia’s authentic works, but not all—or even none—of the calligraphy on them are Xia’s.

If we take a closer look at the combination of texts and images in Xia’s works, we will find that the selected literary text is always paired with a specific image and composition. No matter how similarly Xia assembled the architectural images in his *Yueyang Pavilion* and *Prince Teng Pavilion*, paintings with a building placed at the left must be *Yueyang Pavilion*, and those mirror versions could only be *Prince Teng Pavilion*. These paintings’ themes are confirmed by their incorporate texts. The fixed juxtaposition of texts and images in Xia’s works was most likely designed from the very beginning. Otherwise, it could not explain why both versions of Xia’s *Yellow Pavilion* paintings coincidentally contain the man-on-a-crane image, a contradictory clue reflecting the theme of the Yellow Crane Tower. If the calligraphic inscriptions were tampered with later, it would have been more reasonable for forgers to select literary texts related to the Yellow Crane Tower instead of the Yellow Pavilion. In addition, inscriptions on many of Xia’s paintings—including these two versions of *Yellow Pavilion*—are followed by Xia’s seals. It means that not only are Xia’s architectural images an assemblage of standard and simplified modules, but that the transcribed literary texts are also part of the transmitted modules. The image-text matching had been precisely decided before the artist began to work, which further complicates the modular system of Xia Yong’s *jiehua*.

Apart from calligraphic inscriptions on Xia's works, we may surmise that other minor elements, such as landscape settings and figures, were sometimes done by others as well. For example, although we have confirmed Xia's general adoption of the late Yuan literati landscape style in his *jiehua*, we can see subtle differences between "his" representations of distant mountains, like those in his *Prince Teng Pavilion*. While the Shanghai and Freer ones (fig. 2.9 and 1.12) emphasize the dotted textures, the Boston one (plate 4) uses thick ink lines to highlight the mountain's rugged contours. In other words, Xia Yong cooperated with other specialists like calligraphers and landscapists to execute *jiehua*.

It was not rare for *jiehua* artists to collaborate with other specialists. Ren An 任安, a Northern Song *jiehua* artist, is recorded to have often worked with landscapists like Zhu Zongyi 朱宗翼 and He Zhen 賀真 to complete a single work.⁴ However, distinguished from Zhu or He, Xia's colleagues did not leave their names in painting catalogs. Only Xia's signatures and seals frequently appear on their coordinated *jiehua*. It is most possible that Xia Yong directed the entire process of *jiehua* creation while others were only partially responsible. Their coordinated production, to borrow Lothar Ledderose's words, is "compartmentalized into single steps" and "these steps can also be viewed as modules—modules of work in a system of production."⁵

Such a system of production—characterized by "standardization, coordination, and predictability"—was more likely developed by professional workshops than individual literati painters, because this system encouraged efficiency to maximize profits.⁶ Indeed, Xia Yong's *jiehua* possess the unique qualities of workshop products. In contrast to Wang Zhenpeng's long handscrolls and large hanging scrolls, Xia's paintings are either fans or album leaves. These miniature paintings are the perfect size for the painter to churn out quickly in large numbers. In addition, Xia Yong replicated his own paintings, developed a modular system of architectural drawing, and organized successful teamwork. His practice ensured sustained, consistent quality for multiple works in the most effective way, a feature shared by the production of commodities. Therefore, Xia Yong might have earned a living through selling paintings and leading a professional atelier.

Xia Yong's professional status can also be supported by the absence of his name from official histories and contemporary art texts. When we sought biographical information about Wang Zhenpeng and other Yuan *jiehua* artists mentioned in this book, we often turned to *Tuhui baojian*, a comprehensive reference work compiled by Xia Wenyan of Wuxing in 1365. After all, it records approximately 200 artists active from 1276 to the time of the author's writing, providing the broadest coverage of Yuan painters. However, *Tuhui baojian* completely ignores Xia Yong, a capable painter contemporary with the author and living in a nearby city. As noted by Deborah Del Gais Muller, there are underlying literati values hidden in *Tuhui baojian*, such as the overemphasized

interconnections of social class and artistic practices.⁷ It further confirms that Xia Yong, neglected by this important painting catalogue, was a professional painter.

How do Xia's professional status and workshop practice influence our evaluation of his paintings' authenticity? When the modern scholar Chen Yunru studied the multiple *Dragon Boat* paintings in the style of Wang Zhenpeng, she gave up the quest for Wang's best copy or original copy. To paraphrase Chen, these paintings' production involved a certain division of labor in workshops, which made a single painting show varying levels of qualities in different areas and thus confused Wang's original style.⁸ I agree with Chen that it makes no sense for us to pick out the best copy from the multiple versions of the same composition and subject matter made in workshops. However, distinguished from those *Dragon Boat* paintings, Xia Yong's *jiehua* are made up of simpler painting elements, and all their architectural images maintain a consistent quality, perfectly reflecting Xia's original style. Thus, there is no need to question Xia's authorship of these *jiehua*. In my opinion, Xia's atelier would have been a small enterprise. As its principal master, Xia Yong drew these massive architectural buildings, the most significant part of *jiehua*, and supervised the work of his apprentices and assistants. That is why the coordinated *jiehua* were released under his name.

After acknowledging Xia's *jiehua* to be workshop products, it is virtually impossible to divorce the participation of potential buyers from the production and transmission of these *jiehua* in the art market. What do texts inscribed on Xia's *jiehua* suggest about their audiences? Who were these audiences and what did Xia's *jiehua* offer them?

The Art Market: The Cultural Values of Buildings Painted

Despite the insufficiency of available data, some observations can be made regarding the art markets that existed for the late Yuan *jiehua* in the Jiangnan area. As already noted, Xia Yong's *Tower Reflected in the Lake* paintings differ from his other four groups of *jiehua* because there are no corresponding literary texts inserted. While texts and images are matching or interlocking modules in Xia's *Prince Teng Pavilion*, *Yueyang Pavilion*, *Pavilion of Prosperity and Happiness*, and *Yellow Pavilion*, texts on Xia's *Tower Reflected in the Lake* paintings are not exclusive modules, but interchangeable ones. The calligrapher flexibly added texts as the final step to accomplish those ready-made works, thus better meeting buyers' specific requirements. For example, Xia's Harvard version of the *Tower Reflected in the Lake* includes the brief inscription: "Painted for □□ (two faint characters) by Xia Yong Mingyuan from Qiantang," suggesting the painter was filling a commission. The questions are: Who was the original recipient? A bureaucrat, a merchant, an erudite recluse, or a literatus?

The initial audiences of Xia's *jiehua*, in my view, were likely educated clerks or lower-ranking literati in the Jiangnan area. Note that Ling Yunhan, a contemporary of Xia Yong from his hometown of Hangzhou and a scholar who rejected official appointment under the Yuan but instead served the following Ming, once wrote a poem on a painting by Xia.⁹ We may surmise that Xia's *jiehua* once circulated among local literati, particularly those loyal to ethnically Chinese dynasties. However, I am not arguing that Xia's paintings should be interpreted as friendly gestures that this professional painter made to network with his literati friends or to enhance his social acceptance. Instead, I emphasize that Xia Yong either received commissions or openly sold his works in the art market to acquire profits. After all, in the title of Ling's poem, this literatus called Xia Yong by his courtesy name and last name—"Mingyuan Xiashi" 明遠夏氏—showing a reserved and distant manner not used between friends. The literati's disdain toward professional artists, who emphasized craft-related skills and painted to earn a living, already appeared in the Song-Yuan periods and further dominated the orthodox literati tradition in the Ming. In other words, Chinese literati-elite preferred amateur artmaking to buying paintings from professionals. Thus, only lower-status cultured clients would buy Xia's works of lesser art.

Xia Yong's painting strategies satisfied the demands of this clientele. His *jiehua* were all done in a small, portable format, which made them more affordable and informal than scrolls and thus quite suitable for lower-status gentlemen's private enjoyment or long-distance gift-giving. In addition, the placement of classical literary texts within the paintings not only demonstrates the owners' cultured taste and complete mastery of reading, but it also suggests that the owners identified themselves as lofty scholars who used painting as a means of expression. Indeed, Xia Yong's works exhibited distinct preferences with regard to subject matter. Considering the mercantile aspect of Xia's art, the incorporate literary texts should have given voices to the clientele's concerns and aspirations, rather than those of the painter.

Xia almost exclusively depicted grandiose Chinese palace structures—none of his extant paintings represents contemporary Mongol Yuan buildings—and made copious quotations from canonical Tang-Song literary sources, including Wang Bo's "Tengwang ge xu," Fan Zhongyan's "Yueyang lou ji," Su Zhe's "Huanglou fu," and Lin Yede's "Fengle lou fu" 豐樂樓賦 (Rhapsody on the Pavilion of Prosperity and Happiness). As previously discussed, during the last chaotic decades of the Yuan, the Mongol control waned and the respective positions of Yuan officials, southern literati, and other social groups underwent major changes. It should come as no surprise that erudite gentlemen in the south might favor painting themes linked to ethnically Chinese dynasties to shore up long-sagging Chinese pride and aim at resisting political authority. Xia Yong's preference for Song and earlier architectural subjects of the

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