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**THE GUSHI HUAPU 顧氏畫譜, A MING DYNASTY  
WOOD-BLOCK PRINTING MASTERPIECE IN THE  
NAPLES NATIONAL LIBRARY.<sup>1</sup>**

During the thirteen centuries that followed the invention of the wood-block printing process<sup>2</sup>, Chinese people created an infinite number of printed images - the frontispices in the horizontal scrolls, illustrations in books and separate prints - that are incomparable in terms of quantity and quality.

Although lack of space precludes mention of the figurative Buddhist imagery<sup>3</sup> that dominated the entire printed output of the tenth and eleventh centuries, we must recall that illustrated works were numerous in the Song dynasty (960-1279) as well both within Chinese territory and in neighbour-

<sup>1</sup> The rare copy of the *Gushi huapu* that provides the principal subject of this short article was found thanks to an article written at the beginning of the century by Lucia Lopresti, "Una raccolta di xilografie cinesi" [An album of Chinese wood-block prints] published in *L'Arte*, XXIV (1921 no.5), pp. 32-33, written after a series of lectures given by Giovanni Vacca at the University of Rome. The present article also includes summaries of some of the topics considered in a Ph.D. thesis on the illustrated works of the Hui school currently being prepared at Section IV of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris. I would like to thank Jean-Pierre Drège and Jonathan Hay for their precious advice and assistance in the editing of this article.

<sup>2</sup> The first wood-block prints were prepared at the end of the seventh or beginning of the eighth century; see Jean-Pierre Drège, "Des effets de l'imprimerie en Chine sous la dynastie Song", *Journal Asiatique*, CCLXXXII (1994 n.2), p. 414. The first dated printed work in China, the *Jingang jing* 金剛經 [Diamond sutra] (868 A.D.), found at Dunhuang at the beginning of the century and now in the collection of the British Library in London, has an illustrated frontispiece that displays the high technical level and marked artistic talent already in use at the time.

<sup>3</sup> An exception to the figurative production above is the thirteenth chapter of the imperial preface to the *Tripitaka* engraved during the reign of Taizong (976-997), the *Yuzhi bizang quan* 御製秘藏詮 [Imperial explanation of the secret treasure], which includes a series of prints of landscapes - an extremely rare subject in the printed production before the end of the Ming Dynasty. See Max Loehr, *Chinese Landscape Woodcuts from an Imperial Commentary of the Tenth Century Printed Edition of the Buddhist Canon* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1968).



III. 1: Xinkan qu Lienü zhuan, Wenxuan lou congshu, nineteenth century

ing foreign regions. All the classics, technical and medical textbooks (the *Bencao* 本草, *materia medica* editions reprinted many times even by the Jurchens and the Mongols, are a particularly famous example) and literary and artistic works were skilfully illustrated.

The oldest illustrated literary work, with a preface dating back to 1063 (but known to modern scholars only in a facsimile edition from the nineteenth century that provides a copy of an edition published by Qinyou tang 勤有堂 in Jianyang 建陽, Fujian, during the Yuan dynasty, 1280-1368), is the *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 [Histories of women], by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79-8 B.C). The illustrations [ill.1] which occupy the top half of the page, *shangtu xiawen* 上圖下文 [illustrations above, text below]<sup>4</sup>, have traditionally been ascribed to the painter Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (fourth century A.D.).

The *Meihua xishen pu* 梅華喜神譜 [Album of the life-like plum blossoms] by Song Boren 宋伯仁, containing one hundred images and poems dedicated to the wild plum flower [ill.2], also dates back to the Song dynasty. This album, printed for the first time in 1238 and then again in 1261, is notable for the balanced beauty created through the combination of text and image in a limited amount of space that forms the basis of this graphic work: by the end of the Song dynasty, the wood-block print had already completed its development and become an autonomous art form.

**The evolution of wood-block printing techniques in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries**

During the second half of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), Chinese editorial production entered another flourishing phase of development through the application and perfection of a certain previously existing printing techniques that had been applied only sporadically prior to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

After 1500, both reprints of earlier works and fine illustrated editions in black and white multiplied in number, while the production of movable type

<sup>4</sup> The same format was utilized for a series of *Quanxiang pinghua wuzhong* 全相平話五種 [Five completely illustrated *pinghua*] engraved in the Zhizhi Reign (1321-1323) by the Yu family, and for one of the oldest and most beautiful illustrated editions of *The Story of the Western Wing*, the *Xinkan dazi kuiben quanxiang canzeng qimiao zhushi Xixiang ji* 新刊大字魁本全相參增奇妙注釋西廂記 carved in Beijing by the Yue 岳 family in 1498.

books underwent a limited development.<sup>5</sup> These editions required an amazing technical prowess that can still be admired today in a number of existing copies printed in Nanjing, Huizhou 徽州, Hangzhou and other cities of central-eastern China.

The colour printing technique was utilized primarily by private publishers working in Wuxing 吳興, Huizhou and Nanjing. The Chinese had already begun adding colours by hand to the black and white prints as early as the tenth century. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, colours were used to print currency notes and the first polychrome illustrations, but this technique was not fully developed until three hundred years later. The *Shizhu zhai shuhua pu* 十竹齋書畫譜 [Manual of calligraphy and painting from the Ten Bamboo Studio] printed in Nanjing at the end of the Wanli reign (1573-1620), provided a demonstration of the colour-printing technique in all its splendour. Until then, multicoloured prints were made using the same block - as in the case of *Chengshi moyuan* 程氏墨苑 [The ink garden of Mr. Cheng] published in Huizhou around 1594, but Hu Zhengyan 胡正研 (seventeenth century) and his collaborators utilized a different block for each colour: this *taoban* 套版 [set of blocks] or *touban* 餵板 [assembled blocks] technique was utilized together with the even more refined *gonghua* 拱畫 [embossed design] or *gongban* 拱板 [embossed blocks] process for the most beautiful editions of all.

Lastly, the stitched thread binding format, *xianzhuang* 線裝, using silk or cotton threads, came to replace definitively the previous technique of binding based on the use of glued strips of paper. In the lay-out process,

<sup>5</sup> Movable type, a Chinese invention of the eleventh century, was first made using earthenware or wood, and subsequently metal. Due to the nature of the Chinese language, which required a great number of type characters - more than one for each ideogram - this economically inconvenient technique was never widely applied in China. In addition to the famous imperial printed works, such as the reprint in 1574 of the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 [Taiping reign-period imperial encyclopaedia] or the *Wuying dian juzhenban congshu* 武英殿聚珍版叢書 [Imperial printing office collection printed in movable type] and the *Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成 [Completed collections from books of ancient and modern times] from the eighteenth century, numerous movable type publications were printed during the second half of the Ming dynasty in Wuxi, where two famous publishing families worked, the Hua 華 and the An 安; see Qian Cunxun 錢存訓, "Lun Mingdai tong huoziban wenti" 論明代銅活字板問題 (1969) in Liu Jiabi 劉家璧 ed., *Zhongguo tushu shi zilliao ji* 中國圖書史資料集 (Hong Kong: Longmen shudian, 1974), pp. 511-526 and Zhang Xiumin 張秀民, *Zhang Xiumin yinshua shi lunwen ji* 張秀民印刷史論文集 (Beijing: Yinshua gongye chubanshe, 1988), pp. 236-241.

the graphic system defining the printed page's "frame", where the text and images were located, was simplified, while at the same time the illustrations that had previously occupied only the top half of the page, *shangtu xiawen* 上圖下文, were allowed to fill it entirely.

#### Notes on private publishing at the end of the Ming dynasty

During the Wanli reign, Hangzhou was one of the most important private publishing centers.<sup>6</sup> Although the factors that triggered the fall of the Ming dynasty were already operative,<sup>7</sup> commercial and manufacturing activities continued to develop and the population continued to grow in the largest central-eastern cities of Jiangnan 江南. Immigrants from the surrounding countryside swelled the numbers of lower-strata urban residents (most becoming weavers or petty merchants), while "large numbers of specially privileged city residents, landlords, gentry, and others also began to live within the city's boundaries"<sup>8</sup>: not least in importance among these new citizens were the rich merchants who came to establish themselves and their business in the heart of the cities.<sup>9</sup> Traditionally in search of cultural, and

<sup>6</sup> The city had already developed its publishing activity as early as the period of the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279) when Hangzhou became the capital of the Empire. See Sören Edgren, "Southern Song Printing at Hangzhou", *Bulletin of the Museum of the Far Eastern Antiquities*, 61 (1989), 212 p.

<sup>7</sup> The estrangement of the Emperor from the scholars and the growing power of the eunuchs, the disinterest in the management of the large land holdings by the gentry [*xiangshen* 鄉紳], "a group with status based on success in the examination system" [see Harriet T. Zurndorfer, *Change and Continuity in Chinese Local History of Hui-chou Prefecture, 800 to 1800* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989), pp. 116-117], the failure of the "single-whip" tax reform [*yitiaobian fa* 一條鞭法], which would have simplified the system through the unification of the tax collection system and payment in cash as much as possible, were only a few of the evils that threatened the Empire's stability. The invasion of the Manchus was only the final factor of crisis in an already severely compromised social situation. On the abuse of power by the eunuchs, the "single whip" tax system, the gentry, the merchants and the urbanization, see Mario Sabattini and Paolo Santangelo, *Storia della Cina. Dalle origini alla fondazione della repubblica* (Roma Bari: Laterza Editori, 1987), pp. 486-487, 516, 520-526; in regard to the social and cultural context at the end of the Ming Dynasty, see Paolo Santangelo, *Il "Peccato" in Cina. Bene e male nel neoconfucianesimo dalla metà del XIV alla metà del XIX secolo* (Roma Bari: Laterza Editori, 1991), pp. 10-22.

<sup>8</sup> Susumu Fuma, "Late Ming Urban Reform and the Popular Uprising in Hangzhou", pp. 49, 55, 79, in Linda Cooke Johnson ed., *Cities of Jiangnan in Late Imperial China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 47-79.

<sup>9</sup> On the Xin'an 新安 (Anhui) merchants in Hangzhou, see *ibid*, pp. 73-74.

Hangzhou



III. 2: Songke Meihua xishen pu, facsimile Shanghai, Meishu chubanshe, 1981

consequently political and economic affirmation<sup>10</sup>, these merchants developed interests in art and culture to become dealers and consumers, and not infrequently producers<sup>11</sup>, at the same time. During this period, many established or aspiring scholars [wenren 文人] unemployed or unhappy with the central authorities, sought employment in the private sector, and (while outwardly denying the fact) marketed their intellectual and artistic services, becoming, in Jonathan Hay's felicitous definition, *literati entrepreneurs*.<sup>12</sup>

The one hundred year period that came to conclusion with the consolidation of power by the Qing dynasty (1644-1911)<sup>13</sup> was an epoch of great social mobility and heterogeneous intellectual ferment in which the populous cities of Jiangnan naturally played a key role in the development of private publishing. An elite urban public, composed of readers from different cultural backgrounds in search of the curious and new, continually de-

<sup>10</sup> The merchants directed their most talented offspring toward studies and exams, both in order to acquire higher social status (merchants were generally considered to belong to the lowest class in Chinese society, at least as far as Confucian ethics are concerned) and because the holding of public office by even a few members could lead to significant economic and political advantages for the entire family. Those families with members with academic degrees or political power were in a better position to obtain special concessions and tax reductions. During the sixteenth century, the leading families in Huizhou organized themselves to coordinate scholarship and commerce together. See H.T. Zurndorfer, 1989, *op. cit.*, pp. 65, 54-56 and Ho Ping-ti's "The Salt Merchants of Yang-chou: a Study of Commercial Capitalism in Eighteenth-Century China", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, XVII (1954), pp. 165-166, for more information about the success achieved in their studies by descendants of the merchant families between 1646 and 1802.

<sup>11</sup> Li Chu-ting, James Cahill and Wai-Kam Ho eds., *Artists and Patrons. Some Social and Economic Aspects of Chinese Painting* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1989), Part III, "Patronage in Other Regions of Chiang-nan" pp. 161-231. See also Ho Ping-ti, 1954, *op.cit.*, pp. 156-161; H.T. Zurndorfer, 1989, *op.cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Hay, *A Painter in Yangzhou*, forthcoming.

<sup>13</sup> If the change in dynasty is not considered as a fracture of the empire's political and institutional structure, the "solidification of late Ming social, economic and cultural developments" may be recognized in the rise of the new dynasty; see H.T. Zurndorfer, 1989, *op.cit.*, p. 111. As far as private publishing activity in general and illustrated editions in particular are concerned, no crisis appears to be directly related to the invasion, since publishing output continued without any significant change during the very first years of the new dynasty. Shortly thereafter, however, the publication of the more handsome illustrated editions of theatrical texts and novels came to an end, but this important phenomenon - an analysis of which would represent a needless digression here- did not directly involve the painting manuals and woodcut anthologies.

manded new books to read or merely 'purchase and consume'<sup>14</sup>, from the professional publishers, who competed with each other to meet this demand with an endless offer of books that were constantly different and new, at least outwardly in printed aspect and paging, if not always in content. At the same time, the non-professional private editors, amateur bibliophiles and patrons of the arts alike all busied themselves in the preparation of valuable editions that were theoretically destined for distribution among friends and specialists and not for sale to the public at large. After the first edition, however, and precisely due to the particular care and attention received, these works were subsequently reprinted numerous times in either legal or pirated market editions that more or less faithfully reflected the originals.

By the end of the Ming dynasty, illustrated editions of works of all kinds had become more and more common: textbooks, novels, theatrical texts, poetry anthologies, painting manuals and collections of prints. This form of illustration reached its maximum expression and widest diffusion during a period of prosperity in a consumption-oriented image-conscious society. A comparison with the boom that occurred in the sale of photographic picture books that followed the invention of the camera in the West at the end of nineteenth century, while not entirely exact, might give a good idea of the extent that this phenomenon had reached in China three centuries before.<sup>15</sup>

In the final decades of the sixteenth century, there were three different schools of carving technique, each one characterized by its own graphic style: the Jianyang school located in Fujian,<sup>16</sup> the Jinling 金陵 (Nanjing)

<sup>14</sup> See Craig Clunas's entertaining description of Chinese society at the end of the Ming dynasty as a pre-industrial consumer society with a highly commoditized economy; Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things, Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> As far as Western books in general and art books in particular are concerned, the reproduction of illustrations developed fully only when printing techniques based on photography permitted images and texts to be printed at the same time; see Germain Bazin, *Histoire et l'histoire de l'art, de Vasari à nos jours* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1986), p. 404.

<sup>16</sup> In the Jianyang district in the north of today's Fujian province, Masha 麻沙 and Chonghua [Shufang] 崇花香坊 were two centers of publishing activity that had been active since the days of the Song dynasty. Many engravers came and went over the years, among the most important of which were members of the Yu 俞 Xiong 熊 and Liu 劉 families, which worked there over a period of four, five centuries. The popular and widely-distributed Jianyang editions were soon criticized for their low quality and accused (not always justifiably) both of containing an excessive number of mistaken ideograms and of often being pirated, incomplete or unreliable versions.

school in Jiangsu<sup>17</sup> and the Hui school [Huipai 徽派] in Anhui further south. The last produced prints with increasingly intricate and minute details, where figures were diminished in size to give greater expression to the landscapes, gardens and interiors. This style of carving arose in Huizhou - a prefecture already renowned for its production of ink from the time of the Song dynasty, whose techniques of decorative wood carving seem to have made a positive contribution to the development of wood-block printing as a whole. These skills were subsequently exported beyond the prefecture's borders<sup>18</sup> by their original exponents to the cities in today's Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Fujian provinces. The influence of the Hui school was felt everywhere, even in Suzhou and Hangzhou, and for this reason the works printed in these two cities, including the *Gushi Huapu* [Collection of paintings compiled by Mr. Gu] to whom the second part of this article is dedicated, may rightfully be considered as a product of this school.<sup>19</sup>

The low esteem in which these editions were held is probably the reason for which they were excluded from a number of older collections and why so few copies are available today, at least in Western libraries. Some of these books contain illustrations, most of which appear in the upper half of the page above the text, in the *shangtu xiawen* 上圖下文 format [ill.1].

<sup>17</sup> In the opinion of Zhang Xiumin, there were around fifty ateliers for the printing of market editions in operation in Nanjing at the end of the Ming Dynasty, including twelve run by members of the Tang family and seven of the Zhou 周 family (Zhang Xiumin, "Mingdai Nanjing de yinshu" 明代南京的印書, *Wenwu*, 1980, 11, p. 81). Zhou Wu 周蘇, in his article on the same subject says that "...the list of renowned ateliers included the Fuchun tang 富春堂, the Shide tang 世德堂, the Wenlin ge 文林閣, and the Guangqing tang 廣慶堂, all owned by the Tang family; the others were the Jizhi tang 繼志堂 owned by the Chen 陳 family, the Zhou family's Wanjuan lou 萬卷樓, and the Wang 汪 family's Huancui tang 環翠堂, the Shizhu zhai 十竹齋 owned by Hu [Zhengyan] 胡正研 and the Jiezi yuan 芥子園 of the Li 李 family" (Zhou Wu, "Mingmo Jinling banhua" 明末金陵版畫, *Meishu*, 1985, 2, p. 25). Full-page illustrations with large, stiffly positioned human figures and very few background elements were originally used in Nanjing [ill.3].

<sup>18</sup> Due to the mountainous territory unsuited for agriculture, a significant proportion of the inhabitants of Huizhou worked in handicrafts and commerce. The merchants from the area were obliged to travel and by the end of the Ming Dynasty, some had come to settle in the cities of central-eastern China. A number of carvers followed the same route as their wealthier fellow-countrymen.

<sup>19</sup> I have chosen to consider only the three schools above and the characteristics common to all their works, without further dividing the editions on the basis of the geographical origin. For the Hui school, the works were produced in Huizhou or elsewhere by engravers coming from Huizhou or local engravers using the Hui style, which was much in fashion during the first half of the seventeenth century. I have therefore not considered the Hangzhou or Suzhou schools to be autonomous schools, as indicated by Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸, "Zhongguo banhua shilüe" 中國版畫史略, *Zheng Zhenduo yishu kaogu wenji* 鄭振鐸藝術考古文集 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1988), pp. 370-375.



III. 3: *Nandiao Xixiang ji*, Zhou Wu, *Jinling guban hua*, Nanjing, Jiangsu meishu chubanshe, 1993

A developed and mature artistic medium like the Chinese wood-block printing of the period permitted the publication of the most refined illustrated editions with a pictorial content that was even more pronounced than in the theatrical and literary works, where the text necessarily remained an extremely important element. The end of the Ming dynasty witnessed the publication of numerous volumes of prints depicting *shanshui* 山水 [landscapes], *huaniao* 華鳥 [flower and bird compositions] and, more rarely, assorted objects, along with illustrated poetry anthologies with imagery relevant to, but not dependent on, the verse and painting manuals as well. In all these editions, the illustration is carved on half or even the entire block and occupies both physically and conceptually an amount of space that is equal or superior to that of the text. The preparation of these prints required enormous technical skill and a marked artistic sensitivity from the engravers of the Hui school, who worked in close contact with the editors and the draftsmen, and sometimes even famous artists such as Ding Yunpeng 丁雲鵬 (1547-1628), Chen Hongshou 陳洪綬 (1598-1645) and Xiao Yuncong 蕭雲從 (1596-1673). By this time, wood-block printing was finally being presented to the public and appreciated for its own worth, and no longer merely as a functional element necessary for the explanation of the text and the decoration of the margins.

#### *The Book of Gu Bing 顧炳*

The *Collection of Paintings [compiled] by Mr. Gu*, also known as *Lidai minggong huapu* 歷代名公畫譜 [Collection of paintings by famous gentlemen of successive dynasties]<sup>20</sup>, is an edition that illustrates a number of the characteristics mentioned above. This illustrated history of Chinese painting up to the Ming dynasty was originally made available in four volumes without division into chapters in which each artist was presented together with a representative image of his art. Biographies of artists and statements about their works are arranged in chronological order and not according to the subjects of their paintings.

<sup>20</sup> This second title, in which the painters are addressed as *gong* 公, a very laudatory and quite unusual term for them, appears for the first time in "Lidai minggong huapu mulu" 歷代名公畫譜目錄, the list of artists' names in the facsimile of the second edition of the Ming Dynasty (no copy of the older edition has so far been available to me); see Gu Bing, *Gushi huapu* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1983).

We know that the author, "Gu Bing 顧炳, zi Anran 黯然, [hao Huaiquan 懷泉] was the son of an old family of the Western Lake region, Xihu 西湖.<sup>21</sup> An orphan at an early age, his paternal grandfather<sup>22</sup> recognized his intelligence, and in order to eliminate the need [for his grandson] to suffer the pains of the duty of mumbling [memorizing the classics by heart], he supplied him with examples of calligraphy and paintings by illustrious men conserved since ancient times that permitted Gu to pursue his inclinations and conduct research; he quickly followed the traces of [these] authors. He travelled to famous mountains, visited renowned scholars and built as a home a hut at the foot of Mount Wu,<sup>23</sup> where he developed his talent day by day. In the *yihai* 己亥 year [1599], he accepted a temporary position as a *gongshi* 供事 [hired employee] at Wuying 武英 (殿) Palace,<sup>24</sup> where his work was appreciated by all his equals. He [profited from] his pauses for meals to continue his research on the knowledges of the past..."<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Other sources state that he came from Qiantang 錢塘, or simply Wulin 武林; see *Lidai minghua dacheng* 歷代名畫大成 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, s.d.), preface to the 1888 edition, p. 1b, which cites the *Wusheng shishi* 武聲詩史 (Shanghai: Ruiji shuju, 1910, *juan* 3, p. 29b).

<sup>22</sup> Or his paternal uncle; see Wang Bomin, *Zhongguo banhua shi* 中國版畫史 (Shanghai Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1961), p. 101.

<sup>23</sup> The Wushan 吳山 or Chenghuang shan 城隍山, a mountain south-east of the Western Lake in Hangzhou; see *ibid.* After studying painting and undertaking a series of journeys, Gu Bing reputedly settled in Hangzhou.

<sup>24</sup> The Wuying dian, or Hall of Military Glory, is a building inside Beijing's Forbidden City that during the Ming dynasty was used for royal service (until the Jiajing reign, 1522-1566); it was also a place for painters from the beginning of the dynasty and is a frequently mentioned palace in painters' biographies but without any statement clarifying its exact purpose; see Harrie Vanderstappen, "Painters at the Early Ming Court (1368-1435) and the Problem of a Ming Painting Academy", *Monumenta Serica*, XV (1956), pp.258-307, XVI (1957), pp.315-346, ch.1, "Various Palaces and Halls Mentioned in Connection with Painters at the Court", pp.276-282. The Wuying dian became the headquarters of the Imperial Printing Office [*Wuying dian xiushu chu*] during the Qianlong reign (1736-1795); see Tsien Tsuen-Hsuei, *Paper and printing*, pp.184-185, in Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), volume 5 part 1.

<sup>25</sup> See *Lidai minghua dacheng*, the preface to the 1603 edition, p. 1b. Other sources state that the painting manual was composed using material collected at the Palace; *ibid.*, preface to the 1888 edition, p. 1a; *Wusheng shishi*, 1910, *juan* 3, p. 29b; *Hangzhou fuzhi* 杭州府志 by Gong Jiajun 龔嘉俊 and Li Rong 李榕 during the Qing Dynasty, the 1922 edition, *juan* 147, p.32a, *Zhongguo fangzhi congshu* 中國方志叢書 (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1974), p. 2833.

The album was prepared and drawn by Gu Bing during or shortly after his stay at court, which appears to have been rather brief. Corrected by Xu Shuhui 徐叔回, and engraved by Liu Guangxin 劉光信 from Jingde 旌德 - a good example of the emigration of engravers from Anhui mentioned above - the *Gushi huapu* was printed for the first time at Shuanggui tang 雙桂堂 in Hangzhou in 1603, the thirty-first year of the Wanli reign, and then again in 1613 (and/or 1619).<sup>26</sup> Other editions were the Hongwen shuju

鴻文書局 (1888) and Saoye shanfang 掃葉山房 (1924) lithographic printings, both printed in Shanghai. In 1926, a special edition was prepared in Japan by Omura Seigai 大村西崖 for the *Zuhon sōkan* 圖本叢刊 collection, and in 1941, a copy owned by Zheng Zhenduo was reproduced by the collotype process<sup>27</sup>.

Original copies of the work are extremely rare today. There is one example conserved in Shanghai without any outlines around the images that bears the signature of the engraver Wu Fengtai 吳風台. Two copies of the first edition and one of the second are conserved in the Beijing National Library and in the Xidi 西諦 Collection (originally the Zheng Zhenduo Collection). A fifth copy is in the Beijing University Library.<sup>28</sup> In Europe, in addition to the example in the Naples National Library, I have had the privilege of examining a copy conserved at the Percival David Collection in London: both lack the final volume and belong apparently to the same edition.<sup>29</sup> Today, the *Gushi huapu* is primarily known through facsimile editions of

<sup>26</sup> Zhou Wu provides only the name of the engraver; quoting Fu Xihua, he states that a reprinted edition was made in 1619 by a certain Gong, and that a second, undated edition was prepared by his descendants Gu Sanxi 顧三錫 and Gu Sanpin 顧三聘; Zhou Wu, *Huipai banhua shi lunwen ji* 徽派版畫史論集 (Hefei: Anhui renmin chubanshe; 1983), p. 65. Elsewhere the name of Xu Shuhui is found with reference to Gong Guoyan's edition reprinted in 1613 and the new, undated version by Sanxi and Sanpin; *Gushi huapu*, 1983, explanatory notes p. 1 and Zheng Zhenduo ed., *Zhongguo gudai banhua congkan* (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1988), p. 577-578; see Footnote 30 in regard to these two facsimile editions.

<sup>27</sup> See *Gushi huapu*, 1983, explanatory notes p.1 and Zheng Zhenduo ed. 1988, *op.cit.*, p.577. This copy was once owned by a certain Chen from Fujian; Wang Bomin, 1961, *op.cit.*, p. 102.

<sup>28</sup> Zhou Wu appears to be unaware of this copy and explains that the edition reprinted by Zheng Zhenduo includes pages copied from two different copies; Zhou Wu, 1983, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>29</sup> In the Naples copy, the printed page has a surface area of 26,5-27 x 18,5-19 cm.



Ill. 4: *Gushi Huapu*, facsimile, Beijing, Wenwu chubanshe, 1983

both the second original edition bearing the names of Gu Sanxi and Sanpin,<sup>30</sup> and of the lithographic edition dated 1924.<sup>31</sup> 三錫 三聘

The copy at the Naples National Library begins with an undated preface by Quan Tian(xu) 全天(敘), "Huapu xu" 畫譜序,<sup>32</sup> and the preface by Zhu Zhifan 朱之蕃<sup>33</sup> dated to the year *guimao* 癸卯 in the Wanli reign (1603), "Gushi huapu xu" 顧氏畫譜序. These are followed by the Chen Jugong 陳居恭 preface dated to the year *guichou* 癸丑 in the Wanli reign (1613), "Gushi huapu xu",<sup>34</sup> the six introductory notes to the album by Gu Bing himself, "Puli liuze" 譜例 六則, and the list of the artists presented, "Lidai minggong huapu mulu" 歷代名公畫譜目錄.<sup>35</sup> At the beginning of

<sup>30</sup> The facsimiles of the second edition published in 1983 and 1988 (see Footnotes 20, 26) have an introduction signed by the Beijing University Library that refers to an original copy conserved there. In a few pages of these facsimile editions appears the stamp of the library, which is a peculiarity of this copy and is absent in the Naples copy.

<sup>31</sup> *Lidai minghua dacheng*, cited in Footnote 21. The 1924 edition was a copy of the first lithographic edition and therefore includes the preface written in 1898, the year *wuzi* 戊子 of the Guangxu reign (1875-1908), "Lidai minghua dacheng xu", which states that the original book, in six volumes, was in the collection of the Feng 馮 family in Cixi 慈谿, Zhejiang.

<sup>32</sup> This person is either Quan Tian, [zi] Xuánzhou, [hao] Pingdān jushi, in the opinion of Wang Bomin, 1961, *op.cit.*, p. 102, or Yu Xuánzhou 余玄洲, in the opinion of Guo Weiqu 郭味蕓, *Zhongguo banhua shilüe* 中國版畫史略 (Beijing: Zhaohua meishu chubanshe), 1962, p. 97. This person, who provides his signature as Imperial Art Control Officer [Shengzhu beizhi yishi jianzhe 聖主備執藝事諫者] and was to be nearing the end of a period of discharge when Gu Bing came to present him with the manual, could also be Quan Tianxu, a Vice-Minister [shilang 侍郎] contemporary of Huang Ruliang 黃汝良 (*jinshi* 進士 in the fourteenth year of the Wanli reign); *Mingshi*, *juan* 224 and 236 (Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 1974), vol. 19, p. 5908 and vol. 20, p. 6151. The preface by Quan Tian(xu) printed on six and a half leaves is missing the first page in the Naples copy.

<sup>33</sup> Complete preface comprising two and a half leaves. Zhu Zhifan (circa 1536-1613), government functionary and painter, originally from Chiping 茌平 in Shandong but generally recognized as an inhabitant of Jinling 金陵, was active between the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries; *Mingren zhuanji ziliao suoyin* 明人傳記資料索引 (Taiwan: Guoli zhongyang tushuguan, 1965), p. 123.

<sup>34</sup> Chen Jugong 陳居恭 from Shanggu 上谷; the two pages preface, that is not reproduced in any facsimile edition, praises the book and Gu Bing by quoting from the *Zhuangzi* (chapter 21 "Tian Zifang" 田子方) an expression that qualifies a real painter, undressed and seated with his legs outspread, naked at the moment of creation [*jiyei panbo luo* 解衣槃礴]; see Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 228; Susan Bush and Hsiao-yen Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1985), p.42.

<sup>35</sup> The "Puli liuze" is a leaf and a half long, while the "Mulu" covers three leaves. The list of the artists presented in an appendix to this article includes 108 names organized in four

this list, we read that the work was compiled [zuan 纂] by Gu Bing [zi] Anran from Wulin, corrected and published [jiaokan 校刊] by Sanxi and Sanpin, and then organized in sections [bianci 編次] by Gong (Guoyan) 龔 (國彥).<sup>36</sup> Like the copy in London, the Naples copy belongs to an edition published no earlier than 1613 and prepared in Hangzhou when Gu Bing's original material was revised and presented once again to the public, probably for the third time in twenty years or little more.

The Naples copy is comprised of three volumes that are almost complete.<sup>37</sup> Half of each block is covered by illustrations; the other half is filled with biographical notes and comments [tiba 題跋] on each artist written out in various calligraphic styles. These texts are modified or directly copied from another history of Chinese painting written at the end of the Yuan dynasty by Xia Wenyan 夏文彥, the *Tuhui baojian* 圖繪寶鑑.<sup>38</sup> The signatures of the poets, painters, officials and monks at the end of these in-

volumes. In most cases, it is written that the *Gushi huapu* has 106 illustrations, but in the appendix at the end of the article 108 names are given because this is the number of the prints included in the facsimile version of the Beijing copy, the most complete document available to me (this facsimile, in conformity with tradition, does not include the last two names in the initial list, thereby leading to the supposition that the two final woodcuts were added only as the new edition was going to press). The artists' list of the copies in London and Naples includes 107 names (the last one is that of a certain Lu Congguang 路從廣); in the Naples copy more than half of the names are completed by the *zi* and/or the *hao* (see also Footnote 73).

<sup>36</sup> This final statement is missing from the facsimile of the Beijing copy, which seems to be based on a different edition, probably older than the Naples copy. The blocks of the first two prefaces in the Naples copy seem to be the same as in the Chinese copy reproduced in the facsimile, but they are more worn and the printing is rather light. For the illustrations, where the printing is very dark and the black and white contrast quite strong, the blocks seem to be newer (re-engraved?). In the Naples copy the expression *jiaokan* 校刊, with the first character that seems to be a variation of *jiao* 較 (for *jiao* 校, taboo character of the emperor Xizong, personal name Zhu Youjiao 朱由校), can induce to date the edition at the Tianqi reign (1621-1627) or later.

<sup>37</sup> Note also that in volume 2, the pages on Renzong (reign 1023-1063), Gu Deqian 顧德謙 (tenth century) and the text about Chen Juzhong 陳居中 (early thirteenth century) are missing, while the pages on Xia Gui 夏珪 and Ma Yuan 馬遠 (twelfth-thirteenth centuries) have been inverted: in all seventy-eight illustrations and seventy-seven texts are still conserved in the Naples copy.

<sup>38</sup> In the penultimate of his introductory notes, Gu Bing states that a part of the comments faithfully copies the text of the "Precious Mirror" [*zhilu Baojian benwen* 直錄寶鑑本文]. The *Tuhui baojian* 圖繪寶鑑 [Precious mirror for examining painting] was written at the end of the Yuan dynasty by Xia Wenyan in five *juan*; one *juan* was added subsequently to include the Ming painters up to the beginning of the sixteenth century.

scriptions testify both to the extent of the group effort involved in the publication of the work<sup>39</sup> and to the importance of the contacts Gu Bing maintained, which were essential to someone who, as we read in the preface by Zhu Zhifan, had not been required to undergo the painstaking "duty of mumbling" [*tiebi zhi ye* 貼碑之業], that is the compulsory study for learning the classics by heart. We may therefore infer that Gu Bing had not received a traditional education; he had reached the court as a hired employee and defined himself as a "poor literary man from Jiangnan" [*Jiangnan pin shi* 江南貧士].<sup>40</sup> In the words of Quan Tian(xu), Gu Bing was described as a man "...forgetful of care, foolish and emaciated", an eccentric [*qi* 奇] in art and life, and ready to give away all his money as if he were a Buddhist monk rather than an artist living on the proceeds from the sale of last night's painting. Although the preface is couched in a commendatory tone, Gu Bing appears as little more than a tradesman of painting, a so-called artisan painter [*huagong* 畫工 or *huashi* 畫師]<sup>41</sup>, who spent only a limited amount of time at court. The famous names<sup>42</sup>, true or false as they may have been, therefore served to provide his edition with greater credentials in order to reach a wider public. This purpose is also evidenced by the editors in Shanghai in the nineteenth century, who in their frontispiece to the lithographic edition cite the inscriptions of two-hundred famous figures but do not even mention Gu Bing's name.<sup>43</sup>

The selection of the paintings copied as examples of the works of the single artists presents no surprises as regards the tradition and artistic taste

<sup>39</sup> See Wang Bomin, 1961, *op.cit.*, p. 102; the specialist lists some of the illustrious personalities who signed the comments. All these names, sometimes accompanied by their city of origin, are provided below the list of painters in the lithographic edition, "Lidai minghua dacheng xingshi mulu".

<sup>40</sup> Gu Bing, *Gushi huapu*, "Puli liuze", Note 6.

<sup>41</sup> The artisan-painters represented the lowest category of painters after the scholar-official-amateur painters and the educated professional artists (educated men who had failed the examinations or who had no place in the administration or who had settled into the status of professional painter); see James Cahill, *The Painter's Practice: How Artists Lived and Worked in Traditional China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 123.

<sup>42</sup> Checking the first ten signatures, a number of *jinshi* are revealed (including which Gu Qiyuan 顧起元, Wen Tiren 溫體仁, Mi Wanzhong 米萬鐘, Chen Zhilong 陳之龍) and the name of a compiler, Tao Wanling 陶望齡... etc., all of whom were Gu Bing's contemporaries.

<sup>43</sup> See the facsimile's frontispiece page, where the modification of the title to *Lidai minghua dacheng* eliminates all reference to the author.



Ill. 5: *Gushi Huapu*, facsimile, Beijing, Wenwu chubanshe, 1983

of the time.<sup>44</sup> Nearly two-fifths of the entire illustrations in the album are landscapes done in the style of the great masters [Landscape by Mi Fu (1051-1107), ill. 4], particularly as far as the Song and Yuan dynasties are concerned. Landscape, originally a subject of only minor significance in wood-block printing, acquires greater importance from this moment on, here, thanks to Gu Bing, making its first appearance in an illustrated painting manual prepared for printing. The second most recurrent subject is the "flower and bird" composition, which was already common to editions of this kind. Around fifteen expositions of this theme are included, more than half provided as examples of the work of Ming dynasty artists, and one ascribed to Zhou Zhimian (sixteenth-seventeenth century) [ill. 5], known as the young Gu Bing's teacher.<sup>45</sup> The compositions of flowers and symbolic plants (bamboo, pine, plum blossom, etc.), insects, and domestic and mythological animals are fewer in number. Human figures are depicted in approximately ten woodcuts with a religious theme, in numerous landscapes where scholars and servants, travellers and bearers, fishermen and boatman appear, and in

the roughly twenty figurative works including the famous *Doucha tu* 鬥茶圖

[Tea competition, ill. 6] by Yan Liben 閻立本 (?-673). This illustration, whose subject can also be seen in an extremely similar painting that still exists today ascribed to Qian Xuan 錢選 (circa 1239-1299)<sup>46</sup> demonstrates that the images reproduced by Gu Bing must have been at least partially available to him at the time either in original, copy, or other form. Although it may appear hard to believe Gu Bing capable of copying "everything that had been passed down from the Jin (265-420) and Song dynasties"<sup>47</sup>, his

<sup>44</sup> Wang Bomin, 1961, *ibid.*, p. 103. Of course, specialists in art history could reveal more in this regard.

<sup>45</sup> *Minghua lu* 明畫錄, *Juan 6, Chengji congshu* 成集叢書 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1936), p. 65; *Huashi huiyao* 武彞詩史, *Juan 4, Siku quanshu*, p. 65b; *Wusheng shishi*, *Juan 3*, 1910, pp. 28b-29b: they do not say that Zhou was Gu Bing's teacher. At any rate Wang Bomin, 1961, *op.cit.*, p. 101, and Guo Wei-qu, 1962, *op.cit.*, p. 97, both say so, probably on the basis of texts that I have not yet been able to consult.

<sup>46</sup> *Pincha tu* 品茶圖 [Appreciating tea], a painting conserved at the Osaka Museum of Art; see Suzuki Kei 鈴木敬, *Chûgoku kaigô sôgô zuroku* 中國繪畫總合圖錄 [Comprehensive illustrated catalog of Chinese paintings], (Tôkyô: Tôkyô Daigaku Shuppankai, 1982-1983), vol. III, pp. 110, 378, JM 3-033.

<sup>47</sup> See *Lidai minghua dacheng*, preface to the 1888 edition, p. la; or "...Jin and Tang (618-907) dynasties": see *Wusheng shishi*, *Juan 3*, p. 29b; *Hangzhou fuzhi*, 1922 edition, *Juan 147*, f.32a, p. 2833.

efforts in this regard appear to have been sincere and may also have been enabled by his access to both palace and private collections. Both Quan Tian(xu) and Gu Bing insist on the difficulty of procuring originals and on the visits of Gu Bing with this objective in mind to the learned and accomplished men all over the Empire<sup>48</sup>, a few of whom were perhaps among those who added their inscriptions at the end of the work. In the opinion of Zheng Zhenduo, even if not all the original paintings are known, the styles of the painters of the past can be recognized in the prints because the reproduction and engraving work was sufficiently accurate to conserve the spirit of the originals and the various pictorial styles of each period.<sup>49</sup>

The *Xixiang tu* 洗象圖 [Bath of the elephant] by Li Gonglin 李公麟 (1049-1106) is one of the most frequently reproduced images of the *Gushi huapu* [ill.7], and at the end of the Ming dynasty was already known to a wider public than the habitual readers of painting manuals. A traditionally popular subject in paintings<sup>50</sup>, the *Bath of the Elephant* had already been reproduced at the end of the sixteenth century in various ink-cake designs albums<sup>51</sup>. This woodcut is also interesting because the animal's body is traced in white marks on a black background and carved deeply into a part of the unworked printing block - a rather rare example for the time of the use of this carving technique with evident pictorial objectives. In addition to rendering the roughness of the elephant's skin remarkably well, the dark forms catch the reader's eye, in the same way as the black body of the horse in the woodcut by Han Gan 韓幹 (? - 780). The distribution of the text and image over the entire block used for the drawing of daffodils by Zhao Mengjian 趙孟堅 (1199-1264/7) and the landscape by Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301/6 - 1374) also serves to avoid the monotony of a uniform and repetitious succession of separate images and texts.

<sup>48</sup> See *Gushi huapu*, 1983 facsimile edition, "Huapu xu", pp. 4b-5a, and "Puli liuze", note no.4.

<sup>49</sup> See Zheng Zhenduo, 1988, *op.cit.*, p. 375.

<sup>50</sup> To cite just one of the paintings of this subject that still exists, see *Ksitigarbha and Attendants Washing a White Elephant*, an anonymous painting on silk in the collection of the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University; Suzuki Kei, 1982-1983, *op.cit.* vol. I, pp. 54, 435, A 10-009.

<sup>51</sup> *Chengshi moyuan* 程氏墨苑 1595, *juan 6 xia*, p.16b and *Fangshi mopu* 方氏墨譜 [Collection of inks of Mr. Fang], 1588, *juan 5*, p. 21b; see facsimile editions (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1990 and 1991).

### The oldest edition of an illustrated history of art

When the Italian artists of the sixteenth century turned their attention from the natural world and antiquity in order to consider the work of the Masters, art itself became a model and source of inspiration, and the Western study of the history of art began.<sup>52</sup> In 1550, Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) published *Le vite...de più eccelenti architetti, pittori e scultori italiani...* [The lives of the most eminent Italian architects, painters and sculptors] and in the second edition (1568) added the lives of a number of contemporaries and portraits of the artists. More than one hundred years were to pass before Joachim Sandrart (1606-1688) illustrated his *Teutsche Akademie* (first edition in 1675) not only with portraits but also with prints reproducing ancient works of art, thereby combining in one book prints that had previously appeared only separately, thus partially shifting the reader's attention from the artists to the works of art.<sup>53</sup> The European practice of art history, unlike that (much more ancient) of China, reflected national divisions; more over, sculpture and architecture were considered together with paintings and were even provided with illustrations prior to painting (the *Teutsche Akademie* dated 1675 provides copies of monuments, antiques, figures in bas-relief and medallions with the faces of the painters, but not actual paintings as yet). All of this is obviously reflected in the conception, preparation, appearance and physical characteristics of the art books. In addition, books of, or about, art, just as all illustrated works, were facilitated in China by the use of the xylography technique which naturally enables the simultaneous reproduction of both text and image. In contrast, the tendency that emerged in the sixteenth century in the West to use deeply-etched metal plates, which could not easily accommodate type, made the printing of all illustrated works with texts more complicated and expensive.

Without making an unreasonable comparison between Western and Chinese art history, between an history of Chinese painting and an all-inclusive

<sup>52</sup> Germain Bazin, *op.cit.*, 1986, p. 33. In China, writings about paintings have a very old history: "[...] criticism of individual artists and their work is first known to have appeared in [...] (*Gu*)*hua pin(lu)* [Classification of painters] by Xie He (active ca.500-535) and the [...] *Xu huapin* 續畫品 [Continuation of the classification of the painters] by Yao Zui (535-602)"; see Bush and Shih, 1985, *op.cit.*, p.23. Around 847, Zhang Yanyuan produced the *Lidai minghua ji* [Record of famous painters of all the dynasties] including essays and biographies of painters arranged by their respective dynasties. All these works are known in Ming editions; *ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>53</sup> G.Bazin, 1986, *op.cit.*, p.63.



III. 6: *Gushi Huapu*, facsimile, Beijing, Wenwu chubanshe, 1983

treatise on European art, and between the light volumes of Hangzhou and the imposing tomes printed in Germany, similarities may be noted in the editorial effort required by two painters at a distance of less than one century from one another, who were both committed to presenting and reproducing the work of other artists while trying to meet the visual demands of their readers. The different approaches to copying and to the portraiture in the pictorial cultures of Europe and China<sup>54</sup> may have led to a wider use of portraits in the earliest histories of European art on the one hand, and stimulated the preparation of Gu Bing's illustrated work on the other. However, this is no reason to consider the editorial work of the painter from Hangzhou in lesser light. After all, he was the one who first thought of reproducing paintings when he could have just as well limited his work to the publication of biographies of the artists illustrated by portraits where required<sup>55</sup>; equally, he could have arranged the materials according to the subjects and not in chronological order.

In China, the category of *huapu* (translated as a painting album, manual, collection or treatise) can be used to group works of extremely different nature, even if at glance these volumes that combine different images with calligraphic styles may initially appear to be alike.

The *Meihua xishen pu* 梅華喜神譜, already mentioned at the beginning of this article [ill.2] is the oldest *huapu* conceived for purposes of

<sup>54</sup> It would be useless to insist on the "practice of copying as means of preserving past styles and imparting artistic techniques", one of the fundamental principles of Chinese painting formulated in the *Liufa* 六法 [Six laws] by Xie He 謝赫 (ca. 550-535?); see Bush and Shih, 1985, *op.cit.*, p. 11. In regard to the art of portrait painting, if it was promoted by "a relatively greater emphasis on the values of individualism and autonomous self in Western cultures in comparison to the Chinese," in China this "was already a diverse and socially important practice in the Han period"; portrait painting had always been practiced by the Chinese, even if its development was transformed as early as the Song dynasty by an "antithetical mode of portraiture [...] associated with the scholar-amateur school of painting, [...] a symbolic and abstract portraiture of personality through images of plants"; Richard Vinograd, *Boundaries of the Self. Chinese Portraits 1600-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 1, 20-23.

<sup>55</sup> Gu Bing published his *huapu* in 1603, at the beginning of a century that witnessed the "resurgence of the prestige of portraiture after many centuries of critical neglect"; *ibid.*, p. 20. In the printed production, portraits had accompanied the collections of historical and pseudo-historical biographies for a long time, and were especially numerous by the end of the Ming dynasty - it is sufficient to recall those included in the illustrated *Sancai tuhui* 三才圖會 encyclopedia [Assembled pictures of the three realms] published in 1609 - and they became one of the most frequently seen subjects in Qing dynasty prints.

engraving and wood-block printing. This work did not involve the publication of a pre-existing manuscript or a painting textbook - as was the case, for example, for the *Zhupu* 竹譜 [Treatise on bamboo] by Li Kan 李衍 (1245-1320).<sup>56</sup> As stated by the author in the introduction, this is an anthology of one hundred illustrations and poems dedicated to the flowering plum, a work prepared “for leisure” [*xian shiye* 閑事業] thanks to an “amateur’s skilled labour” [*xian gongfu* 閑工夫].<sup>57</sup> Three hundred more years passed before the publication of the first true painting manuals, the *Gao Song huapu* 高松畫譜 [Albums of Gao Song] (1550-1554), in which the painter Gao Song 高松 (sixteenth century) explained how to paint chrysanthemums, birds, bamboo, plum flowers and orchids (original copies of only the first two albums exist today).<sup>58</sup> These were followed by the publication of *huapu* of every sort, dedicated to a single topic<sup>59</sup> or various themes, such as the *Yimen guangdu Huasou* 夷門廣牘畫藪 [Collection of paintings in the Wide register of the secluded door] (1589), the *Tuhui zongyi* 圖會宗彝 [Ancestral vessel of painting] (Wanli reign), the *Jiya zhai huapu* 集雅齋畫譜 [Albums of paintings of Jiya studio] (Tianqi reign, 1621-1627) and the *Shizhu zhai shuhua pu* 十竹齋書畫譜 (1627).<sup>60</sup> Lastly, between 1680 and 1702, were printed the first three sections of the *Jiezi yuan huazhuan* 芥子園畫傳 [Manual of painting from the Mustard Seed Garden], a collective enterprise exposing methods of landscape representation, professional secrets of materials and concepts of art history, which also included examples of contemporary works.<sup>61</sup> All these editions may be numbered among the *huapu*, a term that by this time came to indicate both an album of prints and a painting manual. The subjects depicted might be ‘deconstructed’ in order to better reveal their constituent parts, and illustrations were often accompanied by practical comments for the execution of the copy or explanatory notes on the style. The didactic element predominates over the documentary and the author’s character or social origin are often recognizable.

<sup>56</sup> Wang Bomin, 1961, *op.cit.*, p. 40

<sup>57</sup> Song Boren 宋伯仁, *Songke Meihua xishen pu* 宋刻梅華喜神譜 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1982).

<sup>58</sup> Guo Weiqu 郭味蕓, 1962, *op.cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>59</sup> For example, the *Wang Yuqing meishi* 汪虞卿梅史 (1588), the *Xiangxue linji* 香雪林集 (1607) and the *Liu Xuehu meipu* 劉雪湖梅譜 (Wanli reign) on the plum flower; see Zhou Wu 周蕪, *Zhongguo banhua shi tulu* 中國版畫史圖錄 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe 1988), vol.1, pp. 360, 372, 380.

In order to understand better the nature of the *Gushi huapu*, reference must be made to Gu Bing’s notes to the edition, “Puli liuze”, which clearly state that he has no intention of teaching theory. Refusing to formulate judgements on the aesthetic values and categorizations of the pictorial works, he dares to propose what might be referred to as a ‘visual method’ for the appreciation of painting, formulated as “the eyes are sufficient in themselves to observe the ancient and value the present” [*yan nai zu jiang yijin* 眼乃足鑒古儼今]. He explains that like his own teacher Deng Gongshou, he does not base his assessments on criticism and praise,<sup>62</sup> and claims to have often followed the *Tuhui baojian* 圖繪寶鑑 text in his editing. In a period in which compilations appear to have been in fashion, Gu Bing made sketches of famous paintings and, inspired by another illustrated volume, the *Xuanhe Bogu tu* 宣和博古圖 [Illustrated catalog of antiquities of the Xuanhe reign-period (1119-1125)]<sup>63</sup>, he prepared a number of reduced scale, sometimes simplified but, we are told, always generally faithful versions of original paintings. For a number of these ancient paintings from the Jin, Tang and Song dynasties, Gu Bing had to search extensively through private

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 360-4, 371-373, 380-391.

<sup>61</sup> Jonathan Hay, *op.cit.*. The *Jiezi yuan huazhuan*, lacking in biographical texts but more rich in illustrations than the *Gushi huapu*, is probably the most similar of these illustrated books to Gu Bing’s *huapu* in the planning of the sections assembling images by contemporary masters.

<sup>62</sup> Gu Bing seems to contradict himself here. Deng Chun 鄧椿, (*zi* Gongshou 公壽), during the Southern Song dynasty wrote the *Huaji* 畫繼 [“Painting” continued] - a book about painting from 1075 to 1167 - in an ideal continuation of the *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記 of the ninth century and the *Tuhua jianwen zhi* 圖畫見聞志 [An account of my experiences in painting] by Guo Ruoxu (active during the second half of the eleventh century); at the end of the preface to the 1167 edition, Deng Chun resumes Guo’s text and indicates the existence of two categories of painters: the “high official” [*xuanmian* 軒冕] and the “retired scholar” [*yanxue* 巖穴]. These expressions, which provide an initial distinction of painters by social status, are cited by Gu Bing together with the grouping of paintings as either “inspired” [*shen* 神], “untrammelled” [*yi* 逸], “competent” [*neng* 能], “refined” [*ya* 雅], at the beginning of his explanatory note in which he proposes his “visual method” as an alternative to these renowned theories; see Deng Chun, *Huaji*, *Zhongguo meishu lunzhu congshu* 中國美術論著叢書 (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1983, first ed. 1963), p. 2; Bush and Shih, 1985, *op.cit.*, pp. 15-16, 102, 131.

<sup>63</sup> The *Xuanhe Bogu tu* 宣和博古圖 by Wang Fu 王黼 (1079-1126) is a collection of texts and illustrations on the bronze vessels and other antiquities in the imperial collection at the outset of the twelfth century which was published numerous times during the Song dynasty, once during the Zhida reign (1308-1311) in the Yuan dynasty, and many times again from 1588 onwards.

collections. Many people participated in the preparation of the texts, either copying the [*Tuhui*] *baojian* or personally developing the comments, as their personal contribution to this compilation by the self-avowed "poor scholar from Jiangnan", now in his later years, who had attempted to present all the works of the great masters in a single album that could eventually be used as a book of models, *fenben* 粉本.<sup>64</sup>

The explanations provided by Gu Bing can be supplemented by the words of Quan Tian(xu) at the beginning of his preface, in which he presents the *Gushi huapu* as a response to the needs of those involved in painting. Although painting was developed later than the other arts, paintings are passed down through the generations with greater difficulty than bronzes or objects in stone or metal. Collection of antiquities [and paintings] was flourishing since the Xuanhe period of the Song dynasty, but only the mention of names remains from the Qin (-221-206) and Han (-206 to +220) dynasties, and a few of paintings in the Gu Kaizhi (345-406 or 348-409) or Lu Tanwei 陸探微 (? - 485) style for the following centuries. A great deal of material has been lost through historical upheaval, also due to the perishable nature of the paper and silk painting support surfaces. A few original works by Tang painters have been passed down to the Ming dynasty and ~~are were~~ still some calligraphies from the Qin and Han periods (copied, engraved or reproduced by rubbing, *ta* 榻). Forgeries, which did not exist in ancient times were developed recently, which has led to the need for the establishment of models, for which reason Gu Bing compiled his album of paintings<sup>65</sup> reproduced by most efficient system then available, carving into wood blocks and then printing with ink.

Although the author never intended the *Gushi huapu* to be a systematic exposition of painting technique, even if its use as a book of models for painting was not excluded, Quan Tian(xu) was the one who referred to painters and their need for high-quality reproductions. It is evident that the edition follows the same rules as the painted albums that provided reproductions of famous works on a smaller scale: the opinion of Kohara Hironobu on the *Xiaozhong xianda* 小中現大 [The great revealed in the small] as "a reliable source for the study of old paintings" because "the artist who pro-

<sup>64</sup> See Gu Bing, *Gushi huapu*, "Puli liuze", notes 1-6.

<sup>65</sup> Quan Tian(xu), "Huapu xu", pp. 1a-3b, *Gushi huapu*.

duced these copies suppressed the individuality of his own and achieved an authentic representation", thereby preserving the diversity of a variety of ancient styles<sup>66</sup>, might equally well be applied to the *Gushi huapu*. The painted album and the printed album both target to an audience composed of professionals painters and lovers of painting, who could commission collections in miniature for their own pleasure or need, if they lacked the means to acquire larger copies or, *a fortiori*, originals.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, the audience, while similar, was presumably not entirely the same, given that the repeated reprinted editions of the *Gushi huapu* lead one to think of a relatively economical product addressed to a relatively wide local readership.<sup>68</sup>

Returning to a consideration of the edition as such, it is interesting to observe that Gu Bing indicates a renowned illustrated book as his model, and not an album of paintings. Given that he chose a printed model for his *huapu*, it is of little importance that the subjects of *Xuanhe Bogu tu* are bronze antiquities and not paintings.<sup>69</sup> The reduction of the illustrations in size and their efficient reproduction together with the text appear to be his fundamental concerns. In order to succeed in this editorial venture, Gu Bing supervised the work of the carvers in person while living in poverty and paying his carvers with donations that may even have been obtained from imperial sources [*shangsuo ci* 上所賜].<sup>70</sup> Despite this contribution, the *Gushi*

<sup>66</sup> This album, compiled by an anonymous painter but rich in inscriptions by Dong Qichang (1555-1636) from the 1598-1627 period, together with another album of the same type prepared in 1663 by Wang Jian (1598-1677) regarding the collection of Wang Shimin (1598-1680) is presented by Kohara Hironobu, "Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's Connoisseurship in T'ang and Sung Painting", in Ho Wai-kam ed., *The Century of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, 1555-1636* (Kansas City: The Trustees of the Nelson Gallery Foundation, 1992), vol. 1, pp. 95-99.

<sup>67</sup> Zheng Zhenduo justifiably raises the question as to how many medium-level scholars might have had better opportunities to observe so many ancient paintings; see Zheng Zhenduo, 1988, *op.cit.*, p. 375.

<sup>68</sup> Insisting on the relativity of such definition, I would like to draw attention to the rather exclusive nature of the luxurious editions; in my opinion, a good copy of a first illustrated edition of a famous publisher could not have been more economical than an album released by an ordinary *huagong* 畫工 of little repute.

<sup>69</sup> This reference to a book on antiquities formulated by Gu Bing himself makes the comparison of the Chinese edition to the *Teutsche Akademie*, proposed at the beginning of this section, perhaps more comprehensible.

<sup>70</sup> Quan Tian(xu), preface, p. 5a. This donations, *cangqian* 餐錢, were probably made to Gu Bing when he was employed at the court and used by himself to pay the engravers. Nothing in the book seems to show a direct participation of the Imperial Palace in the editorial effort.

*huapu* seems to have been a product of private publishing that Gu Bing intended to distribute [in the markets] of the capital, *bu Chang'an shi* 布長安市<sup>71</sup>.

Whether or not Gu Bing succeeded in this venture is difficult to establish for sure. It is certain however, that his book must have been well known to the other private editors in Jiangnan at the end of Ming dynasty, who had no scruples about inserting in their own editions some illustrations that were similar to, if not outright imitations of Gu Bing's works<sup>72</sup>. As occurs with all good publications suited to printing, the *Gushi huapu* could not escape the fate of being copied itself in both full and partial form.

translated by Craig Allen

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4b.

<sup>72</sup> A few of the illustrations in the *Gushi huapu* are almost identical with those in the *Shiyu huapu* 詩餘畫譜 [Manual of paintings with themes from lyrical poetry] printed in Wanling (Anhui) during the Wanli reign; the *Tang Jieyuan fang gujin huapu* 唐解元倣古今畫譜 [Collection of paintings of ancient and modern times copied by Tang Yin (1470-1523)] included in the *Jiya zhai huapu* 集雅齋畫譜 printed in Hangzhou; and the *Pipa ji* 琵琶記 [The lute] dated 1610 and also printed in Hangzhou. There is no reason to exclude the possibility that it is a matter of prints inspired by the same originals, especially as far as the two Zhejiang editions are concerned. However, I think that it is more likely that copies made from the prints contained in the *Gushi huapu* are involved, due to the presumed rarity of the paintings, the frequency of instances of copying or pirating evident in other commercial illustrated editions, the mobility of the carvers, and the circulation of books and printing blocks between ateliers in different cities.



Ill. 7: *Gushi Huapu*, facsimile, Beijing, Wenwu chubanshe, 1983