

Unrolling Histories: The Material Practices and Social life of the Handscroll Culture

in Mid-Ming Suzhou

By

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## Abstract

This dissertation investigates the material and cultural practice of making poetry handscroll (*shijuan*), or poetry manuscripts in handscroll format, in Suzhou from 1436 to 1566. As an important part of making, the collaboration between literati and artists demonstrates the ways in which literary practice, regional identity, and social memory were integrated in the materiality of poetry handscroll. By tracing the making process through which this type of handscroll came into existence materially, socially, and historically, this dissertation provides a method of reading the three processes of inscribing, making, and viewing poetry handscroll altogether. Unlike the usual understanding of handscroll as a neutral format of painting or calligraphy, this dissertation argues for the multisensory nature, collective and communicative identity of such creation. In particular, the case studies exemplify how mid-Ming Suzhou literati used handscroll as a means of presenting ideas, seizing cultural capital, strengthening shared local identity, and recording individual and collective memories.

The three sections of this dissertation each discusses a crucial phrase of handscroll's cultural life: writing and inscribing; assembling and mounting; viewing and appreciating. Section 1 interprets poetry handscroll as a material and cultural product. Special attention is paid to the physical attributes of handscroll and how materiality both allows and constrains the ways in which writings are carried out, preserved, and perceived. Section 2 investigates the social aspect of making by discussing the interaction and collaboration

amongst literati, artists, and craftsmen in the process of assembling individual pieces into final products. Combining evidence of surviving poetry handscrolls and textual sources gleaned from letters, diaries, and academic jottings, this section presents a detailed social picture of making poetry handscrolls which involves bargaining, procrastination, negotiation, and exchanges at various points of the process across social classes. Section 3 discusses poetry handscroll as multisensory objects as they interact with the audience and the physical surroundings. It discusses the ways in which the viewing practice is integrally linked to the materiality of the handscroll. It concludes by showing how Suzhou literati's narrating and fashioning of their peculiar viewing experience influenced the paradigm of appreciating poetry handscrolls.

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

## Used in Texts, Illustrations, and Notes

### GGCMQMRSZ:

*Gugong cang mingqing mingren shuzha moji xuan* 故宮藏明清名人書札墨跡選

(The Palace Museum's Collection of Letters and Ink Traces Left by Celebrities of the Ming-Qing Period), eds. Zhang Luquan 張魯泉 and Fu Hongzhan 傅紅展, 2 vols., Beijing: Rongbaozhai, 1993.

### Siku quanshu:

*Jingyin wenyuange siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (Complete Books in the Four Treasuries), eds. Ji Yun 紀昀, et al., 1500 vols., Taipei: Commercial Press, 1983–1986.

### SHTSGCMDCD:

*Shanghai tushuguan cang mingdai chidu* 上海圖書館藏明代尺牘 (Shanghai Library's Collection of Letters of the Ming Dynasty), 8 vols., Shanghai: Shanghai kexue jishu wenxian chubanshe, 2002.

### ZGGDSHTM:

*Zhongguo gudai shuhua tumu* 中國古代書畫圖目 (Illustrated Catalogue of Selected Works of Ancient Chinese Painting and Calligraphy), 23 vols., Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1956-2001.

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## Introduction

This dissertation explores the interplay between literary practice, memory, and local identity in mid-Ming China, with a special focus on handscroll culture in the Suzhou literati community. Handscroll, also known as horizontal scroll (*hengjuan* 横卷), is a time-honored format usually combining poetry, calligraphy and painting. I use the term “handscroll culture” to discuss two characteristics of Suzhou literati’s professional life in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These include a growing trend in forming literary associations and conducting collective literary practices, as well as a noticeable preference for circulating their works via handscrolls. As the study will show, these two phenomena were intimately related to the emerging local identity and the forming of cultural belief during this period. Through studying several representative handscrolls, I will not only illuminate how handscrolls were produced, sensed, utilized, and perceived by Suzhou literati, but also arrive at some broader conclusions about the process of making, constructing, and transmitting cultural memory through art works.

In this section, I start by rethinking the concept of handscroll, tracing the origin of the scroll format, and illuminating its multiple reference in Chinese cultural history. I then provide an overview of recent scholarship concerning handscroll paintings and calligraphy which is of methodological significance to me that has laid the foundation for my further investigation of the handscroll culture in Suzhou. Following the literature review is a brief account of the sociohistorical contexts of mid-Ming Suzhou which temporally and spatially define my research. The last section concisely outlines the main structure of this dissertation.

## What is handscroll?

The principal concern of my dissertation is a seemingly simple but important question: what is a handscroll? The handscroll's physical features, such as its long narrow shape and considerable length, make it straightforward to appreciate the handscroll format in material terms. A handscroll is an assemblage of silk or paper sections that were joined by and backed with stiff paper layers.<sup>1</sup> The length of the handscroll ranges from less than one meter to more than ten meters while its height varies from a few inches to two feet.<sup>2</sup> Such an aspect ratio clearly distinguishes the handscroll from the other two major formats of traditional Chinese art, hanging scroll and album.

A typical handscroll includes a frontispiece (*yinshou* 引首) at its right end which indicates the theme of the handscroll, the main section of pictorial or textual work, and a jointed endpaper (*weizhi* 尾紙) that usually bear colophons and seal impressions.<sup>3</sup> (See figure 1.1) When being stored, a handscroll is rolled into a cylindrical shape. Some valuable ones would be individually wrapped with silk fabric and placed in wooden boxes, for protective purpose.<sup>4</sup>

However, a straightforward definition of the handscroll format will be challenged

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<sup>1</sup> Robert L. Thorp and Richard Ellis Vinograd, *Chinese Art & Culture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, 2001), 263.

<sup>2</sup> According to Jerome Silbergeld's observation, "handscroll paintings ranged from less than three feet to more than thirty feet in length; the majority were between nine and fourteen inches high." See Jerome Silbergeld, *Chinese Painting Style: Media, Methods, and Principles of Form* (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1997), 12.

<sup>3</sup> See Dawn Delbanco, "Chinese Handscrolls," *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000). De-nin D Lee. *The Night Banquet: A Chinese Scroll Through Time* (Seattle, Wash: University of Washington Press, 2011), 10-11.

<sup>4</sup> Another common way to store handscrolls, as is shown in paintings that depict the study room of Ming-Qing literati, is to diagonally fold a square cloth in half and hang it on a wall. One cloth pack can hold several or even dozens of scrolls.

when we take into consideration its manifold uses and complicated cultural meanings. The handscroll can be a kind of material carrier for writing and painting, a mounting form in which valuable documents are preserved, a gift dedicated to an honoree, a multisensory object that can be visually, tangibly, and even olfactorily perceived. Before I start to address the key word of my research, handscroll culture, I will explain further the diverse roles handscroll plays in literary, artistic, historiographic, and memory practice, which necessitate our rethinking of handscroll's multiple identities in Chinese literati's cultural life.

“Handscroll” is a literal translation of Chinese word *shoujuan* 手卷, as Wu Hung points out, “hand” is for *shou* while “scroll” for *juan*.<sup>5</sup> Such a term captures the intimate nature of this format by implying the most common way of viewing it: a spectator may hold two ends of the scroll in “hand” and unroll it to an arm span.

However, I want to add here that the term *shoujuan* emerged much later than the time when the format was widely adopted.<sup>6</sup> Although silk scroll was used as a writing medium in the Han dynasty (202 BC–220 AD),<sup>7</sup> and paper scroll became popular in the Jin period

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<sup>5</sup> Wu Hung, *The Double Screen: Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 57.

<sup>6</sup> The surviving scrolls discovered in Dunhuang suggest that the paper-backed horizontal scroll, a primary form of handscroll, was adopted as a writing format was no later than the Tang dynasty. See Zhang Pengchuan 張朋川, “Cong dunhuang xiejing he bihua kan zhongguo juanzhou shuhuageshi de qiyuan he xingshi” 從敦煌寫經和壁畫看中國卷軸書畫格式的起源和形式, *Wenwu* 文物, no. 08 (2000): 52-60.

<sup>7</sup> Tsuen-Hsuei Tsien posits that silk fabric (*jianbo* 縑帛) become an alternative writing material to bamboo slips in the Han dynasty. The upper limit to a silk scroll's length was 40 *chi*, approximately 13.3 meters. It could be made into seamless long scroll for writing and painting, while its fine texture makes it more suitable for represent details in images, such as military maps. See Tsuen-Hsuei Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk: The Beginnings of Chinese Books and Inscriptions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 126-44.

(266–420 AD),<sup>8</sup> the term *shoujuan* was not coined until the thirteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Even in the Ming-Qing period when handscroll became one of three major formats of painting and calligraphy, it was usually referred to in artistic parlance only as *juan* 卷 (scroll), instead of *shoujuan*. An abundance of evidence can be found in handscrolls' titles which were written on labels attached to those works or in those inventories of private or official art collection. Sometimes, the character *juan* can be modified according to the content of a scroll, for examples, poetry scroll (*shijuan* 詩卷), calligraphic scroll (*shujuan* 書卷), pictorial scroll (*tujian* 圖卷), and jointed scroll of poetry and painting (*shihua hejuan* 詩畫合卷). The use of the shortened name, *juan*, to describe a horizontal scroll is probably out of a practical need to make the title of each work concise, since one single character can explicitly indicate the format of the artwork, which is neither a *ce* 冊 (album) nor a *zhou* 軸 (hanging scroll).

However, it is noteworthy that *juan* (scroll) has multiple reference in Chinese culture. *Juan*, as an easily handled and stored alternative to bound bamboo slips, became one of the primary formats of books and documents no later than the third century B.C., when silk fabric came into use as a writing material and gradually replaced bamboo slips and wooden boards.<sup>10</sup> It is well supported by the bibliographic information in “Record of Art and

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<sup>8</sup> Qiu Zhenzhong 邱振中, *Shufa de xingtai yu chanshi* 书法的形态与阐释 (Beijing: Renmin daxue chubanshe, 2005), 42-52.

<sup>9</sup> Surviving texts show that the use of the term *shoujuan* can date back to the Southern Song period. When editing the inventories of their private collection, connoisseurs like Zhou Mi 周密 (1232-1298) and Yu Yan 俞琰 (fl. 1200) used *shoujuan* 手卷 to refer to horizontal scrolls. See Zhou Mi, Yunyan guoyan lu 雲煙過眼錄, juan 2, *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 871, 55-64; Yu Yan, *Linwu shanren mangao* 林屋山人漫藁 (n.p. Beijing University Library), 6b.

<sup>10</sup> Wu Kuang-tsing 吳光清, “The Chinese Book: Its Evolution and Development,” *T'ien Hsia Monthly*, Vol.3, No.2 (August 1936): 25-33. See also Inoue Susumu 井上進, *Chûgoku shuppan bunka shi: Shomotsu sekai to chi no fûkei* 中国出版文化史—書物世界と知の風景 (Nagoya: Nagoya daigaku shuppankai, 2002).



Literature” 藝文志 in the *Book of Han* (*hanshu* 漢書), where the measure words *juan* and *ce* (a bundle of bamboo slips) are used on similar scale to count how many fascicles a book has.<sup>11</sup> Despite the advance of printing and binding techniques in the tenth century which made accordion-style thread-binding book the dominant format of Chinese manuscript and book, *juan* (scroll) never ceased to serve as an important medium of writing until the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> To be more explicit, before the late Song, horizontal scroll was a physical format adopted by books, documents, and artworks. From the Yuan period onwards, it continued to be an important format of painting and calligraphy, but as a writing medium and documentary form, the horizontal scroll became less common. The scroll format would be deliberately chosen by scribes and executors when other formats turned out to be infeasible to fulfill particular needs. By tracing the ambiguous identities of *juan* (scroll), I want to emphasize the entanglement of the handscroll format with Chinese book history and manuscript culture, from which handscroll derived its antique tinge and particular cultural attribute.

Another factor that complicates the meaning of *juan* (scroll) and *shoujuan* (handscroll) lies in their intimate relation to the civil examination system. The exam sheet (*tizhi* 題紙) on which examinees write down their answers is always referred to as *juan* 卷, even though the long paper sheet sometimes is folded in accordion style instead of being rolled into a scroll. As the civil examination became the primary method of recruitment for officials, it functioned as a significant vehicle of social mobility by promising the educated young the

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<sup>11</sup> See Ban Gu 班固, “Yiwen zhi” 藝文志 in *Hanshu* 漢書, vol. 6 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 1701-84; Ma Yi 馬怡, “Zhongguo gudai shuxie fangshi tanyuan” 中國古代書寫方式探源, *Wenshi* 文史, no. 104, 3 (2013): 147-90.

<sup>12</sup> Zhang Ping 張平, “Shuhua zhuangbiao yanjiu” 書畫裝裱研究 (Ph.D. diss, Suzhou University, 2009); Du Zexun 杜澤遜, *Wenxianxue gaiyao* 文獻學概要 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 32-35.

rise of social status. The *juan*, therefore, was endowed with the symbolic meaning associated to “literary cultivation,” “competition,” and “rank.” The terms used in the civil examination, such as *mingti* (命題, literally “assign a topic”) and *dengjuan* (登卷, literally “transcribe or copy the text on a scroll”), were frequently appropriated in the collective executing of handscrolls.<sup>13</sup> Such a phenomena reached its first peak during the Yuan period. After the imperial examinations ceased at the turn of the fourteenth century,<sup>14</sup> Han people in southern China demonstrated unprecedented enthusiasm in arranging literary societies and privately sponsored poetry competition, which “resurrected the formative ideals and structure of the examination system.”<sup>15</sup>

A well-studied example is Gu Ying 顧瑛 (1310-1369) and his elegant gatherings at Yushan (*yushan yaji* 玉山雅集) which were active from 1348 to 1353.<sup>16</sup> Gu and his fellows collected and ranked poems written by scholars across Jiangnan area, and mounted them in the form of poetry scroll (*shijuan* 詩卷). These poetry scrolls should be understood

<sup>13</sup> Gu Ying 顧瑛, *Yushan mingsheng ji* 玉山名勝集, *juan* 5 -8, *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 1369, 75-174.

<sup>14</sup> A strict quota of *jinshi* candidate was imposed to South China, about seventy-five candidates for each provincial exam. Even so, less than thirty Han Chinese from South China could obtain the *jingshi* title, while two thirds of the quota would be allocated to Mongolians. See Edward A. Kracke, “Region, Family, and Individual in the Chinese Examination System,” in *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 260-64. See also Ho Ping-Ti, *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China Aspects of Social Mobility, 1368–1911* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962); Wu Jun 武君, “Keju xingfei yu yuandai houqi shixue sixiang de zhuanbian” 科舉興廢與元代後期詩學思想的轉變. *Qinghai shehui kexue* 青海社會科學 4 (2017): 155-64.

<sup>15</sup> Chang Sun Kang-i and Stephen Owen, eds, *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*. vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 576. Qianqian 李茜茜, “Yuanmo mingchu wuzhong wenren qunti yanjiu” 元末明初吳中文人群體研究 (Ph.D. diss., Fudan University, 2014); Cui Zhiwei 崔志偉, “Yuanmo mingchu songjiang wenren qunti yanjiu” 元末明初松江文人群體研究 (Ph.D. diss., Shanghai University, 2011); Wang Kuixing 王魁星, “Yuanmo mingchu zhedong wenrenqun yanjiu” 元末明初浙東文人群研究 (Ph.D. diss., Fudan University, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> Some of these works were printed, but in jiangnan area, most circulate handwritten codices. Related research see Liu Ji 劉季, “Yushan yaji yu yuanmo shitan” 玉山雅集與元末詩壇 (Ph.D. diss., Nankai University, 2012); Liu Ailian, “Yang Weizhen (1296-1370) and the Social Art of Painting Inscriptions” (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 2011).

as compensatory projects that comforted the Han literati who were marginalized in the nomadic reign. However, such a mode of literary interaction, namely, “the collection of poems on a single topic” (*tongti jiyong* 同題集詠) and “composing poems and making scrolls” (*fushi chengjuan* 賦詩成卷), was inherited in literati circles of the Ming dynasty, and reached its second heyday during the Chenghua (1465-1487) and Hongzhi (1488-1505) periods, around which my research centers.

Some of the handscrolls collectively produced by mid-Ming literati are characterized by the severe regulations on rhyme, fixed submission deadline,<sup>17</sup> detailed records of the poetry competition results, and follow-up critical commentary.<sup>18</sup> Knowing the cultural links between the handscroll format and civil examination system allows us to better understand the archival nature of those poetry handscrolls as well as the great precision that Suzhou literati showed in composing and inscribing their works.

As a medium of writing, the handscroll is not only a material carrier of the text that is created “at present,” but always a deliberately chosen material form to store and display

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<sup>17</sup> Take a poetry club formed in 1464 for example, the participants including Li Dongyang 李東陽 and Suzhou literati Zhang Tai 張泰 made the a set of rules, such as: “Participants are not allowed to be absent for invalid reasons, otherwise he will be punished. People who attend the meeting but fail to compose a poem will be punished also. 不允無故缺會，否則有罰，與會不成詩者亦罰。 See Huang Zuo 黃佐, *Hanlin ji* 翰林記, Siku quanshu edition, vol. 596. 351. One short message by Li Dongyang indicates that he was asked to submit his poem after one gathering at Wu Kuan’s home, although Li was unsatisfied with his composition. See Wu Kuan 吳寬 et al., *Illustrated Scroll of Yuyan Pavilion* 玉延亭圖卷, handscroll, ink on paper, 24x1200 cm. Auctioned at Sungari International on June 19, 2017. A similar example is a handscroll named *Mountain Hut of Herb and Weed* 藥草山房圖 on which each poem is marked according to the order it was finished. See Wen Zhengming 文徵明 et al. *Mountain Hut of Herb and Weed* 藥草山房圖, 1540, handscroll, ink and color on paper, painting: 28.3x14.8 cm, Shanghai Museum. Both these two handscrolls will be discussed in Chapter 2.

<sup>18</sup> The Palace Museum in Beijing collects a handscroll whose frontispiece is written “A Cluster of pearl from the Hanlin Academy” (*hanyuan congzhu* 翰苑叢珠). The scroll consists of poems by Li Dongyang and his disciples in the Hanlin Academy and preserves the evidence of the interaction between the poets and critics. See Li Dongyan 李東陽 et al, *Scroll with Assorted Poems in Running Script* 行書雜書卷, the second half of fifteenth century, handscroll, ink on paper, main section: 23.5 × 111.5 cm, Palace Museum in Beijing

what belongs to the “past.” In other words, the handscroll is also a mounting format with noticeable strength in documentation and conservation. Its theoretically unlimited length allows a handscroll to accommodate a wide assortment of textual pieces which may differ in length, but their heights vary from several inches to one or two feet, a range of the heights of common writing paper or textile. The handscroll’s “unwieldy length” also exempts it from frequent and long-standing display as that often happens to the hanging scroll.<sup>19</sup> Therefore the sheets mounted on the surface of handscrolls are free from grime, dust, sunlight, smoke, humidity, and other physical factors that may accelerate natural aging process. A wide range of the documents can be mounted in the form of handscroll, including but not limited to letters,<sup>20</sup> loan bills,<sup>21</sup> biographies in an annalistic style (*nianpu* 年譜),<sup>22</sup> travel documents,<sup>23</sup> and various texts which were handwritten by local elites and moral paragons.

By enumerating these examples, I want to emphasize the high inclusiveness of the handscroll format. Although other formats like the album sometimes could perform a similar function, the mounted work may have to compromise its entirety, being cut into several pieces to fit the size of each album leaf, or may lose its intimacy after being mounted as a hanging scroll. The case studies in the following chapters will further attest

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<sup>19</sup> De-nin Lee, *The Night Banquet: A Chinese Scroll Through Time*. (Seattle, Wash: University of Washington Press, 2011), 10.

<sup>20</sup> Wu Kuan 吳寬 et al., *Inscription in running script on Fan Zhongyan's letters* 行書跋范仲淹手札, early 15th century, handscroll, ink on paper, letter: 25.2x33.1cm, Suzhou Museum.

<sup>21</sup> Wang Chong 王寵, *Loan Bill in Running Script* 行書借券, handscroll, main section: 24.2x21.2 cm, ink on paper, Zhejiang Provincial Museum.

<sup>22</sup> Shen Zhou 沈周, *The Eastern Plain* 東原圖, 1498, handscroll, ink and color on paper, 454x30.3 cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.

<sup>23</sup> A colophon in Feng Guifen's 馮桂芬 (1809-1874) anthology *Xianzhi tang gao* 顯志堂稿 says that it was written on a handscroll named *Xia Qiutian juan* 夏秋田卷 (A Scroll of Xia Qiutian). The scroll consists of the travel permit Xia used when carrying his father's bone ash to hometown and a letter in which he applied to the government for an honorific title for his mother. See Feng Guifen 馮桂芬, *Xianzhi tang gao* 顯志堂稿, *juan* 12 (Suzhou: Jiaopin lu, 1876), 31a-31b.

to this observation, showing that the content of handscrolls is more than calligraphic pieces and paintings.

In addition to being a writing medium and a mounting format, the handscroll can also be understood as an "object" with peculiar material substance. The material dimension of the handscroll includes its physical features, sensory properties, and the process of mounting as well as associated material and craftsmanship. In *Zhuanghuang zhi* 裝潢志 (The Book of Mounting), a systematic account of mounting techniques and connoisseurship knowledge, the writer Zhou Jiazhou 周嘉胄 (1582-1658) reminds his readers that the artistic merit of a handscroll is never determined solely by its content, namely, the paintings or the calligraphic pieces. Rather, the handscroll itself can be a "delightful" object that capture its audience's attention:

"When you but take the scroll, thus equipped with various elegant decorations in your hand, heart and eye shall be delighted by its pure beauty, even before you have unrolled it."

種種精飾，才一入手，不待展賞，其潔緻璀璨已爽心目矣。<sup>24</sup>

This passage suggests that the process of appreciation always starts before we reach what is mounted on the scroll. To achieve such an effect, Zhou makes detailed directions and suggestions on the material and skills used in different phrases of mounting handscroll, such as backing, jointing, decorating, and wrapping. His directions not only include the selection of major mounting material such paper and silk twill,<sup>25</sup> but also involve

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<sup>24</sup> Zhou Jiazhou 周嘉胄, *Zhuanghuang zhi tushuo* 裝潢志圖說 (Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 2003), 42-43. The text is translated by Robert Hans van. Gulik. See Robert Hans van. Gulik, "Chou Chia-chou's Chuang-huang-chih," *Chinese Pictorial Art as Viewed by the Connoisseur* (Roma: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958), 304.

<sup>25</sup> Zhou Jiazhou, "Zhiliao" 紙料, "Lingjuan liao" 綾絹料, in *Zhuanghuang zhi tushuo*, 54-57.

regulations on small accessories of handscrolls, such as knobs attached to the ends of roller (*zhoutou* 軸頭), silk bands for binding (*zadai* 扎帶 or *dai* 帶), fastening toggles (*biezi* 別子), the brocade protective wrappers (*zhi* 帙 or *nang* 囊), and title labels (*qian* 籤).<sup>26</sup>

It is no surprise that the exquisite workmanship of the handscroll wins the favor of the gentry class and literati in the Ming period. On the one hand, those delicately made handscrolls facilitate those cultural elites to fulfill their cultural ambition and to take part in the fashion-setting process associated to things.<sup>27</sup> By demonstrating how to obtain, preserve, and deal with handscrolls in a culturally appropriate way, the elites arbitrated the boundary between elegance and vulgarity.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, the handscroll was imbued with multilayered cultural significance in the discourse practice of cultural elites, merchants, and common audience.

The objecthood of the handscroll should also include its extended use as an animated object with magic power. The belief that the handscroll may process distinct spiritual essence may derive from the worship of certain scriptures in ancient China, such as Daoist and Buddhist classics. The handscroll, owing to its portable and intimate nature, serves as an ideal material carrier for favorite or awe-inspiring texts, and transform the texts to convenient portable companions to their owners. According to Gao Lian's 高濂 (1573-1620) account in *Zunsheng bajian* 遵生八箋, an encyclopedic reference book about the

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<sup>26</sup> Zhou Jiazhou, "Shoujuan" 手卷, "Nang" 囊, "Zhoupin" 軸品, in *Zhuanghuang zhi tushuo*, 42-43, 36-37, 58-59.

<sup>27</sup> Timothy Brook examines the massive consumption and production of art works which was driven by the rise of commerce during the Ming Dynasty. See Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure Commerce and Culture in Ming China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 222-228.

<sup>28</sup> A typical example is Wen Zhenheng's *Zhangwu zhi* 長物志 in which he criticize the vulgar collectors who unroll and roll up scroll improperly (*juanshu shisuo* 卷舒失所), and deem those people as a disaster of paintings and calligraphy (*shuhua zhi'e* 書畫之厄). See *Zhangwu zhi* 長物志, in *SIKU QUANSHU*, vol. 872, 50.

art of life, Linghu Tao 令狐綯 (fl. 848) had a diminutive scroll enveloped in an iron tube, less than one inch in diameter and about four inches in length. On the scroll, the texts of Nine Classics (*jiujing* 九經) were written in extremely small script.<sup>29</sup> Echoing Linghu's anecdote, both Gao Lian and Tu Long 屠隆 (1543-1605) claim that the diminutive scroll inscribed with symbolic icons of Five Mounts (*wuyue* 五嶽) may have protective function:

[The icons] should be written with cinnabar on yellow silk, mounted into small scroll, three or four inches in height, decorated with jade knots and brocade bands, hang at the top of a walking stick. It can defend one from tigers and wolves and keep ghosts away.

以黃素朱書，裱作三四寸高小卷，飾以玉軸錦帶，懸之杖頭，與葫蘆作伴，可拒虎狼，可遠魑魅。<sup>30</sup>

If it is questionable whether the spiritual power of the scroll in Tu Long's account derives from the Taoist icons of Five Mounts or the delicate scroll itself, a colophon written on Mi Fu's 米芾 (1051-1107) handscroll calligraphic piece, *Shusu tie* 蜀素帖, literarily constructs the scroll's image as a fabulous guardian. The colophon was written by Gu Congyi 顧從義 (1523-1588), a Ming calligrapher who became the owner of *Shusu tie* since 1555. Gu carried the scroll with him every time when he traveled the Jiangnan area. "One day he passed by Wuzhong and visited Master Hengshan (Wen Zhengming 文徵明). It is the only time that he did not carry the scroll with him and encountered a series boat

<sup>29</sup> Gao Lian 高濂, *Zunsheng bajian* 遵生八箋, in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan* 北京圖書館古籍珍本叢刊 series, vol. 61 (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2000), 388.

<sup>30</sup> The Chinese text is from *Kaopan yushi* 考槃餘事, *Zunsheng bajian* has a similar passage with some textual variants. See Tu Long 屠隆 (1543-1605), *Kaopan yushi* 考槃餘事, in *Congshu jicheng xinbian* 叢書集成新編 series, vol. 50 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chubanshe, 2008), 84; Gao Lian, *Zunsheng bajian*, 234.

accident.”<sup>31</sup> The colophon is ended with Wen Zhengming’s comment which attributes Gu’s accident to the absence of the scroll, in Wen’s word, a fabulous object that can provide protection (*shenwu hehu* 神物呵護).

The brief examples above not only reveal one aspect of the handscroll's objecthood, but also demonstrate the predilection that the Ming literati held for handscrolls. In the growing body of connoisseurship jottings, colophons, and diaries through the Ming dynasty, the handscroll is addressed as an object deeply associated with literati life. The peculiar way of viewing a handscroll, unrolling and rolling it back (*shujuan* 舒卷), has also been conceptualized and metaphorically related to a scholar-official’s entering and retreating from his political career (*jintui* 進退, literally, “advance and retreat”).<sup>32</sup> We can also find abundant pictorial evidence of the literati's special favor of the handscroll at this time. In a considerable number of paintings that represent the gentry's elegant gatherings and life scenes, the handscroll was employed as an indispensable visual motif to represent the literati's distinctive taste, no matter whether as part of the art collection piled on a desk or as being unfolded and inscribed by someone.

To sum up, this section tries to complicate our understanding of the handscroll by revealing its manifold identities, which are embedded in Chinese literary, artistic, and cultural contexts. The handscroll is more than a time-honored format of painting and

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<sup>31</sup> The original text reads, 一日過吳中。謁衡山先生。獨不携此。適有覆舟之厄。先生曰：米書在否。曰否。先生曰。豈無神物呵護至此耶。See Mi Fu 米芾, *Poems written on Shu Silk (Shusu tie 蜀素帖)*, 1088, handscroll, ink on silk, 27.8x270.8cm, Palace Museum in Taipei.

<sup>32</sup> The use of “unrolling and rolling” as a trope to describe one’s attitude toward life can date back to the Tang dynasty. A famous example is from Wang Rong’s 王戎 (234-305) biography in *Jinshu* 晉書. Wang Rong imitated the lifestyle of Qu Boyu 蘧伯玉 who reconciled himself to the social circumstances instead of committing unnecessary loyalism (與時卷舒，無蹇愕之節). See Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 et al., eds, *Jinshu* 晉書, *juan* 43 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 1231-34.



calligraphy. Rather, it never ceased to be an important writing medium that has been adopted by literati to deal with the need of creating, recording, and circulating their works in mid-Ming China. As a mounting format, it was frequently used for documentation, preserving a wide assortment of textual and pictorial pieces. The making of the handscroll involves a series of craftsmanship and the deployment of a wide range of materials. A handscroll is always an exquisitely executed object with visual, sensory, and affective potential. The hybrid nature of the handscroll necessitates an interdisciplinary approach to elucidate its entanglement with the literati in mid-Ming Suzhou. My dissertation will single out the handscroll format as the focal point to investigate how the handscroll signifies meanings beyond simply providing a material ground for writing and painting, and how Suzhou literati utilized the rich connotations of the handscroll to manifest their voice, to materialize their collective memories, and to enhance their shared cultural belief.

Handscroll paintings and calligraphic pieces have always been fascinating topics for scholars from different fields. Even though much previous research has covered only partial sets of the whole spectrum of the handscroll, focusing on one theme or subgenre of handscroll paintings, or on an individual handscroll that is representative of the spirit and taste of its age, it provides important insight into the essence of the handscroll culture and has laid solid foundation for further inquiry into the significant role handscroll played in mid-Ming Suzhou.

### **Understanding a handscroll from a material perspective**

This dissertation is methodologically indebted to Wu Hung's research on the various

forms the screen (*ping* 屏) in Chinese art. According to his analysis in *The Double Screen*, the screen's multiple roles, as an architectonic item, a painting medium, and a visual motif, "are deliberately mixed up, enriching, reinforcing, reinterpreting, confusing, debasing and cancelling one other."<sup>33</sup> Wu Hung therefore draws attention to the "painting's physical form and all concepts and practices related to its materiality" in order to achieve the comprehensive understanding of the peculiar history and tradition of the screen.

The approach he has tried toward a Chinese painting, namely, to treat it as both "an image-bearing object" and "a painted image,"<sup>34</sup> is inspiring for my research. A handscroll, in addition to being a material carrier of paintings and texts, is also an object, in Wu Hung's word, "a product of a culture" which can interact with particular audience and physical surroundings. As Wu has mentioned in his introduction of the handscroll format when discussing *The Night Entertainment of Han Xizai* (*Hai Xizai yeyantu* 韓熙載夜宴圖), the material attributes of the handscroll largely decide how a beholder unrolls, views and reviews the image on its surface.<sup>35</sup> Following this line of thought, a series of question will be raised: whether handscroll's physical form can also structure the reading experience when a beholder faces a scroll consists mainly or even exclusively of texts, like a poetry scroll? to what degree the handscroll format affects the act of writing on its surface? how should we understand the ways in which the handscroll that transmits inscriptions to its readers reinforces or restrains the production of meaning?

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<sup>33</sup> Wu Hung, *The Double Screen*, 26.

<sup>34</sup> Wu Hung, *The Double Screen*, 237.

<sup>35</sup> Wu Hung, *The Double Screen*, 57-60. Also focusing on *The Night Entertainment*, De-nin Lee explicitly points out the audience's psychological state during the dynamic viewing process, rolling up what has been viewed while revealing the hidden section. See De-nin Lee, *The Night Banquet*, 12.

It is apparent that the handscroll, compared to other formats, has superior capability for accommodating endless textual accretions. The inscribed texts can be assigned to a wide range of genres, such as poem, short essay, seal impression, and epigram with two or four characters. As is shown in previous scholarship, abundant information can be extracted from handscrolls to support literary analysis,<sup>36</sup> historical research,<sup>37</sup> cultural study,<sup>38</sup> and inquiry concerning authentication and connoisseurship.<sup>39</sup> However, when we treat a handscroll with copious inscriptions as a bank of textual evidence, we may easily overlook its particular materiality.<sup>40</sup> What is blurred in these studies is the essential distinction between the handscroll and other media for recording information, like the printed book, a common form of many anthologies of colophon writings.

My research aims to reevaluate the agency of the handscroll format in shaping the writing practice and in structuring inter-referential relationship between those inscribed texts. The handscroll is a process as much as it is a static product.<sup>41</sup> As is shown in two

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<sup>36</sup> Wang Xiaoli 王晓骊, *Sanwu wenren hua tiba yanjiu* 三吳文人畫題跋研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2013); Mao Wenfang 毛文芳, *Tucheng xingle: Mingqing wenren huaxiang tiyong lunxi* 圖成行樂: 明清文人畫像題詠析論 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 2008); Yi Ruofen 衣若芬, *Su Shi tihua wenxue yanjiu* 蘇軾題畫文學研究 (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe 1999); Liu Jicai 劉繼才, *Zhongguo tihuashi fazhanshi* 中國題畫詩發展史 (Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 2010).

<sup>37</sup> Walther, Ann. "Remembering the Lady Wei: Eulogy and Commemoration in Ming Dynasty China." *Ming Studies*, 2007(1), 75-103. Elizabeth Kindall, "Envisioning a Monastery: A Seventeenth-Century Buddhist Fundraising Appeal Album," *T'oung pao*, vol.97, no. 1 (2011): 104-159.

<sup>38</sup> Itakura Masaaki 板倉 聖哲, "Issues Related to the Portrait of Ni Zan and Inscription by Zhang Yu" 張雨題「倪（サン）像」をめぐる諸問題. *Bijutsu shi ronsō* 美術史論叢, no. 17 (2001): 159-185.

<sup>39</sup> See Li Chu-ting, "The Autumn Colors on the Ch'iao and Hua Mountains: a Landscape by Chao Meng-Fu. *Artibus Asiae*. Supplement vol. 21 (1965): 89-109; Sherman Lee and Wen Fong: "Streams and Mountains without End. A Northern Sung Handscroll and Its Significance in the History of Early Chinese Painting". *Artibus Asiae* Supplement vol.14 (1955): 1-55. Xu Bangda 徐邦達, *Gushuhua wei'e kaobian* 古書畫偽訛考辨 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1984).

<sup>40</sup> According to Wu Hung, "to see a painting as a pictorial representation is to negate the painting's materiality: the fundamental premise of this view is that surface signs must substitute the surface and transform it into images with their independent (pictorial) space. Wu Hung, *The Double Screen*, 237.

<sup>41</sup> The unstable condition and ever-growing body of colophons is one of the dominant features of the handscroll, which renders it similar to the manuscript in medieval Europe. See Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen, eds. *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 4-9.

commemorative handscrolls created for filial sons (*xiaozhi* 孝子) in Suzhou, which I will discuss in Chapter 2 and 4, the stories about the filial sons evolved as more and more local literati participated in the collective memorial projects. Although each inscription reads fragmentary and incomplete, when they are mounted as a long scroll, the peculiar display mode neutralizes their miscellaneous nature. Despite the variations in genre, style, literary quality and even attitude, the textual add-ons interact with each other and form a complete story. Both the story and the scroll were in a dynamic process since the continuous viewing practice and textual accretion always brought new modification and reinterpretation.

In such a signifying process, inscribers often demonstrate their full awareness of handscrolls' physical conditions, such as the texture of the writing surface, the blackness of the ink traces left by former writers, and the crowdedness of inscriptions on endpaper. Correspondingly a system of expression about the physical condition has been coined and widely used to suggest the value of scrolls and the judgement of their owners. For instance, the condition of *yingjuan* and *leijuan* (盈卷 and 纍卷 literally, the scroll is full of [inscriptions]) always implies the owner's amiable character,<sup>42</sup> while *saibai* (塞白 literally, to fill the blank part [with writing]) may come from a self-effacing cliché or a critique of the predecessor's perfunctory composition.<sup>43</sup>

The materiality of text and associated modes of communication in ancient China are not a neutral ground. When talking about poems inscribed on walls (*tibi shi* 題壁詩), Judith Zeitlin expands the scope of the materiality of writing and draws particular attention

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<sup>42</sup> See Wang Yu's 汪昱 colophon in Tang Yin 唐寅 et al., *Farewell at the Bridge of the Hanging Rainbow* 垂虹別意圖, 1508, handscroll, ink on paper, painting: 29.7x107.6 cm, Cleveland Museum of Art.

<sup>43</sup> See Fu Han's 傅瀚 colophon in Shen Zhou 沈周. *Serenely Appreciating Potted Chrysanthemum* 盆菊幽賞圖, the late 15th century, handscroll, ink and color on paper, painting: 23.4x86 cm, Liaoning Provincial Museum.

to the surface on which an inscription is written.<sup>44</sup> Placing particular attention on manuscript and orally-based materials, Christopher Nugent directs our attention to material contexts in which Tang poetry was composed and transmitted. From his view, a Tang poems is as much an object with sonic and material attribute as a text, which could be shaped by both the creator and the reading public.<sup>45</sup> Dirk Meyer's meticulous research on philosophical texts that were inscribed on bamboo slips also sheds light on the intricate relations among the material carriers, writings, and thoughts.<sup>46</sup> Though the textual objects explored in these studies seem distant thematically and temporally from my focus, mid-Ming handscrolls, they are nevertheless inspiring and of methodological significance to my research.

It is equally noteworthy that scholars in the field of material culture also conducted a series of research on the substance and craftsmanship which give the handscroll its tangible material form. R.H. van Gulik's pioneering book *Chinese Pictorial Art* provides a critical framework for investigating Chinese mounting by building up the set of terminology and redirecting our attention to the interaction between craftsmen, artists, and connoisseurs. Another contribution of this book is the full-length translation of the only two monographic books about mounting crafts in imperial China: *The Book of Mounting* (*Zhuanghuang zhi* 裝潢志) and *Records of Prolonged Gratification of the Simple Heart* (*Shangyan suxin lu* 賞延素心錄), which contain detailed accounts of how handscrolls were engaged in literati

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<sup>44</sup> Judith T. Zeitlin, "Disappearing Verses: Writing on Walls and Anxieties of Loss," in Judith T. Zeitlin, Lydia H. Liu, and Ellen Widmer, eds., *Writing and Materiality in China: Essays in Honor of Patrick Hanan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 79-80.

<sup>45</sup> Christopher M. B. Nugent, *Manifest in Words, Written on Paper: Producing and Circulating Poetry in Tang Dynasty China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010), 15-18.

<sup>46</sup> Dirk Meyer, *Philosophy on Bamboo: Text and the Production of Meaning in Early China* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2011).

life in Jiangnan area.

When talking about the material form of mid-Ming handscrolls, we have to face a problem that handscrolls could seldom retain the original appearance of mounting after having been circulated for several centuries.<sup>47</sup> Alternations may involve changes in format, for instance, a handscroll could be cut up and remounted as sequential album,<sup>48</sup> and losses or gains of pictorial section, colophon paper, and mounting accessories. However, it is still possible for us to construct a mosaic picture of the handscroll culture in mid-Ming Suzhou from a wide range of monographic research on the handscroll's backing textile, wrapping brocades,<sup>49</sup> containers,<sup>50</sup> knobs,<sup>51</sup> and associated craftsmanship with Suzhou's regional tint.<sup>52</sup>

### About illustrations in handscroll format

The handscroll as a painting format has been noticed by many art historians whose

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<sup>47</sup> Fu Dongguang 傅東光, "Qianglong neifu shuhua zhuanghuang chutan" 乾隆內府書畫裝潢初探. *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊, no. 118, 2 (2005): 111-61.

<sup>48</sup> Jerome Silbergeld, *Chinese Painting Style*, 15.

<sup>49</sup> Gu Chunhong 顧春華, "A Study of Ancient Chinese Mounting Form and the Use of Silk" 中國古書畫裝裱形製與絲綢使用規律研究, *Yishu sheji yanjiu* 藝術設計研究, 3 (2017): 112-20; Gu Chunhua, "Study and Design of Badayun Brocade Pattern Used for Mounting Traditional Chinese Calligraphy and Painting" 古書畫裝裱中八達暈錦圖案的研究與設計, *Sichou* 絲綢, vol. 50, 8 (2013): 36-42. Qian Xiaoping 錢小萍, *Zhongguo songjin* 中國宋錦 (Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2011). Moreover, the book series *Zhongguo gudai sichou sheji sucai tuxi* 中國古代絲綢設計素材圖係 edited by Zhao Feng 趙豐 present a rich collection of various silk textile which have been used for mounting. See Zhao Feng and Gu Chunhua, *Ornamental Patterns From Ancient Chinese Textiles Mounting Silk* 中國古代絲綢設計素材圖係: 裝裱錦綾卷 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue chubanshe, 2017).

<sup>50</sup> Ma Yi 馬怡, "Shuzhi congkao" 書帙叢考, *Wenshi* 文史, vol. 113, 4 (2015): 183-220.

<sup>51</sup> Hou Yan 侯雁 et al., *Zhongguo shuhua zhuangbiao cailiao zhoutou yanjiu* 中國書畫裝裱材料軸頭研究 (Beijing: Gugong chubanshe, 2014).

<sup>52</sup> Chen Huiqing 陳慧清 and Xu Shengli 徐勝利, *Sushi zhuangbiao* 蘇式裝裱 (Nanjing: Jiangsu fenghuang meishu chubanshe, 2017). Zheng Lihong 鄭麗虹, "Chiming sihai de subiao" 馳名四海的蘇裱, in *Suyi chunqiu: Sushi yishu de yuanqi he chuanbo* 蘇藝春秋: 蘇式藝術的緣起和傳播 (Jinan: Shandong meishu chubanshe, 2009), 118-20.

meticulous research yielded significant results.<sup>53</sup> Julia Murray's investigation into a series of handscroll paintings, Ma Hezhi's illustration of the *Book of Odes* (*shijing* 詩經), not only reveals how the state-patronized art project was launched, executed, and handed down, but also disclosed the inner relation between the illustration and texts from *Shijing*. According to her observation, some *Odes* illustrations were rendered in the form of pure landscape to "transcend the literary imagery" and to capture the essential "moods of the poems."<sup>54</sup> The rhetorical devices and representational strategies adopted by the illustrators partly reflects Ma Hezhi's effort to "cast the ancient poems as a living force in Southern Song culture." The official interpretation of the classics is therefore negotiated within "an intellectually and visually satisfying" representation mode.<sup>55</sup> While her discussion focuses on the illustrated handscrolls in the twelfth century, it also throws light on our rethinking of Ming poetry scrolls. Many paintings mounted on poetry scrolls are so-called "make-up illustrations" (*butu* 補圖) that were created as visual components to artfully convey the meaning of already existing texts.<sup>56</sup>

In her book *Mirror of Morality: Chinese Illustration and Confusion Ideology*, Julia Murray broadens the scope of research to Confucian-themed narrative illustrations in

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<sup>53</sup> Kohara, Hironobu 古原宏伸. "Ga maki keishiki niyoru Chuugoku setsu waga nitsuite" 畫卷形式による中國說話畫について [About Narrative Illustrations in the Handscroll Format]. *Nara Daigaku kiyō* 奈良大學紀要, no.14 (December 1985): 89-110. Julia K. Murray, "Ts'ao Hsün and Two Southern Sung History Scrolls," *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 15 (1985): 1-29; Shane McCausland, "Visual Narratology in China and Japan around 1600: A Comparative Study," in *Rethinking Visual Narratives from Asia*, ed. Alexandra Green (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), 41-59.

<sup>54</sup> Julia Murray, *Ma Hezhi and the illustration of the Book of Odes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 82-103.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>56</sup> See Shen Zhou's inscription on his painting *A Painting of the Southern Studio* 南軒圖. Before he got the chance to visit the studio, Shen made the painting on the basis of Gui Xinxue's 桂新學 preface and presented it as a gift to Ding Yao 丁曜, the owner of the Southern Studio. Shen Zhou. *A Painting of the Southern Studio* 南軒圖, preface dates to 1449, handscroll, ink on paper, 26.8x377.9 cm, National Palace Museum.

imperial China. The last two chapters of this book examine how the Ming-Qing cultural elites were involved in making and using “narrative pictures that conveyed or affirmed values associated with Confucian ideology.”<sup>57</sup> When talking about the upsurge in Confucian themed storytelling illustrations since the sixteenth century, she refers to woodblock printing, commodity painting with forged attributions, and illustrations commissioned by literati which represent some well-known historical anecdotes pertinent to Confucian ideology. Her research successfully demonstrates “the continuing vitality and variety of Confucian-themed illustrations” in the Ming-Qing period.

While Julia Murray explores pictorial works of a wide range of formats and topics, she does not touch upon the illustrations painted by Ming-Qing literati for contemporary paragons of Confucian virtues, like filial children, chaste women, and philanthropists active in local administration.<sup>58</sup> In a broader sense, some of those commemorative illustrations should also be categorized into Confucian themed paintings with “didactic efficacy.” They share discernable similarity in compositional features with those canonized paintings of moral subjects, although they sometimes appear inferior to the canonized ones in terms of delicacy and technical skills. A typical example is Wen Zhengming’s narrative illustration *The Touching Filial Piety* 孝感圖 which depicts Gu Chun 顧淳, a Suzhou native, cut off a piece of meat from his head to save his ill father.<sup>59</sup> The illustration brought abundant eulogies from Wen Peng 文彭 (1498-1573), Wen Jia 文嘉 (1501-1583), and their friends in Suzhou. Their honorific writings that follow the painting reiterate Gu's story in various

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<sup>57</sup> Julia K. Murray, *Mirror of Morality: Chinese Narrative Illustration and Confucian Ideology* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 3.

<sup>58</sup> 孝子, 节妇, 乡邦楷模

<sup>59</sup> Wen Zhengming et al., *Xiaogan tu* 孝感图, handscroll, ink and light color on silk, image: 22.2×74 cm, Liaoning Provincial Museum.



forms and try to arouse feelings of reverence from a broad reading public.

By stressing these cases, I want to call attention to some under-studied illustrated handscrolls which were utilized by the mid-Ming Suzhou literati as a vehicle of promoting their moral values and being engaged in local cultural events. Admittedly, literati, as well as painters, were involved in those handscroll projects for different reasons. They could be persuaded by their friend to fulfil their obligations in social network or simply driven by monetary remuneration.<sup>60</sup> However, the shared sense of responsibility to record local affairs and to promote moral worthies also functioned as an important driving factor. Their participation in collective handscroll projects *per se* could be understood as the embodiment of Confucian ideal. As is summarized by He Liangjun 何良俊 (1506-1573) in his diary: <sup>61</sup>

“It is a fashion among Suzhou gentlemen that the old generation is fond of promoting those up-coming youngsters. The younger also esteemed the accomplished predecessors. If one has an excellent deed, he would be praised profusely in extreme detail. Therefore [Suzhou] has sufficient literature to document to bring us evidence.”

蘇州士風，大率前輩喜汲引後進，而後輩亦皆推重先達。有一善，則褒崇贊述無不備至，故其文獻足征。

The last line reminds us of Confucius who was unable to comment on the rites of states Song and Qi for the lack of documents: “This is because there is not much in the way of culture or moral worthies left in either state. If there were something there, then I would be

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<sup>60</sup> Craig Clunas, *Elegant Debts: The Social Art of Wen Zhengming, 1470-1559* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004).

<sup>61</sup> He Liangjun 何良俊, *Siyouzhan congshuo* 四友齋叢說 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 134.

able to document them.”<sup>62</sup> He Liangjun’s summary suggests that the illustrated handscrolls on moralistic themes should be singled out as an alternative form of documents with historiographical significance in mid-Ming Suzhou.

Cédric Laurent has noticed Suzhou literati’s extraordinary preference for narrative illustration in handscroll format in the sixteenth and seventeenth century and understand it as a response to the prevailing archaism thorough the Ming period.<sup>63</sup> The sheer amount of illustrated handscroll produced in mid-Ming Suzhou partly attests to Laurent’s observation. When talking about *biehao* painting (*biehao tu* 別號圖), a subgenre of painting created according to the dedicatee’s literary name, Anne de Coursey Clapp also claims that the handscroll is the dominant format of those commemorative landscape paintings for its unmatched amenability to literary component.<sup>64</sup> However, Laurent’s, Clapp’s, and Murray’s studies on handscrolls are mainly based on illustrated ones. Limited attention has been paid to those moralistic handscrolls whose illustrations have been lost, replaced, or even have not been made since the inception of the art projects, although these kinds of

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<sup>62</sup>See Analects 3.9, “...but there is little remaining in the state of Song to document them. This is because there is not much in the way of culture or moral worthies left in either state. If there were something there, then I would be able to document them.” 宋不足徵也。文獻不足故也，足則吾能徵之矣。 See Confucius, *Analects: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, trans. Edward Slingerland (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2003), 20.

<sup>63</sup> Cédric Laurent tries to examine the cultural root of the rise of Suzhou narrative paintings, their archaistic style, and the preferred physical format (handscroll) against a broad socio-cultural context of mid-Ming China. His article establishes the connection between the revivalism at this time and Suzhou literati painters’ choice of subject and form. However, it is an open question that to what degree the revivalism in literature affected the art circle when we consider 1) the substantial divergence of opinion within the revivalist circle led by Li Dongyang 李東陽 and He Jingming 何景明 (1483-1521); 2) that those narrative paintings of classic stories, discussed in his article, were mainly created for the audience outside the literati circles. Some Suzhou artists, like Zhu Yunming and Cai Yu, showed enthusiasm for and learned from paintings of the Song dynasty but also had expressed their radical rejection again Song literature. See Shane McCausland, ed., *On Telling Images of China: Essays in Narrative Painting and Visual Culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014), 141-77.

<sup>64</sup> According to Anne de Coursey Clapp, “The hanging scroll format was rarely used because it could not accommodate the literary component.” See Anne de Coursey Clapp, *Commemorative Landscape Painting in China* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 108.

works take a large proportion in surviving handscrolls. Moreover, although they have noticed the importance of colophons and employ them to a certain extent, the textual accretions surrounding the illustrations are still positioned as "paratextual element" for reference.<sup>65</sup>

From the perspective of art history, the focus on image rather than text is beyond reproach. However, it is unacceptable to lose sight of a substantial number of un-illustrated handscrolls and the hierarchy of text over image that permeated the literati life of the mid-Ming China. I do not mean to challenge the established view about the handscroll that many inscribed texts were written after the completion of the paintings and serve as an instructive addition to the image. Rather, my research aims to call attention to an alternative group of handscrolls whose chief virtue mainly resides in their textual sections.

Although the mid-Ming saw the dramatic rise of painters' social status, it does not mean that painting, as an art form, was comparable with poetry and calligraphy in terms of cultural significance.<sup>66</sup> Men of letters (*wenren* 文人) could stand out for their versatility of painting and calligraphy, but professional painters were still marginalized in the cultural arena dominated by literati. This phenomenon can be supported by a sizable body of literature pertinent to painters' life, for instance, Zhou Chen 周臣 (d. 1535) was despised by his peers for his lower degree of learning than his disciple Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470-1524), while Qiu Ying 仇英 (1494-1552) seldom attended elegant gatherings because his

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<sup>65</sup> According to Gérard Genette, paratextual elements are not uniformly obligatory but of liminal and structural function to mediate the relation between the work and the reader. Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: The University of Cambridge, 1997), xx, 1-4.

<sup>66</sup> Chen Zhenghong, "The Combination of Painting and Poetry in Traditional Elegant Gatherings and Its Change in the Sixteenth Century" 傳統雅集中的詩畫合璧及其在十六世紀的新變. *Meishushi yu guannian shi* 美術史與觀念史 vol.7 (Nanjing: Nanjing shifan daxue chubanshe, 2009), 88-116.

unsatisfactory calligraphy and poetry writing skills made him feel inferior.<sup>67</sup>

Owing to this intellectual climate, the pictorial sections on a handscroll are not always indispensable to its structural completeness. Besides, compared to that of album leaf or hanging scroll, the painting section of a handscroll and texts on its endpaper appear rather independent of each other.<sup>68</sup> It was common for Ming dealers and collectors to detach paintings from handscrolls and remount them for profit,<sup>69</sup> but the remaining textual section continued to be circulated and appreciated. Sometimes a handscroll's value can be determined solely by the poems and calligraphy displayed on its surface. An extreme example is a handscroll painting named *Spring Morning in the Han Palace* (*Hangong chunxiao tu* 漢宮春曉圖).<sup>70</sup> Although the scroll is dominated by You Qiu's 尤求 (fl. 1570) illustrations that depict twelve life scenes in Zhao Feiyan's (d. 1 BC) story, the owner of the scroll, Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526-1590), still ascribed its merit to the textual components handwritten by three generations of Wu School calligraphers.<sup>71</sup>

By mentioning the examples above, I have no intent to downplay the significance of Chinese painting. These examples are noteworthy because they contribute to our

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<sup>67</sup> When being asked the distinction between his paintings and Tang Yin's, Zhou Chen mocked at himself and said: "[My paintings] are inferior to that of scholar Tang for the lack of several thousand scrolls of book." 只少唐生數千卷書耳。See Zhang Shunhui 張舜徽, *Yiyuan conghua* 藝苑叢話 (Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 2018), 36. Qiu Ying, owing to his humble origin, started his career as a craftsman of lacquerware. He has not received the cultivation of poetry and calligraphy therefore seldom left inscription on his painting except for his signature.

<sup>68</sup> The colophon section and the painting can exist on their own, but even though one can remove colophons surrounding a painting on hanging scroll, hardly can those colophons be displayed separately.

<sup>69</sup> Contemporary scholar Huang Peng offers a detailed account of the strategies used by dealers and collectors to obtain, detach and remount paintings for profit in Ming Suzhou. See Huang Peng, *Wumen juyan: Mingdai suzhou shuhua jiancang* 吳門具眼：明代蘇州書畫鑒藏 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2015), 375-91.

<sup>70</sup> You Qiu et al., *Spring Morning in the Han Palace* (*Hangong chunxiao tu* 漢宮春曉圖), 1568, handscroll, ink on paper, 24.5x801.2 cm, Shanghai Museum.

<sup>71</sup> The biography of Zhao Feiyan was written by Wen Zhengming, while the frontispiece was written by his eldest son, Wen Peng. The texts following the illustration were written Zhou Tianqiu 周天球 (1514-1595) and Yu Yunwen 俞允文 (1513-1579) who belonged to a younger generation than Wen Peng but still learned from Wen Zhengming.

reevaluation of those handscrolls which have not received sufficient scholarly attention for the lack of pictorial sections. One direct result of the deep-seated preference for painting over text is the improper naming of handscroll works. An illustrated handscroll may get its distinct name according to its pictorial section, while many unillustrated handscrolls were simply labeled as *xingshu juan* 行書卷 or *zashi juan* 雜詩卷 despite their essential difference in theme and content, and sank into the museums' enormous collections. A latent effect caused by such a bias is that it may reduce the richness of the handscroll and, to certain degree, distort the historical reality associated to handscroll culture. Admittedly, the complicated situation of surviving handscrolls discourages a clear-cut categorization and some in-depth discussions. My research is an attempt to provide some new interpretations of handscroll and broaden our perspectives on this peculiar format of writing and painting.

### **The sociological approach toward the handscroll**

In the past two decades, researchers of Chinese literature and arts have demonstrated enduring interest in the perspective of social relations. Theories about gift and exchange, artistic field, and materiality have been widely adopted to reveal literati and artists' everyday social interactions and the formation of distinction and taste, collective memories, shared beliefs, and cultural identities. Poems, paintings, and calligraphic pieces are believed to have served as communicative tools through which cultural elites could engage each other. The handscroll is not the exclusive focus of these studies, but as an art format featured by collective authorship and social nature, it received a considerable amount of scholarly attention.

Craig Clunas's investigation into Wen Zhengming's artistic practice within complex

networks of obligation and reciprocity is a trailblazing work in this field. Rather than taking the social context as a static background, *Elegant Debts* elucidates the constantly shifting nexus of agents which were involved in Wen's creating, dedicating, and exchanging of paintings and writings within and beyond the literati community of Suzhou. Admittedly, Clunas is neither the first scholar focusing on the reciprocal relationship based on gift-exchange,<sup>72</sup> nor the earliest one who delved into the social strategies that Jiangnan literati employed to establish their influence.<sup>73</sup> However, his richly detailed account of various social aspects of Wen Zhengming's life is still of theoretical and methodological significance.

In addition to Craig Clunas's research, a large literature on the social networks of obligation in late imperial China was produced in the 2000s and 2010s in English world. Bai Qianshen's research on Fu Shan 傅山 (1607-1684) reveals the dynamics of cultural and political forces that gave rise to the formation of the stele school and a new calligraphic taste during Ming-Qing transition.<sup>74</sup> Ailian Liu and Christina Yu's dissertations demonstrate how Yuan literati in Jiangnan area constructed their shared identity and a sense of belonging through collective activities of painting, appreciating, and colophon writing,

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<sup>72</sup> In his article about Wen Zhengming's life, Shih Shou-ch'ien argues that the exchange of art gifts would evoke widespread emotional responses from Jiangnan literati. These gifts formed a peculiar "lyrical mode" in the expression of personal experience and shared identity. See Shih Shou-ch'ien, "Calligraphy as Gift: Wen Cheng-ming's (1470-1559) Calligraphy and Formation of Soochow Literati Culture," in Cary Y. Liu, Dora C.Y. Ching, and Judith G. Smith ed., *Character & Context in Chinese Calligraphy* (Princeton, N.J.: Art Museum, Princeton University, 1999). 154-184. See also Ellen Johnston Laing, "Real or Ideal: The Problem of the 'Elegant Gathering in the Western Garden' in Chinese Historical and Art Historical Records," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88, no. 3 (1968): 419-35.

<sup>73</sup> As is mentioned by Clunas, scholars like Celia Carrington Riely have uncovered how a talented artist established and maintained a functional social network involving influential officials, eunuch parties, and other literati coterie. See Celia Carrington Riely, "Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's life: The Interplay of Politics and Art" (Ph. D. diss. Harvard University, 1995).

<sup>74</sup> Bai Qianshen, *Fu Shan's World: The Transformation of Chinese Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003).

while handscroll paintings make up a sizeable proportion of their studied cases.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, both literary scholars and art historians have noticed the emergence and popularity of portraiture in Ming-Qing period. Individual and group portraits are understood as a site of active social practices including but not limited to self-fashioning, lamenting of the past, and claims for social status or cultural identity.<sup>76</sup> Fang Xiaozhuang's monograph on the handscroll portrait of Yan Yonghui 严用晦 (1593-1658) and Mao Wenfang's series studies on inscriptions and colophons associated to Ming-Qing portraiture examine the literary interactions on the surface of the handscroll as a way to decipher the social dimension of the portrait-making process which could cost a few decades or even several centuries.

The scholarship mentioned above gleans and presents ample evidence, textual or visual, which weaves up a vivid picture of the interaction between cultural elites and the public in late imperial China. They persuasively attest to the complexity and pervasiveness of the social network behind literary and artistic practice, but the issues concerning how such networks were sustained and functioned at personal, regional, and cultural levels have not been examined in all of their ramifications. A wide range of further questions can be raised: 1) How should we understand the causal relationship between the strengthened social ties and the emergence of local identity? 2) How were the collective artistic projects planned,

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<sup>75</sup> According to Christina Yu, the literati painting (*wenren hua* 文人畫) served as “a catalyst” for the formation and consolidation of scholar community in the Yuan period. See Yu Christina Yu, “Building a Community through Painting: Fourteenth Century Chinese Scholars” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2011), 20. Handscrolls comprise half of the paintings discussed in Christina Yu's dissertation, and about three fourths in Liu Ailian's dissertation. See “Yang Weizhen (1296-1370) and the Social Art of Painting Inscriptions” (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 2011);

<sup>76</sup> Fang Xiaozhuang 方小壯, *Zeng Jing Yan Yonghui xiang chuanjuan kaoping* 曾鯨嚴用晦像長卷考評 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2005). Mao Wenfang, *Tuchengxingle*, 2008. Seokwon Soi, “Fashioning the Reclusive Persona: Zeng Jing's Informal Portraits of the Jiangnan Literati” (Ph.D. diss., University of California Santa Barbara, 2016).

organized, negotiated, and finally executed? 3) What were the immediate and long-term effects, in concrete terms, of those collective artistic and literary projects? 4) If the handscroll format offers a peculiar way to display paintings and writings, to what degree this format shaped literati's communication mode and the transmission of their works?

My dissertation aims to address some of these questions from a microscopic perspective. Based on specific cases, I want to disclose mid-Ming Suzhou literati's all practice associated with the life cycles of handscrolls, from a project's design to the allocating of tasks, from assembling textual or pictorial piece into a handscroll to the process of circulation and reception. Instead of focusing on colophons and inscriptions alone, I have tried to seek clues of surviving handscrolls from various types of extant writings by Suzhou literati, including their autographic letters and messages, self-edited chronicles, personal anthologies, memoirs, and local gazetteers. This textual evidence not only contributes to my reconstruction of a handscroll's cultural life, but also reveal the psychic realities of literati and artists who had been driven into the handscroll project by the network of obligations. James Cahill successfully challenges the traditional image of the scholar-artists aloof from material profit by uncovering their intricate engagement with patronage in late imperial China.<sup>77</sup> Clunas also draws attention to the various strategies that literati like Wen Zhengming used to deal with "unwanted debt" of paintings and writings. I will conduct my research within a much narrower scope, which is defined by two frameworks, the handscroll format and mid-Ming Suzhou. I hope my dissertation can provide a more detailed account of the pervasive acts of procrastinating, bargaining, and negotiating throughout the making process of handscrolls.

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<sup>77</sup> James Cahill, *The Painter's Practice: How Artists Lived and Worked in Traditional China* (Columbia University Press, 1995).



Bringing up the issues concerning the impact of handscroll projects, I do not mean to reduce “the finely judged matrix of reciprocal obligations”, in Clunas’s term, to a simplified pattern of social exchange,<sup>78</sup> although the mid-Ming Suzhou literati always took the handscroll as an effective vehicle to construct their public persona.<sup>79</sup> Rather, I want to complicate our understanding of the handscroll by reassessing its role in representing, promoting, and remembering public events, such as charitable activities and commemorative rites. A good model lies in Elizabeth Kindall’s research on the fundraising album that was created for reconstructing Fuyuan Monastery in Suzhou.<sup>80</sup> Her article not only demonstrates how the illustrated album made the donation appeal persuasive and effective, but also call attention to a social phenomenon in Jiangnan area that literati were deeply engaged with cultural affairs within their local communities. Following Kindall’s line of thought, I will extend my discussion to a set of cultural events in Suzhou which have been mediated by handscroll projects, such as the rebuilding of the Filial Chen’s (*Chen xiaozi* 陳孝子) shrine and the restoration of Fan Zhongyan’s 范仲淹 (989-1052) charitable property in the early sixteenth century. I argue that some handscrolls in the hands of Suzhou literati, to a certain degree, served the internal communication need within the local community and allowed their audience to experience contemporaneous events with immediacy and authenticity.<sup>81</sup>

From the angles of literary study and book history, the sizable quantity of handscrolls

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<sup>78</sup> Craig Clunas, *Elegant Debts*, 145.

<sup>79</sup> See Wu Kuan 吳寬 et al., *Preface for Xu, the Filial Child* (Xu Xiaotong xu 徐孝童序), 1478, handscroll, ink on paper, 27.5x512 cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.

<sup>80</sup> Elizabeth Kindall, “Envisioning a Monastery: A Seventeenth-Century Buddhist Fundraising Appeal Album,” *T’oung Pao*, 97 (2011): 104-59.

<sup>81</sup> My discussion about the communication function of the handscroll is also inspired by Heiko Droste and Kirsti Salmi-Niklander’s study on handwritten newspaper. See Heiko Droste and Kirsti Salmi-Niklander, *Handwritten Newspapers: An Alternative Medium during the Early Modern and Modern Periods* (Helsinki, Finland: Finnish Literature Society, 2019), 7-26.

in mid-Ming Suzhou also provides justification to rethink the dominant means of textual production and circulation in literati circles at this time. The mid-Ming is a transitional phase in which commercialized publishing enterprises began to burgeon while the manuscript remained a vital format of publication. The high cost of raw material and hiring woodblock carvers was still a restraint for literati to publish their works.<sup>82</sup> Living writers, according to Suyoung Son's observation, seldom had chance to see their works in print before the seventeenth century.<sup>83</sup> In this sense, there is no surprise that many mid-Ming literati, including some high officials, relied heavily on handwritten manuscripts, especially those in handscroll format, to preserve and circulate their compositions.

Besides economic concern and the manuscript's peculiar artistic and social prestige which woodblock printing could not afford, mid-Ming literati's preference for this format can also be attributed to its controllable readership. The limited number of copies allowed writers to circulate their works within a circumscribed social spectrum or among targeted audience group. To a certain degree, they were free of concern for official censorship and unwanted criticism from intellectual or literary rivals. For this reason, mid-Ming literati usually kept a tight rein on their works in printed form but held an open attitude toward their writings inscribed on manuscripts or art pieces.

Lihong Liu suggests that the making of commemorative albums in the late sixteen century "heralded" the surge of compiling poetry of recent poets or poets in late Ming.<sup>84</sup> However, surviving poetry manuscripts produced individually or collectively by mid-Ming

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<sup>82</sup> Cheng Zhangcan 程章燦. *Shike kegong yanjiu* 石刻刻工研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008).

<sup>83</sup> Suyoung Son, *Writing for Print: Publishing and the Making of Textual Authority in Late Imperial China*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018), 1-4.

<sup>84</sup> Lihong Liu, "Collecting the Here and Now: Birthday Albums and the Aesthetics of Association in Mid-Ming China." *The Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture*, (April 2015): 43-91.

literati indicate that the handscroll, instead of the album, was the dominant format to hold poems with thematic or temporal coherence.<sup>85</sup> Such a fashion of editing and making poetry handscrolls can date back as early as Chenghua period (1465-1487). Since the 1470s, officials in central government and the *jinshi* candidates in the Hanlin Academy showed an increased interest in compiling poems submitted for or composed on elegant gatherings and some other special occasions.<sup>86</sup> As is recorded by Huang Zuo 黃佐 (1490-1566) in his *Hanlin ji* 翰林記: “Members [of the poetry club] have to compose poems every time they meet. [The poems] will be assembled as scroll for the purpose of preservation” 每會必賦詩，皆成卷，以備家藏。<sup>87</sup> It can be deemed as a direct outcome of the burgeoning trend of forming literary societies (*wenhui* 文社) and poetry club (*shihui* 詩會). The poetry handscroll, in its turn, allowing for immediate and low-cost reproduction and circulation of literary works, functioned as a significant material factor that bound like-minded poets with “communicative glue.”<sup>88</sup> As is stated by Wang Ao 王鏊 (1450-1524), an eminent scholar-official from Suzhou: <sup>89</sup>

“In blooming season or moon-lit nights, whenever these gentlemen have spare moments, they always get together. They hold banquet and write a linked-couplets, or sometimes,

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<sup>85</sup> Solid evidence can be found in poetry manuscripts which preserved the collective composition of poems and lyrics on the theme of “Falling Blossoms” (*luohua* 落花) and “The spring in Jiangnan” (*jiangnan chun* 江南春), two famous long-lasting poetry projects that took place across sixteenth-century Jiangnan region. Related research includes Peter C. Sturman, “Presenting Mortality: Shen Zhou’s Falling Blossoms Project.” *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture* 2, no. 1 (2015): 92-133; Wang Xiaoli 王曉驪, “Wumen huajia de Jiannan chun cihua chuanzuo” 吳門畫家的江南春詞畫創作, in *Sanwu wenren hua tiba yanjiu* 三吳文人畫題跋研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2013), 187-93.

<sup>86</sup> Ye Ye 叶晔, *Mingdai zhongyang wenguan zhidu yu wenxue* 明代中央文官制度與文學 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue chubanshe, 2011), 209-38.

<sup>87</sup> Huang Zuo, *Hanlin ji*, 351.

<sup>88</sup> P. David Marshall, ed., *The Celebrity Culture Reader* (London: Routledge, 2007), 193.

<sup>89</sup> Wang Ao’s 王鏊 (1450-1524), “Preface dedicated to Gentleman Xu, the Councilor of Guangdong” 送廣東參政徐君序, in *Wang Ao ji* 王鏊集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2013), 189-90.

compose poems on assigned specific things. An initial poem always receives answering pieces. They compete with one another for beautiful words and arcane allusions. Those poems usually join together into a long handscroll, circulating within and outside our state.”

花時月夕,公退輒相過從,燕集賦詩,或聯句,或分題詠物。有倡斯和,角麗搜奇,往往聯為大卷,傳播中外。

The large number of literary societies and active factional interactions featured prominently in the literary scene of the Ming dynasty.<sup>90</sup> The poetry handscrolls produced at this period allow literary historians to synchronize the evolution of Ming literati's association with changes in literary and cultural trends, and even with the vicissitude of the state. In his attempt to reveal the foundation and influence of Li Dongyang and his poetry school, He Zongmei refers to a host of “records” (*ji* 記) and “prefaces” (*xu* 序) which were composed for the collectively executed poetry scrolls.<sup>91</sup> Chen Zhenghong and Wang Di conduct a series of research on mid-Ming literati culture in Suzhou with special focus on artworks “combining painting and poetry” (*shihua hebi* 詩畫合璧), in which illustrated handscrolls hold an overwhelming proportion.<sup>92</sup> According to Chen, the Ming period saw

<sup>90</sup> According to the statistics in He Zongmei's research, approximately 680 literary societies and poetry clubs were formed throughout the Ming period, while about 430 were active during the periods from Chenghua to Wanli. See He Zongmei 何宗美, *Wenren jieshe yu mingdai wenxue de yanjin* 文人結社與明代文學的演進, vol. 1 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2011), 9. See also Jian Jinsong 簡錦松, *Mingdai zhongqi wentan yanjiu* 明代中期文壇研究 (Ph. D. diss., National Taiwan University, 1986); Liao Kebin 廖可斌, *Mingdai wenxue fugu yundong yanjiu* 明代文學復古運動研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1994), 55-89, 187-244; Xie Guozhen 謝國楨, *Mingqing zhiji dangshe yundongkao* 明清之際黨社運動考 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 2004).

<sup>91</sup> See He Zongmei, *Wenren jieshe yu mingdai wenxue de yanjin*, 177-203. Another example is a timeline made by He Zongmei that reflects the elegant gatherings arranged by scholar-officials who obtained *jinshi* title in the year of *jiashen*, 1464 (*jiashen tongnian hui* 甲申同年會). *Ibid*, 182-84.

<sup>92</sup> Wang Di 汪濤, *Mingzhongye Suzhou shihua guanxi yanjiu* 明中葉蘇州詩畫關係研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai wenhua chubanshe, 2007); Chen Zhenghong 陳正宏, *Shihua hebi shi congkao* 詩畫合璧史叢考 (Hangzhou: Zhongguo meishu xueyuan chubanshe, 2019).

the gradual waning of poetry while the painting had been elevated to a higher place in cultural hierarchy. As the gap of social prestige between these two art forms narrowed, the combination of painting and poetry” in handscroll, album or hanging scroll format became increasingly popular and served as a “communication tool” (*shejiao gongju* 社交工具) among social elites in Jiangnan area.<sup>93</sup> Despite their insightful perspective, Chen and Wang's studies did not transcend the research tradition that employs handscrolls as a source of information, with little consideration of the agency of the handscroll *per se* in social and literary interactions. Comparatively speaking, Xu Yanping's discussion on Qing handscroll portraits grapple in particular with the handscroll's material features and their roles in producing meanings.<sup>94</sup> Xu suggests that colophons written on a handscroll are located within, in Bourdieu's term, "a space of positions and position-takings." The colophon writers had to deal with both the particular physical attributes of the handscroll itself and the influence of the existing works, producing “distinction” and claiming to a “position” for their own writings in a social space relative to each other. This article is one of the rare studies that singled out the handscroll as a focal point. My investigation into the mode of interaction that is shaped by the handscroll format, therefore, is especially indebted to Xu's exploration.

In sum, the sizeable body of existing research reflects contemporary scholars' enduring interests in handscrolls. A variety of scholarly attempts have been made to reveal different dimensions of the handscroll as well as its literary, intellectual, historical, and artistic values. However, a broad range of questions concerning the handscroll's ambivalent

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<sup>93</sup> See Chen Zhenghong, “Shihua hebi yu jinshi zhongguo shishen de shejiao fangshi” 詩畫合璧與近世中國士紳的社交方式. Chen Zhenghong, *Shihua hebi shi congkao*, 59-79.

<sup>94</sup> Xu Yanping 徐雁平, “Qingdai xiezhaoxing shoujuan jiqi wenxueshi yiyi” 清代寫照性手卷及其文學史意義, *Wenxue pinglun* 文學評論, no.3 (2017): 201-11.

identities and multiple roles, as have been mentioned in this section, are still need in-depth discussion and necessitate an interdisciplinary study. My dissertation focuses on the peculiar function that the handscroll performed in actualizing and articulating the literary, regional, and cultural affiliations among the mid-Ming literati. My emphasis on the handscroll's materiality, on the ways how Suzhou literati materialized their shared memories and made sense of their community through the use of the handscroll, is stronger than that of previous research. I hope my investigation will unfold the material story presented in Suzhou handscrolls and provide an alternative explanation for the rise of Suzhou literati in mid-Ming period.

### **Suzhou Literati and Their Cultural Images in Handscrolls**

From the fifteenth century onward, Suzhou recovered from the devastation caused by the dynastic transition, and gradually developed into the cultural and economic center in the Yangtze delta. It is commonplace among scholars working on mid-Ming Suzhou to emphasize the burgeoning commercial economy and bewildering urban life as the characteristics of the city's cultural image.

The dramatic expansion of the commercial economy and booming handicraft industry in Suzhou laid a solid foundation for developing handscroll culture. Under the pressure of heavy taxation, agricultural land use was intensive in the Jiangnan region. Local people had to grow commercial crops, such as cotton and mulberry trees, and to manufacture value-added products in order to pay off the tax, whose rate was about four times as high as that of other provinces. One of the direct results of this agricultural inclination was the

dynamic growth in the textile industry, including silk weaving and embroidery, <sup>95</sup>two commercial products essential for handscroll making.

Suzhou, in proximate to the Lake Tai and the Grand Canal, was also one of the geographically significant points along the north-south axis of water transportation. The vibrant commercial market and prosperous trade gave Suzhou people easy access to high-quality goods products nationwide, including first-class stationery such as paper, pigment, ink cake, and brushes. <sup>96</sup>Artists in Suzhou, professional or amateur, were free from the anxiety for the lack of refined materials for writing and painting. The bustle of urban life in Suzhou also charmed experienced craftspeople of diverse professions from neighboring provinces. They came to Suzhou and earned their livelihood in studios or factories in which individualized craft traditions and styles were developed freely. Literati artists in Suzhou benefited from this because they could negotiate with craftsmen in stationary profession and get material for artistic creation with customized design.<sup>97</sup>

Along with the newly emerging pursuit of refined lifestyle and worldly pleasure, mid-Ming Suzhou witnessed unprecedented prosperity in craftsmanship such as mounting, seal carving, and the making of curios and antiques.<sup>98</sup> A related phenomenon was the formation of the style with the local specialty, which were labeled as *suyang* 蘇樣 or *suyi* 蘇意

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<sup>95</sup> Fan Jinmin 范金民 and Jin Wen 金文, *Mingqing jiangnan sichoushi yanjiu* 明清江南絲綢史研究 (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 2016), 76-137.

<sup>96</sup> Fan Jinmin 范金民. *Mingqing jiangnan shangye de fazhan* 明清江南商業的發展 (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 1998), 26-46.

<sup>97</sup> Robert Hans van. Gulik, *Chinese Pictorial Art as Viewed by the Connoisseur* (Roma: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958), 309-10

<sup>98</sup> Wu Jen-shu 巫仁恕. *Pinwei shehua: Wanming de xiaofei yu shidafu* 品味奢華—晚明的消費社會與士大夫 (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye youxian gongsi, 2007); Robert Thorp and Richard Vinograd. *Chinese Art & Culture* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2006), 339-41.

(literally, “Su mode” or “Su style”), spreading from Suzhou across the nation.<sup>99</sup> The Suzhou style mounting reached its heyday after a long-term development since the Song dynasty. With conspicuous regional features like peculiar pattern design, color blending and choice of textile materials, Suzhou mounting were identified as an ideal mode that could exactly embody the literati interests and tastes. It is not coincidental that most leading figures in the Suzhou literati community formed a close friendship with mounting craftsmen.<sup>100</sup>

Besides the aforementioned economic factors and material guarantee, also essential to our examining of handscroll culture in Suzhou was the fashion of society-building and factionalism, which characterized the cultural landscape of the Ming.<sup>101</sup> Although Suzhou is not the only place that saw an increasing number of poetry clubs and literary societies, the social bonds and interactions within Suzhou's local community were so durable and complicated that deserve scholarly attention.

From the mid-fifteenth century onward, a wide range of societies and associations were established by Suzhou elites for various purposes. Some took the form of study groups for young scholars to hone literary skills and to prepare for the civil examinations; some were established by scholar-officials to strengthen regional identity and to cope with factional conflict, and some were loosely organized by like-minded literati for entertainment and recreation. In such specific cultural settings, the handscroll format

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<sup>99</sup> Fu Xiaotong 付曉彤, “Wuyu mihuan: Zhongguo gudai wuyao yanjiu” 物慾迷幻中國古代物妖研究 (Ph. D. diss., Nanjing yishu xueyuan, 2019); Fan Jinmin 范金民, “Suyang, Suyi, Mingqing Suzhou Lingchaoliu 苏样苏意明清苏州领潮流,” *Journal of Nanjing University*, vol. 50, no. 04 (2013): 123-41.

<sup>100</sup> See Zhou Jiazhou, “Zhizhong zhuanghuang” 知重裝潢, in *Zhuanghuang zhi tushuo*, 61-63.

<sup>101</sup> Based on Chen Baoliang's research on Chinese literary association, Michel Hockx points out that “the Ming period, especially the late Ming, is traditionally seen as the heyday of society-building and factionalism.” See Michel Hockx, *Questions of Style: Literary Societies and Literary Journals in Modern China, 1911-1937*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2011).



gradually won the favor of Suzhou literati in pace with their growing enthusiasm for collective literary and artistic activities. It was believed to be an effective vehicle of collective expression of shared belief and memory. Those collaborative artistic and literary projects “operate on many levels of aggregation and touches many facets of associative life,”<sup>102</sup> deepening the participants' attachment to Suzhou emotionally, historically, and culturally.

To further my inquiry concerning the relationship between literary association and collective handscroll projects, I hope to transcend the conventional categorization of literati collective groups. Many contemporary scholars adopt a perspective tinted with structural functionalism, splitting up literary societies according to their goals, such as aggregating people who passed the imperial examination in the same year (*tongnian hui* 同年), grouping fellow provincials (*tongxiang* 同鄉) or entertaining the senior and retired officials (*yilao* 怡老).<sup>103</sup> I do not mean to refute such a method of categorization. Rather, my research will demonstrate that some handscrolls provide us with a complicated picture of how literati groups co-existed, overlapped, and intertwined in the mid-Ming.

Beginning in the Chenghua period, multi-authored handscrolls were produced in Suzhou on an unprecedented scale. The collaboration of literati and artists in handscroll projects gradually settled down into a communicative pattern. To those cultural elites residing in Suzhou area, the handscroll helped them to strengthen regional identity and fulfill their social obligations as “the local;” while to Suzhou scholar-officials serving in the

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<sup>102</sup> Jay Winter, “Sites of Memory and the Shadow of War,” *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, 61.

<sup>103</sup> He Zongmei 何宗美, *Wenren jieshe yu mingdai wenxue de yanjin* 文人結社與明代文學的演進, vol. 1 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2011); Chen Baoliang 陳寶良, *Zhongguo de she yu hui* 中國的社與會 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1996).

central government, the handscroll could not only facilitate their communication with colleagues and other literati factions with similar political orientations but also bridge their connection with the young generations of scholars from their hometown.

A good example for the local literati groups is a handscroll titled *The Virtue of a Recluse in Mount Bao* (*baoshan yinde* 包山隱德).<sup>104</sup> It was executed by ten Suzhou literati who were associated to several literati groups, including the editorial panel of Suzhou's local gazetteer and revivalist poetry clubs.<sup>105</sup> Despite their disagreement over scholarly affiliation and literary taste, they participated in the commemorative project, expressing normative sentiments to Lu Jun 陸俊 (1409-1492), a minor official who protested strongly against heavy taxation exerted on Suzhou people. The shared sense of responsibility for recording local events and memorable figures were explicitly summarized in one colophon written by Zhu Yunming 祝允明 (1460-1526): “Wu (Suzhou) is a superior state of documents and objects. If a gentleman who live in this town has one good word or one excellent deed, gentleman must record it and keep it from falling into oblivion.” 吳文物上國，士居其鄉有一言一行之善，其君子必錄之不使泯泯無傳。

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Equally noteworthy are those handscrolls collectively created by Suzhou scholar-officials who assumed positions in the central government. These people's social status,

<sup>104</sup> The handscroll is also known as *A Preface for Recluse Lu's Seventieth Birthday* 行楷書壽陸隱翁七十序. See Wao Ao 王鏊, et al., *A Preface for Recluse Lu's Seventieth Birthday*, 1784, handscroll, ink on gold decorated paper, 27.3x218.6cm, Shanghai Museum.

<sup>105</sup> For instance, Wen Zhengming, a member of editorial panel of *Gazetteer of Gusu*, got to know a recluse named Lu Jun when compiling local history, and led his disciples to inscribe on the commemorative handscroll for Lu. *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> See Zhu Yunming's preface inscribed on the handscroll *Promoting agriculture in Xukou*. Wen Zhengming and Zhu Yunming, *Promoting agriculture in Xukou* 胥口勸農圖卷, 1525, handscroll, ink on paper, Palace Museum in Beijing. See also Lihong Liu, “Path, place, and pace in mid-Ming Suzhou landscape painting” *Res Anthropology and Aesthetics* 67/68 (2016/2017): 207-24.

political orientation, and literary influence imbued the handscrolls with multi-layered cultural meaning. The mid-Ming period witnessed the emerging of Suzhou literati as a new force in political arena through imperial examinations. From 1439 to the end of the Ming dynasty, Suzhou produced eight *zhuangyuan* 狀元. The *jinshi* candidates from Suzhou outnumbered that from any other part of the Jiangnan area.<sup>107</sup>

When talking about Suzhou literati, some literary scholars and art historians tend to emphasize their indifferent attitude toward officialdom and unrestrained individualistic style. Two well-known examples are Shen Zhou and Tang Yin: Shen has never prepared for civil examination while Tang was deprived of the qualification to pursue an official career, and always fashioned himself as an eccentric iconoclast. However, the sense of depression and frustration that threads Tang's oeuvre partly suggests how important was the imperial examination to a literatus in Confucian society, not to mention literati painters like Wen Zhengming and his son who had tried the examination more than nine times.

Knowing Suzhou literati's attitude toward officialdom is essential to understand their association in the capital city and sustaining effort to produce handscrolls. Arranging regular elegant gatherings and collective handscroll projects, senior scholar-officials like Cheng Minzheng 程敏政 (1445-1499), Wu Kuan, and Wang Ao successfully introduced young scholars into the center of cultural power. Just as the aforementioned quote from He Liangjun's 何良俊 (1506-1573) diary: It is a fashion among Suzhou gentlemen that predecessors are fond of promoting those up-coming youngsters.” 蘇州士風，大率前輩

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<sup>107</sup> Throughout the Ming dynasty, Suzhou produced 1055 *jinshi* candidates. Chang Sun Kang-i and Stephen Owen, eds, *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*. vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 38; see also Fan Jinmin 范金民, “The Numbers, Geographical Distributions and Characteristics of Jinshi in Ming-Qing Jiangnan Area” 明清江南进士数量、地域分布及其特色分析. *Journal of Nanjing University (Philosophy, Humanities and Social Sciences)*, 02(1997): 171-78.

喜汲引後進。<sup>108</sup> Young scholars would be happy to have their names adjacent to prominent officials and leading figures of literary communities. Although it is not safe to posit to what degree young scholars could benefit from their interaction with those eminent officials and literary elites, an interesting phenomenon is that many Suzhou literati, like Zhao Kuan 趙寬 (1457-1505) and Mao Cheng 毛澄 (1460-1523), had developed a harmonious relationship with those senior officials through handscroll projects before they passed the *jinshi* examination. These cases will be discussed in detail in Chapter 1.

In addition to supporting and promoting young scholars, Suzhou officials also used the handscroll to augment their influence in the literary field. In the last two decades of the fifteenth century, the dominant voice in poetry was that of Li Dongyang and his Chaling School (*chaling pai* 茶陵派),<sup>109</sup> the first Ming poetry school (*shipai* 詩派) in strictly Chinese terms.<sup>110</sup> Departing from the clichéd and bland cabinet-style literature (*taige wenxue* 台閣文學), Li and his fellows tried to resurrect a time-honored poetic tradition that emphasizes linguistic novelty and the expression of fresh life experience. They gradually established their fame not only through many literary gatherings in Beijing but also through their cooperation and conflict with other groups of revivalists, such as “Former Seven Masters” (*qian qizi* 前七子).<sup>111</sup>

Suzhou poets, especially the associates of Wu Kuan and Wang Ao, retained friendly

<sup>108</sup> He Liangjun 何良俊, *Siyouzhan congshuo* 四友齋叢說 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 134.

<sup>109</sup> Lin Jiali 林家驪 and Sun Bao 孫寶, “Chaling shipai xinlun” 茶陵詩派新論, *Wenxue pinglun* 文學評論, 5 (2009): 159-64; Sima Zhou 司馬周, *Chaling pai yu mingzhongqi wentan yanjiu* 茶陵派與明中期文壇研究 (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 2010)

<sup>110</sup> Wang Shan 王山, “Mingdai wenxueshi shang de Li Dongyang he chaling pai” 明代文學史上的李東陽和茶陵派, *Gudian wenxue zhishi* 古典文學知識, 2 (1986).

<sup>111</sup> Liao Kebin 廖可斌, *Mingdai wenxue fugu yundong yanjiu* 明代文學復古運動研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1994), 55-89.

relations with members of the Chaling School, yet there was a subtle, ambiguous tension between these two literati groups. On the one hand, Li appreciated Suzhou literati's achievement but still refused to include poets like Wu Kuan into the roster of Chaling School. Li explicated the reason in his jottings: “Wu gained his fame before passing the examination...and had developed his own style” 未第時已有能詩名...自成一家。<sup>112</sup> On the other hand, Suzhou literati, owing to their frequent poetic exchanges with Chaling poets, earned a reputation as “the aides to the Chaling School” (*yuyi chaling* 羽翼茶陵, literally “the flank of Chaling”).

What matters is not the question of whether Suzhou poets belonged to the Chaling School, but the manners in which these two groups mutually constructed each other. The handscrolls that were produced at this time can give us a better understanding of Suzhou literati's strategy to employ Li Dongyang's influence and to seize cultural capital for themselves in the literary field. Kang-i Sun suggests that the influence of Suzhou poetry may partly account for “the changes wrought over time in the cabinet-style poetry.”<sup>113</sup> Surviving handscrolls, such as *Yuyan Pavilion* and *Return to Mount Wu from Officialdom* (*wushan guilao* 吳山歸老), [21] perfectly attest to her assumption. These handscrolls, preserving first-hand accounts of literary interaction and the scenes of poetry cultivation, inform us of how Suzhou poets infused their regional style into the burgeoning revivalism poetry.

In summary, the handscroll is better understood as a mode of communication that can encompass different voices and a catalyst for literati association, rather than simply

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<sup>112</sup> Li Dongyang 李東陽, *Lutang shihua* 麓堂詩話, in *Lidai shihua xubian* 歷代詩話續編, ed. Ding Fubao 丁福保, vol.2 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), 1393.

<sup>113</sup> *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*. vol. 2, 39.

an art format of painting and calligraphy or a container of texts. The literati in mid-Ming Suzhou embraced the handscroll as an effective means of presenting their ideas, demonstrating their literary achievement, seizing cultural capital, strengthening shared local identity, and perpetuating their individual and collective memories.

## **Chapter Outlines**

This dissertation is divided into three chapters according to three important phrases of a handscroll's cultural life, namely, inscribing, making, and appreciating.

From a material perspective, Chapter 1 explores the various writing practices in relation to handscrolls, including colophon writing, poetry games, and collective composition for commemorative purposes. Considering handscrolls as writing objects, I shift the attention from their "content" to their "materiality." The process of writing is therefore understood as the complicated negotiation between writers and the material surface of a handscroll. I want to argue that material attributes of the handscroll can significantly impact the ways in which colophons are carried out, preserved, and perceived. I start with a survey of some of these attributes, including but not limited to the texture of paper, the ink grids on silk, and the space left by early colophons. My research may complicate the generally accepted, but a little dubious, images about the act of writing as always characterized by an unrestrained style and spontaneity. One cannot render his or her colophon in a proper manner on the surface of a handscroll without fully consideration of both the physicality of the scroll and already existed writings.

The brief survey is followed by three case studies. The first one addresses a series of poetry handscrolls collectively executed by Suzhou scholar-officials to materialize their

memory about elegant gatherings. The second case study focuses on some poetry handscrolls that were produced as a particular means to pay tribute to Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1102) whose literature and lifestyle exerted great influence on mid-Ming Suzhou literati. The poems written on these handscrolls not only bear thematic and linguistic similarity to Su Shi's works, but also were handwritten in a manner that has a notable resemblance to Su's calligraphy. These handscrolls facilitated the Suzhou literati's collective expression of their particular literary taste and shared cultural beliefs. The third case study examines the writings on three commemorative handscrolls. They were created for three local paragons of virtue in Suzhou, one farmer who devoted himself to flood control, one filial child who cured his mother of serious disease, and one minor official who protested for Suzhou people against heavy taxation and conscripted labor. The writings on handscrolls connected the audience to local occurrences in a timely fashion, strengthened their sense of belonging, and enriched the cultural image of Suzhou.

Chapter 2 focuses on the making of handscrolls. I try to reveal Suzhou literati's interaction with artists and craftsmen in the process of collecting, assembling, and mounting those isolated literary and artistic pieces into a handscroll. With textual evidence gleaned from letters, diaries, and jottings written by Suzhou literati, I hope to resurrect the social and cultural contexts in which handscroll were executed, and to present a more detailed picture of the handscroll culture in mid-Ming Suzhou. My study demonstrates how the sense of social obligation and economic factors influenced executors of handscroll projects. I want to emphasize the significant role that intermediaries and dealers played in commissions of handscrolls, which has long been underrated. The first case study in this chapter explores a series of handscrolls that bear the handwriting of Fan Zhongyan. People

of the Fan family had these scrolls remounted again and again in order to keep them clean and fresh. The well-preserved handscrolls became a locus for commemoration attracting local elites across generations. As the fame of the scrolls spread in the Jiangnan area, the Fan family successfully expanded their influence, restored their ancestral shrine, and regained the charitable farmland which had been confiscated by the government in early Ming. The second case study investigates a handscroll project initiated by Shen Zhou in his old age to raise funding for the restoration of a shrine. The shrine was built to commemorate a filial son, Chen Lixing, who was active during the Song period and deified as a Taoist icon in the Ming. Shen Zhou and his associates produced a handscroll, had it circulated within the Suzhou area. Participants of this project were varied, ranging from young scholars, professional painters, minor officials from neighboring cities. Their sustained effort demonstrates local literati's continuing enthusiasm for local administration in a Confucian society. The story about the filial son has been retold again and again in colophons with noticeable textual variation and finally took shape in biography in Suzhou's local gazetteer. The scroll provides an ideal window into an interesting facet of handscroll's social life as well as its engagement with literary practice, historical writing, political propaganda.

Chapter 3 deals with the appreciation of handscrolls. It takes the handscroll as a multi-sensorial object that has its own agency in the interaction with the audience and surroundings. Attention is paid to various colophons and anecdotal accounts in which handscrolls were perceived visually, tangibly, and even olfactorily, as well as to handscrolls' entanglement with locality and memory practice. Handscroll can establish the manifold links between audience and authors, the past and the present, the viewers, and the



environment where the viewing practice take place. I investigate how and to what degree the peculiar temporal and spatial structures forged by the handscroll format provide material and emotional conditions for remembrance.

The case studies in this chapter discuss the process of historicizing the experience of viewing handscrolls in mid-Ming Suzhou. I account handscrolls as the “sites” that can encapsulate the miscellaneous experience and engage groups of people to collectively share the past. The first case study is about the handscrolls that have been used as time marks to anchor memory at individual, collective, and cultural levels. The second case study is about a landscape painting named *Dayao Village* (*dayao cun tu* 大姚村圖) and its imitated copy that was made by Shen Zhou after the loss of the original version. The vicissitude of the handscroll’s cultural life, loss and return, are symbolically related to Suzhou’s history. The handscroll facilitated the exchange and transmission of memories. From a perspective of cultural geography, literary accounts of viewing experience can be understood with reference to the emerging awareness of local identity in mid-Ming Suzhou. The handscroll provides a perfect window through which we can see the mutual construction of Suzhou’s cultural image and significance of the handscroll through the continuing practice of appreciating and colophon writing.

## Chapter 1 Writing on Handscroll as Material Practices

This chapter explores the material nature of the textual accretions on handscroll paintings and calligraphic works. When being unrolled, a handscroll can be visually consumed as an aesthetic work or serve as physical support for recurring acts of inscribing. The physical condition of a handscroll, such as scribal status of textile or paper, decides how a piece of text is inscribed and perceived. Texts on its surface, including written characters and seal impressions, also impact the handscroll's cultural life.

The categorization of writings inscribed on artworks varies with reference to different standards. Generally, writings in verse form are termed as *tihua shi* (題畫詩 literally, “poem inscribed on painting”) while ones in prose form as *tiba* 題跋 (literally, “inscription and colophon”).<sup>114</sup> It is common to use “inscription” as the English substitute for *ti* 題 which are written by the painters themselves, and “colophon” for *ba* 跋 or *tiba* 題跋 which are written by viewers.<sup>115</sup>

*Tiba* has become an independent literary genre since the Song period. Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) and Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045-1105) demonstrate great enthusiasm for writing colophons on the paintings they had viewed. Their persistent efforts made *tiba* an

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<sup>114</sup> The definition sometimes seems confusing because *tiba* also refers to the commentary texts written by bibliographers, which is also known as *shumu tiba* 書目題跋 (bibliographic *tiba*). Moreover, *tiba* can be used as a general concept of all textual works inscribed on the surface of artistic works or general objects, such as walls or stelae. It, in some cases, includes poetic inscriptions or colophons. The use of “inscription” and “colophon” to translate *tiba* is an unsatisfactory compromise, because in Euro-American traditions of art, there is no commensurate practice of writing such a huge quantity of texts on the same surface of the painting.

<sup>115</sup> See Lee, De-nin D. “Colophons, Reception, and Chinese Painting.” *Word & Image*. 28, no. 1 (2012): 84-99. See also Liu Ailian, “Yang Weizhen (1296-1370) and the Social Art of Painting Inscriptions” (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 2011). Yu Christina Yu, “Building a Community through Painting: Fourteenth Century Chinese Scholars” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2011). Wenxin Wang, “A Social History of Painting Inscriptions in Ming China (1368-1644)” (Ph.D. diss., Leiden University, 2016).

integral part of Chinese painting, especially of literati paintings.<sup>116</sup> However, not all texts in the form of *tiba* have been inscribed on the surface of an artistic work. As one of the favorite genres, *tiba* has been widely used by literati outside the context of connoisseurship.

Inscriptions and colophons preserve abundant historical and cultural information and attract interpretation from various perspectives. Compared to the rich scholarly works that explore the content of *tiba*, less attention has been paid to the act of writing *tiba* and its relations with writing materials. This chapter tries to reveal the particular ways in which handscroll, as a material support, accommodate, mediate, and store writings. The act of writing should be deemed as the interaction between the inscriber and the materiality of handscroll.

The material features of handscroll affect the act of writing mainly in many ways. The structured space on handscroll both invites and limits viewers to leave their own comments or responding works. A typical example is Shen Zhou's handscroll painting *Serenely Appreciating Potted Chrysanthemum* (*Penju youshang tu* 盆菊幽賞圖). On the colophon paper following the painting, there are three autographic poems by Wu Kuan, one of Shen's best friends. However, Fu Han's 傅瀚 colophon informs us that Wu's works were composed purely to fill up the blank space (*saibai* 塞白) between the painting and the

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<sup>116</sup> The writing of *tiba* does not specify a location on a painting. A piece of *tiba* could be written on the painting, the margin of the mounting frame, the textile that segregates painting from endpapers, endpaper, or a piece of separate paper that accompanies the work during its circulation and is waiting for being mounted into it in the future. Sometimes, the information concerning the original moment and material conditions in which *tiba* was created can be found in writers' signature, marked out by certain words such as *juanhou* 卷後 (literally "after the scroll") and *lingzhi* 另紙 (other paper). Paintings are not the only medium of *tiba* writings. The text of *tiba* can be found in diverse media such as manuscript, stele, printed book, embroidery, and even the surface of object like porcelain work or seal stone. Through their long cultural lives, *tiba* writings have chance to shift back and forth between the category of paratext of paintings and the category of independent literary works.

wooden roller at the left end.<sup>117</sup> Secondly, inscribers of a handscroll would be inevitably influenced by preexistent texts. During some collective appreciation activities, connoisseurs are requested to write on the sites adjacent to each other. It is a difficult task to create something innovative without changing the tone set by previous writing. Thirdly, when facing a handscroll that is filled with colophons, a new inscriber has to seek for a solution to squeeze his own work into the cluster of texts. For instance, Zhuang Chang 庄昶 (1437-1499), a Zhejiang official, once missed a farewell gathering for his friend and found that the gift handscroll was full of colophons. He had to write his poem on a piece of separate paper with a remark “Begging for being included [in the handscroll]” 乞求纳入.<sup>118</sup> Seen in this light, the acts of writing on handscrolls are more complicated than they are often assumed to be as an unrestrained and impromptu activity during elegant gatherings.

Literary accounts of the process of writing on handscrolls always emphasize the spontaneity, quick-wit and the unrestrained style, which is termed as *manbi* (漫笔, literally “random brush”). There is a host of historical anecdotes and stories that depict the literati persona finishing a perfect colophon in an instant. However, the fact is that most inscribers are meticulous in their writing because the mistake that they could make, no matter how small it is, is indelible on the surface of the handscroll.

Several pieces of instruction in manuals of painting skills allows a few reasonable inferences of the process of writing:

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<sup>117</sup> Original text reads: 匏庵少之, 用掇拾三疊如右, 蓋卷長資 以塞白. See Shen Zhou 沈周, *Serenely Appreciating Potted Chrysanthemum* 盆菊幽賞圖, the late 15th century, handscroll, ink and color on paper, painting: 23.4x86 cm, Liaoning Provincial Museum.

<sup>118</sup> Li Dongyang et, al. *Retiring and Going back to Mount Wu* 吳山歸老圖卷, 1487, handscroll, ink on paper, Dafeng tang in Hongkong.

“Sometime, inscriptions written by literati also appear inappropriate to the positions in which they were placed. Someone writes characters with bold strokes [on the side of] images delineated with fine lines; someone’s paintings were created by expressive brush work but accompanied by characters in standard style.”

或文士所題，亦有多不合位置。有畫細幼而款字過大者，有畫雄壯而款字太細者，有作意筆畫而款字端楷者；<sup>119</sup>

“If [you] are unsatisfied with your inscriptions, write a running-style ‘leading version’ in advance” 若嫌題款不稱意，行書引本先預備。<sup>120</sup>

“Leading version” (*yinben* 引本), also known as “shadowy version (*yingben* 影本), is kind of draft written on semi-transparent paper. The writer could put this copy on the surface of a handscroll to see what visual effect it may create.

The quotes above are from two manuals written in the Qing dynasty, but still can give us a general picture of the practice of inscribing. At least the act of writing is not as easy as is recounted in anecdotes and jottings. The rest of this chapter will go into detail about how inscribers dealt with their writing materials and designed their colophons.

## 1.1 Paper, silk, and other writing materials

On April 8, 1068,<sup>121</sup> Lin Xi 林希 (1025-1101) had a piece of Shu silk mounted into

<sup>119</sup> Zheng Ji 鄭績 (1813-1874), “Lun tikuan” 論題款, *Menghuan ju xuehua jianming* 夢幻居畫學簡明 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin meishu chubanshe, 2017), 38.

<sup>120</sup> Dai Yiheng 戴以恒 (1826-1891), *Zuisuzhai huajue* 醉蘇齋畫訣, in *Hualun congkan* 畫論叢刊, ed. Yu Anlan 于安瀾, vol. 3 (Kaifeng: Henan daxue chubanshe, 2015), 953-54.

<sup>121</sup> The original text reads: 熙寧元年戊申三月丙子。See Mi Fu 米芾, *Poems written on Shu Silk* (*Shusu tie* 蜀素帖), 1088, handscroll, ink on silk, 27.8x270.8cm, Palace Museum in Taipei.

a handscroll. This piece of silk textile was characterized by the fine grids on its surface, termed as *zhusi lan* 朱丝欄 (literally, “vermilion thread grid”), which were woven by dyed silk in the color of red. The textile was finished in 1044 (*qingli jiashen* 慶曆甲申) and had been collected by Lin’s family for more than twenty years. Lin’s remark at the left end of the silk reads: “.... It is already mounted now, [I] will ask people who is well versed in calligraphy to inscribe on its front section” 今既裝褙將屬諸善書者題其首. After eight years passed, however, this scroll of silk had not been filled with any calligraphic works. On May 1, 1075,<sup>122</sup> Lin’s friends paid a visit to him and appreciated this blank scroll on which there was nothing but Lin’s short note. Hu Wanfu 胡完夫, one of the visitors, articulated their encounter with this handscroll in his colophon beside Lin’s remark: “Together with..., [I] visited Zizhong’s (Lin Xi’s courtesy name) Eastern Garden of Shao Family on invitation, [we] viewed this scroll several times.” 與...同赴子中邵氏東園之招，觀此數遍。The blank silk scrolls therefore gained a new dimension in this context. Even though neither painting nor calligraphy work has been executed on its surface, the scroll’s unique texture, physical condition, and artistic potential made it a beloved object of Lin Xi and his friend. Thirteen years later, this blank scroll was filled up by Mi Fu 米芾 (1051-1107), one of the four great calligraphy masters in Song dynasty, and finally became a phenomenal calligraphy specimen in Chinese art history, “Poems written on Shu Silk” (*Shusu tie* 蜀素帖).

This anecdote seems to be an extreme example about the attention that was given to the material for writing. Different types of silk or paper, owing to their different extent of

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<sup>122</sup> 熙寧八年四月十四.

absorbance of ink, smoothness, and color will cause various visual effect when encountering the tip of brush. The close relationship between the material support and calligraphic creation has been well illuminated by Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322), a famous painters and calligrapher in the Yuan dynasty, through an analogy between the brush and a horse, “the brush cannot move smoothly on the surface of coarse paper just like a horse cannot run fast on muddy land.” 譬之快馬行泥淖中其能善乎。<sup>123</sup>

Mi Fu’s story has a counterpart version in the Ming dynasty. In 1513, Li Dongyang received a blank handscroll made of Ningbo silk fabric (*Ningbo juan* 寧波絹), a kind of plain tabby weave,<sup>124</sup> from Dong Wangji 董王己 (fl.1505), one of Li’s disciples who got a second rank in the civil examination at the palace which was hosted by Li Dongyang in 1505. Li was asked to transcribe his recent poetry works on the scroll. The pleasant textile and Dong’s zealous invitation made him happy. We may have a better understanding of Li’s psychology at this time if taking into consideration that Li has retired from the position of Minister of Personnel Branch for one year and was being criticized by his rivals in both political and literary arenas. A channel of promulgating his literary ideas appeared more important for him than ever before.

He recorded the process of writing on this scroll in his colophon: “Every time when it was sunny and warm, [I] went directly to study room, asking servant to ground ink cake and wait for me [to write].”<sup>125</sup> The scroll consists of several sections of silk fabric and Li did not fill them up with his poems exclusively. Instead, he left one section for Cui Jie 崔

<sup>123</sup> The original text reads: 書貴紙筆調和，若紙筆不佳，雖能書亦不能善也。譬之快馬行泥淖中其能善乎 see Lu You 陸友, *Yanbei zazhi* 研北雜誌, in *Siku quanshu*, vol. 866, 608.

<sup>124</sup> Li Dongyang 李東陽, *Autographic Poems in Running Script* 行書自書詩卷, 1513, handscroll, ink on silk, 36.4x743.5cm, Hunan Provincial Museum.

<sup>125</sup> 每遇晴天暖日，徑造書室，令家僮磨墨以侍。Ibid.

傑, a native of Suzhou who passed the imperial exam in the same year as Dong, to inscribe other works. Then Li recorded the whole process on a separate piece of paper that was attached to the scroll. Li's depiction of his cautiousness when inscribing the poems can be understood as a cliché used in response to the request from friends. However, it also shows his cherishing of the rare material for writing.

Although the artistic revivalism in early Ming period made silk textile became the major medium for painting again as it was in the Song era, paper was still the favored material for the act of writing. The economic reason is apparent, paper, as an inexpensive medium, was often preferred to silk. Even though the weaving industry has gone through dynamic commercialization and technological development since the fifteenth century, paper was still much cheaper than silk textile woven for writing, such as twill damask (*ling* 綾) and plain tabby weave (*juan* 絹).<sup>126</sup> A more important reason is the flexible absorbency of paper which “allowed for a broader range of dynamic effects” of ink.<sup>127</sup> Since the reign of Emperor Hongwu (r.1368-1398), calligraphy has been listed into the content of civil examination. The growing importance of calligraphic performance give rise to increasing use of paper as writing medium, which could catch the artistic detail and style of a writer more effectively than silk.

Inscriptions composed by Ming literati preserve copious records of how high-quality paper has sparked enthusiasm of artistic creation. When Zhang Xuan 張宣(1341-1373)

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<sup>126</sup> Each *pi* of the twill damask (*lin* 綾) costed a hundred and twenty guan 貫 while a sheet of paper cost one penny (*wen* 文). See Qin Peihang 秦珮珩, “Mingdai wujia jilu” 明代物價輯錄, in *Mingdai jingjishi shulun cong chugao* 明代經濟史述論叢初稿 (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1959), 146-7.

<sup>127</sup> Jerome Silbergeld, *Chinese Painting Style*, 9; Craig Clunas, *Art in China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 135.



was invited to view Su Shi's calligraphy specimen, the collector prepared colophon paper for him to write his comments. Zhang wrote in the address: "The paper that Maocai offered is rather excellent, therefore I compose two poems and gave him as a gift." 茂才出此紙頗佳，因書二詩以遺之，至正乙巳春張宣識。<sup>128</sup> Sometimes the colophon poems would be neatly composed or severely selected just to be match the high-quality writing material. "Three times I have read the poem 'Northward Travel' in admiration, which never fail to live up to the Langan paper [bamboo paper]" 三歎北游詩，不負琅玕紙。<sup>129</sup> From the perspective of the inscriber, only the excellent poetic works like 'Northward Travel' are comparable to the paper that holds them.

An interesting issue is that the patrons or collectors may have different feelings about the materials than artistic practitioners. In a piece of note by Wang Shizhen 王世貞, he depicted the process how a painting was collaboratively made on the base of a horizontal paper scroll:

"Recently I obtained some Korean style cocoon paper (*gaoli gongjian*) that is as white as jade. In the summer, Qian Shubao (Qian Gu 錢穀) passed my place, and I asked him to make "Deep and beautiful creeks and mountains" in the format of long and narrow scroll. The composition is inherited from the artistic lineage of Huang Ziji (Huang Gongwang 黃公望), but mixed with the mature brush techniques of Qinan (Shen Zhou 沈周)...During the period of time [after its completion], local celebrities in Wu area all compose songs to express their admiration."

<sup>128</sup> An Qi 安岐 (1683-?), *Moyuan huiguan lu* 墨緣彙觀錄, *juan* 2, reprinted in *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu* 中國書畫全書, vol. 14 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2009), 352.

<sup>129</sup> Li E 厲鶚, "Ji Wu Minggao" 寄吳鳴皋, in *Li E ji* 厲鶚集, annotated by Luo Zhongding 羅仲鼎, vol. 2 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 2016), 450.

余近獲高麗貢繭，潔白如玉，夏月錢叔寶見過，令作矮行長幀淺色溪山深秀圖。結法一脈流自黃子久，而間以啟南老筆，蒼古秀潤，絕出蹊徑之外。一時吳中名士俱作歌賞羨之<sup>130</sup>

*Gaoli jianzhi*, owing to its superiorly white color and pliability, was a kind of paper highly valued by painters in Ming dynasty because on the one hand, it was believed to be the paper used in the Jin dynasty (266-420), the first heyday of Chinese calligraphy, on the other hand, its surface, when absorbing ink, can produce a unique blotted and blurred effect.<sup>131</sup> It is conspicuous that Wang, the consignor of “Deep and beautiful creeks and mountains” and the patron of Qian Gu, wrote this colophon in great excitement because he acquired the paper and finally made it an excellent artwork. The painter, Qian Gu, however, was unsatisfied with the physical condition of this paper scroll. A piece of Qian’s jotting reflects his mild dismay. “Recently, [I] worked with Inspector Wang Yuanmei (Wang Shizhen) from Taicang, to create “Deep and beautiful creeks and mountains,” the spirit is fully represented in a delicate manner, but [the painting] is completed by assembling several sections of cocoon paper. It is a little unsatisfying” Qian preferred to wield his brush on long pieces of paper which had been produced originally in considerable length, rather than on the jointed scroll. The seams between every two sections of paper affected his composition or painting.

However, the techniques of making paper have set an upper limit to paper’s length.

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<sup>130</sup> Wang Shizhen’s 王世貞 colophon on Qian Gu 錢穀, *The Deep Beauty of Streams and Mountains* (*Xishan shenxiu tu* 溪山深秀圖), 1571, handscroll, ink on paper, painting: 18.9x359.8 cm, Shanghai Museum.

<sup>131</sup> Lothar Ledderose, *Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000). Liu Renqing 劉仁慶, *Zhongguo guzhi pu* 中國古紙譜 (Beijing: Zhishi chanquan chubanshe, 2009).

During the process from fiber pulp to formed sheet, its essential dependence on molding instrument made its length subject to the size of the background board.<sup>132</sup> It is rather different from textile that can be made into more than ten meters long (one *pi* equals 13.2 meters), although its width is also limited by the width of the loom's warp yarn. The long edges of papers that were acquirable in market during the Ming period could not exceed eight *chi* (measuring approximately 248 cm) or six *chi* (c.186 cm). The long paper handscrolls that are extant today also corroborate this conjecture since most of these horizontal paper scrolls consist of several sections of paper rather than being made of single sheet of paper.

The majority of paper used in poetry handscroll belongs to a category named letter paper (*jianzhi* 箋紙), which was mass produced for daily writing. Different from the paper designed for painting, letter paper is much thinner, glossier and of close texture. When making letter paper, craftsmen would flatten both sides of the paper by pressing it with smooth stone.<sup>133</sup> The surface is as tough as cocoon paper, which is mentioned before, but the cocoon-like coarse fiber would be polished. Owing to intensive use of decorative patterns or dye colors by manufacturers, the paper produced in this period of time was rich in style and appearance.

Letter paper (*jianzhi* 箋紙) was widely used to deal with various literary tasks in daily life, such as drafting official documents, composing poems, writing letters and so on. The length of these paper ranged from one *chi* (measuring approximately 31 cm) to three *chi*

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<sup>132</sup> Jacob Eyferth, *Eating Rice from Bamboo Roots: The Social History of a Community of Handicraft Papermakers in Rural Sichuan, 1920-2000* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), 27-35.

<sup>133</sup> Jiang Xuanyi 蒋玄伯, *Zhongguo huihua cailiao shi* 中國繪畫材料史 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1986), 61-65.

(c.93 cm), but their heights were less varied, which was approximately between one *chi* to one and half *chi*. As common stationery in literati's studio, letter paper was always easily obtained. There is no surprise it served as primary choice of writing material during some occasionally initiated literary games.

Scholar-officials working in the Hanlin Academy sometimes preferred another type of paper, the answer sheet for civil examinations (*tizhi* 題紙). People who served as the supervisors and graders of the imperial examinations, no matter at provincial level or palace level, had to seclude themselves in examination hall until the publication of the exam results. Poetry game was always a favored entertainment that could release them from the onerous task of grading. A piece of commentary attached to Weng Fanggang's 翁方綱 (1733-1818) poem shows that "answering poems in examination hall are often written in the extra section of the paper for examination" 闈中倡和多用題紙餘幅.<sup>134</sup> It is difficult to judge whether those answer sheets were of better quality than other kinds of paper. However, the use of them appears more like an avowal of the poets' honorable identity, because only few Hanlin scholars would be trusted by the emperor and installed as examiners or graders.<sup>135</sup>

In the aforementioned case, the silk ground of Mi Fu's calligraphic work *Shusu tie* is characterized by the lines which were woven with dark color silk thread. Such a technique was also used in the manufacture of paper. No later than Song era, paper craftsmen in Bo

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<sup>134</sup> Weng Fanggan 翁方綱, "Dingxuan who served as inner court examiner asked me to inscribe on the scroll of poems by gentlemen during civil examination" 定軒給諫充內簾監試官以闈中諸公唱和詩艸裝卷屬題。In *Fuchuzhai shiji* 復初齋詩, *juan* 61, see *Qingdai shiwenji huibian* 清代詩文集彙編, vol. 381 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2010), 574-5.

<sup>135</sup> It could be well illustrated by the records in the chronicles of some high officials' life, like Wang Ao and Li Dongyang. They had applied for retreat from officialdom several times but were refused by the ruler who asked them to be in charge of one or two more civil examinations.

state mastered the technique of adding colored fibers into semi-manufactured paper pulp in order to create regular grids or columns on the surface of the paper they made.<sup>136</sup> The gridded or squared paper could discipline the writing practice and give the text a formal and tidy appearance. According to an entry in Mi Fu's *Shushi* 書史, a bibliographic record of his private collection, he had viewed a calligraphy specimen executed in the Six Dynasties (222–589), on which the text were inscribed on a scroll of yellow-colored, squared silk (*huangsu* 黃素). The horizontal borders of each cell were woven by black silk threads while the vertical lines were drawn by brush and cinnabar ink.<sup>137</sup>

Even though the gridded paper or silk, as raw material for writing, became easy to achieve due to the development of handicraft industry and increasing division of labour in art market in the Ming period, calligraphers preferred drawing grids by their own hands to using the already-made products when writing colophons or creating calligraphic works because they could adjust the height and width of cells or columns according to the specific contexts. On an illustrated poetry handscroll that were written by Can Yu in collaboration with his teacher and schoolmates, *Tea Party at Mount Hui*,<sup>138</sup> Cai's poetic lines were neatly laid out on grid pattern delineated by vertical lines (see figure 1.2). The grid reminds

<sup>136</sup> 宋毫間紙有織成界道者謂之烏絲欄。See Li Zhao 李肇 (fl. 813), *Guoshi bu* 國史補, vol. 2, in *Jiaofang ji wai qizhong* 教坊記外七種 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2012), 83. Yu Jiacy 余嘉錫 has a detailed account for “wusi lan” 烏絲欄 in his scholarly jottings about book binding, see Yu Jiacy 余嘉錫, “Wusi lan jiehang” 烏絲欄界行, in “Shuce zhidu bukao” 書冊制度補考, in *Yu Jiacy wenshi lunji* 余嘉錫文史論集 (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1997), 513-5.

<sup>137</sup> 黃素縝密上下是烏絲織成欄其用硃墨界行。Feng Wu 馮武 (fl. 1640), *Shufa zhengzhuān* 書法正傳, *juan 9*, *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 826, 448.

<sup>138</sup> Wen Zhengming et al, *Tea Party at Mount Hui* (*Huishan chahui tu* 會山茶會圖), ink and color on paper, 21.8x67.5, Palace Museum in Beijing. The scroll represents a gathering at Mount Hui, in modern Wuxi. There is another version collected by Shanghai Museum, but Xu Bangda and Fu Xinian believes that some colophons preserved in the Shanghai version, which are attributed to the Ming calligraphers, are fake. See *Zhongguo gudai shuhua jianding shilu* 中國古代書畫鑒定實錄, vol. 3 (Beijing: Zhongguo chubanjituan, 2011), 1305.

The painting was attributed to Wen Zhengming while the poems were written by Cai Yu, Tang Zhen and Wang Chong.

viewers of the appearance of bamboo slips which were always laid side by side and tied together by cords. It was a common binding method widely used before the mass production of paper. The grid pattern, as an archaistic design allocating the space on the surface of endpaper, grants the manuscript a peculiar tint of grandeur and elegance.<sup>139</sup> On this section of endpaper there are no horizontal lines except upper and bottom borders, so the inscribers enjoyed more freedom to arrange space of each character according to the complexity of strokes. However, they tried to make each regulated verse occupy two and half lines respectively. Different from the endpaper that holds slat-like column, the colophon paper adjacent to painting is squared, on which Cai Yu wrote an introduction in small standard script, the very script in which he wrote best. Squared space was distributed evenly to each character.

It is apparent that the grids on the end of *Tea Party at Mount Hui* were drawn by hand because joints of ink lines and borders are not sealed perfectly (see figure 1.3). The drawing of grids needs a border ruler (*jiechi* 界尺), a specially designed tool which are often used by painters when they draw straight lines of buildings. The border ruler is characterized by a groove on its surface, which is parallel to its long edge. When drawing the grid, the operator would hold one brush and one stick in one hand, keep the distant between the stick and the tip of the brush steadily, and move stick along with the groove. The brush, which is being hold between another two fingers, will leave a trace on the surface of paper. The excessive popularity of “paintings drawn by border ruler” (*jiehua* 界畫), such as *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* always gives us an impression that the ruler is just a

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<sup>139</sup> Anne Burkus-Chasson, *Through a Forest of Chancellors: Fugitive Histories in Liu Yuan's Lingyan ge, an Illustrated Book from Seventeenth-Century Suzhou* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2010), 25-26.

necessary tool for painters however, it is also one of the common tools in literati studio. As is written in Wang Wenbai's 汪文柏 (fl. 1662-1722) poem on the border ruler: "Black thread grid on cocoon paper, goes vertically and horizontally without a tiny flaw."<sup>140</sup> The juxtaposition of two images, grid and cocoon paper, reveals that the act of gridding paper might be rather frequent in literati's daily life

An interesting phenomenon is that drawing ink grids, a seemingly boring and mechanical job, was always done by the writers themselves rather than being delegated to an assistant or servant. As a preparative act, drawing grids shares similar function as other ritualistic acts before writing, such as cleaning desk and grinding ink cake, which are believed to help the writer to calm down and to ruminate on the content of writing. The daily practice of Zhi Jian 支鑒, a native of Suzhou and a calligrapher who excel in standard script like Wen Zhengming, serves as an example. "Every morning when he got up, he wiped the desk and drew the grids by his own hands and then wrote hundreds of characters in standard script or copied the characters that were inscribed on steles standing in temples or in front of graves."<sup>141</sup> The characters, consisting of strokes of unified width, accord with a sense of solemnity evoked by the neat grids.

There is a degree of resemblance between the slat-shape grid and the column in printed books. Traditional bibliographers also use gridded paper as the writing support to preserve their findings, comments, exegesis and other kinds of formal writings in the process of their

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<sup>140</sup> The original text reads: 繭紙烏絲欄,縱橫不少異.因君直以方,啓我思敬義. Wang Wenbai 汪文柏 (fl. 1662-1722), *Keting yuxi* 柯庭餘習, Guxiang lou edition, *juan* 9 (Harvard-Yenching Library Chinese Rare Books Digitization Project-Collectanea, 1705), 14b.

<sup>141</sup> The original text reads: 每旦起,拂拭几案手界烏絲欄,作百十楷字蠅頭蟬翼具有尋丈之勢,或請書宮廟墟墓碑版莊體勻畫無異. Feng Guifen 馮桂芬 (1809-1874), Li Mingwan 李銘皖 (1880 *jinshi*) et al, eds., *Suzhou fuzhi* 蘇州府志, tongzhi edition, *juan* 109 (Nanjing: Jiangsu shuju, 1882), 16a-b.

bibliographic research. Li Dongyang once wrote a biography for a local elite named Xu Ben 徐本 whose only hobby was collecting books. “Every time when he obtained a book, he would proofread the text in person. If he found typos or missing characters, he would draw black thread grid on paper and invite adepts in calligraphy to inscribe the supplemental texts.”<sup>142</sup>

In comparatively few circumstances literary works were written directly on an already-made handscroll. An exception might be the occasion of collectively viewing some extremely valuable works. For example, one of Fan Zhongyan’s calligraphy works was mounted into handscroll and collected by his progeny as a family heirloom. Within a span of four hundred years from late Song to early sixteenth century, visitors were only allowed to view the handscroll in the shrine of the Fan family on specific occasions. The rare opportunity and limited time have forestalled colophon writers to inscribe a delicately composed colophon on the surface of endpapers. Many of them finally chose to write just few words as a mark of viewing, in order to avoid making errors and causing irretrievable damage to the scroll.

The hosts of literary gatherings seldom asked guests to directly write on the surface of a scroll for several practical reasons. Firstly, the impromptu work might be imperfect and need further modification. Secondly, the unfolding of a long handscroll demands a rather long desk which were not always available during the game, since those games may take place at a dining room, a pavilion, a boat, or a scenic point, rather than at a studio or study room. Sometimes, writers had to make do with unsatisfactory material conditions for

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<sup>142</sup> The original text reads: 獨嗜書,每得一書手自披對缺板脫字則界烏絲欄紙乞善書者補之。Li Dongyang 李東陽, “Ducheng gulao zhuan” 都城故老傳, in *Huailu tang ji* 懷麓堂集, *juan* 71, in *Siku quanshu*, vol. 1250, 745-7.



writing. When writing in sequence on an already-made handscroll, a later writer has to wait until the ink trace of previous writer is completely dry so he or she can roll up that finished section and expose another blank section of endpaper. Meanwhile, other poets would have little chance to read the finished poems.

The distribution of prepared paper can solve this problem, just as that was recorded in a colophon on a handscroll named *Official Zhou's Viewing Lanterns and Linking Verse* (*Zhou Guan guandeng lianju tujuan* 周官觀燈聯句圖卷): “On the ground of yard [the host] prepared a banquet and eight people sat around. Someone is stretching the paper and writing quickly, someone is holding the letter paper and circulating it to others, someone is thinking about his own couplet or weighing the words used in poems. A young servant, standing by the desk, was grinding the ink. It is the scene of the Lantern Festival in Wang Chengxian's garden which was pictured by Zhou Guan.” 在地庭列長筵八人團坐其間或伸紙疾書或擘牋傳觀或搜索尋思或推敲作勢一童子就几磨墨此王成憲真愚軒元夕觀燈聯句而周官爲之補圖者也<sup>143</sup>

A more detailed account of how a poetry game took place can be found in a piece of annotation in *Ming shi jishi* 明詩紀事.

“It started to rain at dusk. [The host] therefore ordered servants to prepare dishes, fruits and vegetables and put them on a table and asked them prepare another small table aside for leisurely conversation...Gentlemen composed verse for entertainment and thus suggested that they should select a person as the master of the game who can be in charge of the rules, prize and punishment. Zhao Lifu (Zhao Kuan) was asked to

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<sup>143</sup> Gu Wenbin 顧文彬, “Zhouguan guandeng changyong juan” 周官觀燈倡詠卷, in Gu Wenbin 顧文彬 (1811-1889), *Guoyunlou shuhua ji* 過雲樓書畫記, *juan 3* (Harvard-Yenching Library Chinese Rare Books Digitization Project-Collectanea, 1882), 11a-12a.

propose the title and rhyme of the poem...During the game of linking verse, the six guests had nothing to do when one guest was holding the brush and pondering his own couplet. Each round would cost half an hour or forty-five minutes. We felt bored by this. Therefore, Zhao asked people to split paper in to seven pieces, each of which was as wide as a palm. Before taking his own turn, one can compose another poem. The master would judge whether the poem was good enough. I offered six pieces of small paper to gentlemen and left one for myself...”<sup>144</sup>

日暮雨作，乃命家僮出肴核蔬菜陳列几上，又令別設一小案具紙筆以待，諸君叙坐...諸君作長句為樂因復請立一人為詩監以典賞罰留駁就請命題以趙栗夫為之...方聯句時一客秉筆構思則六客無事一巡詩至須待二三刻余以為不樂乃僭立一令裂紙如掌闊者七紙請於趙栗夫曰聯句未至時請各自述一詩述不當者詩監主之栗夫曰諾余乃以六小紙散諸君之前而自留其一。

The body movement of writing on a scroll is quite different from that of viewing a handscroll. The latter one need the viewer to unroll a bit at a time, about one arm's length was exposed each time. The scroll can be held by hands, put on the viewer's lap or on a table. However, writing on handscroll need a solid support, like a table or desk, which have to be long enough to expose more than several feet of the scroll to make sure the ink trace would dry before the scroll's being rolling up.

Combining the material attributes of handscroll with these anecdotal accounts, we gain a glimpse into the process how the writing practice took place during literati's elegant gatherings. The composing and inscribing of colophons have not been possible without a

<sup>144</sup> Yang Xunji 楊循吉, “Qiren lianju shiji” 七人聯句詩記, in Chen Tian 陳田 (1849-1921), ed., *Mingshi jishi* 明詩紀事, 187 *juan* edition, *bing* section 丙籤, *juan* 8 (Guiyang: Tingshizhai, 1899), 12a-14b.

full consideration of all agents involved, including the physical settings and material attributes of the handscroll.

## 1.2 Rethinking the Visual Effect of the Writings on Handscrolls

The following part will investigate the social meaning and cultural connotation that can be conveyed materially on the surface of a handscroll. When unrolling a handscroll, no matter at what length the scroll is exposed, a viewer will first encounter the physical layout of the material surface, such as the size of the paper or textile piece, the placement of images and texts, and the margins that delineate the canvas.

The intensive writing practice on the surface of handscroll not only textually constitutes its artistic and historical renown, but also build up its peculiar visual potential. The latter, in some circumstances, appears to be a more important factor that can influence the reception and understanding of a handscroll. Viewers tend to use *leijuan* 累卷 (piling up on scroll) or *yingjuan* 盈卷 ([scroll] full of...) to describe such a situation that the surface of a scroll has been filled with brush traces left by antecedent inscribers.

This situation would exert great pressure on emerging colophon writers, since they had to struggle to get rid of the shadow casted by their predecessors and to create something innovative. The “anxiety of influence” can be well illustrated by a piece of postscript that accompanies Zhu Wen’s poem on the handscroll *Yuyan Pavilion*:

Yuyan Pavilion was newly completed, and the scroll is filled with superior works. I also, after the gentlemen, [celebrated] the inauguration. Following the rhyme scheme, I managed to compose four couplets and presented them [to the master]. My words are

awkward and vulgar, the spring in the garden must be able to rinse them for me.

玉延亭新成，高作盈卷。生亦曾後諸公共落，勉次四韻奉呈。詞語拙惡，園中清泉必能為我一洗。

Zhu is a native of Suzhou. His poetic line “A new examinee from Suzhou in this year” 蘇郡今科門下士 suggests that he just passed the civil examination in the spring of 1484. However, he showed great modesty when reading poems that were inscribed by his elder townsmen like Wang Ao and Chen Jue, who have assumed official positions for a long time. In addition to the praise for the garden and the pavilion, he also expressed gratitude to Wu Kuan, the owner of the garden, for allowing him to join this elegant gathering.

In the process of writing on handscrolls, “the person of the writer” is situated into a network woven by pre-existing texts and functions as “a component of an assemblage of material participants.”<sup>145</sup> When an inscriber plans the initial composition, he or she has to fully consider not only the contents of the writings which have already occupied the surface of a scroll, but also their formats, genres, and scripts. Only then, an inscriber can make his or her own contribution without disrupting the consistency and continuity of the whole body of writings on a scroll.

One of Wang Mian’s (1310-1359) representative works, *Plum Blossom* 梅花圖, was highly valued by literati in the Ming period because it is also a rare copy of Wang’s autographic inscription that was written in the same frame as the image.<sup>146</sup> It has attracted a host of viewers in Suzhou including Gu Lin 顧璘, Zhu Yunming 祝允明, Wen

<sup>145</sup> Jacob Haubenreich, *The Materialities of Writing in Rilke’s Die Aufzeichnungen Des Malte Laurids Brigge* (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2013), 5.

<sup>146</sup> Wang Mian 王冕 et al., *Painting of Plum Blossom* 梅花圖, 1346, handscroll, ink on paper, Shanghai Museum.

Zhengming 文徵明 and Cai Yu 蔡羽 to leave their remarks on the attached endpapers.  
(see figure 1.5)

Gu's colophon is no more than a piece of concise jotting. It is written in semi-cursive script and characterized by a quick and unrestricted style. He praised the offspring of Wang Mian for preserving their ancestor's painting carefully. Gu's colophon was followed by Zhu Yunming's piece. In contrast, Zhu's writing was rendered in a different hand, which is much closer to regular script. Zhu focused on the inscription left in the same frame as the image and evaluated its influence in the development of Chinese calligraphy since the mid Yuan period. Wen Zhengming's comment is separated from Zhu's by another piece of colophon written by Wang Feng 王丰, but develops Zhu's argument by offering more historical details about the Wang family. Differing from all other sections of this scroll, the paper used by Wen Zhengming had been gridded by ink lines before he started to inscribe. His writing therefore was endowed with a visual effect like the page in a printed book. Cai Yu, one of Wen's disciples, inscribed right after him. The opening sentence of Cai's colophon reflects his anxiety: "Gentlemen have already stated the conspicuous lineage through which [the handscroll] has been passed on from father to son, from elder brothers to the younger. Needless to give unnecessary details." 其父子兄弟相傳之盛諸公已言，不俟贅也。 However, Cai finally created his own work by tracing the artistic roots of this influential calligraphy specimen back to Jin and Tang period. His piece is not delineated by grids like Wen's, but also carries with it a sense of gentility through regular script, a formal mode of writing.

Even though written on three separate pieces of paper, each of Zhu, Wen and Cai's colophons was placed in similar position on the paper with approximately equal distance

to the upper edge. Whether the unified marginal space was left by the inscribers intentionally is an open question, because such an effect can also be attained in the process of mounting. The craftsman can level the texts by cutting off or adding paper slices. However, it is discernable that all three inscribers have paid ample attention to the composition and arrangement of their characters in order to keep the length of the last line compatible with that of the others. Incorporation of seals and signature into colophons may partly help inscriber to keep the balance between the ending line and the adjacent one. Seal impressions, red in color and sometime wider than the written character, can save the short ending line from being unacceptably abrupt.

The scribal status of Wen Zhengming's colophon provides an extreme example of spatial planning on the surface of endpaper. The space between grids is occupied perfectly by all characters and two seal impressions, which looks like a column in a newspaper. Several possible measures could be taken to achieve this visual effect. When drawing the grids, Wen might have already finished his manuscript and have a clear idea about the number of characters that he would inscribe. However, given that the space of each character is not distributed evenly, it is also safe to infer that Wen might have to made minor adjustment during the process of writing. The layout of this scroll shows that preexisting colophons may play an active and meaningful role in reconfiguring the writing practice of successors. It may force inscribers to consider carefully the placement, composition and forms of their writing.

The visual effect of textual accretions, sometimes, is equally important as their contents, especially on those handscrolls collaboratively executed for gifting purpose. Take farewell handscroll (*songbie juan* 送別卷) for instance, a sequence of crowded endpapers

which are filled with autographic poems by friends would be deemed as material representation of the recipient's social status or meritorious personality.

On the mid-autumn festival of 1508, Dai Zhao 戴昭 (fl. 1505-1520), a young scholar from Anhui who had studied with Tang Yin in Suzhou for one year, started his journey back home. His Suzhou friends held a farewell banquet at Hanging Rainbow Bridge (*chuihong qiao* 垂虹橋).<sup>147</sup> During the banquet, each participant composed one pentasyllabic quatrain and one lyric poem to the tune of "Washing River Sand" (*huanxisha* 浣溪沙). The extant version of this scroll, which is collected by Metropolitan Museum of Art, is only one part of the original one. It contains only thirty poems on it instead of fifty as is recorded by Zhu Cunli 朱存理 (1444-1513), an active player of this literary game at Hanging Rainbow Bridge. Even so, thirty poems on the scroll still filled a viewer named Wang Yu 汪昱 (fl. 1610) with admiration:

The gentleman Dai, Mingfu, got along with [Suzhou literati] and received poems which filled up a handscroll. Was it because Mingfu's words and deeds were so loyal, faithful and respectable that he seemed affable and admirable? If it was not the case, Mingfu was neither the only person who visited Suzhou nor the only one who departs at Hanging Rainbow [Bridge], why was he the only person who made so many local celebrities highly value him to such a degree and see him off in this way?

戴君明甫與之遊，獲其詩累卷。抑明甫之言語事為忠信篤敬可欲而可慕歟。不然，何客蘇者非一明甫，別垂虹者亦非一明甫，而獨能致諸名士重之以辭若是

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<sup>147</sup> Tang Yin et al., *Farewell at the Bridge of the Hanging Rainbow*, 1508, handscroll, ink on paper, painting: 29.7x107.6 cm, Cleveland Museum of Art.

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From Wang's paragraph, we can see that the very visual effect formed by the crowded gift poems on the scroll was believed to be a telling evidence of Dai Zhang's perfect personality.

For scholars of higher social status and greater literary fame, who always served as the host of literary games, those densely packed poetry handscrolls delegated to them should be understood in a broader socio-political context, because the process of collaborative production of handscroll was always related to factionalism and claimed shared belief and taste in literati community. In a lamenting poem written by Wang Ao to his close friend Wu Kuan, Wang depicts a detail in Wu's life: "Exchanging poems fill up the containers of scrolls, inviting friends to intoxicating talks." 倡和辭盈帙，招邀醉洽旬<sup>149</sup>. *Zhi* 帙 is a kind of container designed to hold scroll-shaped documents. Commonly, a *zhi* is made of textile or bamboo and decorated with paper or brocade. It can also contain the endpapers before their being mounted into a scroll. Instead of providing general impression of Wu Kuan, Wang's poem captures the image of Wu's manuscript container that is full of poems. Such an image can be understood as a metonymy of Wu's amiable personality and his central status among Suzhou literati.

To sum up, this section provides a brief account of the interaction between the materiality of handscrolls and inscribers, drawing attention to handscroll's material features and their shaping influence on writing practice. I attempted to complicate the generally accepted, but a little dubious, images about the act of writing as always characterized by an unrestrained style and spontaneity. In fact, one cannot render his or her colophon in a

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Wang Ao 王鏊, "Wu Wending gong wanci" 吳文定公輓詞, see *Wang Ao ji* 王鏊集, ed. Wu Jianhua 吳建華 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2013). 96.



proper manner on the surface of a handscroll without fully consideration of both the physicality of the scroll and already existed writings. The following three case studies carry on the agenda of preceding investigation. The first two cases focus on poetry handscrolls executed by Suzhou scholar-officials who assumed position in the capital city, revealing how the handscroll served as an effective vehicle to comprehensively manifest their voices and cultural tastes. The third one pays more attention to the communicative function the handscroll fulfilled by bridging the connection within and beyond local literati communities.

### **Case 1: Literary Gathering and Poetry Handscrolls Created by Suzhou Scholar-officials in Beijing**

On November 15 and 19, 1491,<sup>150</sup> Wu Kuan and Wang Ao arranged two farewell banquets for their friend Xu Yuan 徐源 (1432-?), a native of Suzhou who would be sent on an imperial commission to Henan 河南. Poems composed during the last two banquets were mounted into a handscroll which was named after Wu Kuan's autograph frontispiece: "Afterthoughts left by Farewell Banquets" (祖筵餘思 *Zuyan yusi*). The scroll is now in the collection of Palace Museum in Beijing and referred to as *Linking Couplets when Drinking Together at Hut of Sharing Moon, in Running Script* (行書醉飲共月庵聯句 *xingshu zuiyin gongyue'an lianju*).<sup>151</sup> Wang Ao introduced the context of this handscroll in the preface following the frontispiece:

<sup>150</sup> The tenth month of the fourth year of Hongzhi 弘治四年十月丁巳,辛酉.

<sup>151</sup> Wang Ao 王鏊 et al., *Linked Verses of Drinking Together at Sharing Moon Hut, in Running Script* 行書和飲共月庵聯句, 1491, handscroll, ink on paper, 20.3x722cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.

The gentry from [my] hometown, following Supervisor of the Heir Apparent, Master Wu, all prepared wine and composed poems to see him off. A host of scholar-officials wrote responding works. When the poems had already been mounted in the form of scroll and [Xu] was about to leave, he came across the celebration of birth of a prince. Having to postpone his departure date, he could not set off until the *jiazi* day of the tenth month (November 22)...In this month, we held farewell dinner again at Yuyan Pavilion on the fourteenth day, and at Sharing Moon Hut on the eighteenth day. Once again, we composed linking verses as gifts...followers' responding works are all attached to [this scroll].

乡之縉紳自少詹事吳先生而下咸置酒賦詩為別。一時士夫多和之。既已成卷。且行矣，適朝廷有前星之慶，遂展其期至十月甲子 [二十一] 乃始克行。君博學工吟詠以武選劇司患不得間至是既解司印而未行乃得從容於詩酒間。是月丁巳 [十四] 再餞君于玉延亭，辛酉 [十八] 餞（餞 is crossed out）于共月庵，復相與聯句以為贈。君復遍和之。詩成，少詹題其首曰《祖筵餘思》，以予輩于君之別，惓惓有不盡之意也。繼而和者若干首咸附焉。

As is indicated in Wang's words, another poetry handscroll was made before the two banquets held by Wang Ao and Wu Kuan. Xu was informed of the travel mission no later than September 18 (*jiwei*, the eighth month) when Emperor Xiaozong issued the order,<sup>152</sup> the making of that handscroll must be finished within just a few days, before his intended departure date in October. It raises a question about how much time the collaborative

<sup>152</sup> See "The *jiwei* day, the eighth month of the fourth year during Emperor Hongzhi's reign" 弘治四年八月己未, in *Ming Xiaozong shilu* 明孝宗實錄 (Veritable Records of Emperor Xiao of the Ming), *juan* 54, 5a-5b, see Zhongyang yanjiuyuan 中央研究院 edition, vol. 2 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan, 1966), 1046, 1059-60.

execution of a scroll may cost, which will be discussed in more detail in following chapter. From Xu Yuan's case, the process of *chengjuan* 成卷 (literally translated as "the completion of making a handscroll") seems different from its reference in modern scholarship about mounting techniques in which the whole process is rather complicated and would cost several weeks or even longer. Wang Ao's preface implies the existence of a simplified procedure through which poetic works were collected, exchanged and mounted on scroll. The procedure corresponds to a burgeoning trend of literary association during periods of Chenghua and Hongzhi. Literati at this time showed increasing interest in collective literary composition while diverse kinds of gatherings became an integral part of their daily lives. Meanwhile, people have become accustomed to using poetry handscrolls as farewell gifts on which high hopes were set for documentation and commemoration.<sup>153</sup>

Referring to Wang Ao's record in preface, the extent handscroll is incomplete, missing the portion of Xu Yuan's response and Wu Kuan's autograph frontispiece.<sup>154</sup> Now the version collected by Palace Museum consists of eight sections: a frontispiece, Wang Ao's preface, two pieces of linking verses, Wang Ao's invitation letter for the dinner and Wu's responding poem, and two sets of responding works by Wang's colleagues. All sections are autographs by the poets except for the linking verses. The verses were composed by Wu and Wang together but inscribed by Wu alone with superscripts at the end of each couplet

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<sup>153</sup> See Wang Xiaoli 王晓骊. *Sanwu wenrenhua tiba yanjiu* 三吳文人畫題跋研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2013). Li Jing 李瑾鵠. "Mingdai Songbie Tu Yanjiu" 明代送別圖研究, (MA thesis, Central China Normal University, 2014). 補充

<sup>154</sup> Wu Kuan's autographic frontispiece has been replaced by another one which consists of four characters in clerical script, written by Ouyang De 歐陽德 (1496-1554), a famous student of Wang Yangming 王陽明(1472-1529).

showing the authorship (see figure 1.6). It is partly because that Wu enjoyed great fame for his excellence in imitating the calligraphic style of Su Shi, a calligraphic paragon popular in mid-Ming period. Another possible reason is that Wang had already fulfilled his role in this poetic project by writing the preface and Wu Kuan, in his turn, should be responsible for inscribing the outcome of their poetry game.

It is noteworthy that two main sections of this scroll, two linking verses composed respectively at Yuyan Pavilion and Gongyue Hut, are separated by poetic correspondence between Wang Ao and Wu Kuan, the owners of these two sites of banquets. This deliberate design is rare in other poetry handscrolls which collect exclusively verses composed during the very moments of gatherings. The autograph correspondence was written at the interval between two banquets, revealing more information about the preparation for the second gathering at Wang Ao's place. By integrating them with the linking verses in chronological order, the maker of the handscroll completed the narrating of this ceremonial situation.

Wang Ao's invitation poem was titled as "Summon to drinking, a substitute for a letter on wooden tablet" (*daijian zhaoyin* 代簡招飲). The *jian*, a small wooden tablet, refers to a conventional form of invitation for gathering. Generally, the host would inscribe the place and date of the upcoming gathering on the tablet and have it circulated among his friends. The invitees who intend to come would sign their names on it. Instead of using the tablet, Wang Ao sent a poem to his friends, inviting them for the farewell banquet. Similar examples are abundant in literary anthologies by Wang and his contemporaries, which could be categorized into the discourse of elegance that presume their distinguished taste. In these poems, information about gatherings' themes, locations, time, participants and even the dishes would be rendered in elaborate language and call for response of literary

parity. However, the success of these poetic invitation has to be based on several premises such as limited number of invitees and a tacit mutual understanding within the coterie. Wu Kuan once invited his friends to celebrate the Lantern Festival by sending them a poem, saying: “The soup in earthen cauldron is boiling and meat is thoroughly cooked, [I] just compose poetic substitute for folding tablet to invite [you]” 瓦鼎湯鳴肉先爛。作詩聊代折簡招<sup>155</sup> and mentioning the other two participants by only calling their family names Chen and Zhou.<sup>156</sup>

Wang Ao’s invitation poem was written in the same formula. Besides announcing the upcoming poetry game, he also indicated the exclusiveness of their gathering. As is showing in his poem, “Only Pao divide the mats and share seats with [me]” 座只匏分席. *Pao* refers to Wu Kuan whose sobriquet is Pao’an 匏庵, one of the only two guests invited by Wang Ao.

Rumination over the content and arrangement of poems on this handscroll raises some questions. Why did Wu Kuan and Wang Ao hold another two successive gatherings for Xu Yuan, after the formal farewell banquet organized by Xu’s friends? What did the maker of the handscroll intend to express through representing such an obscure literary game? What exactly is the story that the handscroll narrates? How does the handscroll format shape the writing practice as well as the emotional factors? Besides the receiver of this handscroll, Xu Yuan, who else is the targeted audience of this handscroll? By addressing these questions, we will have a better understanding of a new fashion in producing handscroll works in mid-Ming period and the interaction between collective poetic composition,

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<sup>155</sup> Wu Kuan, “Returning from Qingcheng’s banquet and inviting Chen Qidong to appreciate lanterns” 慶成宴歸招陳起東賞燈, in *Jiacang ji* 家藏集, *juan* 7, in *Siku quanshu*, vol. 1255, 50-1.

<sup>156</sup> 酬和惟應陳與周.

practices of memory and the formation of local identity.

### Self-definition and the Formation of Locality

The opening line of the poem immediately following Wu Kuan's autograph verse partly reveals the nature of this banquet in his place, namely, a social gathering exclusive for Suzhou literati. The couplet reads: "In a good night [they] were invited to roam at Haiyue, all dignitaries in the banquet are from Suzhou" 良夜相邀海月遊，席間冠蓋總蘇州。 *Haiyue* 海月, literally means "the moon over the sea," can be understood as either a common literary image or the name of a studio, Haiyue Hut 海月庵, in Wu's private garden. His garden was completed in 1482 and soon became a place frequented by Suzhou officials dwelling in Beijing. In a preface dedicated to his friend Zhou Geng 周庚, Wu describes his garden in a complacent tone of voice:

"The place is quiet and secluded, unlike urban areas. The reconstruction of [the ruined garden] was completed in the following year. It was named Yile (alternative enjoyment). I built several pavilions and studios, through which I roamed with gentlemen from my hometown for several times."

地既幽僻，不類城市...比歲更闢 號曰亦樂，治一二亭館，與吾鄉諸君子數游其間。<sup>157</sup>

According to this preface, the visitors of Wu's garden were mainly literati from

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<sup>157</sup> See "Zeng Zhou Yuanji yuanpan shixu" 贈周原已院判詩序, in *Jiacang ji* 家藏集, *juan* 40, *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 1255, 356-57.

Suzhou, such as Chen Jue 陳璠, Wang Ao, Zhou Geng, Li Jie 李傑 and so on.<sup>158</sup> Except for Zhou Geng who was recruited to Imperial Medical College as a Renowned Doctor (名醫 *mingyi*), most Wu's fellows started their political careers through civil examination.<sup>159</sup> Wu Kuan himself got the first rank in the palace exam in 1472 and Wang Ao, the third rank in 1475. Xu Yuan, the recipient of this handscroll, is Wang Ao's school mate and also became *jinshi* candidate in 1475. Throughout the periods of Chenghua (1465-1487) and Hongzhi (1488-1505) more than thirty Suzhou scholars received the title of *jinshi* or Observers in the Six Offices of Scrutiny (庶吉士 *shu jishi*).

Similar scholarly life partly determines a similar approach toward power. Besides the nexus of schoolmate at academies of provincial or national levels, most *jinshi* candidates from Suzhou have also been connected by the shared official experience as Lecturer of Classics (經筵講官 *jingyan jiangguan*). One month before the creating of the handscroll, *Gongyue'an lianju*, Wang Ao, Wu Kuan and the other four Hanlin scholars got promotion to serve as Senior Lecturers of Classics.<sup>160</sup> There is no wonder that Wu and Wang, being in good mood for new appointments, felt excited about that Xu Yuan, another rising star from their hometown, was assigned to a significant mission.

The excellent performance in civil examination and official career not only earned

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<sup>158</sup> 李世賢亦有祿隱之，陳玉汝有半舫之齋，王濟之有共月之養，周原已有傳菊之堂，皆爽潔可愛。而吾數人者又多清暇，數日輒會，舉杯相屬，間以吟詠，往往入夜始散去，方倡和酬酢，歌談辯之際，可謂至樂矣。

<sup>159</sup> According to *Dengke lu* 登科錄, Li Jie passed the civil examination in 1466 and Chen Jue in 1478, See *Dengke lu* 登科錄, ed. Gong Yanming 龔延明 (Ningbo: Ningbo chubanshe, 2016), vol. 2, 155; vol. 1, 476.

<sup>160</sup> See “The *dingmao* day, the eighth month of the fourth year during Emperor Hongzhi's reign” 弘治四年八月丁卯, in *Ming Xiaozong shilu* 明孝宗實錄 (Veritable Records of Emperor Xiao of the Ming), *juan* 54, Zhongyang yanjiuyuan 中央研究院 edition, vol. 2 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan, 1966), 1063-65.

Suzhou literati a nationwide fame, but also facilitated the formation of their local pride. Wu Kuan, as the second *zhuangyuan* from Suzhou since the restoration of imperial examination in the Ming, once claimed “Natives of Wu who take up official posts are flourishing throughout the world under the heaven” 吳人出而仕者率盛於天下.<sup>161</sup> The increasing number of *jinshi* candidates from Suzhou gave rise to the thriving literary association bonded by the ties of geographic origin.

However, the rise of Suzhou literati drew a lot of criticism of factionalism. The challenge became increasingly severe in late 1480s. During this period, Wu Kuan served as chief examiner of imperial examination while two Suzhou natives, Zhao Kuan 趙寬 (1457-1505) and Mao Cheng 毛澄 (1460-1523) obtained the *jinshi* title. Mao Cheng achieved the first rank and became the third *zhuangyuan* from Suzhou.

It is hard to say whether Wu Kuan judge the exam with partiality because of the lack of further evidence. But it is noteworthy that a poetry handscroll titled “Yuyan Pavilion” (*yuyan ting* 玉延亭) was created around 1490.<sup>162</sup> *Yuyan* is a soubriquet of yam. This pavilion is located in Wu Kuan’s private garden in Beijing. The handscroll consists of sixteen pieces of literary and artistic work, including one essay, one rhapsody, eleven poems, one painting, and two frontispieces. The essay is written by Mao Cheng while the rhapsody by Zhao Kuan. All eleven poems share thematic similarity and the same rhyme pattern. They are impromptu works composed during a literary gathering at Yuyan Pavilion. Each poem, no matter how long it is, is written on individual piece of paper. The paper

<sup>161</sup> Anonymous, *Club of Five Similarities* 五同會圖卷, late 15th century, handscroll, ink and color on silk, painting: 41x181 cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.

<sup>162</sup> Wu Kuan 吳寬 et al., *Illustrated Scroll of Yuyan Pavilion* 玉延亭圖卷, handscroll, ink on paper, 24x1200 cm. Auctioned at Sungari International on June 19, 2017. See <http://www.zmsj.cc/?pro/id/1008.html>.



sections are similar in size but nuanced by decorative pattern (see figure 1.7). The flowery patterns include chrysanthemum, orchid, plum blossom and so on. It is safe to infer that Wu Kuan, the host of the gathering at Yuyan Pavilion, had carefully planned this poetry game to make this handscroll on purpose.

This assumption can be substantiated by an episode that Wu Kuan pled with Li Dongyang for joining this game. Li's poem finally became a part of this handscroll, but is accompanied with a short message:

“I heard of the completion of Yuyan Pavilion and composed a poem together with Yuru (Chen Jue), Yuanyi (Zhou Yuanyi) and Lifu (Zhao Kuan). I privately composed one piece of work, but finally cannot hide it from my friends. It would be a good luck for me if this poem can make you laugh. Three days after the banquet, Li Dongyang kowtow.”

聞玉延亭成，與玉汝原已栗夫有作。私和一首，然竟不能匿也。一咲。幸幸。燕後之三日。李東陽頓首。<sup>163</sup>

Li was the leading figure in the literati community in Beijing at this time. In his letter he uses a word *ni* 匿 (hide) which shows his reluctance to make this unsatisfied poem public, because several years later he deleted this poem from his personal anthology. However, Wu Kuan was eager to include the poem into this handscroll as an endorsement for Suzhou scholar-officials' achievement. After finishing this handscroll, an anecdote began to be transmitted among literati in the capital city. Here is a version recorded by You Tong:

“In the year of xinchou 辛丑 during the reign of Chenghua, [Wu] Kuan administered the examination of Ministry of Rites, and award a first to Zhao Kuan. Kuan, whose style

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

name is Lifu 栗夫, is a native of Wujiang. [Zhao's success] aroused suspicions for his partiality for townsmen. [Wu] Wending therefore invited gentries and officials for a banquet at his residence, and asked Zhao Kuan to compose an impromptu verse on Pavilion Yuyan. Zhao was assigned the paper during the banquet. He finished it immediately; it rhapsodized the pavilion with extravagant style and bewildering amount of vocabulary. Those skeptics were convinced [of Zhao's literary capability].”

成化辛丑寬分考禮闈去趙寬第一，寬，字栗夫，吳江人，開榜日頗以同鄉為嫌。

文定乃集公卿宴邸第，命寬作玉延亭賦，即席授簡，頃刻千言，文采奪目，論者乃服。<sup>164</sup>

This anecdote was retold in different kinds of records with nuanced details. In the archival document about imperial examination, the participants of Wu's banquet were all fellow townsmen of Zhao Kuan.<sup>165</sup> It was also selected into the biography of Zhao Kuan in Suzhou gazetteer edited in the Qing period. The handscroll provides the textual basis for this story, and finally helps Wu Kuan absolve himself and Zhao Kuan from the blame of partiality and factionalism.

On the one hand, frequent literary activities produced a host of collective poetry projects. The ephemeral pleasure and oral composition during the gatherings have been objectified and preserved in stable physical forms. On the other hand, these poetry works constructed a delicately structured image of literati lives, which could be circulated within

<sup>164</sup> See You Tong 尤侗 (1618-1704), *Mingshi nigao* 明史擬稿, *juan* 1 (preface dated to 1691), 10a-11b, in *Siku weishoushu jikan* 四庫未收書輯刊, the 5th Series, vol. 6 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2000), 334.

<sup>165</sup> 成化十七年辛丑，吳寬作房官。會元趙寬出其門。趙吳江人，論者頗以同鄉為嫌，吳乃集鄉人開宴。命趙作玉延亭賦，援筆而成詩論乃息。Li Tiaoyuan 李調元 (1734 -1803), “Tongxiang” 同鄉, in *Zhiyi ke suoji* 制義科瑣記, *juan* 2, 7a, see *Xuxiu sikuquanshu* 續修四庫全書 edition, vol. 829 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), 573.

or outside the community of Suzhou literati and solicit more adorers or followers.

A parallel example is another handscroll that was made under the direction of Wu Kuan's friend, Li Dongyang. On December 5th, 1492,<sup>166</sup> Li Dongyang and his disciples studied Confucianism classics in the Western Hall of the Hanlin Academy. After finishing his lecture, Li talked about a key concept in Confucianism discourse, "intent" (zhi 志), elucidating its decisive effect on gentlemen's career. *Zhi* has long been associated to the nature and purpose of poetry composition since the period of *Zuo Tradition* (the late fourth century B.C) which explicitly states that "poetry expresses intent" (*shiyanzhi* 诗言志). Inspired by this famous saying, Li asked all people present, seven disciples and his son, Li Zhaoxian 李兆先, to address their "intent" in heptasyllabic regulated verse.

After the completion of this poetry game, participants transcribed their works autographically on the paper of unified size and texture, and finally had them mounted into a handscroll which was entitled, "Talking about intent under window in midnight" (*yechuang yanzhi* 夜窗言志). The extant version of this handscroll is about five and half meters long and twenty centimeters wide. Besides eight regulated verses, it also contains a frontispiece written by Qiao Zong, a preface by Shi Bao 石瑤 (1464-1528), one of Li Dongyang's favorite students, and two colophons.<sup>167</sup>

According to Shi Bao's account, Li initiated the poetry game around midnight (three strikes of night clock 夜漏及三). Therefore, the characters he picked up to set the rhyme scheme were more or less related to the very context of a late-night conversation. Eight

<sup>166</sup> On the day of jiwang, the eleventh month in the year of *renzi* during the reign of Emperor Hongzhi. 弘治壬子冬十一月既望.

<sup>167</sup> Shi Bao, et al, *Ten scholars poems about their ambitions, under the window in midnight* 十家書夜窗言志, dated 1492, handscroll, ink on paper, 19.8x548cm, Shanghai Museum.

participants were required to end the first line with the character *qing* 檠, the candelabrum or lamppost, and to end the second line with *geng* 更, two-hour period into which the night was divided. Moreover, the rest three couplet should be ended respectively by *qing* 清, *sheng* 聲 and *xing* 行.

All participants of the game had obtained a *juren* title while six of them have already started their career in officialdom. What is shared by them is the experience of preparing for the civil examination. The literary image *qing* 檠 thus have had a special resonance for them because “short candle stand” (*duanqing* 短檠) and “cold candle stand” (*hanqing* 寒檠) are often associated with the tiresome grind of studying late at night. One of the eight participants, Qiao Zong 喬宗, made this particular connotation clear by linking *qing* 檠 with Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) in his poetic line: “At the Dragon Gate [I] once recall my sitting beside Han [Yu’s] candle stand” 龍門曾憶坐韓檠. Han Yu has written a poem named “Song of Short Candle stand” (*Duan dengqing ge* 短燈檠歌) in which he depicted in detail how a short candelabrum accompanied a Hanlin scholar to study in midnight. Yet after passing the civil examination, the scholar replace candelabrum with a luxury long lamppost and discarded it into a corner of wall. With reference to Han’s poem, the image of candelabrum was endowed with multiple layers of meanings including not only the representation of a scholar’s daily life but also the admonishment against betraying the past. The later meaning makes more sense if we take into consideration that that seven poets have received Li’s help in either their scholarly development or their political careers. Take Qian Fu 錢福 (1461-1504), the fifth inscriber on this handscroll, for instance. He got the first rank in civil examination at palace level in 1590 when Li was installed as one of the

examinees. Seen in this light, beneath the surface of collective retrospect of the shared experience lies the manifesto of those disciples' resolve to be loyalists in Li's faction. Qian's poem demonstrates his fully awareness of Li's worries and tries to dispel them. Moreover, it is of equal importance to notice that Qian is also the participant who alluded the similarity between Li Dongyang and revered master Confucius. He says in the third couplet of his poem "Bathing in River Yi, [we] also know Zeng Dian's intent, looking at [leopard] through a tube, I should feel inferior when compared to [Wang] Xianzi." 沂沐也知曾點意，管窺應讓獻之聲。

People familiar with *The Analects of Confucius* may reminisce about a famous conversation recorded in chapter "Xianjin" 先進. Confucian disciples, sitting by their Master, shared their diverse aspirations to careers. Confucius finally endorsed the ideal life proposed by Zeng Dian to "wash in the Yi, enjoy the breeze among the rain altars, and return home singing."

Qian Fu's poem grants historical significance and connotation to this casual game played by Hanlin scholars. The handscroll, therefore, has been recast as a document that record a Ming counterpart of renowned dialogue between Confucius and his disciples. Partly inspired by Qian's poem, Shi Bao composed the preface for this poetry handscroll in which he strengthens the bond between Li Dongyang and Confucius. Li's words were rendered in Confucian style: "I have been one-day older than you for a long time, why not state your intent to me" 予以一日之長久矣 盍各為予言志. It seems to be a combination of the original lines in *Analects*, "I am a day or so older than you" 以吾一日長乎爾 and "do you also, as well as they, speak out your wishes." 亦各言其志也。

Satisfied with his disciples' compositions, Li asked each of them to make a copy of

these works in remembrance of their ambitions at this very moment. Yet the circulation of these works went beyond Li's coterie soon. As is recorded in Shi Bao's preface, "people who heard about this event came [to read these poems], and compared [the poets] to the seven disciples in the school of Su [Shi] and regarded Zhaoxian as Xiaopo (Su Guo, Su Shi's son)" 聞者至，擬之蘇門七學士而以兆先為小坡云。Even though the analogy between Su Shi's disciples and eight poets writing on the handscroll was ascribed to an anonymous reader, we can also understand it as an Li and his fellows' expectation of how this how their collective poetry project would be perceived, especially when we situate this project to the early 1490s, the burgeoning period of Chaling school. They were eager for a broader reader public to accept not only the leading status of Li Dongyang in literary arena, but also to recognize them as a united group with shared cultural identity and taste, which is termed by Shi Bao as *tongzhi* 同志 (literally, "[people] with similar will").

Parallel to the massive production of poetry handscrolls was the rising of literati communities which were tied up by regional origin and identity. The collaborative nature of Ming poetry has been duly noted by contemporary researchers. The poems that were composed communal contexts demonstrate the fading of individualistic style, and a strengthening taste shared collectively within coterie.<sup>168</sup> Even the members of some loose groups or schools would affiliate their literary production with certain models or ideals which were distinctive from others geographically, aesthetically, or politically. Seen in this light, the writings on handscroll, normally poems, could be understood not only as literary practice but also as the "performance" that constructed cultural or local identity.

Writings on this poetry handscroll well illustrate the sociality of Suzhou scholars. In

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<sup>168</sup> He Zongmei, *Mingdai wenren jieshe*, 22

his poetic invitation letter, Wang Ao expressed his predilection for his townsmen bluntly: “The inscription on scroll of bamboo [paper] can be added, it is hard to measure the pleasure in thatched hut. Perhaps in the days of being sober, I love most to talk with townsmen” 竹卷題堪續,茅齋興莫量。可能醒過日,最愛語同鄉。However, Wang himself also felt that the last line appeared too exaggerative, therefore he modified it as “let alone talk with townsmen”況是語同鄉 when collecting it into his personal anthology.<sup>169</sup>

Considering that Wang’s poem was composed right after their first gathering at Wu Kuan’s garden, another information we can get from these two couplets is that the previous poetry project failed to fully satisfy Wang Ao his full content and he wanted to continue the linking verse game with his townsmen. Wang stated his worry about the difficulty of reunion at the end of this poem, “[You] need to know that three days later, the roads between us are bleak and vast” 須知三日後,相望路茫茫。Wu’s answering poem, following Wang’s invitation on the handscroll, addresses the similar issue but expresses more optimistic attitude: “Do not rashly sing the song of Yangguan Pass, which describes the bleakness of the way to the west.” 陽關未輕唱,西出路微茫。

Inscribing on the handscroll, Wu Kuan firmly believed that the memory of the pleasant gatherings would be perpetuated in the handscroll form and withstand the passage of time: “[We] have no idea about this regular gathering, whose meaning will be beyond measure in the future!” 未知宜常會,將來孰可量! To corroborate his statement, Wu also quote

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<sup>169</sup> Wang Ao did not put this poem into his self-edited literary anthology *Zhenze wenji* 震澤文集 in 1517, however, the text was collected in *Taiyuan Wangshi jiapu* 太原王氏家譜. See Liu Junwei 劉俊偉, ed., *Wang Ao nianpu* 王鏊年譜 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue chubanshe, 2013), 52.

two famous stories about elegant gatherings in ancient times,<sup>170</sup> which shows the literary composition could immortalize both the places and people even though the original context of those gatherings became obscure as time went by: “The places of drinking still attract people but the reasons for travel have been forgotten.” 飲處仍招致行機已坐忘。 Wang Ao harbored similar hope that their gatherings would become a “story” someday, as is shown in one line of the linking verse composed by him, “Circulating as a story, the intimate relationship is between [scholars like] pure stream” 流傳為故事契合本清流。

Behind their expectation of the perpetual life of their stories is the confidence in the material form to preserve their literary composition, namely, poetry handscroll. When talking about the literary association (文字會 *wenzi hui*) of Suzhou literati, Wang Ao described the significant role poetry handscrolls played in transmitting his townsmen’s works nationwide.

On some special occasions in spring or autumn, these gentlemen get together after work, having dinner and composing poems or couplets. Sometimes we write poems on assigned topics. Once there is an initial poem, there must be answering works. We compete for flowery language and search for unusual allusions. Those works would usually be assembled into long scroll and transmitted within and beyond the capital area. These events are so elegant and graceful that it can scarcely be found in other states.”

花時月夕，公退輒相過從，燕集賦詩，或聯句，或分題詠物，有倡斯和，角麗

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<sup>170</sup> One allusion is Zheng Xuan’s 鄭玄(127-200) hometown that was famous for disciplined people and harmonious atmosphere, and the other is the mansion of Wang Ziyu 王子猷 (338-386), who had special favor of planting bamboo.



搜奇，往往聯為大卷，傳播中外，風流文雅，他邦鮮儷。<sup>171</sup>

Wang Ao's praise for those collective poetry projects was rendered in vaunted words. To certain degree, however, it reveals the very efforts that had been paid to record and preserve the impromptu composition executed in the contexts of sociality. The practice of writing on handscroll goes beyond the performance of literary wit and fulfills the function of self-identification of geographical belonging.

Handscroll is not only a trustworthy textual object to hand down the taste or spirit shared by local people but also offered a frame in which the association would be imagined and narrated. Compared to printed version of personal anthologies or collection of group poetry projects, a handscroll could preserve more details about the original context in which the collective execution took place, such as the order of writing, process, and even the moods of inscribers that can be detected from their brush works. As a carrier of memory, a handscroll plays an important role on the level of personal memory since it can trigger the practice of remembering. Meanwhile, it can also elicit ceaseless viewing and response from later viewers. Viewers would recognize the symbolic meaning that has been cast on the handscroll and would receive the structured image of literati association.

As a reminding object, a handscroll can trigger the practice of remembering or imagining. To decipher the symbolic meaning that has been bestowed on handscroll assures the viewers of their identity as a member of social group. In other words, handscrolls can be understood as what was termed by Jan Assmann as “outward symbol”<sup>172</sup>, which carries the memories the maker invests to it. The collective memory is constructed with the

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<sup>171</sup> See Wang Ao 王鏊. “Preface dedicated to Gentleman Xu, the Councilor of Guangdong” 送廣東參政徐君序. *Wang Ao ji* 王鏊集. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2013. 189-90.

<sup>172</sup> Astrid Erll et al, eds., *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (New York: De Gruyter, 2008), 110-11.

constant interaction with the object. The interaction is an integral part of the system of memorialization. The practice of remembering is a realization of belonging or a social obligation.<sup>173</sup>

The poems on handscrolls have chance to become a cultural heritage and to create new bonding among readers of similar geographical origins, even though their sense of belonging could have been concealed for many years. It could be well demonstrated by the last section of this poetry handscroll, a set of responding poems written by Shen Zhong 沈鐘(1436-1518) and his son, Shen Bao 沈寶 (fl.1490). They were invited by Xu Yuan to view this handscroll when Xu passed Hubei on his way to taking office of Commissioner of Hunan and Guangdong. Shen's ancestral home was in Fuli 甫里, modern Luzhi 角直 in Suzhou. Shen's family, together with other luminaries in Jiangnan area, were forced by Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1368-1398) to migrate to Nanjing, compensating for the lost population during dynastic transition. After passing civil examination in 1460, Shen spent most of his life in Shanxi and Hubei. In his colophon on this handscroll, Shen admitted his ambiguous identity as a Suzhou native but still called himself as a "townsman" (*xiangren* 鄉人) of Xu Yuan.<sup>174</sup>

From Shen Zhong's perspective, if this poetry handscroll, a calligraphic specimen, can be viewed as an image, the characters *Suzhou* 蘇州 and *tongxiang* 同鄉 function as "punctum" in Roland Barthe's term. Being compelling and attractive, they jump out at the viewer. Shen Zhou was sixty-four years old and sojourned in places outside his hometown for several decades. The poetic lines imbued with local appeal can easily evoke his

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid, 114.

<sup>174</sup> In Xu Yuan's words: 予忝亦鄉人且嘗與交契之末。

nostalgic sentiment. Suffering from the endured separation from hometown, Shen paid particular attention to compose “the response to townsmen’s cluster of verses at townsman’s request” 鄉人囑和鄉人之什, because it is an “obligatory assignment” (*chaishi* 差事) for him, a native of Suzhou.

Compared to Shen Zhong’s answering poems that echo precedent verses in a meticulous manner, Shen Bao’s two poems focus more on recounting the whole story about this farewell gift as a memorable literary event. His set of poem starts with “Being persuaded to stay by poetic composition at Yuyan Pavilion, the great event has transmitted to E Zhou” 玉延亭上被詩留, 盛事流傳到鄂州. After his poetic account of the handscroll’s cultural life, Shen Bao readdresses the image Yuyan Pavilion in the ending couplet of his second poem as a witness which is unconditioned by the effects of time: “Yuyan Pavilion must be in good condition, [we can] still remember the host in company with his guests. 玉延亭子應無恙, 猶記當年客主陪. Wu Kuan once expressed his hope in an invitation letter that the following generations of his Suzhou friends would inherit the custom for elegant gathering.<sup>175</sup> The participation of Shen Bao into this poetry project partly fulfill his goal. The story about this elegant gathering therefore acquired cultural significance, because literary event “can continue have an effect only if future generations still respond to it or rediscover it.”<sup>176</sup>

On the surface of this handscroll, each poem is a self-sufficient work that can be read independently, but when all are read together, there is a structure of emotional resonance

<sup>175</sup> “The important thing of our association is to pass it down so that we can hope our offspring will continually pay particular attention to these rules.” 盟在久要（邀），期子孫之亦講. Wu Kuan 吳寬, *Jiacang ji* 家藏集, 532.

<sup>176</sup> Hans R. Jauss, *Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory*, *New Literary History*, Vol. 2, No. 1, *A Symposium on Literary History* (Autumn, 1970), 11.

and narrative frame that has been shaped by handscroll's peculiar material features, tangible attributes, and aesthetic tradition.<sup>177</sup> The poetry handscroll is more than a conventional "document" preserving literary works. As a carrier of memories shared by townsmen, it can easily evoke nostalgic feelings among Suzhou literati. Their cultural identity and sense of belonging in local community would be anchored and reaffirmed again and again through sustained practice of viewing, remembering, imagining, and writing.

## Conclusion

This linking verse handscroll also brings us to consideration of how sites of memory were constructed textually and culturally. The sites for Wang Ao and Wu Kuan's farewell banquets, Yuyan Pavilion and Gongyue Hut, are clearly stated in the preface immediately following the frontispieces. It is noteworthy that these two places have been underscored repetitively not only by Wu and Wang in their linking verse, two players present during the literary games,<sup>178</sup> but also by the viewers of this scroll who left their responding poems afterwards. The tacit agreement among Suzhou writers on representing these sites brings to them high level public visibility and endurance. Through recurring acts of writing and remembering coinciding with the circulation of the handscroll, these places shift from physical sites initiating literary composition to renowned images, obtaining an alternative form of existence. From the poems written by the viewers like Shen Zhong, as are mentioned in previous section, we can see that the handscroll enables Yuyan Pavilion to be virtually present to a viewer who had never visited it and kept soliciting representation. On

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<sup>177</sup> Wu Hung's discussion about rubbings shed light on this statement. *The Story of Ruins*, 59-60.

<sup>178</sup> Wang Ao's poetic line in the first verse reads, 夜永還乘海月遊, referring to Haiyue Hut 海月庵 which is adjacent to Yuyan Pavilion. Wu's line in the second verse 好月邀須共 (Gongyu an 共月庵) implies the site of the second banquet is Gongyue Hut.

the one hand, the practice of remembering situates the “place” into diverse contexts and endow it with new meanings. On the other hand, these places, as “common points of reference within memory communities,” also exert influence on the literary practice in dynamic process of recollection.<sup>179</sup>

We are informed by Mike Crang in his *Cultural Geography* that literature plays a central role in “creating geographies”, “inventing places” and shaping people’s spatial imagination.<sup>180</sup> A place, when being represented in literary works, is not merely a setting for stories or action. Literary and artistic practice invest to the place its cultural meaning and unique spirit. In this process of signification, both the social context and personal experience would be redefined spatially. Poetry handscrolls, arranging textual accretion in chronological order, sometimes display the process of signification and re-signification in details.

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<sup>179</sup> Ann Rigney, “The Dynamics of Remembrance: Texts Between Monumentality and Morphing”, *Cultural Memory Studies*, 345-346.

<sup>180</sup> Mike Crang, *Cultural Geography* (London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 2013), 27-58.

## Case 2: Su Shi and his Ming Imitators: Writing on Handscroll as the Manifestation of Cultural Loyalism

The following case study shifts the attention from the textual content of handscrolls to its artistic form. Scrutinizing a series of poetry handscrolls produced by Wu Kuan and his fellows, I attempt to reveal the comprehensive way in which the handscroll facilitate Suzhou literati's collective expression of their cultural ideal and tastes.

Wu Kuan was a lifelong imitator for Su Shi's calligraphy and poetry. His enthusiasm for Su Shi can be illustrated by the number of colophons that he inscribed on Su's calligraphy specimens, over half the proportion of colophons he left for artworks of the Song dynasty. As shown in Wu's personal anthology and those miscellanies of colophons, Wu has inscribed dozens of times on both Su Shi's autographic works and imitated copies.<sup>181</sup>

Wu's obsession with Su Shi is familiar to his friends who sometimes poked fun at it. Two of Wu's poems, composed on two subsequent days, were titled with long narrative sentences that records how Li Jie 李傑, another literatus from Suzhou, tricked him into a gathering with a replica of Su Shi's poetry scroll: "A snowy day Li Shixian (Li Jie's *zi*) called me to view Dongpo's autographic work 'Poems on Hall of Pure Emptiness,'" 雪中李世賢招觀東坡清虛堂詩真迹 "On that day, [I] went to see it. It turned to be printed version, as I expected. Probably Shixian was afraid that guests would not come and deceived us. Therefore [I composed] in the same rhyme pattern again" 是日往觀,果刻本,

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<sup>181</sup> Wu's colophons include but is not limited to "Ti Songpo Lisao jing zhenji" 題東坡離騷經真跡, "Ba Dongpo yu shuseng erti" 跋東坡與蜀僧二帖 and so forth. See *Jiacang ji* 家藏集, *Siku quanshu*, vol.1255, 454. See also Fan Yiwen 樊緯雯, "Wu Kuan's inheritance to Su Shi's Calligraphic Heritage" 吳寬對蘇軾書法的繼承, *Zhongguo shufa*, no.2 (2020), 160-3.

盖世贤招饮恐客不至,故詒尔,乃复次韵。<sup>182</sup>

Wu Kuan is a lifelong admirer of Su Shi and his calligraphy,<sup>183</sup> even though many of his associates from Suzhou, like Li Yingzhen 李應楨 (1431-1493) and Shen Zhou, are well known as versatile calligraphers who could master a broad stylistic range and demonstrated stylistic inconsistency through their lives. Comparing his early works with those written in his old days, however, we can find Wu is a loyal follower of Su Shi and his enthusiasm remains undiminished.

Convincing evidence of Su's influence on Wu Kuan's style is to be found in a wide range of his surviving works. In 1494, Wu transcribed his three long poems on a blank scroll prepared by his friend, which was named "Poetry scroll of planting bamboo" (*zhongzhu shijun* 種竹詩卷) later.<sup>184</sup> On this handscroll, characters were rendered in Su Shi's typical brush manner. Each character comprises slender horizontal strokes and solid vertical strokes, while the whole character appears sturdy and flattened because the width noticeably exceeds its height. These two structural features are hallmarks of Su Shi's style (see figure 1.8). Moreover, Su Shi is good at adjusting the composition of characters by randomly elongating single vertical stroke to an unusual extent, as is shown in his handling the vertical strokes in *nian* 年 and *jin* 巾 in *Hanshi tie* (see figure 1.9 and 1.10). Wu adopted this brush technique and reproduced the similar visual effect in his handscroll of

<sup>182</sup> *Jianchang ji*, 77.

<sup>183</sup> The "Abstract" (tiyao 提要) of Wu Kuan's *Jianchang ji* 家藏集 in Siku quanshu summarizes that "Though his life, Wu modeled himself after Su. His calligraphy strongly resembles that of Dongpo." 平生學宗蘇氏,字法亦酷肖東坡; see *Jianchang ji*, 1. See also Wang Ao's comment in the preface he wrote for Wu Kuan's anthology: "Through his life, [Wu] is fond of learning from Su Shi." 獨念公生頗好蘇學。Wang Ao 王鏊集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2013), 216.

<sup>184</sup> Wu Kuan 吳寬, "Poetry scroll of planting bamboo" 種竹詩卷, handscroll, ink on paper, 28.2×586.2cm, Shanghai Museum.

bamboo poems.

Another example *Poetry Scroll of Corresponding Poems of Cushions* 蒲墩倡和詩卷<sup>185</sup> provides further confirmation of Wu Kuan's engagement with Su Shi not only in calligraphy but also in literary practice. The beginning section of this handscroll is a poem written by Wu Kuan to express gratitude to his friend Sun Lin 孫霖 (fl.1481) who presented Wu a pair of reed-woven cushions. Wu's writing is modeled on Su Shi's calligraphy, especially his scripts in informal letters demonstrating more willfulness and casual effect. In his writing, Wu tilts vertical strokes to upper-right direction but maintains balance by allocating more ink to the left and lower side. Slightly distorting character structure without overbalancing the whole is a distinct feature of Su style (see figure 1.10), which renders the work vigorous in tone but still graceful.

Besides the stylistic resemblance in calligraphy, Wu also claims that he draws inspiration from Su Shi when composing the poem. The ending couplet of his poem reads: "Just stealing bantering utterance from [Dong]po the old man, [I] exchanged one poem for two [cushions] in round shape but with pointy tips" 聊就坡翁偷謔語, 一詩換得兩尖團.<sup>186</sup> It is a parody of Su Shi's poetic line "Worth laughing at is the gluttonous magistrate of Wuxing, who exchanged one poem for two [crabs] in round shape and pointy tips" 堪笑吳興饒太守, 一詩換得兩尖團,<sup>187</sup> in which Su rejoices at receiving giant mud crabs (*qiumou* 蝤蛸) from his friend Ding Mo 丁默. Depicting the shape of crab's apron,

<sup>185</sup> Shen Zhou 沈周, *Poetry Scroll of Corresponding Poems of Cushions* 蒲墩倡和詩卷, 1480-1495, handscroll, ink and color on paper, frontispiece: 29.5x95cm, painting: 29.5x84.5cm, colophon paper: 29.5x802cm, auctioned in Beijing Council, December, 2011.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Su Shi 蘇軾, *Su Shi shiji* 蘇軾詩集, annotated by Kong Fanli 孔凡禮 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 973.



*jiantuan* 尖團 is used in Su's poem as a synecdochic signifier of crabs.<sup>188</sup> Yet it is appropriated by Wu to address the cushions of the similar shape. In a nod to Su Shi's vivid representation of seafood, Wu also displays his approval for Su's enthusiasm for worldly pleasure in daily life. Therefore, the execution of this handscroll could be understood as an autonomous practice that corresponds to the literary and aesthetic mold cast by Su Shi.

Su Shi's style was characterized by a perfect balance between heavy strokes and flexile character structure. For Wu Kuan and his fellows, such a style could satisfy their need for self-expression and refined taste and appear graceful. It is also aesthetically appropriate for the calligraphy used in transcribing formal documents. In the late fifteenth century, Suzhou literati also demonstrated a keen interest in "recording poems on scroll" (*dengjuan* 登卷) periodically. Wu Kuan, owing to his achievement in Su style calligraphy, often took responsibility for transcribing poetic works on jointed scrolls for archival purposes.

An untitled poetry handscroll collected in Palace Museum is supposed to be an outcome of this kind of archival practice.<sup>189</sup> On the beginning section of the scroll, approximately one hundred centimeters wide, Wu Kuan transcribed two sets of linking verse that were composed collectively during two gatherings at Wang Ao's home. The first one is a housewarming banquet in 1484 while the second one was to celebrate the birth of Wang's son in 1486. The listed participants on the scroll are exclusively Suzhou literati who assumed official position in the capital city, including Wang Ao, Li Jie, Wang

<sup>188</sup> Shi Yuanzhi 施元之 (1102-1174), *Shizhu sushi* 施注蘇詩, *juan* 17, 8b, *Siku quanshu edition*, vol. 1110, 342.

<sup>189</sup> The handscroll is titled by contemporary curators as "Poems in running script" (*xingshu shi* 行書詩) for categorical purpose. Wu Kuan, et.al., *Poems in running script*, 1483, handscroll, ink on paper, 41.5×108 cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.

Chengxian 王成憲(1443-?), Yang Xunji 楊循吉 (1458-1546) and Zhou Geng 周庚 (fl. 1465-1487). It is noteworthy that Zhou Geng 周庚 is also a follower of Su Shi's calligraphy, although his imitation is sometimes embellished with his individualized style (see figure 1.7). In March of 1481, Zhou was asked to transcribe a set of poems composed by members of his literary coterie on an archival handscroll.<sup>190</sup> The leading section of this scroll is Wu Kuan's introductory preface. The preface records that two banquets were held in the first and second month of 1481 which attracted almost all Suzhou literati in Beijing.<sup>191</sup> The host Wang Chengxian subsequently asked Wu and Zhou to make this scroll as a commemorative object of this townsmen's gathering.

Bai Qianshen's study on Fu Shan's calligraphy calls attention to the compatibilities between calligraphic style and text, because "particular styles fit particular formats better than do other styles."<sup>192</sup> Following this line of thought, the choice of Wu Kuan and Zhou Geng as the transcriber of collective composition by Suzhou literati suggests their consensus acceptance of Su Shi's calligraphic model. The cultural significance of their works was believed to remain undiminished when being translated into archival format through the hand of "Su Shi."

A close look at the texts on these handscrolls may reveal another aspect of Su Shi's appeal for Suzhou literati. He was esteemed as a model of poetry by Wu Kuan and his friends, although the mainstream poetic culture at this time encourages the imitation of

<sup>190</sup> 聯句既成，成憲既請原已登卷，欲予綴數語於後。Wu Kuan's inscription on a poetry handscroll named *Minggong yanyin lianjue shijuan* 名公讌飲聯句詩卷, see *Shuhua huikao* 書畫彙考, juan 30, *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 828, 267-71.

<sup>191</sup> The participants includes: Wang Chengxian, Yang Xunji, Zhou Geng, Chen Jue, Li Jie, Li Yingzhen, and Yao Wenhao 姚文灝 (*jinshi*, 1484).

<sup>192</sup> Bai Qianshe, *Fu Shan's World*, 111.

Tang examples.<sup>193</sup> The aforementioned Wu Kuan's poem on "cushion" is not the only example that is indebted to Su Shi's poem. A wide range of Su's works were imitated by Suzhou literary coterie thematically and rhetorically. Anecdotes about Su Shi's elegant lifestyle were also commonly used in their collaborative compositions during gatherings. A sound example lies in the commemorative handscroll of the Wang Chengxian's banquet that is mentioned above. During the banquet, participants were required to compose impromptu pieces according to the dishes in front of them. Following this rule, one participant, Shao Gui 邵珪 wrote a poem on a dish of seasoned bamboo shoots. The sixth line of Shao's poem describes the sprout "already a leftover from Dongpo's dinner" 已是東坡大嚼餘. It directly refers to Su Shi's peculiar fondness for bamboo shoots which is represented in his poems several times.<sup>194</sup> Shao's poetic line and Su Shi's hobby found an echo on another poetry handscroll three year later. During a dinner hosted by Wang Ao in 1484, Wu Kuan composed a poem on the same topic, and the last couplet reads "Do [we] need meat for chewing! [I] love old [Dong]po all my life." 大嚼何須肉! 平生愛老坡。<sup>195</sup>

Besides scholar-officials like Wu Kuan and Wang Ao, literati-artists in Suzhou also showed great reverence for Su Shi. Shen Zhou, the leading figure in art circle of Suzhou, not only admitted his calligraphic cultivation started with Zhao Mengfu and Su Shi's model, but

<sup>193</sup> It is summarized by Zhu Yizun's 朱彝尊 term "praising Tang and despising Song" (*yangtang yisong* 揚唐抑宋). Similar statements were also rendered as 揚唐輕宋.

<sup>194</sup> See Su Shi, "He Huang Luzhi shisun ciyun" 和黃魯直食筍次韻 and "Xie hui mao'ertou sun" 謝惠猫兒頭筍, in Su Shi, *Su Shi shiji hezhu* 蘇軾詩集合注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), 1120-1, 2388. In a letter in poetry genre to his friend Cai Zihua 蔡子華, Su Shi also expressed his nostalgia for Hangzhou where bamboo shoots were available and low in price: "Remembering the day when we wore blue robes and walked on a riverside road, white fish and purple bamboo shoots are low-priced. 想見青衣江畔路, 白魚紫筍不論錢。 See *Su Shi shiji hezhu*, 1577-8.

<sup>195</sup> Wu Kuan et al., *Poems in Running Script* 行書詩卷, 1483, handscroll, ink on paper, 41.5×108 cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.

also attributed his achievement in composing long verses to the influence of Su Shi's canonical works.<sup>196</sup>

The obsession with Su Shi we find in previous cases reflects a tendency for Suzhou literati to revive the literary and cultural tradition of the Song dynasty. Su Shi, a versatile genius, served as an ideal model to follow at literary, calligraphic, and moral levels, but he was by no means the only example praised by Wu Kuan and his fellows. Other famous literati of same period, such as Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅(1045-1105), Lu You 陸遊 (1125-1210) and Fan Chengda 范成大 (1126-1193) also gained considerable numbers of adherents from the literati community in Suzhou.<sup>197</sup> Huang Tingjian's influence can be found in Wang Ao's poetry which is characterized by deliberate choice of obscure words and unusual structure, a distinctive feature of Huang's poems and Jiangxi school. In his later years, Shen Zhou often followed Huang Tingjian's calligraphy when writing mid-sized script on large-scale poetry handscrolls.<sup>198</sup>

Poems by Lu You and Fan Chengda, to certain degree, played an important role in shaping regional literary taste and fashion. Even though the mid-Ming Suzhou produced a

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<sup>196</sup> When writing a brief biography for Shen Zhou, Wen Zhengming summarized the development of Shen's poetry style: "Originally, he learnt poems from the people of the Tang dynasty, inherited the elegant spirit of Master Bai [Juyi], and then learnt long verses from Meishan (Su Shi)." 其詩初學唐人,雅意白傳,既而師眉山為長句。其詩初學唐人,雅意白傳,既而師眉山為長句 Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582-1664) comments that "[Shen Zhou] combines the poetry styles of Shaoling (Du Fu 杜甫), Xiangshan (Bai Juyi 白居易), Meishan (Su Shi 蘇軾) and Jiannan (Lu You 陸遊). 出入于少陵、香山、眉山、劍南之間。 See Qian Qianyi 錢謙益, *Liechao shiren xiaozhuan* 列朝詩人小傳, *bing* section (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1959), 290.

<sup>197</sup> Lu You received scarce attention from Ming literati and reading public, but was peculiarly praised by versatile amateur artists in Suzhou. Qian Zhongshu 錢鐘書, "Lu You" 陸遊, *footnote 3, Songshi xuanzhu* 宋詩選註 (Beijing: Sanlian, 2002), 274.

<sup>198</sup> See Li Yingzhen 李應禎 et al., *Viewing Giant Stone, Linking Verse and Colophons* 觀大石聯句並跋冊, 1478-1504, album adapted from handscroll, ink on paper, Liaoning Provincial Museum; Shen Zhou, *Qianrenshi yeyou* 千人石夜遊, 1493, handscroll, ink and color on paper, 30.1x157.1cm, Liaoning Provincial Museum.

considerable number of *jinshi* candidates, Suzhou literati still maintained a subtle distance from officialdom for the sake of individual freedom, as Lu and Fan did in their old days. It is no surprise that Lu and Fan's idyllic poetry about life of leisure were highly esteemed in Suzhou community. Stone Lake (*shihu* 石湖), where Fan Chengda's residence was located, attracted increasing amount of tourists since the fifteenth century and became a common motif in numerous illustrated poetry handscrolls. What "Suzhou School of Poetry" absorbed from Lu and Fan's works was the abiding enthusiasm for worldly occurrences and sensuous existence. They emphasized the expression of sincere feelings and affection through poetry, even though their understandings of poetic devices were never unified. It is safe to say that Suzhou literati broke new ground for the prevailing discourse of cultural revivalism in mid Ming period. Nevertheless, the Song models that they followed distinguished them from the mainstream revivalists such as Chaling School and "Early Seven Masters" (*qian qizi* 前七子). Members of these two groups advocated models of Tang period, paying more attention to formalistic style, phonetic patterns, and political concerns.

In this regard, the handscrolls discussed above, with worldly themes, casual-style poems, and Song calligraphy, could be interpreted as comprehensive manifestation of Suzhou literati's aesthetic pursuit. Though producing, inscribing, and circulating these handscrolls, Wu Kuan and his fellows wove into Suzhou's image a wide range of life scenes such as drinking, dinners, jaunts, and games, as well as their peculiar cultural taste.

### Case 3: The “Grand Scribe” of Suzhou:

#### Historical writings on handscroll and literati’s self-construction

If poetry handscrolls that document literary games reflect the elegant life of a relatively small circle of intellectuals, those commemorative handscrolls produced for paragons of virtue in Suzhou provide a window into a broad community in which social elites were deeply entangled with local cultural enterprise and moral education. From the eyes of some literati in mid-Ming Suzhou, handscrolls were more than products of literary and artistic practice, but an effective media with historiographical significance. A considerable number of handscrolls were collaboratively executed in order to report, recount, and promulgate the so-called "paragon of hometown" (*xiangbang dianxing* 鄉邦典型) during this period. Some of the protagonists of these handscrolls, such as filial children, recluses, or benevolent merchants, rose to fame as the scrolls circulated, while a tiny minority even secured a place in official histories, local gazetteers, or miscellanies of regional anecdotes. This phenomenon gives rise to a series of questions: what factors stimulated Suzhou literati to create commemorative handscrolls for those famous or obscure worthy persons? Who would be the target audience of these handscrolls? Does the handscroll format mediate the historical narrative on its surface? And if it does, to what extent?

To answer these questions, the following section will examine three handscrolls initially created by Wen Zhengming, Wu Kuan and Wang Ao from the 1470s to the 1520s. Each of them focuses on one mode of morality. The creators share in common a strong sense of duty as contemporary eyewitnesses. For the creators, the acts of compiling and recording are of cultural importance, even more important than the events and figures *per*

se. It is not merely because writings on handscrolls could connect audience to local occurrence in a timely fashion, strengthen their sense of belonging; but the writing practice bolter the construction of Suzhou's cultural image as "a town of documents" (*wenxian zhixiang* 文獻之鄉) and "a superior state of documents and objects" (*wenwu shangguo* 文物上國).

Creators of these commemorative handscroll had no intent to conceal their friendship or even kinship with those paragons represented, which may however potentially raise question of objectivity and neutrality. Instead, the close relationship is translated to a guarantee of historical veracity. For instance, when Wu Kuan created a handscroll to praise a filial son whose cognomen is Xu 徐, he started his preface by saying: "Xu has a familial relationship with Wu, I did indeed know the story of the filial son" 徐與吳有連,孝童事予寔知之.<sup>199</sup>(see figure 1.11) Similarly, Wang Ao's commemorative handscroll for gentleman Lu Boliang 陸伯良 also addressed Lu as "uncle of my clan" (*zushu* 族叔) who developed a close relationship with Wang in his youth. The venerable deeds of these paragons were recounted as part of lived experience of the local community.

The first case is an illustrated handscroll named "Promoting Agriculture in Xukou" 胥口勸農圖卷. It was executed collaboratively from 1525 to 1526 to extol a farmer Pan Chongli 潘崇禮 (fl.1492-1525) in Suzhou. The pictorial section is painted by Wen Zhengming, while Zhu Yunming and Yao Wenzhao 姚文炤 (1495-?) took responsibility to compose two biographical records (*ji* 記). Different from general prose pieces that can

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<sup>199</sup> Wu Kuan 吳寬, *Preface for Xu, the Filial Child* (Xu Xiaotong xu 徐孝童序), 1478, handscroll, ink on paper, 27.5×512 cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.

serve as a match for illustration on a handscroll, Zhu Yunming deliberately invested his writing with historical significance, rendered it in the similar fashion as an entry in local gazetteer.

Zhu's "record" obtains an aura of historicity from various aspects, including the preparation before writing, the narrative style, the criteria for selecting snapshots in Pan's life, and the peculiar way to chronicle them. At the ending paragraph of this record, Zhu gives credit to Wen Zhengming and Cai Qihong 蔡啟宏 for the evidential basis they have laid for his composition. After finishing the painting, Wen Zhengming wrote a draft of Pan Chongli's biography according to the information dictated by Lu's son.<sup>200</sup> This draft was passed upon to Cai Qihong who undertook fact-check and editorial job, and then invited Zhu to compose the "record."<sup>201</sup> Zhu claims that his friendship with Lu Chongli lasts for forty years.<sup>202</sup> The intimacy suggests his legitimate role as the biographer.<sup>203</sup> Moreover, he was gratified at the result that the worthy person in his hometown finally received the honor commensurate with his contribution.<sup>204</sup>

In a chronological fashion, Zhu's record highlights three important episodes in Pan Chongli's life and defines his image in a series of action that saved Suzhou farmers from natural disasters. When the Suzhou area, especially Likou county,<sup>205</sup> was suffering from floods in 1492 and 1510, Pan led his townsmen to build earth dams to block the overflow from lakes, and laid down bamboo pipes to drain the farmland submerged by flood water.

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<sup>200</sup> 和甫述之，仲子乃手寫其事。

<sup>201</sup> 俾包山蔡君啟宏纂其實，倩余記於圖余。

<sup>202</sup> 與余為金石交四十年。

<sup>203</sup> 余固慶余之知處世也。

<sup>204</sup> 鄉者才德之論之譽，今有所試。寔獲我心。

<sup>205</sup> Likou 蠡口 is a town six miles northeast from the Suzhou city, and belongs to Xiangcheng District of modern Suzhou.



Zhu Yunming goes to unusual details in recounting Pan's quick response and efficient operation that kept flooded wheat shoots from smothering.<sup>206</sup> Pan was depicted as the hero who saved Suzhou people from severe crop failure. At the turn of Emperor Jiajing's reign (1522-1566), Suzhou was subject to locust plague that last for four years from 1521 to 1524.<sup>207</sup> Pan not only arranged the construction of protective nets but also mediated between peasants in distress and the local governors. In a more detailed way, Zhu Yunming narrates the interaction between Pan and the magistrate of Suzhou, revealing the pivotal role Pan played in a petition to central government for tax reduction. Pan's utterance was translated into a concise but elegant style. For instance, he answered the inquiries about disaster with only two characters: 蝗也 (literally, "It is locust") and initiated his report to the magistrate with "As humble as I am, still have something to say" 微若云我,固將言之. Zhu Yunming deliberately borrowed the grammatical structure and narrative mode from classical historical writings, trying to fashion Pan's image as a well-documented glorious paragon of the past.

Zhu's cultural ambition is substantiated by his attempt to distinguish this commemorative handscroll from ordinary works created purely for social reciprocation. The fundamental difference between these two types of handscroll is expressed in the voice of Pan. According to Zhu's account, an obscure painter once wanted to congratulate Pan's birthday by "drawing a portrait for him by convention" 如俗寫其容. Pan's refusal manifests his dislike for the stereotyped visual formula of portraits, which always render the protagonist as a successful official wearing gorgeous uniform, or as a recluse eating

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<sup>206</sup> The original text reads: 去其藪, 扶其良, 苗復長, 乃得以蒔, 終少穫焉。

<sup>207</sup> In the preface, the disaster was dated to 辛壬癸甲歲, an abridged expression of 辛巳, 庚午, 癸未, 甲申, that refers to the time span from 1521 to 1524.

wild herbs.<sup>208</sup> This criticism reads more like Zhu Yunming's own words because it goes beyond the lore Pan possessed as a peasant. However, Zhu's comment calls for attention to the peculiar composition of Wen Zhengming's illustration on this handscroll. Wen's painting presents neither facial features nor bodily traits of Pan Chongli as standard portraits do. Instead, Pan's figure is delineated with light ink lines in a sketchy manner. In stark contrast to his small figure at the left corner of the canvas is the vast background of flooded farmland. The painting turns to be a visual record of the very moment when Pan was patrolling the earth dam.

Also, in Pan's hypothetical dialogue with the obscure painter, Zhu Yunming brings out a revivalist theme. Pan expresses a glow of pride in his dual identity as a peasant who is versed at agriculture and a scholar who has the moral courage to plead for local people. Even though he has never entered officialdom or the upper social strata, he feels no qualms to be "the only one who entered the familial shrine but wearing plain clothes" 吾獨以素服入家廟。Zhu extols Pan's belief and performance as the embodiment of the moral customs in the glorious past. A time period supposedly witnessed a permeable boundary between scholar class and farmer: "so there was no scholar who could not do farm work."<sup>209</sup>

Understandably, Zhu's cultural nostalgia represented on this handscroll had practical significance in mid-Ming Suzhou. The climax of Pan Chongli's story is his success in appealing for tax reduction. Suzhou people were exempt from about forty percent of tax. As an obscure peasant without official rank, his moral integrity is tinted with knight-errant celebrated in classical Chinese literature. It is possible that the heroic transformation of

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<sup>208</sup> The stereotyped depiction is rendered as 金紫待漏, 蟒玉榮鄉, 縫掖以爲偏, 藜藿以爲隱。

<sup>209</sup> 古士農一,故無不農之士。

Pan's deed was directly related to the economic predicament that faced Jiangnan people. Since the Hongwu period, farmers in Suzhou and Songjiang were heavily taxed to gain crop revenues for central government. Roughly 1.76 percent of the state's farmland had to produce 14 percent of state's annual agricultural gains.<sup>210</sup> The tax ratio of grains in Suzhou is 0.285 *dan* per acre, approximately six times higher than that of nationwide average, 0.035 *dan* per acre.<sup>211</sup> Heavy taxation forced Suzhou people to escape. According to the investigation conducted by Zhou Chen 周忱 (1381-1453), even though 8986 households were registered officially in Suzhou, only 738 of them remained and could pay tax. Population loss made it more difficult to accomplish the goal of taxation. While the only solution to predicament is official remission from accumulated liability, as what took place in 1371, 1421 and 1434, consequently Suzhou would enter a new round of revival.<sup>212</sup> This peculiar social context provides us with a new perspective to understand the appeal of Pan Chongyi's courageous acts and Zhu Yunming's endeavor to historicize his story on a commemorative handscroll.

Zhu's effort echoes in another colophon on this handscroll. It is of similar length as Zhu's piece but focus on the practice of making this handscroll. The opening paragraph reads: "Wu is a superior state of documents and objects. If scholars who live in this town

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<sup>210</sup> Suzhou and Songjiang had about 1.5 million acres of farmland while 85 million nationwide during the mid-Ming period. See Fan Jinmin 范金民 and Xia Weizhong 夏維中, *Suzhou diqu shehui jingjishi* 蘇州地區社會經濟史 (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 1993), 127-41.

<sup>211</sup> Fan Jinmin 范金民, *Mingqing jiangnan shangye de fazhan* 明清江南商業的發展 (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 1998); Mamoru Kawakatsu 川勝守, *Min Shin Konan nogyo keizaishi kenkyu* 明清江南農業經濟史研究 (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1992).

<sup>212</sup> About 0.36 million *dan* and more than one million *dan* of grain was remitted in 1371 and 1421, respectively. About five sixth of tax in grain was remitted in 1434. See *Suzhou tongshi* 蘇州通史, ed. Wang Guoping 王國平, vol. 1 (Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2019), 349-52. See also Wang Yuquan 王毓銓 ed., *Zhongguo jingji tongshi mingdai juan* 中國經濟通史明代卷 (Beijing: Jingji ribao chubanshe, 2000).

has one word or one deed that is virtuous, gentleman must record it and keep it from falling into oblivion. It is a way to show honesty and sincerity."<sup>213</sup> Therefore, the making of this handscroll is invested with cultural significance as a manifestation of the shared belief and identity in Suzhou community.

A detail in Wen Zhengming's inscription is equally noteworthy. Wen recalls that he already created a painting for Pan Chongli in 1510 to praise his virtuous conduct against flood.<sup>214</sup> "Sixteen years passed" until Pan's son, Pan Chang 潘鋹, traveled to Beijing and solicited another copy.<sup>215</sup> We know that Wen assumed a position in Hanlin Academy in Beijing around 1522, before which he spent most of his time in Suzhou. A question is why Pan Chang would rather take a long journey than approach Wen Zheng with the commission when Wen was in Suzhou. There is no textual evidence about Pan Chang's life between 1510 and 1522, but it is possible that Pan Chang wished to enhance the fame of his father and to seize cultural capital through Wen Zhengming's assistance in Beijing.

Despite the fact Wen's reputation in the capital city was disputed,<sup>216</sup> it does not mean that Pan Chang's hope is purely a fantasy. The middle years of the Ming saw the emergence of Suzhou literati who entered central court through civil examination. They paved the way for the cultural communications between Suzhou circle and the one in the capital area.

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<sup>213</sup> 吳文物上國，士居其鄉有一言一行之善，其君子必錄之不使泯泯無傳，示厚也。

<sup>214</sup> Craig Clunas mentioned the Pan family when discussing Wen Zhengming's literary association with local elites. See Clunas, *Elegant Debts*, 105.

<sup>215</sup> Wen Zhengming's saying in his inscription is that "unconsciously sixteen years passed" 不覺十有六年矣。

<sup>216</sup> Scholar-officials in Hanlin Academy held different attitudes toward Wen. Some felt contempt for Wen because he was not enrolled through civil examination. One famous example is that Yang Weicong 楊維聰 and Yao Lai 姚涞 mocked at him: "My Yamen office is not the Painting Academy. How can we tolerate a painter standing here?" 我衙門中不是畫院，乃容畫匠處此耶。However, Wen's poems and letters also reveal that he was treated with decorum and respect by Ma Ruji 馬汝驥 (1493 -1543), Huang Zuo 黃佐 (1490-1566), and Chen Yi 陳沂 (1469-1538). See He Liangjun 何良俊, *Siyoushai congshuo* 四友齋叢說 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 125.

Handscrolls often served as a medium for literary collaboration and knowledge sharing. The following example will show how a commemorative handscroll broadcast Suzhou story in Beijing.

In the mid-summer of 1478, Wu Kuan wrote a preface in handscroll format to extol a filial child (*xiaotong* 孝童) in his hometown.<sup>217</sup> The child's name is Xu Meide 徐美德. Xu's mother suffered from malignant sore. Xu routinely licked her wounds to alleviate her pain until she was fully recovered. Word of Xu's filial deed spread quickly through Suzhou area and he was recruited to prefecture school. Wu composed this preface at the moment when Xu was registered as an government-sponsored Confucianism student (*ruxue dizi* 儒學弟子). Previous to Wu's composition, Zhu Hao 祝灝 (fl.1439-1480), a Suzhou literatus and the grandfather of Zhu Yunming, had written a detailed biography for Xu Meide as a paragon of filial piety. The primary purpose of executing this handscroll therefore shifts from objective recording to cultural investments.

Wu's preface focuses on the significance of this filial child for ethical practice in local community. Zhu's biography was referred to not only as source of information but as an important link in the chain of canonizing Xu's virtuous deed. Wu admits that Xu's filial deed, licking his mother's wounds, may makes audience uncomfortable,<sup>218</sup> but rejects the suggestion to adapt the story to suit common tastes. Invoking Zhu Xi's 朱熹 extolling of filial exemplar Yu Qianlou who tasted his father's faeces, Wu argues that Xu's deed is

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<sup>217</sup> According to Wu's inscription, the final version of this preface is finished on the *bingwu* day of the sixth month, the fourteenth year of *chenghua* (成化十四年歲次戊戌六月丙午), namely July 15, 1478. However, this event has not been recorded in Wu Kuan's chronicle (*nianpu* 年譜). See Huang Yueqin 黃約琴, "Wu Kuan nianpu" 吳寬年譜 (MA diss., Lanzhou University, 2014), Wu Kuan, *Xu Xiaotong xu* 徐孝童序, 1478, handscroll, ink on paper, 27.5x512 cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.

<sup>218</sup> 然或有疑舐瘡非常孝而欲引之以歸中道。

unusual but not abnormal.<sup>219</sup> Therefore, “making a preface to circulate [Xu’s story] is motivational” 序而傳之可以勸乎。

The second half of this preface legitimates the special recruiting process that admitted Xu into prefecture school, even though Xu seemed underage and not academically qualified. Wu mentioned the anecdote of Lad Zhang (*zhang tongzi* 張童子), a young prodigy in the Tang dynasty who was bestowed *jinshi* title for being able to recite Confucian classics at the age of nine. Wu holds that Xu Meide is superior to that lad because Xu put Confucian moral principle into practice. Imitating Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) who presented an encomium to Lad Zhang, Wu Kuan wanted to use his preface to “elucidate Xu’s story and spread his glorious fame.” 辨其事揚其美。

The preface is written in standard script on a paper with grid on its surface. Character structure is square and solid while strokes are bold and heavy. It looks like a combined style of Su Shi and Yan Zhenqing which is commensurate with the serious theme about filiality. The text of the preface and Wu’s inscription, 408 characters in total, were evenly distributed to 34 lines without any indentation or hanging characters. The regulated appearance of the calligraphy gives rise to an assumption about the alternative purpose of this preface. It was probably a literary piece to be engraved on the surface of a stele. The formula of texts on commemorative stele consists of several genres, including biographical record (*ji* 記), preface (*xu* 序), stylized prose with regular lines (*ming* 銘 or *zan* 讚) and assorted verses. Zhu Hao had finished the biography and Wu composed the preface. There is a possibility that other necessary works in different genres would be collected through

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<sup>219</sup> 不謂之非常孝。

the circulation of this handscroll.

It is hard to say whether Wu's writing on this handscroll is an impartial rendition of the filial story because Xu Meide is of a gentry lineage in Suzhou. His grandfather is the younger brother of Xu Youzhen 徐有貞 (1407-1472), a Suzhou scholar-official well known for his achievement in literature, calligraphy, martial arts, and politics. He was once the leading figure of the Cabinet after he staged a coup in 1457 and restored Emperor Yingzong (r. 1436-1450; 1457-1465) to the throne. Xu Youzhen's daughter married Zhu Hao, the author of Xu Meide's biography.

Wu Kuan wrote this preface during his mandatory mourning period for his father in Suzhou. His composition received active responses from literati circle in his neighborhood. Shen Zhou might have created an illustration for Wu's preface, because a colophon by an early viewer mentions the juxtaposition of "Wu's essay and Shen's painting" (*wuwen shenhua* 吳文沈畫), a typical formula of commemorative handscroll.<sup>220</sup> However, the illustration was lost in the surviving version for unknown reasons.

Among the earliest group of inscribers, three out of four are Wu's townsman from different administrative divisions of Suzhou.<sup>221</sup> Their colophons were arrayed on one piece of endpaper adjacent to Wu's text, suggesting the temporal contiguity of their creation. These colophons share in common the praise for the collective effort to canonize Xu the filial child. Li Min's 李旻 (1445-1509) colophon celebrates that Xu's filial deed became

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<sup>220</sup> See Huang Yun's colophon, the ending couplet in which reads: 有子一時全至孝, 吳文沈畫重兼金。

<sup>221</sup> Shen Zhou 沈周 from Xiangcheng 相城, Ling Yuan 凌遠 (1426-?) from Haiyu 海虞 (modern Changshu 常熟), Huang Yun 黃雲 from Kunshan. Zhang Tai 張泰, a Suzhou literatus serving in Hanlin Academy in Beijing, might present his work much later given the noticeable interruption between Zhang's work and his townsmen's on the scroll.

undebatable since “the grand scribe of our family has good poems” 吾家太史有佳詩。

“Grand scribe” refers to Wu Kuan. Wu was serving as secretary at Hanlin Academy, a post also known as *taishi* (太史, literally “grand scribe” or “grand historian”) The long poem by Ling Yuan 凌遠 (fl. 1460), a literatus from Changshu county, summarizes Zhu Hao and Wu Kuan’s contribution as well as their far-reaching influence in the future:

Tongxuan (Zhu’s *zi*) composed biography recording the start and the ending,

Pao’an is contemporary Lord Grand Scribe.

Elegance and talent [of Xu] spread to four seas now,

Not only Suzhou people knows of the filial child.

侗軒作傳載始終，

匏庵今之太史公。

風華爾今播四海，

不獨蘇人知孝童。

Ling’s also addresses Wu as “Master of Grand Historian” (*taishi gong* 太史公). With the honorific title “His Honor,” however, *taishi* is more than a kenning for Wu’s occupation but the art name that has long be accorded to Sima Qian (c. 145-c. 86 BC). Wu Kuan was elevated to a great historian comparable with Sima Qian for his endeavor to perpetuate a memorable figure in his hometown and for his moralizing approach to social events.

The handscroll corroborates Wu Kuan’s posture as a “historian” of local community. He enjoyed the honorable title “grand scribe” and later created a seal for himself with the scripts “古太史氏” (literally “A ancient clan of grand scribe”). The impression of this seal



can be found in several pieces of colophon Wu inscribed after 1481 (see figure 1.12).<sup>222</sup> Contemporary connoisseurs tend to interpret this seal as an example of “Seals of scholar’s official career” (*shilu yin* 仕履印),<sup>223</sup> relating the script merely to Wu’s position in central court. Given Wu’s predilection for Song culture, however, he presumably accepted Huang Kuo’s 黄廓 (fl. 1150) definition of *taishishi* 太史氏: “The duty of an ancient clan of grand scribe was to collect ballad, adapt them into lyrics and poems and present to the king. In this way, the king would know their talent and ambition.”<sup>224</sup> Therefore, the “scribe” and the represented deeds or persons mutually construct the fame of each other.

Seen in this light, it is no surprise that Wu immediately sent it to his friends in Beijing after finishing the handscroll in the summer.<sup>225</sup> The surviving scroll shows that at least thirteen scholar-officials have participated in the collective inscribing activity since the turn of 1479, including Li Dongyang and Xie Duo, the center of literary power of this period, and Wu’s school mates and townsman such as Gu Lin, Zhang Tai, and Li Fang 李方.

The intensive literary practice on this handscroll accelerated the spread of Xu Meide’s story and gave rise to varied interpretation. Owing to their shared experience as successful examination candidates, inscribers in central government focused more on the filial child’s promising future since he had entered Prefecture School. Comparatively, the plot of licking wound was downplayed in a moderate rhetoric manner. Six poems contain parlance of civil

<sup>222</sup> For instance, Huaisu 懷素, *Huaisu’s Autobiography* 自敘帖, handscroll, ink on silk, 28.3x755 cm, Palace Museum in Taipei.

<sup>223</sup> Wu Qinfang 吴芹芳 and Xie Quan 謝泉, *Zhongguo gudai de cangshuyin* 中國古代的藏書印 (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue chubanshe, 2005), 79-80.

<sup>224</sup> 古太史氏職採民謠，緝為歌詩，以獻於王，王以知其才而見其志。See Huang Che’s 黃徹 (1093–1168) “Gongxi shihua xu” 磬溪詩話序, in Zeng Zaozhuang 增棗莊, ed., *Songdai xuba quanbian* 宋代序跋全編, vol.6 (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 2015), 4056.

<sup>225</sup> Wu Shou’s colophon dates the twelfth month of the same year, recording how this handscroll was brought to the capital city by a traveler from Suzhou.

examination such as “pluck the cassia” (*zhegui* 折桂), “register on the list of successful candidates” (*biaobang* 標榜), and “assistant of the excellent judgment” (*fushengming* 輔聖明). Fu Han 傅瀚 (1435-1502) went even further, suggesting to change the name of Xu’s community to “Filial Child’s Lane” as if he would have succeeded in imperial examination.<sup>226</sup>

Most colophon writers have realized handscroll’s potential as a durable medium for documentation and self-posturing, yet only few of them were acutely aware the opposite side. The enduring life of a handscroll a double-edged sword. For instance, after reading a series of encomia to the filial child, Wu Shou 吳綬 (fl. 1487) presented his concern and warning: if the filial child failed in examination and sank into oblivion, the excessive praise and false prediction on this handscroll would become an inexpungible stigma for inscribers.<sup>227</sup>

Compared with the uncertainty in the filial child’s future, praising the “scribe” of this story appears to be a safe topic of inscriptions, because he has already achieved success in officialdom. It is understandable that an overwhelming number of colophons reaffirm the pivotal role Wu Kuan played in the literary construction of the filial exemplar. Previously, Suzhou is well known as the hometown of Lu Ji 陸績 (188-219), a historical figure who has been listed in “Twenty-four filial exemplars” (*ershisi xiao* 二十四孝) for stealing oranges for his parents during a formal banquet. Referring to Lu’s story, Lin Han’s 林瀚 (1434-1519) colophon implies Wu Kuan’s success in producing a new filial exemplar for

<sup>226</sup> 他日福業端可擬，標榜須名孝童里。

<sup>227</sup> 以諸公之所稱道者儼然自居，忘其掖勸之助...將以諸公之言為無證矣。

Suzhou.<sup>228</sup> Both Wu Kuan and Zhu Hao were eulogized as “venerated old men” (*qilao* 耆老) for manifesting the paragon of virtue in their hometown.<sup>229</sup>

As the handscroll circulated in Beijing, Wu Kuan utilized his influence to seize more public recognition for the filial child. Meanwhile, he tried to establish his own fame as keen custodian of Confucianism edification (*fengjiao* 風教).<sup>230</sup> Besides these immediate personal gains, however, a long-term consequence is the forming of Suzhou’s cultural image. The sheer length of the handscroll and dozens of colophons physically and textually represent the concerted efforts that Suzhou literati put in local cultural enterprise. As is summarized by Wu Shou in his colophon: “The filial child was born in a town of documentation.” 童子生於文獻之鄉。

If the handscroll of the filial child illustrates the literary construction of a local paragon of virtue, a handscroll series executed by Wang Ao and his fellows for a Suzhou recluse Lu Jun 陸俊 (1409-1492) will exemplify a dialogical connection between inscriptions and other textual sources. I am trying to reveal the peculiar intertextuality that is conditioned by the handscroll format. On the one hand, the inscribing practice is, to a certain degree, determined by preexisting texts of different genres, authors and themes. On the other hand, a scroll may “involve a text into a continuum” of local culture by strengthening its signifying nature and establishing associations hinting at the events in local community.<sup>231</sup>

The handscroll series discussed below consists of three independently created but

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<sup>228</sup> 江夏黃童今再見，吳都陸續古來歆。忠君報國他年事，還擬芳聲播士林。

<sup>229</sup> 功德已煩鄉老著。

<sup>230</sup> 太史闡風教 名譽昭塵寰。

<sup>231</sup> My argument here is inspired by Glinka’s study on intertextuality and world literature. Natalia Glinka, “Intertextuality in the Modernist Literature,” Conference: International Journal of Multidisciplinary Thought, Boston, Harvard University (Jan 2019):147–154.

interrelated works. The first one is titled “The Virtue of a Recluse in Bao Hill” (*baoshan yinde* 包山隱德), also known as “A Preface for Recluse Lu’s Seventieth Birthday” 壽陸隱翁七十序.<sup>232</sup> It was originally written in 1478 but the collective inscribing practice lasted until 1562. The main section of the second handscroll is an epitaph Wang Ao wrote for Lu around 1493.<sup>233</sup> Wang’s running script suggests that this work probably is a manuscript before being transcribed in standard script and carved on a stone tablet.<sup>234</sup> The third handscroll is a prose oration lamenting Lu Jun (see figure 2. 3).<sup>235</sup> Lu died on March 10, 1492, but Wang could not go back to Suzhou to attend the funeral. He held a memorial sacrifice in the fall, reading the oration as condolence. Around the turn of the fifteenth century, Wang Ao transcribed the oration at the request of Lu Jun’s son, and made it into a handscroll.<sup>236</sup>

The execution of these three handscrolls spanned half a century. I group them together because they have thematic similarity and overlapping authorship. Besides the creator Wang Ao, Suzhou scholars Xu Zhenqing 徐禎卿, Wang Chong 王寵 and Wang Shou 王守 actively participated in collective execution and left their colophons on more than one handscroll of this series.

The active response Wang Ao obtained from local literati circle was partly indebted

<sup>232</sup> Wang Ao 王鏊, *A Preface for Recluse Lu’s Seventieth Birthday* 行楷書壽陸隱翁七十序, 1784, handscroll, ink on gold decorated paper, 27.3x218.6cm, Shanghai Museum.

<sup>233</sup> Lu died on March 10, 1492. The epitaph was composed after his funeral on December 6. Wu records the date of the funeral in the epitaph so that it might be written no earlier than December of 1492. See Wang Ao, *Lu Jun’s Epitaph* 陸俊墓志銘, handscroll, ink on gold-decorated paper, 26.7×262 cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.

<sup>234</sup> The example of a finished epitaph can see on the stele of Gentleman Xu (see figure 2.1), which was composed by Wang Ao and transcribed by Wu Kuan in standard script.

<sup>235</sup> Wang Ao, *An essay lamenting Lu Jun in running script* 行書祭陸俊文, handscroll, ink on gold-decorated paper, 26x167.5 cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.

<sup>236</sup> See Xu Zhenqing’s colophon. Ibid.

to his nationwide literary fame and great success in political career. His unmatched rhetoric success in eight-part essay (*bagu wen* 八股文) not only earned him two “first rank” in civil examination of local and provincial levels and a “third rank” at court level, but also attracted numerous followers from his hometown. Wang assumed the position as Vice Director of Ministry of Personnel in 1500 and was installed in the Cabinet in 1506. It is one of the reasons that he is held in great esteem by colophon writers, like Xu Zhenqing, with honorable address “prime minister” (*xiangguo* 相國).

My focus on this handscroll series is not the social ties within literati circle in Suzhou, although seventeen colophons on endpaper provide an interesting picture of Wang Ao’s association with his young admirers. What interests me is the textual construction of Lu Jun, and how writings on handscroll were entangled with historiographical practice at local level.

Different from most protagonists of commemorative handscrolls, Lu Jun remained obscure for most of his lifetime. The Lu family migrated to Dongshan 東山 in Suzhou during Song period and had a time-honored pedigree. However, Lu Jun was known to his townsmen largely due to his archaic fervor and eccentric mode of conduct. As is summarized by Wang Ao, Lu’s “appearance, spirit and style of costumes have an antique flavor.” Many contemporary people mock his pedantic words and deeds.<sup>237</sup> Nevertheless, Wang Ao still looked with favor on Lu’s stubborn obsession with archaism.<sup>238</sup> He strove to elevate Lu Jun to be a model of both individual cultivation and moral authority, which embodied the long-lost ethnic tradition. Writings on three handscrolls illustrate how Wang Ao put his ambition into practice.

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<sup>237</sup> 古貌古心古衣冠...出詞行事，世多迂之。See *Lu Jun's Epitaph* 陆俊墓志铭; see also the text in *A Preface for Recluse Lu's Seventieth Birthday*: 其始人莫不嗤嗤。

<sup>238</sup> 予特愛其近古也。

Wang Ao's three prose pieces, distinctive in genre though they are, form the cornerstone of the textual system about Lu Jun. Lu is depicted from different perspectives with nuanced level of detail. The earliest one is the preface to celebrate Lu's birthday. Wang tries to textually reshape Lu's public image through an exaggerated detail: "[He] was good at telling the affairs of Hongwu and Yongle periods, and stories about Magistrate Zhou Chen and Kuang Zhong, which fascinated listener all day long without leaving" 善談洪武永樂間及周文襄況太守遺事，聽之移日不能去。The rest of the prose devotes ample space to Lu's endeavor to change the policy about taxation on military horse. Since the beginning of Ming, an overwhelming number of military horses were distributed to households in Jiangnan area to feed as a form of taxation. It shifted the financial burden of military operation from central government to local ones. However, peasants in Jiangnan area, who relied on agriculture, were suffering, because most of them had neither experience nor conditions to feed horses from northern China. Lu was once in charge of "horse service" (*mayi* 馬役) in Suzhou and fully aware of the inappropriate regulation. Therefore, he spent fifteen year to petition for a change. Although his appeal was routinely dismissed as interference, he persisted in writing without stop.

Wang Ao's depiction delineates the eccentric image of Lu Jun: he locked himself in his home and kept writing everyday despite the change of weather and season. As written paper piled up, he distributed them to people passed by, hoping they could help deliver the petition to the local government.<sup>239</sup> However, he refused Wang Ao's help to remit his duty because he hoped that "his petition would benefit people from the Jiangnan area or even

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<sup>239</sup> The original text reads: 日閉閣秉筆操紙雖祁寒暑雨不廢雖家事甚急禁勿以關... 如是蓋十五年其帋筆如山遇人無問可不可必 授之冀有能行之。

nationwide.” ...所以爲此者爲江南也，爲天下也。

The epitaph written by Wang provides more details about Lu's maniacal acts. Lu's petition addresses a wide range of political issues beside taxation. When drafting the texts, he spent every day weighing his words and posted an announcement in the downtown area to recruit volunteers to convey his letters. His effort never stopped until his death, so the time span of his petition was modified as “thirty years” in this epitaph written in 1492, fourteen year later than the preface. The prose oration focuses more on Wang Ao's personal affection toward Lu. The close relationship between them developed during Wang's youth. Lu is one generation senior to Wang and has a marital relationship with the Wang family that resides in Dongshan. Therefore Wang Ao addressed Lu as “uncle of my clan” (*zushu* 族叔) in his writings. When Wang Ao was preparing the civil examination, Lu offered him financial support. His generosity is foregrounded and echoes Wang's summary in the preface that Lu is a benevolent person.

Parallel to Wang's textual construction is the editorial process of the Suzhou gazetteer at the turn of the fifteenth century. Wen Zhengming's colophon on the handscroll of the congratulatory preface mentions his experience of reading Lu's petition when he was in the editorial committee of local gazetteer.<sup>240</sup> Meanwhile, Lu's petition was also compiled by Wen Zhengming's friend, Qian Gu 錢穀, into the updated version of *Anthology of Selected Literature in Capital Wu* (*wudu wencui* 吳都文萃).

However, the state-sponsored local history gives Lu's story a different ending. In Wang Ao's writing, Lu's petition was declined completely. He remained obscure until 1488, four years before his death, when he received official recognition and the honored identity

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<sup>240</sup> 比歲余從郡士夫纂修郡乘讀成化間洞庭陸伯良甫所上當道馬役狀。

as a local elite (*guandai* 冠帶). In contrast, the *Gusu zhi* 姑蘇志 records that Lu had a brief encounter with an official from central government.<sup>241</sup> If the encounter is a real case, it might be the highlight of Lu's thirty-year petition campaign, but neither Wang Ao's preface nor the epitaph mentions such fulfillment. There is possibility that the plot in gazetteer is fabricated out of sympathy for Lu's long-held dream.

Understandably, colophon writers on the handscroll preferred the happy ending in the gazetteer. Zhang Ling (fl.1506), a Suzhou poet, tried to direct future readers' attention away from Wang's lamenting words to the narrative in gazetteer: "If one wants to know affairs before and after [Lu's] death, just examine the posthumous traces in prefectural book."<sup>242</sup> However, Wang Ao's disciples, owing to their peculiar access to Wang's friends, tend to accept the real ending of Lu's story. For instance, Wang Chong, when inscribing again on the handscroll dedicated to Lu, expressed his sympathy for Lu's unfulfilled ambition: "Drafting the memoir, [he] faced empty forest with hoary hair... a sound of sigh is still left in wind and woods"<sup>243</sup> The handscrolls appear to be an "arena of superscription," since new interpretation was continually added without erasing the old ones. They resonate and negotiate with each other.

No matter what attitudes inscribers held to Lu's ending, a thread that runs through most colophons is the recognition of Wang Ao's endeavor to construct a paragon of local community. Shen Shixing 申時行 (1535-1614), a Suzhou native who also obtained

<sup>241</sup> 成化十四年巡按御史劉魁問及馬頭利病有吳縣二十八都耆民陸伯良具呈。Wao Ao et al., eds., *Gusu zhi* 姑蘇志 *juan* 15 (n.p., Chinese-Japanese Library of Harvard Yen-ching Institute, 1506), 15b-16a; see also in *Wuxian zhi* 吳縣志, ed. Niu Ruolin 牛若麟 (*jingshi* 1637), *juan* 49, 15a-15b, see *Tianyi ge cang mingdai fangzhi xuankan xubian* 天一閣藏明代方志選刊續編 edition (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 2014).

<sup>242</sup> 欲知化後生前事，但檢遺芳在郡書。

<sup>243</sup> 白頭草奏對空林...風木猶遺感嘅音。



*zhuangyuan* title, elucidated in his long colophon the historiographic significance of these handscrolls. Shen complains that official or state-sponsored history was so closely identified with elitism and political discourse, from which obscure but noteworthy people were always excluded.<sup>244</sup> Excessive attention has been paid to grand narrative and topics about loyalty, strategy, and policy (*zhongmou yuanlve* 忠謀遠略). On the contrary, he calls for timely recording of those people obscure but deserving respect, because they are exemplars that ordinary people could emulate:

“Grand scribe says those who wish to polish their actions and establish their names could never exert influence on later generations unless they attach themselves to a man of the sky-blue clouds. Oldman Lu’s deeds, under Grand Mentor’s fame, spread more widely... Lu’s unshakable faith and insight, his exemplary and practical words (suggestions) are fully represented on this handscroll. I regret that he was not celebrated in the world but rejoice at Grand Mentor who can treasure him.”

太史公謂砥行立名者，非附青雲之士不能施於後世，陸翁之行得太傅而名益傳... 若陸翁之篤惇卓識，行可表而言可行，此卷備矣。余獨惜其不顯於世而猶幸太傅之能為翁重也。

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<sup>244</sup> 江湖之士抱杞憂而含婦恤者，悉廢不敘。

## Conclusion

Through continuing literary practice and interpretation, the cultural meaning conveyed in Wang's writings became fully intelligible. Zhang Huan 章煥 (fl.1541) even translate Wang's laments on Lu Jun into a keen appeal to future audience: "A man should know the livelihood of common people, Never be unworthy of the recluse's expectation."<sup>245</sup> Handscroll therefore functions as an effective medium for documenting, recounting, and promulgating local affairs and people. It could be deemed as a "site of emotion" on which communication take place at social, historical and cultural levels. A handscroll can weave preexisting representation with living experience. In this fashion, one generation can train its successors. With regard to the cases of the Filial Gu and Lu Jun, the textual construction became the shared memory of all writers who inscribed on these handscrolls.

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<sup>245</sup> 男兒要識蒼生計莫負當年處士心。

## **Chapter 2 Making Handscrolls: The Negotiation Between Patrons, Dealers, and Artists**

This chapter focuses on the making of handscrolls. I try to reveal Suzhou literati's interaction with artists and craftsmen in the process of collecting, assembling, and mounting those isolated literary and artistic pieces into a handscroll. With textual evidence gleaned from letters, diaries, and jottings written by Suzhou literati, I hope to resurrect the social and cultural contexts in which handscroll were executed, and to present a more detailed picture of the handscroll culture in mid-Ming Suzhou.

My discussion begins with a brief account about the process of how handscroll projects were commissioned, organized, and completed. I attempt to reveal the social networks and economic factors that have influenced the production of handscrolls. Particular attention has been paid to intermediaries and amateur dealers in Suzhou's art market, through whose hands a handscroll could be reshaped and invested with new meaning, although the significant role this group of people played in art projects has long been underrated.

### **2.1 Solicitation and Negotiation: Making a Handscroll Socially**

On the Mid-Autumn Festival of 1472, Du Qiong (1396-1474), a scholar and painter in Suzhou, sent a congratulatory letter to Wu Kuan who just achieved the first rank in the imperial examination. After proclaiming his close friendship with Wu's father in the letter, Du solicited Wu Kuan to write a piece of prose to record the rebuilding of a pavilion in the

garden of Du family.<sup>246</sup> The pavilion was named Yanlǜ 延綠 (literally, “extended green”), first built in 1450.<sup>247</sup> Du was therefore branded with a sobriquet Master of Yanlǜ Pavilion 延綠亭主人. Du’s letter reads:

This pavilion has a record written by Chen Yongzhi previously. Gentry people in Wuzhong [Suzhou] continually composed answering poems of different length until they have already filled a scroll! Now I want to implore Your Excellency to compose “Record of Rebuilding Yanlǜ Pavilion.”<sup>248</sup>

It no surprise that Du’s pavilion has attracted a host of encomia given his influential role in local literary society.<sup>249</sup> A common way to preserve these works was to mount them together with an illustration in the form of handscroll. It is usually termed as “painting of sobriquet” (*biehaotu* 別號圖). Wu’s “record” was supposedly to follow illustration or another piece of rhapsody or prose piece on the scroll, and to serve as a transitional section carrying forward to the range of poems on the left part of the scroll (See figure 3.1).

Du’s letter does not mention the payment for Wu’s service. Instead, he sent a landscape painting in hanging scroll format with the letter. Du’s painting could be understood as both a prepaid remuneration and an urgent reminder. He inscribed on the upper left corner of the painting, specifying that the landscape “was sketched exclusively for Yuanbo (Wu Kuan’s *zi*), the new *zhuangyuan*.” 杜琮為原博狀元寫意. Du also indicated his age, seventy-

<sup>246</sup> *Rongdeng tie* 榮登帖, album leaf, 1472, ink on paper, 24.2x48.6 cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.

<sup>247</sup> 景泰元年庚午作延綠亭號延綠亭主人 Shen Zhou 沈周, *Shen Zhou ji* 沈周集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2013), 805.

<sup>248</sup> 是亭也，前有陳永之之記，吳中縉紳繼作長篇短章已盈卷矣。今欲拜求閣下作重建延綠亭記一首。

<sup>249</sup> According to the record of Gu Wenbin, Du started to organize a literary club in 1449 which had stable personnel of eight poets. See Gu Wenbin 顧文彬, *Guoyunlou shuhua ji* 過雲樓書畫記, *juan 3* (Harvard-Yenching Library Chinese Rare Books Digitization Project-Collectanea, 1882), 4a-5a.

seven, in his signature.<sup>250</sup> Although it is quite common for a painter to mention his age in such a way, but Du's signature can also be understood to have implications for urging Wu to quickly respond to the appeal from an "old" man.

In another letter dated February 17, 1473,<sup>251</sup> Du indicated that he had received Wu's "Record" and expressed his gratitude. However, the opening sentence of this letter, "The painting of pine trees and children that I presented through other people might have arrived at your place for a while,"<sup>252</sup> implies that Du pressured Wu by sending another gift during the four-months waiting. Wu's response, dilatory though it was, aroused Du Qiong's higher expectation. What accompanies this letter of acknowledgement is a new wish list. Wu Kuan was expected to impart message to Du's relative, to take care of young Suzhou natives in Beijing, and, more importantly, to send back another piece of calligraphy 賜臺翰.

This case reveals an episode in the agenda of making a handscroll, from accumulating textual contents to soliciting a summary document. Du's first letter states clearly the topic of the work he solicited from Wu Kuan but leaves him with considerable freedom to decide what to write. The potential use of this work on a handscroll, as well as the rhetoric formula and compositional structure, should be tacit knowledge for both consigner and consignee. Sometimes the content of assigned writing would be specified by solicitors. In a letter sent from Zhou Tianqiu 周天球 (1514-1595) to his friend, he asked for a piece of biographic prose as a gift for his seventieth birthday.<sup>253</sup> Zhou made a careful inventory of events that should be addressed, especially his refusal of imperial employment and the indifferent

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<sup>250</sup> 成化八年壬辰中秋，杜琮為原博狀元寫意，時年七十有七。See Du Qiong, *Landscape for Wu Kuan* 為吳寬作山水圖, 1472, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 108.2 x 38.2cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.

<sup>251</sup> The date of the letter is the twenty-first day of the first month 元月廿一.

<sup>252</sup> 外者曾奉松子圖想已達左右久矣。

<sup>253</sup> 明年春上元日，球七十誕辰，愚慾求賜大篇。SHTSGCMD CD, vol. 4, 9-10.

attitude he held toward the emperor's greeting.<sup>254</sup>

To what degree the content will be stipulated depends on various factors such as the closeness of relationships and potential use of assigned works. If the material form and artistic style of a consigned work may heavily affect the overall visual effect of the handscroll in process, more explicit instruction will be presented to executors. It can be illustrated by Wang Yi's 王以 (1486-1553) letter soliciting a frontispiece for a gift handscroll: 'Usurp the title of Stone Hill' (*jianhao shigang* 僭號石岡, *shigang* seems refer to a famous contemporary recluse). Wang's letter reads:

"It was a great honor to receive a scroll from gentlemen of this town. Owing to a tight travel schedule, I failed to beg for your excellent work in person...[I] implore you to wield your brush and send it to me at your convenience. I will treasure it until mounting it on the scroll..."

蒙諸鄉先生賜作卷子，行迫 失於拜求佳製，心甚歉然。伏乞公餘為一揮筆寄來，當寶藏以俟登卷也。<sup>255</sup>

This letter was addressed to a calligrapher whose family name is Gu. There is no other personal information about him except that he might live in Wang Yi's hometown, Jiangning, or areas of immediate neighborhood. Wang received a poetry handscroll as a gift from local elites and intended to remount them with a frontispiece written by Gu. In order to have Gu's work compatible with the poems on the scroll, Wang's letter clearly specifies the content that Gu is expected to write.

Gu might be a calligrapher in great demand during his day. Besides Wang Yi's letter,

<sup>254</sup> 為述昔時蒙徵不拜官；又聖上屢問姓名不敢微進。Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> *SHTSGCMD*, vol. 2, 202-3.

there is another extant note soliciting Gu's calligraphy, in which the consigner stipulates not merely the content but also the size of characters. This letter was written by Xiang Zhong 項忠(1421-1502), an military official in central government. He invited Gu to write "four characters: 四朝元老 (literally, "senior official through four reigns") and the height of each character is about eight inches."<sup>256</sup> The size of the characters implies their possible use as a leading section for a gift handscroll, because they appear to be too small to be carved on a horizontal wooden board (*bian 匾*).<sup>257</sup>

The importance of frontispiece to a handscroll can hardly be overestimated because it is the first section that leaps to beholders' eyes when they unfold a scroll. Generally, a frontispiece consists of two to five characters that summarize or indicate the content as well as the core idea conveyed by the scroll. The executor of this leading section is carefully chosen from people enjoying both artistic prestige and influence within cultural or political circles. For instance, when Zhang Jianfu 章簡甫 (1491-1572), a renowned stele craftsman in Suzhou, arranged the production of a commemorative handscroll for his family, he invited Hu Zanzong 胡纘宗(1480-1560), the present magistrate of Suzhou, to write two characters: 保竹 (*baozhu*, literally, retaining bamboo) as the frontispiece (See figure 3.2).<sup>258</sup>

From a perspective of cultural anthropology and reciprocal relationship, scholars tend

<sup>256</sup> 敢勞大筆題存問二大字，大一尺，四朝元老四字，大八寸。SHTSGCMD CD, vol. 1, 30.

<sup>257</sup> Scrutinizing the record of civilian officials in the Ming period, Xu Fu 徐溥 (1428-1499), the chancellor who retired in 1498, is the only person who deserves this honorable address within the life span of Xiang Zhong. Even though Xiang message does not mention the use of the piece of calligraphy, we can speculate from character size that it will be used as the frontispiece of a handscroll dedicated to Xu Fu as a gift.

<sup>258</sup> Wen Jia 文嘉 et al., *Handscroll of Retaining Bamboo* (*Baozhu tu juan* 保竹圖卷), 1574, handscroll, ink on paper, 27.1x89.8 cm, Palace Museum.

to interpret Hu's writing of these two characters as remuneration. Zhang Jianfu and his family once offered great help in Hu's projects of printing canonic texts.<sup>259</sup> However, it is difficult to disentangle Hu's participation from his attempt at self-invention as a guardian for local worthies as well the cultural tradition. Getting involved in collective artistic project not only enables him to obtain a constituency among elites in Suzhou area but also, to certain degree, perpetuates his performance in material form. Such an internal incentive is clearly reflected by a colophon attached to an illustrated poetry handscroll named "Studio of Apprehending Bamboo" (*canzhu zhai* 參竹齋),<sup>260</sup> which was dedicated to a hermit, Master Zhang, living in Suzhou. The frontispiece was also written by Hu Zanzong. Hu's participation was recounted by Fan Weiyi 范惟一 (1510-1584), a Suzhou native and the author of biography of Master Zhang, in one of his three pieces of inscription on this scroll. According to Fan, a collection of poetic encomia to Zhang were composed by his friends in Suzhou, including Yuan Zhi, Cai Yu, Lu Shidao, Wen Zhengming and his sons. After being mounted into a handscroll, it was presented to Hu, the current magistrate who was "seeking recluses with virtual merit from stone caves" 搜訪巖穴高尚之士. Hu "happily agreed to write for him three characters 參竹齋 at the leading section."<sup>261</sup> The following comments stand careful reading: <sup>262</sup>

<sup>259</sup> Hu's projects include but not limited to printing calligraphy section in *Yiwen leiju* 艺文类聚, *Qinhan wen* 秦汉文 and the family genealogy of family Hu. See Cai Chunxu 蔡春旭, "Mingzhongye suohua huodong de guanli yu jizhi" 明中叶索画活动的惯例与机制, in *Yishushi yanjiu* 藝術史研究, 21 (2019): 147-88; Cheng Zhangcan 程章燦, *Shike kegong yanjiu* 石刻工研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008), 152-62.

<sup>260</sup> Wen Zhengming, *Canzhuzhai tu* 參竹齋圖, 1540s-1570s, handscroll, ink on paper, 20.5×29cm, Shanghai Museum. The extant version is incomplete but most of the textual accretion have been preserved in *Rangli guan guoyanlu* 穰梨館過眼錄. Reprinted in *Lidai shuhua yishu lunzhu congbian* 歷代書畫藝術論著叢編 series, vol.37 (Beijing: Zhongguo dabaiké quanshu chubanshe, 1997), 729-40.

<sup>261</sup> 一日君求出是卷請書，胡公欣然為題參竹齋三字弁其首。 *Rangli guan guoyanlu*, 734-35.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.



“This event was not rare in the ancient past. However, kings and noblemen have not treated scholars courteously for a long time. A senior governor of a county specially wrote [characters] and present them to a recluse. It is indeed an exceptional occurrence.”

茲事在古者不為奇，若今世王侯不下士久矣，郡長吏特書以贈隱人，誠希闕鮮觀覩哉！

This colophon was written in 1578, fifty years removed from the making of the handscroll.<sup>263</sup> In Fan's recollection, Hu is of comparable nobility to worthies in ancient times. The attention Hu paid to the hermit is interpreted as the revival of a long-lost moral behavior. Such an interpretation echoes the estimation made by Hu's coevals. In farewell verses dedicated to Hu when he left Suzhou, his intimate relations with local literati was deemed as one of the main reasons that revitalized the cultural convention in Suzhou: “He praised the outstanding persons, making no distinction between host and guest. Within few months, the ethos of Wu became vibrant.”<sup>264</sup> Admittedly, writing frontispiece pales beside Hu's other efforts in local cultural enterprise, such as editing Qin-Han literary works and delivering lectures to young scholars.<sup>265</sup> Yet it may also serve as an indispensable link in the chain of establishing his image as a protector of cultural heritage.

Calligraphy was not the only form of leading section on handscrolls. The mid-Ming

<sup>263</sup> Hu Zanzong left Suzhou in 1524, so the frontispiece was written no later than 1524.

<sup>264</sup> 褒其異者降為主客之儀。不朞月而吳風泱泱矣。See Wang Chong 王寵, “A Preface to *Essays of The Qin and Han Dynasties*” 秦漢文序, in *Yayi shanren ji* 雅宜山人集, *juan* 9 (Taipei: Guoli zhongyang tushuguan, 1968), 390-2.

<sup>265</sup> Hu Zanzong was in charge of editing Collection of Qin-Han Essays and held regular group discussion with local scholars who were preparing civil examination. Details can be found in personal memoirs by Wang Chong, Cai Yu, and Wen Zhengming as well as officially historical records. See Cai Yu 蔡羽 (d. 1541), “A Farewell Preface to Gentleman Hu” 送大參胡公序, *Linwu ji* 林屋集, *juan* 12, *Zhonghua zaizao shanben* 中華再造善本 edition (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 1529), 4b-5b. Li Ciming 李慈銘 and Feng Guifen 馮桂芬, *Suzhou fuzhi* 蘇州府志, *juan* 26 (Suzhou: Jiangsu shuju, 1881), 20b-21b.

period saw an emerging trend of using pictorial works as frontispieces. In his analysis of Shen Zhou's handscroll painting, contemporary scholar Chen Zhenghong carefully points out the existence of pictorial frontispiece which functions similarly to its calligraphic counterpart.<sup>266</sup> His inference can be confirmed by new findings in extant Ming letters. In a letter sent to Wu Kuan, Shen Xuan 沈璿 expresses his concern over his assigned duty of “painting” a frontispiece for a handscroll:

“Having accepted the order to paint the leading section, I just finish it and present it [to you] today. However, my sight is getting dim for the old age. I am afraid that my awkward brush is unsatisfactory. I should paint another one. Four pieces of epitaph for gentleman Wei are delivered together [with this letter]”<sup>267</sup>

The opening sentence of this letter, with the term “leading section” (*yinshou* 引首) exclusively used for handscroll, reveals that Shen had received clear instruction. While the last sentence informs us that the section of handscroll is not the only task Shen received from Wu Kuan. Even though we have no idea about the identity of “gentleman Wei,” it is safe to infer that Wu play an intermediary role in several collective artistic projects. There might be someone else who undertook other parts of either the handscroll or the set of funeral documents.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> He terms it as “pictorial leading” (*tuyin* 圖引), abridged from “using picture as the leading section” (*yitu weiyin* 以圖為引) with distinction from another *yin*, a literary subgenre, that is widely used as poetic opening in a series of songs or poem. *Yin*, as a subgenre in both literature and music, has been widely used by poets since the Han dynasty. Representative works include Cao Zhi's 曹植 “Leading section of harp song” 箏篴引. Chen Zhenghong's discussion calls for attention to the distinction between two kinds of *yin*. Owing to the lack of textual evidence, however, Chen admits that he speculates the existence of *tuyin* on the base of several extant handscrolls which use paintings instead of calligraphy as the opening section. See Chen Zhenghong 陳正宏, “Tuyin kao” 圖引考, *Xinmeishu* 新美術, 4 (1999): 52-57.

<sup>267</sup> 領命畫引首，今特寫完奉去，但老眼昏花，拙筆恐不稱雅意。再當別畫。魏府君墓銘四幅一同送至。 *SHTSGMDCD*, vol. 1, 98.

<sup>268</sup> What Shen Xuan wrote is the epitaph in verse genre, termed as *muming* 墓銘, which is always accompanied by an epitaph in prose form, *mubiao* 墓表.

Given the joint authorship of a handscroll work, the role that intermediaries play in organizing literati, calligraphers and painters is of crucial significance. Previous research tends to depict the association among men of letters according to their cooperation on certain handscrolls.<sup>269</sup> This clear picture of social network is complicated by the manipulations of intermediaries who might have chance to make artists unfamiliar with one another coexist on one handscroll.

A letter sent from Wang Chong to his teacher<sup>270</sup> attests to this phenomenon. Being entrusted by a monk, Wang Chong solicited an inscription on a handscroll named Upper Peak Yao (*shang yaofeng* 上尧峰) from his teacher, probably Hu Zanzong.<sup>270</sup> Wang's letter indicates that he "has been urged by a monk several times" 山僧每來致懇, hoping that his teacher keep promise and finish the inscription on time. Wang's solicitous enquiry reveals his close relationship, personally or commercially, with the monk, yet it is clear that his teacher knew so little about the monk that his name or epithet is needless to mention in the letter.

The intermediary role a broker plays in solicitation is not limited to expediting the project. Brokers often undertake various missions such as bargaining with artists, selecting materials for painting or writing, offering suggestions for design and so on. A broker is expected to transmit information which consigners feel embarrassed to disclose. In Francis Bacon's words, they help to say what "a man cannot sometimes brook to supplicate or beg". Take a commission letter from Zhou Tianqiu to Lu Shidao 陸師道 (1510-1573) for

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<sup>269</sup> See Yu Christina Yu, "Building a Community through Painting: Fourteenth Century Chinese Scholars" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2011), and Liu Ailian, "Yang Weizhen (1296-1370) and the social art of painting inscriptions" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 2011).

<sup>270</sup> 前寄上尧峰卷, 幸爲揮灑, 山僧每來致懇, 望勿孤其意。In *GGCMQMSZ*, vol.1, 155-6.

instance. Zhou assists his friend Yang Nanquan 楊南泉 with a project, inviting Lu Shidao to transcribe assorted gift verses on a poetry handscroll. Accompanying to this letter is a scroll of paper, the usage of which is explicitly stated:<sup>271</sup>

The paper I send you is for transcribing poems of Rongxian Studio. His [Yang] desired composition is like this. In the first line there is only several characters “Inscriptions sent to Master Nanquan’s Rongxian Studio.” What is written at the end of each poem is only the name [of the author]. Needless to mention information about month and year or official titles. [The format] is similar to that of Hengweng (Wen Zhengming) and Youshi’s (Wang Guxiang) scroll. Because they would be used as a supplement [to a painting].

來紙是書容閒閣詩者，渠意欲於首行只書寄題南泉先生容閒閣數字，末只書名，不必歲月官銜，正與衡翁酉室一樣，作配故耳。

Though the poetry handscroll mentioned in this letter is not extant, its peculiar features and overall design can be deduced from surviving scrolls by contemporaries. Wang Guxiang’s 王穀祥 (1501-1568) “Poetry Handscroll On Flowers” 詠花詩卷 (see figure 3.3) exactly conforms with requirements in Zhou’s letter. On this scroll, poems of thematic resemblance are juxtaposed on a single scroll and followed by an illustration of assorted flowers.<sup>272</sup> Given the fact that Wang’s personal anthology circulated in manuscript format until his death, the handscroll could be understood as an alternative way of literary presentation and self-promotion. In similar fashion, Yang Nanquan had his collection of

<sup>271</sup> *SHTSGCMD*, vol. 4, 15-7.

<sup>272</sup> Wang Guxiang 王穀祥, *Scroll of Poems about Flowers (Yonghua shijuan 詠花詩卷)*, handscroll, ink on paper, poem section: 28x108cm illustration: 28x107cm, colophons: 28x37cm. Auctioned in Beijing Kuangshi, Autumn Section, 2014.

gift poems transcribed by Lu Shidao, a renowned calligrapher, through mediation of Zhou Tianqiu.

Zhou's letter illustrates the agency of patrons and brokers in the process of making handscrolls. However, despite their orders and interference, artists in commission nevertheless have room for individualistic styles and negotiation. When Lu Zhi 陸治 (1496-1576), a Suzhou painter coeval with Lu Shidao, was invited to illustrate Wen Boren's poems on an album, he modified the order, insisting that those poems should be divided into two groups and be treated respectively.<sup>273</sup> His suggestion is "to transcribe former group on [horizontal] scroll and the latter on album" 前作登卷後作登冊. In order to justify his design, he asserted that his scroll would assimilate the visual effects of the illustrated handscroll of Su Shi's rhapsody on Chibi.<sup>274</sup> From a standpoint of art executant, Lu Zhi endeavored to maintain his personal agency and control over the final composition.

Solicitation and prepared materials continued to pour in studios of renowned artists, engaging them into a network of art trade that was intertwined with local social landscape. A letter by Wen Boren 文伯仁, Wen Zhengming's nephew, foregrounds a busy schedule that he has to face:

[The tasks] with which I was entrusted cannot be finished today. [I] will complete the painting at the breakfast time tomorrow and present it to you. When the composition become familiar and easier to me, I can make three scrolls by the day after tomorrow. Liuru's (Tang Yin) painting has not been sent yet. I think he might have forgotten about it. [I] hope that the paintings drawn by my clumsy hand could be sent back in response

<sup>273</sup> 故畫冊少遲，然亦不敢久也。二佳作宜分兩存之。SHTSGCMD CD, vol. 3, 16.

<sup>274</sup> 前作登卷後作登冊，與子由赤壁並傳與世如何。Ibid.

to the request from the patron...

承委，今日不及，明早飯當為圖成奉覽。轉易可得三卷後日可也。六如畫不見發至，想遺之耳。拙筆畫卷以望遣還以應其主之請...<sup>275</sup>

This piece of excerpt implies a possible pace in mass-production of handscroll works. Wen's anticipation about the target completion date suggests that limited time and efforts would be paid to such a series of works. Meanwhile formularized composition might be executed repetitively with increasing efficiency. A safe assumption is that both patrons and artists have tacit consent on the rapid pace of art practice purely for social obligation or commercial profits. Therefore, solicitors, as is shown in numerous letters, often expect consigned work to be finished overnight,<sup>276</sup> within one day, or even before the messengers' returning home.<sup>277</sup>

Tang Yin is mentioned in this letter as another collaborator of the art project. Wen's complaints about Tang's negligence as well as his claim for the painting on loan indicate the multiple roles Wen performed in local artistic circle. He could simultaneously serve as an executive agent in art production, a dealer in business transaction and a broker organizing collective projects.

Involving concerted efforts of various participants, a handscroll would be completed

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<sup>275</sup> *Rangliguan guoyanlu* 穰梨館過眼錄, *juan* 19, 17b-18a, reprinted in *Zhongguo lidai shuhua yishu lunzhu congbian* 中國歷代書畫藝術論著叢編, vol.37 (Beijing: Zhongguo dabaike quanshu chubanshe, 1997), 806-7.

<sup>276</sup> A letter by Peng Nian 彭年 commissions his friend to illustrate Peng's calligraphy (並草書二紙乞畫). Peng intends to get them by the morning of the following day (明早當謁領也). See *SHTSGMDCD*, vol. 3, 135.

<sup>277</sup> In a letter from his friend, Shen Shixing 申時行 is asked to pass his commissioned calligraphy work to the messenger who will carry it back to consigner. Shen refuses because that passing calligraphy through servants will render to him an image of arrogance (若從僕處送去嫌于自伐故不即付來使耳), even though the real reason for his refusal might be that he has not finished the work yet. See *SHTSGMDCD*, vol. 4, 173-4.

over a long period. For brokers, a time-consuming handscroll project makes tremendous demand of persistence as well as tactical maneuvers in negotiation. It can be exemplified by a colophon in which Shen Zhou recounts how he yielded to insistent imploration from Zhu Cunli 朱存理. In the spring of 1485, Zhu Cunli brought to Shen Zhou a blank paper scroll which is more than twelve meters long, begging for a panoramic landscape work.<sup>278</sup> However, Shen Zhou “had a dread of its length and declined as being inadequate.”<sup>279</sup> Instead of persuading Shen to draw, Zhu waited at the side in silence, unfolding the paper scroll and grinding ink for him. Out of sympathy, Shen filled a section of the scroll, about one foot in width, with some ink trees and stones. Since then, Zhu paid regular visit to Shen, repeating the same practice every time until the spring of next year when the handscroll was completed.<sup>280</sup>

Owing to a close friendship between Zhu Cunli and Shen Zhou, Zhu’s piteous supplication proves effective. Nevertheless, when friendship is not strong enough to act as a stimulus of artistic practice, a broker may resort to ties of consanguinity, transmitting his commission through the voices of executants’ brothers, scions, or even distant relatives. It is no surprise that Wen Zhengming’s two sons, Wen Peng and Wen Jia, played the role of “go-between” in art trade during of heyday of Wen family.<sup>281</sup> Such an attempt is also epitomized in a letter by Zhang Fengyi 張鳳翼 (1550-1636) in which he solicits Lu Shidao 陸師道 (1510-1573) for an essay about Orchid Pavilion and a painting.<sup>282</sup> Considering

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<sup>278</sup> 延四丈又畸, 乙巳春持謂余曰此紙於繪事家頗趁水墨, 知子胸中丘壑天下巴蜀也... *Rangliguan guoyanlu* 穰梨館過眼錄, *juan* 16. 7a, in *Zhongguo lidai shuhua yishu lunzhu congbian*, vol.37, 648.

<sup>279</sup> 余憚其長以謝不能. *Ibid.*

<sup>280</sup> 性甫不答, 但磨墨引紙自若, 余笑, 為作集樹坡石盈尺. *Ibid.*

<sup>281</sup> *Elegant Debts*, 124.

<sup>282</sup> 所許惠書蘭亭記并前面惠紙圖, 向已托令弟致悃, 幸承清暇為一揮灑. *GGCMQMRSZ*, Ming section, vol. 2, 270-1.

the age difference between him and Lu, Zhang “begged Lu’s brother to intercede for him” 托令弟致悃, before his sending a formal letter validating the commission.

Craig Clunas reminds us that the communicative mode among Suzhou literati is better described as a “a finely judged matrix of reciprocal obligations” than a simply bilateral one.<sup>283</sup> The intertwined and flexible boundaries between different social roles are well illustrated in the process of making handscroll, which could permeate art practice, social communication and business transaction.

Even though various strategies would be used to facilitate commissioned handscrolls, patrons and intermediaries were not always able to obtain the desired calligraphic or pictorial sections. A consigned work could be delayed for different reasons, such as unsatisfactory remuneration or the artists’ hesitation in composing for contentious patrons. Promises notwithstanding, executant artists may also fail to juggle their busy timetables to fit in a new project. Consequent upon overdue commissions is a great number of apologies offered in correspondence between executants and consignors. It is interesting to note that a wide assortment of pretexts was used to excuse the delays in commissions. For instance, Lu Shidao once complained about the scorching heat in summer and postponed his execution of handscrolls and fans;<sup>284</sup> while Chen Liu 陳鏐 (1508-1581) excused his tardy progress in a handscroll project by saying that he “had not once been in good mood in recent days.”<sup>285</sup>

Whether or not these excuses are factual, they add details to the process of making

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<sup>283</sup> Craig Clunas, *Elegant Debts*, 145.

<sup>284</sup> 日來酷暑，室如坐甑，扇卷未及澤上，容稍涼馳納耳。 *SHTSGCMD*, vol. 3, 211-2.

<sup>285</sup> 尊卷久欲副命...三度舟中，竟不得一日高興。 *GGCMQMR*, Ming section, vol. 1, 75. 昨早以攀高閃腰，致坐立俱不能。今猶憑几而立，二冊久遲。



handscroll and reveal the predicament executants have to face. Relevant to my discussion are those perfunctory works created in such a situation, “imperfect performance” left on handscroll and subsequent remedy.

Handscroll is an assemblage of textual and pictorial components which can be executed separately, therefore leaving more room for future adjustment and supplement than hanging scroll and album. It is no surprise when one participant of collective handscroll project asks to replace the section submitted previously with a better one. A letter from Shen Zhou, for example, expresses his regret at a slapdash colophon and offers the intermediary a substitute version: “The former colophon is superficial. Composed in haste, it has a few mistakes and omissions. [I] transcribed it and hope to replace the former one.”<sup>286</sup> Similar situation can also be illustrated by Wu Kuan’s supplement to his poetry handscroll named “Planting Bamboo” (*zhongzhu* 種竹).<sup>287</sup> At the request of his friend, Wu transcribed his poems about his experience of transplanting six bamboos from Huguo Temple in the summer of 1494. He supplemented the scroll twice in 1497 and 1498 by adding his “recent drafts” (*jingao* 近稿) of poems on the endpaper.<sup>288</sup>

If Shen Zhou and Wu Kuang’s cases illustrate how to deal with imperfect yet amendable handscrolls, an apology letter by Huang Hui 黃輝 (fl. 1589) exemplifies a possible action made for irretrievable mistakes. Huang is clearly aware of that his poetic inscriptions in commission fail to meet the expectation, and shifts the blame onto the designated topic: “Probably most poems like this are not good” 大抵此等詩都不能佳。

<sup>286</sup> 前跋表草，因草草有遺訛，重錄此乞易之爲幸。GGCMQMR SZ, Ming section, vol. 1, 37-8

<sup>287</sup> Wu Kuan 吳寬, *Poetry handscroll of planting bamboo* 種竹詩卷, ink on paper, handscroll, 28.2×586.2cm, 1494. Shanghai Museum.

<sup>288</sup> See Wu Kuan’s signature on the third series of poems on the handscroll: 近稿復有此數首，公餘更錄歸之。

Then he offers another poetry handscroll in compensation, which consists of four autographic ballads by him.<sup>289</sup> Another instance of Wen Zhengming reveals the action that goes to the opposite extreme. Wen was invited to participate in poetic commemoration of his dead friend, Master Xu in Nanjing. At an urgent request, Wen asked a ghostwriter to fulfil the task assigned to him, composing a poem on “Cap made from bamboo slips”(tuoguan 簪冠), as a precaution against an unsatisfactory outcome.<sup>290</sup>

Wen Zhengming’s choice could be explained from an alternative perspective. It is possible that his refusal to write himself was due to not receiving desired payment. Remuneration in financial or material terms is not uncommon in commission of art works, especially in the circles of Suzhou literati.

Preoccupied by an open attitude to commercial economy, literati in Suzhou are not reticent about the possible profit they may get as agents of mediation. When Peng Nian 彭年 solicited painting on plain tabby weave (*juanhua* 絹畫) from one of his friends, he clearly stated that the painting will be used to trade for tea with someone whose epithet is Houshan 後山.<sup>291</sup> He urged immediate finishing of the painting because he hope that “his friend would not suffer losses in the bargain”不可使朋友折本也.<sup>292</sup>

Sending gift repetitively is a usual way to accelerate the finishing of assigned works. For instance, a response letter from Lu Shidao 陸師道 to Qian Gu 錢穀 indicates that Qian send Lu crabs as a reminder for a consigned handscroll, Scroll of Spring Ballad

<sup>289</sup> 大抵此等詩都不能佳，別有近作錄呈斧削...共成一卷，未審可溷置案頭不也。GGCMQMRZ, Ming section, vol. 2, 321.

<sup>290</sup> Wen’s letter shows he has tried to finish the task but failed, therefore has to seek for help. The original text reads: 區區分得簪冠一向因循不曾作得。今其家在此催取，欲煩代作一首。SHTSGCMD, vol. 1, 222

<sup>291</sup> 絹畫二幅，承許與後山換茶，望為委曲 SHTSGCMD, vol. 3, 142-3

<sup>292</sup> 不可使朋友折本也，不欲則已之。Ibid.

(*chunge juan* 春歌卷). Lu makes apologies for his dilatory work and promises the scroll will be finished later and presented with another five hanging scrolls.<sup>293</sup> Lu as well expressed his gratitude for Qian's gift: "But [you] also bestow crabs. I have nothing to offer, nevertheless make you spend money several times."<sup>294</sup> The words "also" (*you* 又) and "several times" (*shuo* 數) emphasized by Lu imply a degree of frequency of gift exchanging between him and the solicitor Qian Gu. It is as well suggested by the sheer quantity of consigned tasks, "another five hanging scrolls," in this letter.

Similar examples can be found in another letter written by Li Yingzhen 李應楨 (1431-1493), a Suzhou scholar-official conspicuous for his achievement in calligraphy. Li informs Wu Kuan that he "received the request to write for gentleman Shi but has not been able to remunerate him yet."<sup>295</sup> Li's words inform us that such a request might be sent with advance payment which entails reciprocation besides a calligraphy specimen. He then asks Wu Kuan a favor to purchase for him two hundred duck eggs, salted and slightly salted, and some clams seasoned with hoisin sauce.<sup>296</sup> It is possible that a portion of Li's order would be used for reciprocating gifts from "gentleman Shi."

## Conclusion:

The close reading above demonstrates that a handscroll is by no means static objects which obtain its content and meanings once and for all. The making of handscroll have not

<sup>293</sup> 椿歌卷當未了，得稍暇當並五軸課上。GGCMQMRSZ, Ming section, vol. 2, 221-2.

<sup>294</sup> 但又惠蟹，無物爲供，反數爲道人費，甚懷愧耳，幸爲致謝。Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> 施先生命書已收，未及相酬耳。SHTSGCMD CD, vol. 1, 72.

<sup>296</sup> 鹽鴨子並淡者便中爲買得二百枚應用，蛤蜊醬蛭些少寄惠，千萬千萬。

been possible without the negotiation between all agents involved. In the process, intermediaries, patrons, dealers all played important role in bridging the connection between artists and patrons. Knowing why and how a handscroll project was initiated, intermediated, and collaboratively executed will deepen our understanding of the handscroll culture in mid-Ming Suzhou.

Details about projects of making handscrolls can be gleaned from letters written by literati and artists. Contemporary researchers, like Huang Xiangong and Xue Longchun, have aroused scholarly attention toward epistolary writings. They make successful progress in delineating the cultural landscape of Jiangnan area, especially the socio-artistic networks among literati.<sup>297</sup> In the following sections, I will shift my focus to the material and economic factors that shaped the making of handscrolls.

## 2.2 Economic Concern and Quality Control: Making a Handscroll Materially

Another factor to consider in thinking about the process of making handscrolls is the selection of materials for artistic practice and mounting. In the aforementioned letter written to Lu Shidao, Zhou Tianqiu reminds Lu that “a scroll of paper” is provided in advance. Scattered evidence makes it clear that literati painters and calligraphers in mid-Ming Suzhou often received consignment together with prearranged paper or silk fabrics. It is different from the convention of art trade in the sixteenth-century Europe where artists always prepared raw materials, like canvas, on their own. With raw materials provided in advance, the outcome of commission became less unpredictable. It became an increasingly

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<sup>297</sup> Xue Longchun 薛龍春, “Mingdai xinzha zhongde wumen wenren shenghuo” 明代信札中的吳門文人生活, *Zhongguo shufa* 中國書法, 7 (2012): 58-88; Peng Lizhi 彭勵志, *Chidu shufa: Cong xingzhi dao yishu* 尺牘書法: 從形製到藝術 (Ph.D. diss., Jilin University, 2006).

common way for patrons or intermediaries in Jiangnan area participate in art production. In letters of solicitation, phrases such as “blank scroll” (*sujuan* 素卷), “distributed paper” (*fazhi* 發紙) or “blank fan” (*susha* 素簃) were mentioned so frequently that came into common parlance.<sup>298</sup>

Besides consideration of aesthetic effects, economic concerns are also on the mind of patrons when they entrust prearranged materials to artists in commission. Given the sheer length of handscroll, which ranges from three feet to several meters, a considerable amount of silk fabric or paper would be used in painting and writing. Artists who profit from executing handscrolls are more vulnerable to material cost than those specializing in paintings of small scales. The *ling* twill damask (*ling* 綾) is one of the most common grounds for calligraphy and painting. Each *zhang* 丈 (approximately, 330 cm) costs twelve *guan* 貫, about thirteen tales of silver. Meanwhile, a handscroll created by obscure painter was sold for the price ranging from one tale to three or four *qian* 錢 of silver.<sup>299</sup> Even for painters of local fame, such as aforementioned Wen Jia and Qian Gu, the payment for their art works were not good. Wen Jia made a profit of around 1.2 *qian* of silver on each fan painting,<sup>300</sup> while Qian Gu about eighty pence (*wen* 文) on every painting at small scale.<sup>301</sup> According to the price in Wen and Qian’s period, eighty pence could purchase a

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<sup>298</sup> “Blank fan paper commanding writing, I just send my awkward and defective work for correction” 素簃命書輒以拙劣就正; “Yesterday Mr. Liu Wenxuan distributed paper to solicit draft of old poem” 昨劉文選先生發紙征舊草。In *SHTSGCMD*, vol. 3, 88; vol. 2, 98-99.

<sup>299</sup> Li Wankang 李萬康, *Gudai huihua jiage lungao* 古代繪畫價格論稿 (Beijing: Renming chubanshe, 2012), 186.

<sup>300</sup> Xu Bangda 徐邦達, *Gushuhua guoyan yaolu* 古書畫過眼要錄, vol.3, Mingqing calligraphy, (Beijing: Zijingcheng chubanshe, 2006), 1062.

<sup>301</sup> Li Wankang, *Gudai huihua jiage lungao*. 185-86.

quarter of watermelon or four peaches.<sup>302</sup>

The great gap between remuneration and the cost of textile but also substantiates a great necessity for patrons to provide materials for painting or writing. When Jiang Xuan 姜玄 (fl. 1530), a Suzhou poet, solicited for his brother a painting of white swallow (*baiyan tu* 白燕圖), he “offered scrolls of blank tabby weave in advance” 今先奉素練.<sup>303</sup> In the same letter, Jiang also indicates that another two scrolls of tabby weave are sent for his own sake and hopes the painter would complete these two consigned projects together.<sup>304</sup>

Different from expensive silk textile, paper became increasingly cheap in Ming period due to technological advancement and burgeoning paper industry nationwide.<sup>305</sup> A piece of full-size paper, about five meters in length and two meters in width, cost less than one penny (*wen* 文). Some literati painters even complained that the declining cost of paper gave rise to an art market inundated with carelessly executed works.<sup>306</sup> However, patrons and brokers often provide artists with primed blank paper notwithstanding for the sake of politeness or for quality concerns. In the aforementioned case about Shen Zhou and Zhu Cunli, even though Shen agrees to draw the painting due largely to Zhu’s persistent begging, Shen also admit that the scroll of delicately mounted paper fueled his enthusiasm.

<sup>302</sup> According to Qin Zhonghang’s speculation, ten watermelons were sold for four *guan* 貫, namely, four thousand pence, while a hundred of peaches or pears two *guan*. See Qin Zhonghang 秦仲珩, *Mingdai jingjishi shuluncong chugao* 明代經濟史述論叢初稿 (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1959), 146.

<sup>303</sup> 表弟沈鐵山欲求白燕圖，僕曾與寒泉致言於足下矣。今先奉素練，望為留意，異日當修敬於左右也。In *SHTSGCMD CD*, vol. 2, 109.

<sup>304</sup> 又奉素練二幅，此僕敢瀆者，幸即為揮灑，當並圖報... In *SHTSGCMD CD*, vol. 2, 110.

<sup>305</sup> Tsien Tsuen-Hsuei, *Science and Civilisation in China: Volume 5, Chemistry and Chemical Technology, Part 1, Paper and Printing* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>306</sup> 今吳人目不識一字... 惟塗抹一山一水，一草一木，既慙之市中，以易斗米。Fan Yunlin 范允臨, *Shuliao guan ji* 輪廖館集. Quoted from Li Wankang, *Gudai huihua jiage lungao*, 172.

According to the first half of Shen's colophon, Zhu Cunlin 朱存理 obtained four scrolls of Quzhou paper (*quchu* 衢楮), cut them along horizontal midlines, and had the narrower scrolls mounted in end-to-tail sequence into a long handscroll. He convinced Shen of the paper scroll's superior quality in absorbing ink and wash (*chen shuimo* 稱水墨) which renders it a perfect ground for panoramic landscape painting.<sup>307</sup>

Absorbency is one of the most crucial physical aspects of ground for most artists, because it would decide the dynamic effects of ink strokes by producing various blurred or washing effects. When Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) was invited to transcribe *Classics of Filiality* (*xiaojing* 孝經), he chose Chengxin paper instead of the grided Shu silk (*shusu wusilan* 蜀素烏絲欄) provided by the solicitor, Liu Chang 劉敞 (1019-1068). Ouyang Xiu thought that the ink could hardly percolate the surface of the sized silk.<sup>308</sup> *Shusu* is one kind of plain tabby weave (*juan* 絹 or *chou* 綢) in terms of the categorization of silk textile. Costly and delicate notwithstanding, *juan* remains an unpopular choice as a medium for writing in Ming period. Literati and calligraphers prefer twill damask (*ling* 綾) the surface of which is more lustrous and smoother than *juan*. In a letter to his friend, Li Wanshi 李萬實 (fl.1544) mocks at himself that the tabby weave (*chou*), if used for making poetry scroll, would be as detestable as his poetry and calligraphy.<sup>309</sup>

The cases discussed above reflect that Ming literati attached great importance to

<sup>307</sup> 朱君性甫得衢楮之績膩者四翻，剖為八翻，通粘為卷延四丈又畸，乙巳春持謂余曰此紙於繪事家頗趁水墨，知子胸中丘壑天下巴蜀也... *Rangliguan guoyanlu* 穰梨館過眼錄, *juan* 16, 7a, in *Zhongguo lidai shuhua yishu lunzhu congbian*, vol.37, 648.

<sup>308</sup> 劉原父以蜀素烏絲欄求歐陽公寫孝經一章，公以其不染墨，寫澄心堂紙答之。Fan Nengjun 范能浚, ed., *Fan Zhongyan quanji* 范仲淹全集 (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2004), 1309.

<sup>309</sup> 若用綢面軸書之并詩字便成三惡。Li Wanshi 李萬實, "Letter to Zeng Luyuan" 致曾魯源, *Chongzhi tang ji* 崇質堂集, Printed by Li Changzuo, 1701, vol.16.

materials for writing and painting. The same emphasis on materials is also applicable to handscroll mounting. A handscroll is an assemblage of a wide range of materials: paper used for backing, wooden rollers, jade or horn used for decorating roller ends, brocade for wrapper and frame, and so on. When introducing handscroll in his encyclopedic book about material culture, *Zhangwu zhi* 長物志, Wen Zhenheng 文震亨 reminds his audience that each part of a handscroll should be made from appropriate material and in delicate way, otherwise the whole handscroll would be ruined.<sup>310</sup> Despite a tint of exaggeration, Wen's suggestions on mounting materials make sense on some levels. For instance, he insists that the ideal material used for backing paintings should be those paper with four traits, "white, smooth, wide and thin" (*baihuamanbo* 白滑漫薄).<sup>311</sup> In the case of excessively long handscrolls, a tiny change in thickness of backing paper will greatly influence its size as a cylinder when being folded. This seemingly trivial issue is of peculiar importance in handscroll making. When Sui Mingyong 眭明永 (1582--1645), a late-Ming literatus, was entrusted by his friend to mount his calligraphy piece into a handscroll, he strengthened the scroll by adding another layer of backing paper. Later, he had to apologize to his friend for making the scroll inconveniently heavy and for his exceeding of the budget.<sup>312</sup>

In the budget of making a handscroll, the cost of mounting presents a considerable portion. A donation proposal written by Lou Jian 婁堅 (1554-1631) informs us with details about the price of a gift handscroll:

"to fulfill the needs for making scroll, preparing payment, and soliciting essays. Your

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<sup>310</sup> See Wen Zhenmeng 文震孟 (1574-1636), "Juansu" 絹素, "Zhuanghuang" 裝潢, "Biaozhou" 裱軸, in *Zhangwu zhi* 長物志, *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 872, 52-55.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid, 182.

<sup>312</sup> 拙書圓覺本欲爲行笈便挾，又恐紙力易渝，故藉高齋裱背人加楮二一重，令堪久...若加論費兄供，既楮絹大奢，且成重滯之玩矣，愧愧。GGCMQMRSZ, Ming section, vol. 2, 384.



uncle replied that each share of the cost should be three taels...The date [of birthday] is approaching, hope you can plan it out with your uncle. You can take the money out of your pocket, or can borrow from your relatives or friends, and send [the money] here within one or two days. So that we can inscribe your names one by one on the scroll...”<sup>313</sup>

Since Lou Jian mentions “share of the cost” (*fenjin* 分金), a safe assumption is that the target audience of this note would not be limited to the addressee. Therefore at least nine taels would have been collected for the gift handscroll. In the late-Ming Jiangnan area, the reward for congratulatory essay or painting could hardly exceed three taels of silver.<sup>314</sup> Even though the evidence in this letter is not enough to unveil the distribution of a handscroll’s price, we can infer that the materials used for mounting and craftsmen’s labor played an important part in its cost. This inference can also be consolidated by a colophon written by Huang Pilie 黃丕烈 (1763-1825) on a poetry scroll. Huang recorded that the remounting project cost five months and “dozens of *guan*” (*shushi qianqian* 數十千錢), not less than ten taels of silver.<sup>315</sup>

In order to guarantee the overall effect of handscrolls in commission, patrons sometimes prepare backing materials on their own, instead of using those supplied by

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<sup>313</sup> 子魚兄適來，語次及遺賀淄川韓大公七十...人各分金三兩，以備製軸、具幣、求文之用。令叔答以當致二分，不審曾爲足下言之否？大夫人虞已豫留分金否？期已迫矣，乞共令伯作計，或取之囊中，或貸之親朋(如閑孟、仲和輩) 於一二日內付來，庶便寫軸時次第題名也。  
*SHTSGCMD*, vol. 5, 125-126.

<sup>314</sup> As is recorded in Li Rihua’s diary, only famous painters or writers like Wen Zhengming could receive the reward as high as three or four taels each time. See Li Rihua, *Weishuixuan riji*, 40.

<sup>315</sup> Huang says that the remounting project started around the sixth month and finished in the eleventh month. The original text reads: 今夏六月，始命工重裝，細加補綴，以白紙副其四圍，直至冬十一月竣事。In Huang Pilie 黃丕烈, *Shiliju cangshu tibaji* 士禮居藏書題跋記, *juan* 2, quoted in *Jingjiatang miji zhi* 靜嘉堂秘籍志, eds. Kawada Takeshi and Du Zexun 杜澤遜 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2016), 148-9.

mounting workshops, because mounting craftsmen, for economic concerns, seldom stock backing materials with redeeming qualities. Mo Shilong 莫是龍 (1537-1587), a famous literati-artist from Songjiang, once complained to his friend that he became inured to those canny craftsmen who “never use fine material unless they can profit from it”<sup>316</sup> Mo also points out that “one should purchase tabby weave (*juan* 絹) [for craftsmen] in order to have the scroll mounted well.” Therefore, a work of large scale, such as a scroll painting, would cost one tael of gold, approximately sixteen taels of silver.<sup>317</sup>

The mature silk industry in Suzhou gave local artists and craftsmen more options in choosing materials than those in other parts of China. Since the late fifteenth century, Suzhou regained its status as the center of silk and cotton industries for its unparalleled number of weaving workshops and experienced weavers. Owing to advanced textile technology, looms became more flexible to cope with varied demands. Mounting craftsmen were able to customize textile of specific width in order to produce seamless backing for paintings or calligraphy pieces.<sup>318</sup>

Handscrolls executed in mid-Ming Suzhou were bright with local color which formed through artistic and literary practice. Even though the so-called “Suzhou style” (*suyang* 蘇樣) was never a unified aesthetic category, scattered evidence could still help use to delineate some of its features. Zhu Shunshui 朱舜水 (1600–1682) summarized the characteristic traits of backing materials used in Suzhou handscrolls:

“[Craftsmen] in our city uses blue-green twill damask to mount paintings. Sometimes

<sup>316</sup> 此輩不得便宜豈肯為用，蓋亦市井之常態也。 *SHTSGCMD*, vol. 4, 203-5.

<sup>317</sup> 須自買絹而令其製作則佳今此大幀若要如畫軸等非一金之費所能了也。 *Ibid.*

<sup>318</sup> Zhou Jiazhou 周嘉胄, annotated by Tian, Jun 田君, *Zhuanghuazhi tushuo* 裝潢志圖說 (Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 2003), 56.

plain tabby weave and paper are also used occasionally. When lining the borders and making frames, we use brocade, golden or brown damask. The brocade should be woven from monochromatic silk yarn without gold threads as decoration. The value [of the material] resides in its elegance, simplicity, and solemnness.<sup>319</sup>

The aesthetic pursuit reflected in Zhu's writing could be understood as a revival of the Song dynasty style, which is always characterized by simple and unadorned forms.<sup>320</sup> People's obsession with Song style is partly ascribed to the prevailing archaism in mid-Ming. From the eyes of cultural revivalists in Suzhou, the mounting technique that was popular during Xuanhe period (1119-1125) represent the highest standards. The old paintings that had not been remounted since the Song period could serve as object of reference for people to judge contemporary handscrolls. For instance, the upper and bottom edges of an unfolding handscroll are always decorated with borders as protection against abrasion. Zhou Jiazhou 周嘉胄 (1580-1658), in his famous guidebook *Record of Mounting* (*Zhuanghuang zhi* 裝潢志), insists that paper borders are superior to silk borders, because paper borders conform to the mounting style of Xuanhe period (*xuanhe zhuang* 宣和裝) while the silk ones "will drop after but a few years" and look vulgar.<sup>321</sup> Zhou's obsession to Song style not only found an echo in his circle but had a far-reaching influence until the early Qing period.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> 敝邑裱畫用縹紺綾，或絹或紙間亦用之。鑲嵌用錦亦用金黃醬色等綾，然用素錦不用織金大名金等物貴雅素而莊重也。See Zhu Zhiyu 朱之俞 (1600-1682), *Shunshui xiansheng wenji* 舜水先生文集, *juan* 10, (n.p., 1712, Peking University Library), 16b.

<sup>320</sup> Many connoisseurship books and painting manuals created during this period quote texts from *Xuanhe huapu* 宣和畫譜 and praises the Song style as examples to follow.

<sup>321</sup> Zhou Jiazhou 周嘉胄 (1582-after 1658), *Zhuanghuang zhi tushuo* 裝潢志圖說 (Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 2003), 20.

<sup>322</sup> Zhou Erxue's 周二學 *Shangyan suxin lu* 賞延素心錄 picks up the mantle of Suzhou literati and makes a more detailed regulation on materials used in each section of a handscroll: "[To make] frontispieces and border strips on horizontal scrolls, one should use twill damask (*ling* 綾) with pattern of bird and cloud. The back, under the mounting edge, should be made of jian paper of Song, jian paper for writing Buddhism sutra, or cocoon-color paper of Xuande period. The flower-pattern jian paper, Song and

Behind the archaic style of mounting was the unprecedented extent to which literati-connoisseurs were entangled with craftsmen in mid-Ming Suzhou. On the one hand, mounting craftsmen, limited by their social status and discursive disadvantage, relied on literati-connoisseurs to accumulate cultural capital and to aestheticize their works. Literati could establish their intellectual and artistic tastes and finally have them materialized through the “hands” of craftsmen.

Mid-Ming Suzhou witnessed the specialization in mounting trade, which developed in three different directions: the red faction (*hongbang* 紅幫),<sup>323</sup> the white faction (*baibang* 白幫), and dealer faction (*jiaohang* 交行). Craftsmen in “white faction” specialized in mounting artistic works created by literati or famous painters. “Dealer faction” only dealt with time-honored works collected in antique shops. However, these two groups of craftsmen are not mutually exclusive as they are supposed to be.

Mounting craftsmen in white faction and dealer faction were expected be versatile workforce that could handle all possible problems during the process of mounting. The problems include but not limited to restoring worn works, making up missing strokes, choosing appropriate backing materials, distinguishing the fake part on a scroll from the authentic one and so forth. Many of them gained first-hand knowledge in connoisseurship from practice. Their versatility offered them the chance to associate with local elites

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Yuan period, are delicate and beautiful but cannot be counted as first class material. The wrapper should be made from real Song brocade and Song embroidery, but it is difficult to find them. There is nothing better than old brocade ribbon to bundle the scroll up.” 橫卷引首及隔水，用宣德小雲鸞綾，罽池用自宋箋、藏經箋或宣德鏡面箋，如宋元金花粉箋，雖工麗卻不入品... 卷首用真宋錦及宋繡，然不易得...不如用舊織錦帶作縛...See in *Shuhua zhuanghuang jiyi jishi* 書畫裝潢技藝輯釋, Du Zixiong 杜子熊 et al., eds., (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1993), 162.

<sup>323</sup> Red faction deals with artistic works for daily use, such as the painting for marriage ceremony or new year celebration. These mounting craftsmen, like other workers, could hardly write and socialize with scholars and other social elites.

including painters, collectors, literati-officials. An experienced mounting craftsman often served as critic to judge a painting or calligraphy specimen from material perspective.

Many handscrolls were executed from the close collaboration between literati and mounting craftsmen. A well-mentioned example is in *Records of Mounting*. Wang Jingchun 汪景淳 (fl. 1580), a scholar-official in Nanjing, once obtained a calligraphy piece by Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303-361). He prepared generous gift in order to invite Tang Jie 湯傑 (fl. 16th c.), one of the most famous mounting craftsmen in Suzhou, to remount that calligraphy masterpiece. Tang agreed and sojourned with Wang in Nanjing for fifty days until he finished his job. Throughout this period, Wang followed Tang closely and with a modest attitude worked as servant.<sup>324</sup> Even though this anecdote is rendered with a tint of hyperbole, at least it reflects the elevated status of mounting craftsmen in Suzhou. In the aforementioned Li Wanshi's letter, when Li assumed an official position in Fujian he could help complaining that the mounting craftsmen his city were "odious" (e 惡) and "lacking refinement and dexterity" (*suzhuo* 俗拙).<sup>325</sup> The unsatisfactory craftsmanship and the lack of qualified silk textile finally forced him to commission the mounting project elsewhere through the intermediation of his friend.

## Conclusion:

The cases above illustrate the significant role that material factors play in the procedure of making handscrolls. By revealing how raw materials and mounting techniques

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<sup>324</sup> 時有汪景淳於白門得王右軍真跡，厚遣儀幣往聘湯氏，景淳張筵下拜授裝，功約五旬，景淳時不去左右，供事甚謹，酬贐甚腆。See *Zhuanghuang zhi tushuo*, 40.

<sup>325</sup> 閩地裱工甚惡兼乏綾絹 See Li Wanshi 李萬實, "A Letter to Zeng Luyuan" 致曾魯源, in *Chongzhi tang ji* 崇質堂集, *juan* 16 (Printed by Li Changzuo, 1701), 15b-16a.

were deployed by literati and craftsmen in mid-Ming Suzhou, I want to argue that the execution of a handscroll can be understood as an act of symbolic production. What was produced in this process is not only a host of art works, but also, in Pierre Bourdieu's term, the "judgement of taste." Cultural elites in Suzhou tried to define their aesthetic pursuit and understanding of elegance (*ya* 雅) in a tangible way. They were challenged by the burgeoning commercial economy in Suzhou which eroded the traditional system of value and art taste. Meanwhile, the prosperous urban life also laid a new material foundation for their artistic practice and finally added to those art works a tint of locality.

## Case 1: Preserving Ancestors' "Touch" and Recruiting Lobbyists: Fan Zhongyan's Handscrolls and His Charitable Property

In early Chenghua period (1464-1487), Fan Shunchen 范舜臣 (fl.1430), the thirteenth-generation descendant of Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹, was assumed as the patriarch of Fan family in Suzhou. In order to revitalize his family whose power waned during the Ming-Qing transition, Fan Shunchen started with improving management of family property and collecting Fan Zhongyan's autographic works that scattered in Jiangnan area.<sup>326</sup> From the mid fifteenth century onward, some of Fan's poems and letters were mounted or remounted in handscroll format, becoming the collection of local public schools and memorial shrines for Fan Zhongyan.<sup>327</sup> These handscrolls were deliberately displayed before local elites and those officials who passed by Suzhou. As commemorative colophons accrued, both the handscroll and Fan family gradually accumulated cultural capital. They were woven into the fabric of literary society in Jiangnan area.

The social lives of these handscrolls parallel to vicissitudes of the Fan family's history, from an officially penalized family in Hongwu period (1368-1399) to its heyday in mid-Ming, and to its decline in Wanli period (1573-1620). In their design, execution and circulation, these scrolls witnessed the debates over selection of colophons during mounting process, admonition against Fan's descendants who lost their clan property, and continuing appeals for regularizing commemoration of Fan Zhongyan in Suzhou.

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<sup>326</sup> Xu Youzhen 徐有貞, "A Record following Fang Shunchen's Scroll of Receiving Bounties" 記范舜臣承澤卷後, in *Wugong ji* 武功集, juan 3, 48b-50a, *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 1245, 111-2.

<sup>327</sup> Three scrolls include aforementioned two scrolls and *Encomium of Taoist Garment* (*Daofu zan* 道服贊), see Fan Zhongyan, *Encomium of Taoist Garment*, 1017-1021, handscroll, ink on paper, image: 34.8x47.9 cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.

Among these handscrolls, “Fan Zhongyan’s autographic letter” (*Fanzhongyan shouzha* 范仲淹手札) and “Ode to Boyi” (*boyi song* 伯夷頌) are two typical examples. The former one made by Fan’s descendants in the mid of fifteenth century while the later one was preserved by Fan family since 1280s but changed hands intermittently in the Ming period. Both the scrolls are famous for the sheer volume of colophons on their endpaper, twenty-four on the scroll of Fan’s letter and one hundred and two on “Ode to Boyi.” The textual accretions provide systematic information about how a handscroll was made and perceived as a portable memory object. They also illustrate the centrality of political, cultural, and historical sources to the remembrance activities in mid-Ming Suzhou, which consequently replaced Luoyang 洛陽 and became the officially recognized locale of memorial to Fan Zhongyan.

These two handscrolls will be the focus in my following discussion. I am trying to explore how these handscrolls were executed and displayed to deal with specific worldly issues and how they functioned as memorials linking individual memory and emotional attachment to local historical heritage.

Compared with memorials in architectural form, a handscroll appears vulnerable to constant challenge such as physical damage or change of possession. However, being situated in a longer span of time, handscrolls may display their peculiar tenacity and potentials. As suggested by the case of Fan family, even though the family school established by Fan Zhongyan and the memorial shine was ruined for more than twice, his manuscripts were kept intact for ritualistic purposes, symbolically showcasing Fan’s lineage that stretches through the ages.



### The Preservation of Fan's "Handwriting"

The main section of handscroll "Fan Zhongyan's autographic letter" consists of two letters addressed to Fan's brother in Suzhou, which suggests purchasing farmland to sustain familial charitable institutions. One letter asks help from his brother to look for suitable lands worthy trading (*dianmai* 典買) and refers to a townsman named Chen Liuyi 陳六一 as an intermediary in transaction; the other one set the standards for farmland and also mentions the ideal location of charitable coffin home (*yizhuang* 義莊), partly because the letter was composed when Suzhou area was suffering from flood and pandemic.

Before the original copies of these two letters were discovered and mounted in the format of handscroll, the texts had been collected into an anthology of Fan Zhongyan's correspondence published by Wenzheng School, a private school open to descendants of Fan family.<sup>328</sup> These two letters' content was not unfamiliar to literati in Suzhou, the hometown of Fan Zhongyan. Moreover, given the pioneering role Fan played in promoting the development of familial farmland (*yitian* 義田), it is conceivable that these letters might reach to a large audience beyond Jiangnan area.

However, the pre-existent printed version and its wide circulation did not overshadow the aura of the handscroll. The appeal for mounting these letters into a handscroll met with enthusiastic responses from Suzhou elites. The level of participation in this collective project could be partly revealed by a pair of frontispieces on the left end of the scroll. They were written by Shen Zhou and Hu Zanzong respectively but hold same content: *shize* 世

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<sup>328</sup> Wu Kuan points out in his colophon that "the anthology of Fan's correspondence that was published by Wenzheng School includes these two pieces" 文正書院所刻公尺牘有此二帖. See *Inscription in running script on Fan Zhongyan's letters* 行書跋范仲淹手札, early 15th century, handscroll, ink on paper, 25.2x33.1cm, Suzhou Museum.

澤, literally, “grace that lasts for generations.” Such a coincidence is rare in handscroll projects which are always designed carefully. A possible reason for it might be that Shen and Hu simultaneously presented their works on their own initiative at the beginning stage of making this handscroll. In their following inscriptions, the significance of this handscroll is attributed to that its representation of Fan Zhongyan in a tangible and intimate material form.

The attention put on Fan’s autographic writing partly derives from the firm belief that the ink trace of Chinese characters can reflect one’s true nature and personality which may be lost if being transmitted to printed copy. The hierarchy of manuscript over printed version is well illustrated in Zhou Lun’s 周倫 (1463-1542) colophon on this handscroll:

“Those official documents and articles written by him (Fan Zhongyan) remain in the annal of history and can stand close examination, but they read like a talking about a dream. Moreover, viewing the excellent calligraphy and painting, as well as the fresh handwriting, it seems as if I was looking at Fan’s face across a table and a mat. [The] situation is like that a dreamer waking suddenly. Doesn’t it generate respect!”

其敕策文章載之史冊者雖斑斑可考猶說夢耳... 且觀其字畫之妙手澤之新若承

公顏色於几席間，如夢者忽覺不亦令人起敬。<sup>329</sup>

Zhou employs the tropes of “dream” and “wake” to clarify the distinctive perception of published books and manuscript. Printed versions have been traditionally believed as a reliable literature source for their accumulative efforts in editing and standardized production, but Zhou tries to invert this idea and to elevate the status of manuscripts. He insists that printed copies only present an illusionary image of its author. On the contrary,

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<sup>329</sup> *Inscription in running script on Fan Zhongyan’s letters* 行書跋范仲淹手札.

the handscroll features Fan Zhongyan in a more realistic and vivid way, because it preserves Fan's "handwriting as fresh as it used to be" (*shouze ruxin* 手澤如新), which is visually evocative of Fan as a real person.

The term *shouze* 手澤 (literally "hand moisture") means many different things, ranging from perceptible objects, such as "written work the deceased have left behind,"<sup>330</sup> to intangibles like the act of touch that took place before one's death.<sup>331</sup> Among one hundred and twenty-six colophons on Fan's two handscrolls, *shouze* is mentioned more than eighty times, referring to Fan's handwriting that emerges from the shadows of time.

Echoing Zhou Lun's preference for manuscript, another colophon on this handscroll also gives attention to "the handwriting that remained rich black after five hundred years passed." 幾五百年而手澤宛然若新。The colophon was written by Zheng Sande 鄭三德 (fl. 1522), a scholar official from Fujian. Zheng went one step further by introducing the attitude that Sima Guang's 司馬光 holds toward the *shouze* in written form. In his days, "Sima Guang does not like people who treasure their ancestors' portraits but delights in those who highly value ancestors' autographic writings."<sup>332</sup> His reason is that "handwriting characters are drawn by heart therefore viewing characters can elicit remembrance." Shen Zhou, another viewer of this handscroll, also holds that Fan's writing channels to his audience the "voice from his heart" (*xin zhisheng* 心之聲), therefore is

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<sup>330</sup> Rania Huntington, *Ink and Tears: Memory, Mourning, and Writing in the Yu Family* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018), 21.

<sup>331</sup> On a handscroll painting represent the bamboo planted by Zhang Jianfu, a craftsman of carving print block, Wen Jia and other colophon writers hold that the bamboo preserved Zhang's hand moisture. When talking about the possession of art works, Wen Zhengming believes that objects may contain collectors' hand writing (*shouze xiangguan* 手澤相關). See discussion about *Baozhu tujian* 保竹圖卷, *Dayao village* 大姚村圖 in Chapter 3 Case Study 2.

<sup>332</sup> 司馬文正公不喜人寶其祖之畫像而喜人寶其祖之字跡，以為字心畫也見其字即見其心見其心即思其人。

worthy of collecting and appreciation as a heirloom.<sup>333</sup>

Seeing in this light, the ink trace left by Fan Zhongyan obtains cultural meaning far beyond its practical use in documentation or artistic expression. It is of symbolic value not only to Fan's descendants but to the elite community in Suzhou. On the one hand, the undamaged "handwriting" serves as a metaphorical representation of Fan family's generational continuity. As is shown in several colophons, the well-preserved handwriting and the image of Fan's descendants mutually constructed each other. On the other hand, the handscroll format makes the "handwriting" accessible to beholders when they are holding wooden roller and unfold the scroll. The virtual link between Fan Zhongyan and his admirers is therefore established in material sense.

The same symbolic significance is clearly applicable to the handscroll "Ode to Boyi," which is named after its core section, an essay written by Han Yu 韓愈 and transcribed by Fan Zhongyan for one of his friends. Both Han and Fan were venerated as the absolute epitome of scholar-officials for their literary talent and moral virtue. Such a combination, Han Yu's composition and Fan's calligraphy, therefore obtained peculiar reverence as a tangible representation of their cultural images in the days when the scroll was made.

However, it is noteworthy that the focus of the handscroll's audience shifted gradually over the span from Song to Ming. Han Yu and Fan Zhongyan were equally commemorated in colophons by early viewers, but Han's pertinence to the handscroll tapered off with time. His authorship notwithstanding, Han Yu has been referred to with a declining frequency. In the eyes of those beholders from late Yuan onwards, it is Fan Zhongyan's writing, his "touch," that served as the fountainhead of the handscroll's nationwide fame.

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<sup>333</sup> 信乎! 言乃心之聲也...故宜其子孫珍襲...

The watershed in the reception history of this handscroll is the early years of the fourteenth century when the scroll returned to the possession of Fan family in Suzhou. After circulating in northern China for over one hundred year, it was purchase by Li Kan 李戡 (fl. 1290) who was install as the magistrate of Suzhou in 1299. Li visited the memorial shrine of Fan Zhongyan and gave the handscroll back to Fan's posterity. Fan Rujing 范汝靜, an eighth-generation descendant of Fan Zhongyan, had the scroll remounted and started to reconfigure its reputation as a heirloom.<sup>334</sup>

Since the handscroll became part of the permanent collection in memorial shrine of Fan Zhongyan, access to it has been controlled by patriarchs of successive generations of Fan family. The patriarchs, often addressed in colophons as *zhufeng* 主奉 (literally, “host of ceremony”), are responsible for maintaining the physical condition of the scroll and soliciting inscriptions from celebrities. The accumulated inscriptions, in their turn, also strengthen the scroll's entanglement with the vicissitudes of the Fan family's history. When the handscroll had to be mortgaged to Wang Shizhen's 王世貞 pawn shop in 1570, what Suzhou literati mourned over was not the loss of property but the waning family that could not protect “the touch of ancestor” 先人手澤. Ten years later, Wang Shizhen “returned the handscroll” to Fan Weiyi 范惟一 (1510-1584), the patriarch of Fan family, “without considering the price” 同舉此二卷以歸主奉，不論價. His deed was acclaimed as the epitome of integrity that maintain the cultural lineage of Fan family.<sup>335</sup> As a precaution against similar transaction in the future, Fan Weiyi advertised Fan family's ownership of this scroll in his colophon. The ending passage of his colophon is rendered in an admonitory

<sup>334</sup> 其八世孙静翁装潢而珍襲之，求名筆以發其光華。

<sup>335</sup> 同舉此二卷以歸主奉，不論價...王大理世貞不索質錙而歸之誠是義事；盛德事...

tone of voice: “If there are unfilial scions still try to get a mortgage on it, please don’t give them the loan.”<sup>336</sup>

### **Recruiting lobbyists and raising funds: handscrolls and political ambition**

The moral discourse about handwriting can establish a framework for the cultural biography of Fan Zhongyan’s handscrolls. The keen awareness of familial obligation provided members of Fan family with the impetus for preserving Fan’s “handwriting” in great veneration. However, we might wonder whether the concerted efforts that were put in execution of those handscrolls could only be driven by a sense of duty. The following section will suggest an alternation explanation by situating the process of making handscroll into its specific social milieu, especially the development of Fan family in mid-Ming Suzhou.

As is mentioned before, Fan Zhongyan took an active part in purchasing charitable farmland (*yitian* 義田) for his family and promoted the construction of familial coffin home in his old age. Through a joint effort of Fan Zhongyan, his brothers and his son, Fan Chunren, more than three thousand acres of farmland were purchased as a financial source for communal projects in the Fan family such as sustaining family school and regular ceremonies.<sup>337</sup> However, the farmland was confiscated in 1385 as a punishment for the Fan family who failed to pay agricultural tax on time.<sup>338</sup> No matter whether the confiscation was due to Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang’s (r.1368-1398) brutal political

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<sup>336</sup> 倘後有不肖子孫仍以質人，請其人勿與質。

<sup>337</sup> The original text reads: 日食人一升，岁衣人一缣，嫁女者五十千，再嫁者三十千，娶妇者三十千，再娶者十五千，葬者如再嫁之数，葬幼者十千。Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹, *Fan Wenzheng gong ji bubian* 范文正公集補編, vol. 2 (Suzhou: Suihan tang, 1707), 15b-16a.

<sup>338</sup> 國初有犯法者田悉沒於官。See Wu Kuan, “Writing after the Chens reclaimed their coffin home” 書陳氏復義莊記後. *Jiacang ji*, 479.

persecution of gentry families in Jiangnan area, it did trigger the decline of the Fan family.<sup>339</sup>

As the influence and fame of Fan family waned, reclaiming of confiscated farmland became increasingly hopeless. In the Chenghua period (1464-1487), a member of Fan family presented a memorial asking permission to restore charitable farmland. The appeal was declined by officials in central court whose response implies a reason for the rejection: in the Fan family there is no person in power, in their word: *ju dangdao* 居當道, who can offer help in this issue.<sup>340</sup>

The sharp decline in gains from charitable farmland put the Fan family in great financial crisis, threatening its ability in serving local community. Largely due to the lack of financial support, Wenzheng School (*wenzheng shuyuan* 文正書院), the private school of Fan family and the place where the handscroll “Ode to Boyi” was stored, was falling into disrepair in the mid-fifteenth century.

However, the patriarch of the Fan family at this time, Fan Conggui 范從規, continued to expand the readership of Fan’s handscroll to social elites in Suzhou, Nanjing and other cities from neighboring provinces.<sup>341</sup> Meanwhile, more colophons were solicited to replenish the endpaper of the handscroll.<sup>342</sup> Fan Conggui’s aim is implied in a colophon written by Dai Ren. It is possible that audience of the handscroll could be touched by Fan

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<sup>339</sup> 官没私侵，寢消寢廢，范之族日以敝。See Xu Youzhen 徐有貞, “Record after Fan Shunchen’s Chengze juan” 記范舜臣承澤卷後, in *Wugong ji* 武功集, juan 3, *Siku quanshu edition*, vol. 1245, 111. Detailed account can also be found in *Gazetteer of Changzhou* 長洲縣志.

<sup>340</sup> 待子異日居當道，自復之未晚。See *Jiacang ji*, 479.

<sup>341</sup> The authors of colophons composed in Chenghua period include, Wu Kuan 吳寬 from Suzhou, Dai Ren 戴仁 from Nanjing, Yang Ze 楊澤 from Zhejiang.

<sup>342</sup> For instance, Cheng Minzheng’s 程敏政 colophon was composed for the stelae in Fan Zhongyan’s shrine but later was mounted into this handscroll for thematic relevance.

Zhongyan's work as well as Fan's worthy descendants who treasured their ancestor's touch. Fan Conggui hoped that the audience, which consists of gentry people and promising young scholars, would potentially mediate in the cause of reclaiming the confiscated farmland.

Fan Conggui's unremitting efforts were not in vain. The dilapidation of Wenzheng School attracted the attention of Liu Yu 劉瑀 (1431-?), the governor of Suzhou Prefecture. Liu Yu reported this problem to his school mate Liu Kui 劉魁(fl.1467) who was in the position of Regional Inspector. With Liu Kui's approval, Wenzheng School was completely refurbished while Fan Zhongyan's shrine was rebuilt in 1481.<sup>343</sup> After completing the renovation project, Liu Kui invited another school mate Dai Ren 戴仁 (1432-?), a literatus from Nanjing and paid a visit to Suzhou in the same year.<sup>344</sup> They viewed "Ode to Boyi" and another handscroll *Encomium of Taoist Garment (daofu zan 道服贊)* at Fan Zhongyan's shrine and coffin home of the Fan family respectively.<sup>345</sup> Dai recorded the whole process of renovation on the endpaper of "Ode to Boyi". The second half of his colophon is dominated by his encomium to Fan Congui who is "good at advertising his ancestor" (*shanyan qizu 善言厥祖*). With worthy descendants like Fan Congui, according to Dai, the revival of the Fan family is promising. Such a family, in its turn, will guarantee the permanence of Fan Zhongyan's calligraphy.<sup>346</sup>

Liu Kui, Liu Yu and Dai Ren all passed *jinshi* examination in 1466, the second year of Chenghua, which gives them the relationship termed as *tongnian* (同年, literally, "same

<sup>343</sup> See "Wenzheng shuyuan ji" 文正書院記, *Wuxian zhi* 吳縣志, *juan* 14. *Tianyige cang mingdaifangzhi xuankan xu* 天一閣藏明代方志選刊續, vol. 16 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1990), 270.

<sup>344</sup> Dai Ren's colophon on handscroll "Ode to Boyi" records their visit, which bears the date the eighth day of the eighth month in the year of Chenghua xinchou (1481) 成化辛丑八月八日.

<sup>345</sup> Liu Kui and Dai Ren also record their viewing experience on handscroll "Encomium to Taoist Cloth".

<sup>346</sup> 范氏又將有興者矣, 然則公之遺墨不亦留芳於千古不磨者夫.



year”). Another *tongnian* of these three scholars, Cheng Minzheng (1445-1499), was also invited to visit Wenzheng School when passing Suzhou. A series of commemorative poems composed by Cheng were subsequently mounted into the handscroll “Ode to Boyi.” It is not a coincidence that four *tongnian* scholar-officials were associated with this handscroll although their levels of involvement vary. Conceivably, there might be a network of sharing information and mutual support among *tongnian* people. Making use of such a social network, Fan Conggui intensified his efforts to establish the fame of both the handscroll and his family.

Cultural significance notwithstanding, a single handscroll could not fundamentally ameliorate the financial conditions of the Fan family. Even though Wenzheng School was reopened with the aids from local government, a severe shortage of money still faced young students. Annual income from familial farmland were not enough to fulfil educational needs, such as printing exemplary literature. Sometimes patriarchs of the Fan family had to sell farmland in order to cover the traveling expenses of civil examinees from their clan.<sup>347</sup>

The handscroll *Fan Zhongyan's Autographic Letters* is executed in this social context. Although the scroll was acclaimed by successive inscribers as a revered work bearing Fan's “handwriting,” the original purpose of making it is explicitly stated in Wang Xuan's 王萱 (1482-1518) colophon:

“The handwriting looks fresh and new,  
Playing with it, I could hardly bear to put it down.  
As for Master [Fan's] literary anthology, [I] asked,

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<sup>347</sup> Liao Zhihao 廖志豪, “Luelun Fan Zhongyan yu Fan shi yizhuang” 略論范仲淹與范氏義莊, *Xueshu yuekan*, 10(1991): 71-75.

For what reason it could not widely spread?

This mission should be assigned to [Fan's] descendants and other talents,

Donate gold in your pockets as soon as possible.<sup>348</sup>

手澤猶如鮮，玩之不欲釋...

為問公文集，云胡不廣傳...

此責屬裔彥，囊金速當捐。

The creator wanted to raise money to publish Fan Zhongyan's literary anthology as a way to expand Fan's influence. Ironically, it is on this handscroll that printed versions of Fan's works are despised by several other inscribers for lacking the sense of reality.

Due to the scarcity of solid evidence, we have no idea whether the handscroll brought the Fan family enough money for block carving and printing. However, it did indeed lay the social foundation for the Fans' future claim to restore familial farmland. Since 1500s, an increasing number of high-ranking officials participated in the collaborative production of this handscroll. Among twenty-four inscribers from late Hongzhi (1488-1505) through early Wanli period (1573-1619), six of them assumed the position of imperial lecturer in central court (*jingyan jiangguan* 經筵講官). Ten inscribers achieved the second rank in the system of nine-rank official, which equals to the head of a ministry.<sup>349</sup> Compared with handscroll "Ode to Boyi," more incumbent officials undertaking administrative duties were involved in this project.

The changing composition of the inscriber group suggests an increase in access to

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<sup>348</sup> 手澤猶如鮮，玩之不欲釋...為問公文集云胡不廣傳...此責屬裔彥囊金速當捐。

<sup>349</sup> The inscribers include Wu Kuan 吳寬, Wang Ao 王鏊, Qiao Yu 喬宇, Lin Wenjun 林文俊, Zhang Bangqi 張邦奇, and Fei Cai 費采.

promulgate the Fans' worthy deeds and requests among elite circles. Inscribers took different strategies to highlight the social and cultural importance of familial farmland and related charitable activities. Some refer to canonized literary works, such as Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130-1200) comment or Qian Gongfu's 錢公輔 (1023-1074) essay, which record how Fan Zhongyan set up charitable farmland, coffin home and family school,<sup>350</sup> while others try to signal the relationship between Fan Zhong's endeavor to "help family member and cultivate clan" (*jiqun yangzu* 濟群養族) and local administration and cultural preservation in Suzhou. Through sustained efforts that spanned three generations, the Fan family acquired the farmland the size of which was more than two thousand acres, roughly equal to that of mid Yuan period.

As its fame continued to grow in a directed way, the handscroll bears symbolic value to the course of restoring familial farmland. When the Fan family had to sell this handscroll in 1601, Shen Yiguan 沈一貫 (1531-1617), the subsequent owner, wrote a colophon in a deep sense of anxiety: "The Fan family lost this scroll, I have no idea whether their farmland exist or not."<sup>351</sup>

If we examine the social life of "Fan Zhongyan's autographic letters" against a broader social background, we will find its early existence parallels a burgeoning trend in sixteenth-century Suzhou: gentry families became keen on purchasing farmland, the income from which were used for public service within the clan, such as sustaining family school and regular ritualistic activities.

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<sup>350</sup> See colophons written by Zhang Shiche 張時徹 (1500-1577), Zheng Sande 鄭三德 and Fei Cai 費采.

<sup>351</sup> In 1601, the handscroll fell into the hands of a dealer Guo Shiqi 郭士騏. Guo presented it to Shen Yiguan as a gift.

According to the statistics collected from gazetteers of Suzhou Prefecture, twenty-seven families are recorded that have purchased farmland as charity estate in the Ming dynasty. Among fourteen transactions which have clear date information, thirteen of them were completed during or later than Zhengde period (1506-1521).<sup>352</sup> Even though we can hardly estimate the actual influence of Fan Zhongyan's handscroll, but it is safe to infer that the members of the Fan family played a pioneering role in this trend and, as is praised in those colophons, set an example of excellent family management.

### **Handscroll as a locus for commemoration**

After his death in 1052, Fan Zhongyan was buried in Jinfanli 錦樊里, a village in southeastern Luoyang 洛陽. A temple named *xianzhong* (顯忠 literally, “manifesting loyalty”) was founded near his grave by edict of Emperor Shenzong (r.1067-1085) for commemorative purposes. However, until the period of Zhizheng (1341-1370), Fan Zhongyan was not enrolled in the register of worthy men who deserved government-sponsored memorial ceremonies. Fan Zhongyan's shrine was a building affiliated to the temple. The monks from Xianzhong Temple assumed full charge of the farmland that was purchased by Fan Zhongyan's son as a financial source for shrine maintenance. During the Zhizheng period, Guo Wennai 郭文鼎 (fl.1350), the magistrate of Luoyang, appealed to the court for periodic commemoration of Fan Zhongyan. With intervention of the central government, Fan's memorial shrine was renovated and independent from the temple. Imperial recognition notwithstanding, the shrine was still in an awkward situation. Over a

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<sup>352</sup> Wu Jianhua 吳建華, *Suzhou tongshi mingdai juan* 蘇州通史明代卷 (Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2019), 428-430.

long span of time from Yuan to mid-Ming, Fan Zhongyan's descendants in Suzhou had to travel to Luoyang at regular intervals to conduct mourning rituals and to clean the gravesite.<sup>353</sup> However, the long distance between Suzhou and Luoyang made the pilgrimage an arduous task. The inconvenient journey and its cost provided the impetus to relocate the memorial for Fan Zhongyan.

As early as 1294, Wu Bingyi 吳秉彝, the local governor of Pingjiang 平江, suggested to renovate Fan family's shrine in Suzhou. This shrine was originally built to worship ancestors of the Fan family rather than Fan Zhongyan. Wu's project was to expand the shrine into a private school.<sup>354</sup> Besides being the educational institution exclusive for students surnamed Fan, the school could also be used as the locus for periodic memorial activities. Wu's request received active response from the central government. The school was completed no later than 1350 and named after Fan Zhongyan's posthumous title: *wenzheng* 文正. Though the first half of the Ming dynasty, Suzhou gradually superseded Luyang as the legitimate place of Fan Zhongyan worship. The commemorative rituals became regularized and held twice each year, setting an example for other cities in the Jiangnan area.<sup>355</sup>

Behind the development of Fan Zhongyan's memorial from an affiliated building to a

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<sup>353</sup> The frequency of this kind of pilgrimage is unknown, but scattered evidence shows that the ritual activities took place more and more sporadically. For instance, a report written by governor of Henan Prefecture in Hongzhi period shows that Xianzhong Temple was out of repair while the farmland set aside to cover the cost of ritual were occupied by other people. It is conceivable that members from the Fan family failed to hold ritual activities for a long time. *Ming xiaozong shilu* 明孝宗实录, *juan* 82, 弘治六年十一月乙卯. Xu Yan 徐琰, "Wenzheng gong citangji" 文正范公祠記. Li Yongxian 李勇先 et al., comp., *Fan Zhongyan quanji* 范仲淹全集 (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe, 2007), 1123-25

<sup>354</sup> See Li Qi 李祁 "Wenzheng shuyuan ji" 文正書院記, in *Fan Zhongyan quanji*, 1190-92.

<sup>355</sup> For example, Du Fan 杜範, the magistrate of Taizhou 台州, once asked imperial permission to hold regular sacrifice ritual for Wei Liaoweng 魏了翁 (1178-1237) in the same manner as Suzhou people did to Fan Zhongyan. 比照范仲淹事例賜以常祭. Du Fan 杜範, *Du qingxian gong wenji* 杜清獻公文集, *juan* 1, (Suzhou: Jiufeng shuguan, 1870), 46b.

temple to a multifunctional institute is the rising status of Confucianism in imperial ideological system. As is pointed out by contemporary scholar Zhang Xiaojun, it reflects the intensification of moral discipline which infiltrated through people's daily life.<sup>356</sup> What is relevant to my research is the role that these two handscrolls played in this process.

In the contest between Suzhou and Luoyang for legitimacy of commemorating Fan Zhongyan, the handscrolls helped Suzhou to augment its cultural capital. Sustained literary practice centered on the handscrolls reconfigured the bonds between Fan Zhongyan and Suzhou at social, historical, and cultural levels. In a host of colophons, Suzhou is not only Fan's hometown but is rendered as the epitome of Fan's glorious achievement as a successful statesman, Confucian scholar, and patriarch of his family.

Bearing symbolic value for the image of a venerated official and a time-honored city, the handscrolls were always put to the test by audience from different dynasties. Before and after the remounting of the handscroll "Ode to Boyi," several beholders asked Fan Rujing, the patriarch of the Fan family to remove two colophons written by Qin Hui 秦檜 (1091-1155) and Jia Sidao 賈似道 (1213-1275), who became turncoats after the fall of Song.<sup>357</sup> The request was declined, but the reasons for keeping them were clearly stated by Fan Rujing's friend: Qin and Jia's colophon could be treated as negative examples that set off Fan Zhongyan's image.<sup>358</sup>

Different from other handscrolls executed for commercial profit, these two handscrolls were deliberately kept distance from marketplace and audience at the

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<sup>356</sup> Zhang Xiaojun 張小軍, "Wenzhi fuxing yu lizhi biange" 文治復興與禮制變革, *Qinghua daxue xuebao*, 27, no. 2 (2012): 17-28.

<sup>357</sup> See colophons written by Huang Qian 黃潛.

<sup>358</sup> See Han Yu's 韓愈 colophon: 退之(Han Yu 韓愈) 之頌深以為亂臣賊子不守名節者之戒...三者無心會而為一, 虹光渥彩昭如日星之垂天.

beginning, even though they had been sold to private owners temporarily. The Fan family declared them as family heirlooms while access to them was rigorously controlled. The handscrolls had limited chance to circulate in literati circles in Jiangnan area. Signatures of colophon writers show that the viewing practice always took place during their visit to the shrine in Suzhou.

As their fame continued to grow, the two handscrolls have reached larger audiences beyond Jiangnan. On the endpaper of “Fan Zhongyan’s autographic letters,” for instance, we can see a cluster of colophons written by three scholars from Puyang 蒲陽, Fujian 福建. The contiguity of these three works implies that they were composed together, probably during their visit to the shrine in group.

It is noteworthy that, from mid-Ming onward, an increasing number of officials deliberately planned their travels to Fan Zhongyan’s shrine for viewing these handscrolls. For local governors such as Zhou Mian 周勉 (fl.1442-1460), Hu Zanzong 胡瓚宗, and Hu Wenjing 胡文靜, their acts of visiting and inscribing would undoubtedly contribute to their images as protectors of local culture, while officials of lower ranks could also raise their reputation from the association with these famous handscrolls. Their writings would be perpetuated with the scrolls while their names therefore had more chance to be noticed by later audience. In his colophon on “Ode to Boyi,” Hu Wenjing terms this act as *fumei* (附美, literally “attach oneself to the glorious”). However, the handscrolls also served as an agent in the mutual construction of fame.

In summary, the case of Fan Zhongyan’s handscrolls provides a window into cultural landscape of mid-Ming Suzhou which is featured by the active interaction between influential families, literati, and local government. The collectively executed handscrolls

witness the rising awareness of locality among literati in Suzhou. They actively participated in the collective handscroll projects, augmented their discursive advantage, and consequentially seized the dominance in commemorating and interpreting Fan Zhongyan.

## Case 2: From a Story to a Shrine: The Making of Fundraising Handscrolls and Moral Cultivation in Suzhou

In 1532, a stele was erected in a shrine at Likou 蠡口 in Suzhou. The upper section of the stele is carved in relief “Stele of Shrine for Song Filial Son Chen” 宋陳孝子祠堂之碑.<sup>359</sup> Chen, a Suzhou native, was imperially recognized as filial son and later was deified by local people as a Daoist practitioner performing medical miracles.<sup>360</sup> The lower part is engraved intaglio with four pieces of text not only praising Chen’s filial deed but also commemorating a fundraising event in early sixteenth century Suzhou. The fundraising was launched by one of Chen’s descendants and a local gentry man named Ge Yuanzhen 戈元禎 with the aim of collecting money to repair the dilapidated shrine of Chen. Their proposal was carried out by Shen Zhou and his associates. They collectively executed a handscroll in the name of “A memorial for gathering donations to rebuilt the tower and aisles in Grand Guardian Chen’s Shrine” 陳太保堂重建門樓廊廡化緣疏.<sup>361</sup> The erecting of this stele suggests that Shen’s attempt might be successful. As the scroll circulating in Suzhou, it attracted voluntary financial contributions while also engaging

<sup>359</sup> Stele of Shrine for Song Filial Son Chen, stone stele, 167x71cm, 1532, Kaiyuan Temple.

<sup>360</sup> Wang Ao et al., eds., *Gusu zhi* 姑蘇志, *juan* 59, 22-23.

<sup>361</sup> Sheng Zhou, *A memorial for gathering donations to rebuilt the tower and aisles in Grand Guardian Chen’s Shrine* 陳太保堂重建門樓廊廡化緣疏, handscroll, ink and color on paper, 33.8x301 cm, Shanghai Museum.



literati's attention in local community. From the texts accrued to the scroll, four pieces were finally selected, transcribed, and engraved on the aforementioned stele in 1532. Yet the inscribing activities lasted through the sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries.

Both the handscroll and the stele survive, thus allow further inquiries about the production, circulation, and transformation of handscrolls when they intersect with worldly affairs and local administration. The first half of this section will exam the transmission of Chen's story within and beyond the "textual enclosure" framed by the handscroll.<sup>362</sup> What interests me most is the dialogic relations among variant versions of this story, ranging from encomiums inscribed on the scroll to archival writings in local gazetteers. My research will investigate how voices from different colophon writers coalesced to form a coherent narrative; how the handscroll mediated the cultural image of the filial son; and the change of Chen's status in officially edited local gazetteers.

The second half of this section tries to capture a glimpse of the socio-cultural context behind the making of charity proposals. The Ming period saw the emergence of unprecedently huge number of handscrolls as a form of plea for financial donations. The collective production of handscroll, as an essential link on the chain of charity projects, engaged artists and literati deeply with local affairs, such as construction projects, cultural maintenance, and regular religious activities, some of which financially relied on prior creation and circulation of "memorial for gathering donation" (*muyuan shu* 募缘疏). By involving several other surviving examples, my analysis will try to reconstruct a profile of handscrolls executed for practical purposes. Moreover, two versions of Shen Zhou's

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<sup>362</sup> When talking about the textual materials related to the painting "Night Banquet," Wu Hung puts forward a concept "textual enclosure," which refers to historical records, colophons, and modern writings. The textual enclosure may shape the audience perception of the painting but "simultaneously yield and block off an entrance to the painting itself. See *The Double Screen*, 29-30.

fundraising verse, the stele version and handscroll version, also offer a valuable window into the strategies adopted by artists to keep the balance between their aesthetic pursuits and the accessibility of their works to common audience.

Before our examining the variation of Chen's story on the handscroll, we need first to look at its original version which set the basic tone of subsequent literary representation. Given that Shen Zhou is the initiator of this handscroll project, his *memorial* (*shu* 疏) can be determined with certainty as the earliest section that was created. However, the biographic information of Chen is rendered in a rather succinct way as an introductory passage of this charity proposal: "Supervisor Chen had been purchasing cakes for his mother carefully over nine years. That Lü Chunyang bestowed him a dipper gourd to save lives earned reputation over three dynasties" (See figure 4.1).<sup>363</sup> Chen's full name is not mentioned through the whole memorial. Equally ambiguous is the address for Chen. Chen is titled "Grand Guardian [of Heirs]" (*taibao* 太保) in the opening line and "Supervisor [of panel affairs]" (*tidian* 提點), a local correctional officer, in the following paragraph. The discrepancy in rank between these two titles is so wide that they could hardly refer to the same person in one single text. However, the concise depiction and confusing titles did little to hinder contemporaneous audience from identifying who Chen is. It could be well illustrated by successive supplements to biographic details in later inscriptions. The reason for their tacit cooperation and tolerance of Shen's vague reference is obvious: the main plot, setting, and theme of Chen's story was familiar to local people long before being textualized by Shen Zhou.

The speculation is confirmed by a line in a following poem inscribed by Wu Yipeng

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<sup>363</sup> 陳提點買糕奉母，九載精心，呂春陽惠瓢救患，三朝傳美。

吳一鵬 (1460-1542), a Suzhou literatus: “Linked jade is consonant with the ballads by our townsmen” 聯璧正協邦人謠. The “linking jade” refers to juxtaposed literary works in the scroll. These poems, despite of nuances in details, still conform with a “prototypical” version which has been likely transmitted on the lips of local people.

An anecdote titled as “Chen, the filial son” (*Chen xiaozi* 陳孝子) in *Gazetteer of Gusu* 姑蘇志 may help us to build up the profile of this “prototypical” version. It is the earliest surviving copy of Chen’s story in textual form. Because the gazetteer was compiled through the late fifteenth century and first published in 1506, temporally parallel to the date of Shen’s composing of this memorial, it is safe to infer this version might be proximate to the biographic reference adopted by Shen Zhou.

According to the account in *Gazetteer of Gusu*, Chen’s given name is Xingli 興立.<sup>364</sup> He was born in an impoverished peasant family in Likou, a small town outside the northern city boundary of Suzhou. His mother, suffering from ill health, ate nothing but the “cakes sold by the Wang family near Lindun Bridge” 臨頓橋王家糕.<sup>365</sup> Therefore, Chen stuck to walking to and fro between his home and the cake shop every morning in order to purchase fresh cake for his mother. One day, he came across a Taoist when he was resting at Yangjing Bridge. The Taoist claimed that his mother was also in ill health and expected to eat the cake and wanted to trade for Chen’s cake. Chen gave him the cake without hesitation, then reentered the city to purchase his own portion. Before his arriving home, the Taoist already offered Chen’s mother the cake and cured her of the illness. Chen suddenly realized that the Taoist was an unusual person (*yiren* 異人). He built a temple in

<sup>364</sup> Wang Ao et al, eds., *Gusu zhi*, juan 59, 22b-23a.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

his neighborhood and converted to Taoism. After his death, local people established a memorial shrine which appeared highly responsive to prayers for health.<sup>366</sup>

Even though this story is categorized into a section named “Recording the Unnatural”(jiyi 紀異), a set of colorful anecdotes noticeable yet unconfirmed,<sup>367</sup> the writer still pays close attention to topographic accuracy. All places involved in narration were geographically real and visible.<sup>368</sup> The cake shop near Lindun Bridge was close to the municipal school and prosperous downtown area (see figure 4.2). Chen handed the cake over at Yangjing Bridge. The bridge is located outside the Qi Gate (*qimen* 齊門), the northern gate of Suzhou city which is on the only route to Chen’s home in Likou (see figure 4.3).<sup>369</sup>

There is no doubt the representation of geographic details may lend credibility to a story. It is a common rhetorical strategy in creating, orally or verbally, folktales, especially those concerning supernatural affairs. However, such a strategy may fall short in explaining the intensive highlighting of geographic fact in subsequent literary practice on Shen Zhou’s handscroll. Among thirteen pieces of substantial inscriptions,<sup>370</sup> Likou is mentioned seven times while other places, such as the Qi Gate and Yangjing Bridge, are also addressed respectively. Shao Bao’s poem even calculates the distance between Likou and the cake shop, thirty *li* (about 8 miles),<sup>371</sup> enhancing a sense of reality through topographic accuracy.

<sup>366</sup> 就所居建三清觀捐俗出家後羽化立祠疾病禱之無不驗. *Gusu zhi* 姑蘇志, 22b-23a.

<sup>367</sup> According to the filtering criteria set by editor of Gazetteer of Gusu, anecdotes in this section are close to the so-called unofficial histories from unconfirmed source (稗官雜家), but are not too unreasonable (稍近理者). See *Gusu zhi*, *juan* 59, 1a.

<sup>368</sup> Anonymous, *Map of Waterways Northern Suburbs of Suzhou* 蘇州城北河道圖, 1863, 83x73 cm, ink on paper, British Library. See also illustrations in *Gusu zhi*, *juan* 1.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

<sup>370</sup> The handscroll consists of sixteen sections. The statistics here rules out the frontispiece, an illustration with signature, and Shen Zhou’s memorial which could not be understood as inscription.

<sup>371</sup> ...三年不為久, 卅里不為遙. 仙人不在楊涇橋...

Roughly going through historical records about “filial sons and virtuous women” (*xiaozi zhenfu* 孝子貞婦) created at this time, we may easily find that those moral examples were deeply associated with locality. If we understood the collective making of this handscroll as a process of canonization, behind the self-conscious addressing of geographic fact would be the attempt at elevating Chen from a literary figure in supernatural anecdote to a paragon of virtue example in local community.

The process of canonization is always slow and complicated, thus entails perseverance and accumulated efforts. Handscroll functions as an ideal medium to transmit and preserve a constellation of literary practice. Fragmentary information may work synergically and form a dynamic and detailed image of the persona. On the handscroll of this filial son, adjacent to Shen’s memorial is Qian Yu’s 錢昞 (fl. 1522) pentasyllabic regulated verse. The contribution of Qian’s poem is to reveal a possible schedule of Chen Xingli’s life: “To purchase the cake, [he] enters the market in the morning, to serve his mother, [he] returns to his town at noon”<sup>372</sup> Following Qian poem is a ballad written by 邵寶 (1460-1527). Shao reminds contemporary audience of another dramatic episode in Chen’s life which is not covered by the account in *Gazetteer of Gusu*: Chen was invited for a heavenly tour and endowed with a magical dipper gourd.

The plot about the tour was neatly represented by Tang Yin in a long narrative ballad, on a separate endpaper section to the right of Shao Bao’s colophon.<sup>373</sup> Tang’s ballad, one hundred and forty-six lines in total, details the experience of Chen to an unprecedented degree. Whether it be fabricated or not, the minutiae revealed in his opening section include Chen’s

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<sup>372</sup> 買糕晨入市，奉母午還鄉。

<sup>373</sup> There is another poem written by Qian Gui between Tang’s ballad and Shao’s poem.

occupation, the age of his mother and the illness she suffered.<sup>374</sup> When talking about the span of time that Chen stuck to purchasing cake, Shen's memorial holds a rough estimation of nine year while Shao poem argues three years.<sup>375</sup> Tang Yin makes the calendar accurate to number of days: "Nine years and a little more than six months" 九年六月零. The first seventy lines of this ballad basically correlate to the plot in gazetteer that Chen got reward from an immortal (*xianren* 仙人), instead of the Taoist, and his mother was healthy again. Yet the whole process has been dramatized by adding conversations and flashback.<sup>376</sup> The following fifty-eight lines represent Chen's journey to Penglai 蓬萊 in company with the immortal. But Chen gave up halfway because he was mindful of his mother at home. The immortal made a farewell gift of a dipper gourd for medical use.<sup>377</sup> Everyone who needs medical treatment should first confess in front of the gourd, and only moral persons could get elixir from the gourd.<sup>378</sup> Chen's experience was transmitted to central government and he was installed into a position "in charge of religious affair in Jiangnan area" 提點江南路, which corresponds to the title "Supervisor" used by Shen Zhou.

The vision in the last few lines returns to the present Ming period. The gourd's whereabouts became unknown after being confiscated by the emperor. Yet Tang's remorse for the loss of the gourd is counterbalanced by the uninterrupted spread of Chen's story in his hometown and preservation of related documents.<sup>379</sup> After restating his purpose of

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<sup>374</sup> 结屋住蠡口，采樵以养生。有母年七十，瘫痪双目盲

<sup>375</sup> Shen's words: The sincerity that lasted nine years 九載精誠; Shao's words: Three years are not long. 三年不為久。

<sup>376</sup> 母言糕寄来，且说寄者形，形与乞糕者，更不差毫分。自啖今日糕，其味甜如饴。大与平日异，顿觉痼疾平。

<sup>377</sup> 相赠一葫芦，大如新结橙，云与汝救患，功可代参苓。

<sup>378</sup> 先须忏悔过，然后就手倾。或倾而乌有，或倾得微尘

<sup>379</sup> 子孙口相传，符牒亦具存。

“recounting the event” (*fugishi* 賦其事), Tang ends the ballad with firm belief that people will be blessed by all deities, including the Wutong Spirits (*wutong shen* 五通神), Gautama Buddha, and assorted Taoist immortals.<sup>380</sup>

The random blending of social beliefs in the ending couplets reveals the worldly function of this piece of text, traveling within and beyond elite circles and raising money. However, a neatly worked-out plot, vernacular language, and the high level of details in this ballad are reminiscent of Du Fu and Bai Juyi’s narrative poems. Narrating historical events in poetry form is also the very effect Tang Yin tried to achieve in his composition. He expected the ballad to be read and circulate as an alternative way of historical narrative about a local event. His ambition could be partly disclosed by the arrangement of the characters on the endpaper. The ballad is written in a semi-running script but closer to standard script while characters are evenly distributed to each line. Different from all other inscribers who sign at the end of their works, Tang Yin puts his signature below the title which is located to left most (see figure 4.4). The autographic ballad appears to be more like a carefully transcribed document than an impromptu inscription. Moreover, Tang annotates the terms that are probably beyond the knowledge of his audience. The glosses are rendered in characters of smaller size and double-line format which share similar style as annotation in printed book (see figure 4.5).<sup>381</sup> As a member of the editorial panel of local gazetteer, it is safe to relate his meticulous attitude to a sense of responsibility in conservation of local culture.

Equally noteworthy is that this ballad was read by a following colophon writer Qian

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<sup>380</sup> 五通为神仙，十号称世尊。诸佛证圆觉，群仙保长生。

<sup>381</sup> The ballad was created during Tang Yin’s later years. As a poet who could not afford to print his own anthology till his death, we can also relate his meticulous attitude to the hope that he wanted to immortalize his work through this channel.

Gui 錢貴 (1472-1530) as an unfinished one. Qian's comment was written in 1525, one year after Tang Yin's death, which reads: "Nevertheless, there was no time for him to complete this passage, which consequently became a work unfinished forever" 然不及終篇，遂成絕筆。Qian's sympathy for this unfulfilled poetry project stimulates him to complete it by adding additional fifty-four lines.<sup>382</sup>

It might be debatable whether Tang's autographic work is structurally complete. At least, the previous analysis of this ballad may cast doubt on Qian's comment. Either as a narrative verse addressing a local legend or as a piece of public writing responding to Shen Zhou's proposal, Tang's ballad should be understood as a finished work with intact structure. Questions therefore arise: For what reasons does Qian Gui interpret it as an incomplete one? what does Qian feel obligatory to add into this ballad?

To answer this question, we should first look to what Qian has supplemented Chen's story. This handscroll preserves two sets of Qian Gui's inscriptions which are intervened by Tang Yi's ballad on the surface of endpaper. The first set dates to 1522, consists of one regulated octave verse and three quatrains, two penta-syllabic and one heptasyllabic. These poems appear to be created perfunctorily for social obligation. The limited attention Qian paid to this set of poems can be revealed by the random mixture of poetic forms, loose structure, and carelessly selected ending syllables that infringe the tone pattern.<sup>383</sup> The relationship between the filial son's glorious deed and immediate locality is rendered in a comparatively blunt manner: "Filial son's [lineage] therefore is incessant, here is the only

<sup>382</sup> 予竊悲焉。因效其體，作五十四句續而成之。

<sup>383</sup> Take the second couplet in the second poem for example, which reads: 齊如門前路不迷，宣公墓旁走成蹊。The couplet starts with a sequence of four characters of flat tone, which render its audio effect monotonous. Moreover, the ending character of the opening line is *mi* 迷, a character of flat tone that fails to correspond to its metrical counterpart *xi* 蹊 in the last line.



place where his spirit rests.”<sup>384</sup>

In 1525, the handscroll, with newly added Tang Yin’s ballad, was shown again to Qian Gui.<sup>385</sup> Qian’s second inscription is preceded by a short passage which, as is mentioned before, refers to Tang’s ballad and proclaims the necessity of the supplement. Qian’s attempt to merge his own composition together with preexistent ballad is obvious. His short comment closely clings to the last character of Tang’s ballad (see figure 4.4), rather than starting in another line beside.

Qian’s ballad, instead of reiterating the plot of Chen’s story, starts with sketches of another four filial sons in Suzhou and Wuxi. The geographical scope of these examples is limited to the area for hundred *li* around Likou, because Qian believes that the further away an anecdote is, the less convincing it will be.<sup>386</sup> However, the lifetimes of them vary tremendously, spanning sixteen centuries from Han to Ming periods.<sup>387</sup> The deeds of these filial sons have received imperial favor, official documentation and a huge body of encomium by the time when Qian composed this ballad. Even though Chen Lixing’s act appears prosaic in contrast with the dramatic scenes of these four examples, such as Zhu Liangji’s cutting flesh to feed his mother, Qian nonetheless tries to argue that they are of equal merit in terms of edification.

It is noteworthy that Qian inherited the layouts of in-text annotation from Tang’s ballad when writing on the endpaper of this handscroll. In the stanza itemizing those four

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<sup>384</sup> 孝子是不斷，精靈惟在茲。

<sup>385</sup> According to Qian’s signature, the second set of inscription was executed in the year of *yiyou* during the reign of Jiajing 嘉靖乙酉, 1522.

<sup>386</sup> 道遠名徒在，茫昧未足憑。

<sup>387</sup> The four filial sons mentioned in Qian’s poem: Hua Bao 華寶 (410-?), Wuxi native, who waited for his father’s returning home and refused to marry; Gu Xiang 顧翔 (active in West Han period), Shaoxing native, who dug a canal to Lake Taihu to grow wild rice for his mother, Zhu Liangji 朱良吉 (fl. 1315) and Yu Yongli 俞用禮 (d. 1441) are Suzhou natives who cut their flesh, offering to their parents.

filial sons, each poem line is followed by an explanatory note rendered in superscript. Moreover, all characters of this ballad are arranged neatly in hand-drawn grids, which enhance further its visual resemblance to printed paper sheets in canonic books.

Qian Gui endeavored to elevate the status of filial Chen literarily and visually. His attempt will be better understood in reference to the promotion he gained one year ago. In 1524, Qian assumed the position of Aide for Court for Dependencies (*honglu chengshi* 鴻臚丞事) in charge of diplomatic and ceremonial affairs.<sup>388</sup> A new start in political career is underscored by Qian in his signature in 1525 (See figure 4.6). Different from a simple combination of date, native place and name, as that of his inscriptions in 1522, Qian's new signature not only includes his official title, but also deliberately mentions that his comment and sequel ballad was composed on a day of mid-spring (*chunzhong* 春仲), a spell right before regular memorial rituals for ancestors which are always promoted by both central government and local administration.

Seen in this light, Qian Gui's supplement to Tang's ballad suggests the entanglement of imperial-national discourse with the collective construction of filial Chen's image. Qian placed Chen among officially recognized filial sons that have been deified as local protectors: "[They] are said to protect families and townsmen forever, virtues of the filial have lasting aroma."<sup>389</sup> Meanwhile, the commemoration of filial sons is deemed as an essential part of imperial propaganda. Qian makes it clear in the last stanza: "Because in this sagacious and glorious dynasty, the administration is comparable to that of Tang [Yao]

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<sup>388</sup> See Wen Zhengming, "Honglusi sicheng zhishi qianjun muzhiming" 鴻臚寺丞致仕錢君墓志銘, in *Wen Zhengming ji* 文徵明集, Zhou Daozhen 周道振 comp. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), 705-7.

<sup>389</sup> 永言保鄉族, 眾孝藹德馨。

and Yu [Shun's] periods. Is there only penal code to observe? There should be model ways worth applauding."<sup>390</sup> From Qian's point of view, meritorious conducts and paragons of virtue are symbols for an exemplary government. The handscroll project not only serves as an efficient means to collect, textualize and to promote the meritorious conduct, but also fulfil the needs of strengthening the moral foundation of a dynasty.

Qian's political stance distinguishes his interpretation and manifestation of Chen's story from that of Tang Yin, an unemployed scholar and professional artist. However, his sequel does not point out inconsistencies in Chen's biographic information as is shown in precedent representation. Chen's given name is written as Lixing 立興 in Tang's ballad, instead of Xingli 興立, while Chen lifetime is shifted from Song period to late Yuan.<sup>391</sup> Moreover, Qian's writing also demonstrates a tolerant attitude toward the unconfirmed account about Chen's medical competency that derives from his dipper gourd, even though the social belief behind Tang's narrative conflicts, more or less, with the Confucianism discourse by which Qian abides. The co-existence of different voices on a single handscroll may inform us to rethink the negotiated authenticity of Chen's story, as the center of this artistic and literary project. In other words, to what extent varied representation could be compatible with each other despite noticeable discrepancies?

Close to the left end of this handscroll is a long essay (about 2000 characters) written by an anonymous viewer from family Gu who came into possession of the handscroll in Qing period. The essay gathers biographic information of inscribers from historical records and conducts a meticulous comparison between different records of Chen, the filial son, in

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<sup>390</sup> 坐令聖明朝，治與唐虞並，豈惟刑可措，尚有道堪鳴。

<sup>391</sup> The title of Shen Zhou's memorial suggests that Chen lived in the Song dynasty while Tang Yin chronicles the story into late Yuan period.

inscribed texts and two versions of local gazetteer. The comparative study points out the inconsistency in filial son's name and calls for scholarly attention to identify the real one, because "filial son's name should not remain erroneous in its circulation."<sup>392</sup> Even though the whole essay is dominated by the spirit of evidential studies that was popular in the Qing dynasty, scarce attention has been paid to the anachronism in Chen's story. The deliberate ignoring of anachronism could be understood together with Qian's enumeration of filial sons whose lifetimes span more than ten dynasties. In the process of cultural-imaginative construction of a filial son, temporal settings are of lesser significance than a firm place of origin, while sometimes even ahistorical presentation are not unacceptable.

The immediate consequence of the jointed ballad by Qian Gui and Tang Yin is that it has inspired successive literary practice among Suzhou literati, including Huangfu Xiao 皇甫洙 (1497-1556), Huangfu Chong 皇甫冲 (1490-1558), and Wu Yipeng 吴一鹏 (1460-1542).

Wu Yipeng passed civil examination in 1493 and later adopted a critical position as Minister of Department of Rituals. The long poem inscribed by Wu in 1530 serves as a successful compromise between literary exaggeration and historical authenticity, between aesthetic pursuit and practical appeal to the public. Wu's poem deliberately omits all unsubstantiated details about filial Chen, ending the story at the moment when the shrine was originally constructed. In the closing stanza of his poem, Wu asserts the necessity of rebuilding the whole shrine instead of merely repairing the aisle.<sup>393</sup>

Parallel to Wu Yipeng's suggestion is another proposal that tries to bolster the

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<sup>392</sup> 孝子之名不應謬訛相延。

<sup>393</sup> 嗟哉祠廟兵火後，頽垣破壁風簫蕭。眼前豈無仗義士，克復舊觀摩雲霄。

reconstruction project: “Memorial for Rebuilding the Shrine of Grand Guardian Chen” 重修陳太保祠疏. It was composed by Huangfu Fang 皇甫汈 (1505-1584), the younger brother of Huangfu Xiao and Huangfu Chong, two poets leaving colophons on this handscroll. Huangfu Fang paraphrases the main ideas of preexistent texts in highly stylized prose which consists exclusively of regular couplets. As a charity appeal supplementing Shen Zhou’s memorial, this proposal develops a new strategy to convince local people of the significance of the shrine. Benefits of such an architectural project are made more concrete and explicit: “[Owing to the shrine], houses will be blessed with benevolent children while families may give birth to sons with promising future.”<sup>394</sup>

It is difficult to estimate the precise role that Huangfu Fang’s memorial played in promoting this fundraising campaign, since no verifiable document recording its financial efficiency and readership exists. However, the surviving text at least indicates that the collective making of this charity handscroll intersected with Huangfu’s writing career. Given that Huangfu Fang joined the editorial committee of local gazetteer in 1560s,<sup>395</sup> the relevance of the handscroll to the updated version of Chen’s story in *Changzhou xianzhi* 長洲縣志, first published in 1571, may deserve careful attention.

Compared to the record in Wang Ao’s *Gazetteer of Gusu*, the biography of Chen Xingli in *Gazetteer of Changzhou County* underwent extensive revision and addition, which correlates with the literary presentation on this fundraising handscroll. In Wang Ao’s version, Chen’s story ends with his realizing the identity of the immortal and converting to

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<sup>394</sup> 將俾戶產感雉之兒，家生召鱗之子。 See Huangfu Fang 皇甫汈 (1505-1584), “Chongxiu Chen taibao ci shu” 重修陳太保祠疏, in *Huangfu sixun ji* 皇甫司勳集, *juan* 60, *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 1275, 909.

<sup>395</sup> Huangfu Fang was the chief editor of the gazetteer of Changzhou County, one of two major counties of Suzhou Prefecture.

Taoism. The county-level gazetteer adds the plots that the immortal bestowed magic dipper gourd on Chen and Emperor Xiaozong expropriated gourd from Chen's descendants.<sup>396</sup> In order to neutralize the fictional nature of the dramatic scene, the intelligent gourd with elixir, as is represented in Tang Yin's ballad, is replaced with a dipper that can turn water salubrious.<sup>397</sup> The entry in county gazetteer deletes the event that Chen Xingli built a temple for the Taoist immortal. An event is added instead that local people constructed a memorial shrine for Chen, the filial son. The revised biography ends with the quotation from Shao Bao's poem of eulogy which was originally inscribed on the handscroll and engraved on the stele in Chen's shrine.<sup>398</sup>

An equally noteworthy change is that the entry of Chen Xingli was moved from the chapter of "Recording the Unnatural" in Wang Ao's gazetteer into a chapter named "Personage" (*renwu* 人物) in *Changzhou xianzhi*. It is formal biographical chapter documenting celebrities in Suzhou from the Tang dynasty through mid-Ming period.

Joe Dennis's research on local gazetteer calls for attention to the nuanced values and attitudes behind categorization in gazetteers.<sup>399</sup> This line of thought may inspire us to reassess the impact and influence of the fundraising handscroll. As the scroll circulated in literati community in Suzhou, fame and symbolic capital accrued to Chen Xingli, which consequently cast his legendary experience as a historical reality. Even though the faithfulness of Chen's story was questioned by Huangfu Fang's contemporaries, like an

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<sup>396</sup> 且留一瓢與之...一時以爲孝感遂聞於朝孝宗遣中使取瓢以去. See *Changzhou xianzhi* 長洲縣志. vol.14 (s.n., 1571, National Library in Beijing), 7a.

<sup>397</sup> 云將此注水飲人可以療疾興立大驚閭里咸詫異自是病者日求瓢水飲之疾良已. *Changzhou xianzhi*. 6b-7a.

<sup>398</sup> 里人爲立祠尚書邵寶嘗跋其碑陰云今日一糕糕明日一糕後日..... *Changzhou xianzhi*. 7a.

<sup>399</sup> Joe Dennis, *Writing, Publishing, and Reading Local Gazetteers in Imperial China, 1100-1700*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 31-32, 46-47.

editor of Gazetteer of Jinkui County in Wuxi,<sup>400</sup> the successive literary practices nevertheless made Chen's story a part of the enduring cultural legacy of Suzhou. Chen Lixing therefore was literarily and historically promoted to a social rank dominated by local elites.

Each phrase of this scroll's life circle can be reconstructed through surviving textual or material traces, from the initial memorial by Shen Zhou, to the textual accretions that intersect with local gazetteers, and to the stele on which excerpts from the scroll were manifested to the public. Moreover, the primary goal of this fundraising handscroll was accomplished, even though more than twenty years had passed before enough money was collected and a new shrine was erected in Likou. Considering the condition of preservation and completeness of the benevolent project, the handscroll of filial Chen is a rare case. However, the mid-Ming period saw a burgeoning number of fundraising handscrolls executed for various worldly purposes, even though an overwhelming majority of them fail to emerge from the shadows of time and are available solely in reprinted anthologies.

The boom in fundraising artistic and literary works, as a kind of benevolent and charitable activity, could be understood against a broad socio-cultural background in Jiangnan area. The burgeoning urbanization and dynamic growth of commercial economy, the mushrooming of literary associations, and the rising consciousness of commitment to local administration engaged increasing numbers of gentry elites, scholars, and artists into public affairs.<sup>401</sup> Fundraising documents executed at this time are famous for both their

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<sup>400</sup> The editor quotes Shao Bao's poem but claims that no reliance can be placed on Chen's anecdote 賣鮓陳孝子其事蹟不可考. See Pei Dazhong 裴大中 (fl. 1887) et al, *Wuxi jinkui xianzhi* 無錫金匱縣志, in *Zhongguo difangzhi jicheng* 中國地方志集成, *Jiangsu fuxian zhiji* 江蘇府縣志輯, vol.24 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1991), 389-407.

<sup>401</sup> Mary Backus Rankin, "The Origins of a Chinese Public Sphere Local Elites and Community Affairs in the Late Imperial Period" *Études chinoises*, vol. IX, n. 2 (automne 1990). R. Bin Wong,

volume and variety. They could be created for maintenance or construction of roads, bridges, shrines, temples,<sup>402</sup> or for diverse cultural enterprises such as praising ascetic religious practitioners or printing canonic books.<sup>403</sup> Voluntary donations these documents tried to collect are varied, ranging from money and food to building materials like stone.<sup>404</sup>

The popularity of fundraising essays aroused scholarly attention from Ming literati. In *Wengzhang bianti xushuo* 文章辨體序說, an introduction book about literary genres written by Suzhou scholar Wu Ne 吳訥 (1372-1457), fundraising proposal is rendered in an independent entry followed by a considerable number of samples in prose or verse genre.<sup>405</sup> Sample essays of fundraising memorial (*muyuan shu* 募緣疏) dedicated to appeal to religious followers were even compiled into encyclopedic reference books for daily life.<sup>406</sup>

The open attitude that the public held to fundraising project could be revealed by an

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“Benevolent and charitable activities in the Ming and Qing dynasties,” *Revue Bibliographique de Sinologie*, 2000, Nouvelle Série, vol. 18 (2000): 249-258.

<sup>402</sup> See Zhu Cunli 朱存理, “Fund Raising for Rebuilding Three Treasures Tower at Pure Minority Taoist Temple” 清微道院修三元閣募緣疏, and “Fund Raising for Repairing Tongji Bridge in Hanshu” 募修韓墅通濟橋疏, in *Wudu wencui xuji* 吳都文萃續集, Siku quanshu edition, vol. 1385, 712; vol. 1386, 181.

<sup>403</sup> See “Inscribing on the scroll of Monk Xirong’s Self-Confinement” 題心融和尚禁足募緣卷, in Zhao Yongxian 趙用賢 (1535-1596), *Songshi zhai ji* 松石齋集, *juan* 11, 4b-6a, in Siku jinhushu congan 四庫禁燬書叢刊 series, *ji bu* 集部, vol. 41 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2000). “Fund Raising for Carving and Publishing Stelae in Auspicious Clouds Temple” 募刊瑞雲觀碑疏, in *Wudu wencui xuji*, Siku quanshu edition, vol. 1385, 720.

<sup>404</sup> “Fund Raising Scroll of Bamboo Hall [Temple]” 竹堂募緣疏卷 encourages local people to donate money and rice to repair the old temple. See *Yulin ji* 寓林集, *juan* 30, 18a-19a, *Xuxiu siku* edition, vol. 1369, 514-15. *The Gazetteer of Huizhou Prefecture* (*Huizhou fuzhi* 徽州府志) also records that in 1536, local elites in Tunxi 屯溪 initiated donation of curved stones (*juanshi* 卷石) to rebuild a bridge in the west of their town. See Wang Shangning 汪尚寧 (*jinsi* 1529) ed., *Huizhou fuzhi* 徽州府志, *jiajing* 嘉靖 edition, *juan* 10, 45a in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congan* 北京圖書館古籍珍本叢刊, vol. 29 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1987), 249.

<sup>405</sup> See He Fuzheng 賀復徵 comp., *Wengzhang bianti huixuan* 文章辨體彙選, *juan* 379-380. *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 1406, 566-577.

<sup>406</sup> See “Daoshi huayuan shushi” 道士化緣疏式, *Simin jieyong fenlei xuefu quanbian* 四民捷用分類學府全編 (Attributed to Yu Xiangdou 余象斗 [1550-1637], Jianyang: Qiaoshan tang, 1609), 201-202.



anecdote about Tang Yin and Zhu Yunming. In the story, Tang and Zhu once sojourned in Yangzhou but used up their money. Pretending to be Taoist practitioners from Xuanmiao Temple 玄妙觀, they deceived an officer of salt trade into believing that they are collecting donation to repair the temple.<sup>407</sup> This anecdote most likely derives from the literary imagination of Tang's admirers, but Tang and Zhu's quick wit and the officer's decisiveness suggests that fundraising activities might be rather common in mid-Ming Jiangnan.

It is safe to infer that most of these fundraising documents were executed in the format of handscroll because a huge number of inscriptions are titled as "Inscribing on the following part of scroll..." (題...募緣卷後). Handscroll, owing to its portability, could be held easily during fundraising travel, which is always literarily described as "holding memorial to collect donation" (*chishu muyuan* 持疏募緣). Moreover, the blank endpaper on a handscroll allows successive inscriptions by beholders, which would continually add luster of cultural capital to both the scroll and the fundraising activity.

Even though many literati participated in the collective execution of fundraising handscrolls for a sense of social obligation, it is hard to rule out the possible commercial reasons in the background. Li Rihua 李日華 (1565-1635), a scholar-official and renowned connoisseur, once recorded in his diary that he was invited to inscribe on a scroll for Master Danran in order to collect money to print works related to *Nirvana Sutra* (爲湛然禪師題募刻涅槃經會疏卷). The rate of remuneration is "three pennies per character,

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<sup>407</sup> The original text reads: 唐子畏祝希哲浪遊維揚，資用乏絕。謂鹽使者課稅甚饒，乃偽作道士玄妙觀募緣。鹽使者檄下長吳二邑資金五百為葺觀費。Liang Weishu 梁維樞 (1587-1662), "Jiagjue" 假譎, *Yujian zunwen* 玉劍尊聞 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), 673-674.

as is requested by my friend, Shen Dingfan.”字如當三錢從友人沈定凡請也。<sup>408</sup>

Suzhou is not the only place that saw the popularity of fundraising handscroll. Execution of fundraising artistic and literary works could be found in most cities in lower Yangtse delta.<sup>409</sup> However, given the rise of Wu school and the leading role that Suzhou literati played in painting and calligraphy during the fifteenth century, a large number of surviving examples were attributed to Suzhou literati. They provide an ideal window into an interesting facet of handscroll's social life as well as its engagement with literary practice, historical writing, political propaganda, and local administration.

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<sup>408</sup> Li Rihua 李日華 (1565-1635), *Weishui xuan riji* 味水軒日記, *juan* 8 (Huzhou: Jiayetang, 1920s). 7b-8a.

<sup>409</sup> See local gazetteers such as *Songjiang xianzhi* 松江縣志, *Qiantang xianzhi* 錢塘縣志, *Baoying xianzhi* 寶應縣志...(need page number)

### Chapter 3 Appreciating Handscrolls as Multisensorial Artefacts and Memory Objects

Having examined the creation of handscrolls and related writing practices in the previous two chapters, this chapter turns to the investigation of their reception, with particular focus on the act of viewing and its association with remembrance. Handscroll is not merely a medium accommodating continuous literary and artistic creation on its surface but can also be understood as a memento that evokes reminiscence and perpetuates the fleeting and distilling quality of temporal experience. The contents of a handscroll, visual or textual, are arranged and fixed together into a narrative sequence, thus allowing for the recollection of persons or events in a curated way. The materiality of the handscroll gives rise to a unique presentational mode of memory, structuring our sense of time and space. On the one hand, handscrolls can function generatively as visual stimuli to evoke remembrance at personal, social, and cultural levels. On the other hand, the audience's responses and recollections accrue in continuous acts of viewing throughout the life of a handscroll, rendering it a vessel for depositing and storing memories and narratives.

We can better appreciate the generative and depository dimensions of the handscroll by taking a close look at the semantic and discursive meanings of the words used to describe audience interactions with handscrolls—*shang* 賞, *yue* 閱, and *guan* 觀. Although these Chinese characters are conventionally translated into “to appreciate, read, view,” respectively, the English words fail to capture or replicate a spatial hierarchy of different levels of sight and mental process that is communicated by the Chinese characters. For example, the radical *jian* 見, in the character *guan* 觀, imitates the shape of the eye, suggests the visual relationality between viewer and object; while the *yue* 閱 qualifies the

visual operation as observation, inspection, even reading. When used in the context of artistic practice, however, these characters are deployed to convey more complexity. *Shang*, by comparison, embraces multisensory information from its objects, which can be simultaneously visual, aural, tactile, as well as emotional and intellectual in the viewers' experience. Furthermore, *yue* also operates within a temporal framing. The practice of *yue* goes beyond the scope of engaging the objects in their material form. It also signifies a retrospective gaze that can decipher and interpret the accumulation and erasure of memories clinging to the objects. In other words, the act of viewing by no means is concerned only with "seeing" or "reading" the contents of artistic works. Rather it covers a wide range of activities and processes vis-à-vis the works, all of which are constituted by and constitutive of the objects' material, social, cultural, and historical significance. In this process, interaction with the handscroll re-temporalizes and re-spatializes both the objects and the audience.

My research in this chapter relies fundamentally on the viewing experience recorded by literati in various forms and genres, such as poems, jottings, encyclopedia entries, and some narrative works. Literati and artists in Ming China have shown great zeal in narrating their multi-sensorial experiences when looking at handscrolls. On the one hand, the rich somatic vocabulary captures the details about how handscrolls, as tangible objects, were perceived sensually and emotionally by literati spectators. The discursive practices of corporeal experience, represented in colophons, jottings, and catalogues by viewers or collectors, function as an integral part of the cultural biographies of handscrolls. On the other hand, a handscroll acts as an agent in directing the audience's corporeal bodies and psychological being—the height of the endpaper, for instance, regulating literary

composition and distribution of characters, thus dictating how the vision of the audience focuses, halts, and skips, and determines the bodily manners of viewing.

In this chapter, I aim to demonstrate how materiality of the handscroll is integrally linked to viewing practice at personal, collective, and social levels, and how its evocative material form, shaped and was shaped by the practice of remembrance. This argument is theoretically informed by a wide range of scholarship pertaining the interactions between objects and persons. Katharine A. Craik's *Reading Sensations in Early Modern England* explores corporeal experiences aroused by literary practices. Craik reveals the multiple roles literary works have played in stimulating readers' minds and bodies, healing and appeasing readers, provoking sensations, and seducing men into certain "states of physical and emotional arousal."<sup>410</sup> Although the literary samples used in this book are mainly from the seventeenth century England, Craik's concerns about bodily engagement in the process of reading can also shed light on my inquiry into handscrolls and their audience.

Moreover, the anthropological approach toward "social biography of things" has also been a source of inspiration for my project. Igor Kopytoff calls attention to the reciprocal relationship between human agency and object, even though his article seems partial towards the role of individuals and systems that have invested meanings and value to material things.<sup>411</sup> Based on Kopytoff's inquiry into the trajectories of commodification, manipulation and signification of objects, Alfred Gell develops the category "instrumentality" and emphasizes the impact of things on their creators, audience, and the

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<sup>410</sup> Katharine A. Craik, *Reading Sensations in Early Modern England* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 7-10.

<sup>411</sup> Igor Kopytoff, "The cultural biography of things: Commoditization as process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Arjun Appadurai, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64-94.

social contexts. Gell suggests a more active model for cultural biographies of objects, in which an object's agency is embodied in and negotiated through its interaction with "people who gaze upon it."<sup>412</sup> Seen in this light, regardless of whether a handscroll was created with identifiable meaning and function *in situ*, it possesses "mediate social agency" and would continually influence its viewers' and collectors' action and thoughts.<sup>413</sup>

A series of empirical studies collected in *Interacting with Objects* offers deeper insight into the recursive relationship between things and their contexts, namely, "how objects are constitutive of and constituted through interaction."<sup>414</sup> My research on viewing handscroll is indebted to the articles in the second section of this book, "Participating and Involving," which takes objects as "situated resources" that people use to interact with others.<sup>415</sup> These articles illustrate the multi-faceted role of objects in the social world during the practices of sharing, cultivating, and organizing, all of which provide crucial analytical foundations upon which I build my discussion of the reception of handscrolls in Ming China. Within the social network that was woven through the circulation of a handscroll, creators, connoisseurs, and dealers existed on "equal footing" as the handscroll itself. They served as "actants," connecting each other in flux and forming what was termed by Bruno Latour as "actor-network."<sup>416</sup> The practice of viewing handscroll is one of the essential ways that "actants," people or objects, make sense of the nexus between them. Handscrolls were created materially, socially and historically.

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<sup>412</sup> Christopher Y Tilley, *Handbook of Material Culture* (London: SAGE, 2006), 76.

<sup>413</sup> Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: A New Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>414</sup> Maurice Nevile et al, ed., *Interacting with Objects: Language, Materiality and Social Activity* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014), 4.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

<sup>416</sup> Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1-17.

## Bodily Engagement with Handscrolls

Compared to leafing through an album or simply gazing upon a hanging scroll, “unfolding” a handscroll entails a great deal of physical interaction between the work and its audience. This is mainly determined by handscroll’s peculiar structural and material features.

The small size and soft backing make the handscroll an object that can be easily handled by viewers. The height of most handscrolls is less than one and a half feet, approximately forty-five centimeters. Some poetry handscrolls, which were originally executed on letter paper (*jianzhi* 箋紙), are slightly wider than the short side of letter paper, ranging from twenty to twenty-five centimeters. Aside from being viewed on a table, it can also be held in hands, resting on the viewer’s knees. The backing material of handscrolls, usually two or three layers of rice paper, appear thin, soft, and flexible. The width of the exposed section can be easily adjusted by the viewer’s hands according to the size and condition of the support.<sup>417</sup> Unlike an album, the handscroll is much more portable and adaptable to viewing conditions. Leaves in an album are mounted on stiff and unwieldy paper backing of fixed size and are linked to each other with glued thin paper. During the Ming dynasty, literati and mounting craftsmen strongly believed that albums should be characterized by a “heavy and solid texture” (*houshi* 厚实).<sup>418</sup> Such a physical feature, to a large degree, prevented albums from being carried or transported about. As is shown in

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<sup>417</sup> Xie Huan 謝環, *Elegant Gathering in Apricot Garden* 杏園雅集, circa 1437, ink and color on silk, handscroll, image: 37.1 x 243.2 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

<sup>418</sup> Zhou Jiazhou 周嘉胄 (1582- after 1658), “Ceye” 冊葉, in *Zhuanghuang zhi tushuo* 裝潢志圖說 (Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 2003). 44.

pictorial works depicting elegant gatherings, albums are always displayed statically on tables, at a distance from their audience.

Unlike viewing a hanging scroll or an album displayed on the table, a beholder of handscroll has to control the content and pace of viewing with his or her own hands.<sup>419</sup> The paper or silk sections of a handscroll are mounted right to left on unfolding paper backing. One cannot reach a section in a long handscroll without unrolling the part on its right side. Generally, a viewer would expose only one arm's length from the roller on the scroll's left and "transfer the excess to a loose roll temporarily maintained around the stretcher on the right."<sup>420</sup> After viewing, the viewer must repeat the action in reverse order, namely, to roll back the scroll to the beginning section. As Wu Hung points out, such a rounding-off procedure allows the spectator a "reversed" reading and "to review some details of specific interest."<sup>421</sup> However, the viewer of an album is free from the mechanical toil of rolling and unrolling, and therefore has less bodily engagement with it, because sections of an album are folded in accordion style and one can easily reach the desired section by opening it as a book (see figure 5.2).

In contrast to handscrolls, hanging scrolls require limited physical interaction between viewer and object. Being suspended on walls or hanging atop vertical poles held by servants, hanging scrolls demand distance from their audience. Moreover, most hanging scrolls, like wall paintings for decorative purpose, expose all contents at once when on display.<sup>422</sup> The

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<sup>419</sup> Wu Hung, *The Double Screen: Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 61.

<sup>420</sup> Jerome Silbergeld, *Chinese Painting Style: Media, Methods, and Principles of Form* (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1997), 13.

<sup>421</sup> Wu Hung, *The Double Screen*, 58.

<sup>422</sup> Exceptions exist in some hanging scrolls of excessive length, which may unacceptably exceed the space of exposition. Some sections close to the roller would be rolled up and rested on a table beneath the scroll.



vision of the audience is by no means determined by the hands that hold the stretchers to unfold the scroll. Seen in this light, handscrolls require more intimate engagement from its audience compared to hanging scrolls and albums.

Owing to the inevitable corporeal involvement, the viewing experience is not merely about sight, but also touch and even smell.<sup>423</sup> Thus, a rich vocabulary has been created by viewers in which the overall visual experience is characterized by various bodily engagement with the scroll, such as holding (*chi* 持 or *ba* 把), unfolding (*zhan* 展 or *pi* 披), fondling (*wan* 玩), caressing (*fu* 撫), and so forth. Examples can be found everywhere in collections of colophon writings. For instance, in Zhu Cunli's 朱存理 (1444-1513) *Shanhu wang* 珊瑚網, an annotated catalogue of calligraphy paintings that Zhu had viewed, the phrase “unfolding and find pleasure in” (*zhanwan* 展玩) appears more than fifty times.<sup>424</sup>

As an intimate artistic object, the handscroll's sensorial qualities can be perceived not just at the moment when it is being unfolded in front of the viewer; a rolled-up handscroll in cylindrical shape also has unique visual and tactile appeal. Generally, the process of making handscrolls is more involved and intricate than that of albums and hanging scrolls. The selection of materials for handscrolls' ribbons, toggles, and protective wrappers have been emphasized or even carefully systematized in various manuals about mounting techniques.<sup>425</sup> It is expected that “when you but take the scroll, thus equipped with various

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<sup>423</sup> The analysis was inspired by Elizabeth Edwards' article “Photographs as Objects of Memory” in which she points out the multi-sensual quality of photograph. See *Material Memories*, Marius Kwint et al., eds., (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1999), 221–36.

<sup>424</sup> See Zhu Cunli 朱存理 (1444-1513), *Zhaoshi tiawang shanhu* 趙氏鐵網珊瑚, in *Siku quanshu* edition, vol.818.

<sup>425</sup> See *Shuhua zhuanghuang jiyi jishi* 書畫裝演技藝輯釋, Du Zixiong 杜子熊 et al., eds., (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1993), 141-174; Zhou Jiazhou, “Shoujuan” 手卷 in *Zhuanghuang*

elegant decorations in your hand, heart and eye shall be delighted by its pure beauty, even before you have unrolled it.” 種種精飾，才一入手，不待展賞，其潔緻璀璨已爽心目矣。<sup>426</sup> The “delicate accessories” can be well illustrated by the handscroll painting *Returning boat on snowy river* 雪江歸棹圖。<sup>427</sup> As is mentioned in a piece of attached colophon, Zhu Yu 朱煜, the owner of the scroll, made the toggle with white jade, the wrapper with classical brocade, and mounted the leading frontispieces with embroidered tapestry. While the exquisite and luxurious decorative parts were ascribed to Zhu’s fondness for this particular handscroll, they also attest to a fascination with the handscroll as an aesthetic object.

Physical proximity to a handscroll also provides an olfactory experience to the viewer. The scent is a mix of dust, aged ink and pigment, paper fibers and so forth, or what’s called the “unusual fragrance” (*yixin* 異馨) by Tu Long 屠隆 (1543-1605) in his famous book on the art of living, *Kaopan yushi* 考槃餘事。<sup>428</sup> Some discerning connoisseurs were believed to have been capable of authenticating paintings by smell. As is recorded in a piece of jotting by a Qing scholar:

The chancellor [Lu] claimed that when he viewed calligraphy pieces and paintings, even at midnight in a dark place, he could tell the authentic one from the fake by sniffing their scents or stroking the wefts and warps of their textile backgrounds.

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*zhi tushuo*, 41-42.

<sup>426</sup> The text is translated by R. H. van Gulik. See *Chinese Pictorial Art*, 304.

<sup>427</sup> see Zhao Jie 趙佶, *Returning boat on snowy river* 雪江歸棹圖, handscroll, ink on silk, 30.3x190.8cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.

<sup>428</sup> The original text reads: “There is a kind of unusual fragrance emitted from something other than paper and ink.” 且有一種異馨發自紙墨之外。Tu Long 屠隆 (1543-1605), *Kaopan yushi* 考槃餘事, in *Congshu jicheng xinbian* 叢書集成新編, vol. 50 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chubanshe, 2008), 326.

太宰自謂看字畫，雖深夜黑暗處，聞其氣味，摹其經絹，即知真贋。<sup>429</sup>

The “chancellor” refers to Lu Zhi 陆治 (1496-1576), a scholar-official and famous collector living in Suzhou. Although the anecdotal quality of this piece of record may cast doubt on its truth—even Lu himself admitted that “discerning painting in dark night” seems exaggerated—it is nevertheless reasonable to expect that an experienced connoisseur would still be a good judge of art by relying on senses other than sight.<sup>430</sup> As a handscroll ages, the original materials, such as ink and starch glue, inevitably endure external elements like air, humidity, excretions from human skin, and come to smell of accumulated dust, mold, decaying fibers of mounting textile and so on.<sup>431</sup> Such a “scent of pastness” constructs an olfactory link between the audience and the bygone days.<sup>432</sup>

Sometimes, the viewing process can be influenced by the scent of the handscroll itself in combination with other deliberately chosen objects. When Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301-1374) viewed a handscroll calligraphy specimen created by Huaisu 懷素 (725-785), he intentionally placed a branch of sweet osmanthus on his table: “The fragrance is strong. Unfolding this handscroll, [I] had pleasure with it for a long time, as if I had been outside of the life of care” 香氣鬱然，展玩此卷久之，如在外也。<sup>433</sup> Ni intentionally

<sup>429</sup> Ruan Kuisheng 阮葵生 (1727-1789), *Chayu kehua* 茶餘客話, *juan* 17 (Unknown publisher, 1888, Beijing University Library). 5b-6a.

<sup>430</sup> 夜無燈火分明在，此語雖誇理未奇。 “Lunhua jueju” 論畫絕句, *ibid.*

<sup>431</sup> See Xie Zhiliu 謝稚柳 *Zhongguo shuhua jianding* 中國書畫鑒定 (Beijing: Zhongguo chubanshituan, 2010), 32-33. Tu Long’s 屠隆 discussion about fake painting produced in Suzhou also reveals that smell has been taken as one of the sensorial qualities of old paintings 以草烟末香烟薰之火氣逼脆本質用和糊若古帖嗅味全無一毫新狀入手多不能破, See Tu Long, *Kaopan yushi*, 326.

<sup>432</sup> Some manuals about mounting technique also mention the scent of handscroll when talking about the selection of materials used for stretcher and decorative component. See *Kaopan yushi* 考槃餘事 and “Anzhou” 安軸, “Zhoupin” 軸品 in *Zhuanghuang zhi tushuo*, 31, 58-89

<sup>433</sup> See Ni Zan 倪瓚, “Ti Tang Huaisu jiukuang tie” 題唐懷素酒狂帖, in *Qingmi ge quanji* 清閨閣全集, *juan* 9, in *Siku quanshu*, vol. 1220, 298.

mentioned that the scroll was viewed at his studio, Hall of Ploughing and Fishing (*Gengyu xuan* 耕漁軒). The reclusive connotation of the studio's name conforms with the symbolic meaning of sweet osmanthus, namely, the moral merit of recluse and retreat from officialdom.<sup>434</sup> In the viewing space that was textually constructed by Ni's colophon, the reception of the handscroll was redirected by this particular "fragrance," shifting from an aesthetically pleasing event to an activity manifesting personal thoughts and socio-cultural attitude.

Given that intensive haptic impulses are involved in the practice of viewing handscrolls, it is no accident that some preparatory exercises, such as burning incense and ablution, were prescribed to viewers prior to the unrolling of handscrolls. The most common of these prerequisites is the washing of hands (*jingshou* 淨手 or *guanshou* 盥手). These practices were originally adopted as protective measures to keep artworks from becoming stained. As is suggested by Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠 (c. 815- c. 877), the author of China's first art historical book, calligraphy specimens should never be displayed in front of people who are eating, drinking, having a runny nose or unwashed hands.<sup>435</sup> However, the practices of body purification have been endowed with more cultural meanings and ritual significance. On the New Year's Day of 1569, Wen Peng 文彭 (1498-1573), Wen Zhengming's first son, got a chance to look at a handscroll executed in the Tang dynasty. He inscribed on the endpaper:

Burning incense and washing my hands, [I] viewed it with caution. Wen Peng,

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<sup>434</sup> The symbolic meaning of sweet osmanthus can date back to the poem "Zhao yinshi" 招隱士 in *The Songs of Chu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 210-13.

<sup>435</sup> The text reads: 正飡飲唾涕不洗手並不可觀書畫。Quoted in *Tuhua kao* 圖畫考, *juan* 7, in *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu* 中國書畫全書, ed. Lu Shengfu 盧聖輔, vol. 2 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, ), 841.

Shoucheng recorded. Due to the restriction of entertainment on this day, [we] could not celebrate the festival. By the bright windows and a clean desk, [I] unrolled and played with the handscroll several times. It is a great pleasure.

焚香盥手謹觀文彭壽承甫記是日有禁不得賀節明牕淨几展玩數日甚樂。<sup>436</sup>

A pair of ritualistic acts preceded Wen's viewing practice in order to show respect for this time-honored artwork. The highlighted details about the surroundings, such as the window and the desk, imply that ritual purification also applied to the site of viewing. The unmistakable reverence conveyed in this description underscores how preparations for viewing, from the body of the viewer to the immediate environment—are imbued with ritual significance.

Similar cases can be found in myriad colophons or inscriptions attached to handscrolls. Ablutions are not limited to the washing of hands but also includes bathing (*mu* 沐), which can at times accompany fasting (*zhai* 齋) as well. For instance, Shen Zhou 沈周 had been longing to see Mi Youren's 米友仁 (1074-1153) handscroll painting *Landscape of River Xiaoxiang* for several decades. When he was seventy-five years old and lost all expectation of viewing it personally, one of his friends brought the painting to him. Shen paid religious attention to the moment when he encountered the scroll, which, according to Shen's colophon, was no less miraculous than witnessing the flight of a

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<sup>436</sup> See "Tang Feng Chengsu linben Yueyilun" 唐馮承素臨本樂毅論, in Yu Fengqing 郁逢慶, eds. and comp., *Shuhua tiba ji* 書畫題跋記, *juan 3*, *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 816, 835-36. 焚香盥手謹觀文彭壽承甫記。是日有禁不得賀節明牕淨几展玩數日甚樂。 see "Tang Feng Chengsu linben Yueyilun" 唐馮承素臨本樂毅論, in *Shuhua tiba ji* 書畫題跋記, *juan 3*, *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 816, 636.

phoenix.<sup>437</sup> He prepared himself by “performing ablutions twice” 為之重沐者再 before unrolling the scroll. The cleaning of his body was depicted an essential part of the etiquette that imbued the artwork with symbolic significance, as a “mythologized” object worshiped by Suzhou literati.

It is noteworthy that the depiction of bodily engagement falls within a certain repertoire of similar stories told by handscroll viewers. The terms, plots, and narrative grammar of these stories bear a striking resemblance to each other and to their counterparts in previous dynasties. For the lack of substantial evidence, it is hard to say whether these plots could be read as records or recollections of real events or a common literary formula representing the process of viewing. However, what matters is why the process is represented in this way. When talking about the representation of reality, Hayden White argues that “events do not take the form of a story naturally.” Events derive their particular meaning and significance from the specific narrative form established by narrators. Seen in this light, we can imagine a long historical process in which the fragmentary sensorial experiences were assembled and made coherent through narrativized encounters with handscrolls, as links in the chain of what White famously termed “emplotment.”<sup>438</sup> An ordinary event of viewing could be constructed into a story passes from generation to generation through the repeatable bodily engagement by later viewers. The texts of the stories serve as both the “media of remembrance” and “the object of recollection.”<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> 今七十五年矣。意餘生與此圖斷為欠緣，亦歎仲孚忍為拂人意事。茲廷貴忽爾送至，猶景星鳳凰為之薰沐者再得一快睹。“Mi Youren xiaoxiang qiguan juan” 米友仁瀟湘奇觀卷, See Wang Keyu 汪珂玉, *Shanhu wang* 珊瑚網, in *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 818, 439.

<sup>438</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 10-11.

<sup>439</sup> Astrid Erll et al., eds, *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 349-50.

The accounts of manual, visual, and even olfactory experience give voice to the physical aspect of handscroll as an object of memory. The handscroll engages with the body, evoke memories, and structures the past in a comprehensive manner. It is more than a sum of its parts, such as texts, images, and decorative ensembles. Rather, all these components work synergistically, forming the handscroll's unique materiality. In the following section, I will continue to investigate the intricate relationship between the materiality of handscroll, the act of viewing, and the form of remembrance.

### **The Interactional Ecology of Handscroll Viewing**

The perception of a handscroll is regulated by the physical circumstances in which the viewing practice takes place. The circumstances include but are not limited to location, season, temperature, and even different types of light. All of these factors can affect the viewing process, regulate audience's behavior, and shape interpretation at different levels. This section aims to reveal how these environmental factors were represented as an essential part of the viewing experience, and how details about material settings could serve as semiotic resources to elicit emotional response, to strengthen collective memory, and to augment shared taste or identity.

There is a huge number of inscriptions and colophons documenting both acts of viewing and the circumstances, which are preserved either on the surface of artistic works or in various types of collections edited officially or personally. However, it would be naive to inflate literary representations of settings with the actual circumstances. Even though details about locale and occasion always appear as part of viewer-signatures, which are often taken as evidence of faithful records of the contexts of creation, it is also important

to remember that such details can be altered or embellished for various reasons. As has been discussed previously, the surface of artworks is not always the physical support of those poetic or prose compositions. Taking the authenticity of environmental details in colophons for granted may hamper our attempt to understand what the inscribers intended to express through particular literary configurations.

Depictions of physical surroundings in these writings are largely formulaic and can be repeated in artworks of various forms and periods. The handscroll, owing to its theoretically unlimited endpaper, can accommodate more inscriptions than other formats such as the album or hanging scroll, and therefore can include more environmental details about viewing contexts. The most common formula is a combination of temporal and spatial information which spreads vertically in a single line following or paralleling the signature of the viewer. For instance, “Ni Zan viewed [the scroll] on the twenty-first day of the eighth month, at Plowing and Fishing Hall” 倪瓚八月二十一日观于耕渔轩。<sup>440</sup>

In contrast to this simple formula, some colophons render the context of appreciation in more complicated ways. Being part of the main body of inscribed texts, accounts of viewers’ surroundings cover copious details from various perspectives. Sometimes, the deliberate selection of factors, such as season, weather, and special occasion of viewing also resonate with the regulation in some compendia of knowledge about literati’s art of living. In other words, the colophon writers can situate their viewing practice into a moment that is meaningful and recognizable at least within the coterie of cultural elites. Both the object and the practice of viewing can be shaped, redefined, and

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<sup>440</sup> See Ni Zan 倪瓚, “Ti Tang Huaishu jiukuang tie” 题唐懷素酒狂帖, in *Qingmi ge quanji* 清閤閣全集, *juan* 9, in *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 1220, 298.



made sense of within the literarily constructed space.

Taking the framework of interactional ecology as a theoretical departure point, my analysis in this section tries to transcend the “stimulus-response” mode in dealing with the relationship between context and viewing activity. Early studies concerning material culture and objects’ agency investigate how people act through objects. The objects are endowed with personhood. They can produce effects with their specific features and contribution.<sup>441</sup> However, interactional ecology tends to depict a more complicated picture of how objects function in the social milieu. According to Maurice Nevile, objects are entangled with participants of interaction through series of practice, their significance can be achieved through “participants’ pointing, referencing, naming and touching.” Meanwhile, they can also “manage interactional order” and “augment communication” in various settings of social life.<sup>442</sup> In brief, interactional ecology of objects illuminates how objects feature dynamically in a network that is fabricated by discourse, practice, agents, and surrounding environment.

A good example of this point can be found in a series of colophons written by Song Ke 宋克 (1327-1387), a Suzhou poet and calligrapher, in celebration of regaining a handscroll that has been lost for decades. Instead of showcasing its artistic merits, he draws the audience’s attention to the physical context of handling the handscroll: “...Sometimes when the window is bright and the desk clean, with brush and paper of excellent quality, [I] unroll the scroll and make a shadowy copy. It is the most pleasurable thing under heaven” 或窗明几净，纸笔精佳，展玩一临，实天下之至乐也。From an ambient vision, the

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<sup>441</sup> Janet Hoskins, “Agency, Biography and Objects”, in László Munteán, et al., eds., *Materializing Memory in Art and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 76.

<sup>442</sup> Maurice Nevile et al., *Interacting with Objects: Language, Materiality, and Social Activity*. (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014), 15-17.

handscroll, as an object, anchors the physical surroundings as well as the body of its viewer, without itself being elaborated on. On a rudimentary level, the significance and value of the handscroll are realized through the viewer's idiosyncratic interaction with it. More complex, however, is the way in which the handscroll relinquishes its status as the focal point of literary representation, and invites, instead, narrativization of all that surrounds it. In so doing, the object in question plays an active role in shaping and constituting the "material and spatial circumstances of social interaction."<sup>443</sup>

Seen in this light, even though the textual history of handscrolls cannot be understood as absolute true records of viewing activities, their narrative capacity, operating on the level of "emplotment," certainly functions to continuously construct material and symbolic relationships between the handscroll (object), the viewer, and their surroundings. The next section will examine several kinds of physical environments as they are rendered in colophons, ranging from private studios to cities where inscribers or collectors live. Of particular interest to my study is how personal experience within situated surroundings was connected to a larger course of temporal and spatial interactions, and finally became acts and memories that could be shared collectively.

### **Fashioning the Viewing Experience as a Spectacle**

Viewing handscrolls, as a visual motif, has received a considerable amount of artistic treatments and scholarly attention. Most paintings bearing this motif are created in the theme of elegant gathering (*yaji* 雅集). In these paintings, the scene of handscroll viewing is often juxtaposed with other scenes of tasteful amusement, and almost always rendered

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<sup>443</sup> Maurice Nevile, "On the Interactional Ecology of Objects," in *Interacting with Objects*, 12.

in a heavily formulaic way: one is holding a scroll in his lap or on a flat table while several friends sit or stand beside the holder. Sometimes the scroll is held by two viewers, and the number of bystanders can be altered according to the composition of the whole image. Such scenes are also represented in literary works with high frequency. Not only do poems, letters, and diaries offer direct accounts of collective viewing practice, signatures and inscriptions (*tikuan* 題款) on endpaper of artworks also attest to the social nature of appreciation. Inscriptions of this kind are always recognizable with characteristic terms such as “view together with...” (*tongguan* 同觀).

Among scholarly approaches toward collective viewing practice, the cultural anthropological perspective stands out as the most widely accepted. Scholars try to construct a social network on the basis of textual evidence from artworks or collections of inscriptions,<sup>444</sup> even though they also notice that the handscroll, as a “private medium of visual art,” may preclude completely public viewing due to its physical features.<sup>445</sup> However, any easy contrast between collective practice and private appreciation of handscrolls would be misleading. Individual experience can be addressed in stylized form, which is informed by perceived convention and is therefore legible to the reading public. In a similar way, collaborative creations of viewing records by no means disqualify claims of subjectivity and individuality. Take, for instance, the aforementioned poetry handscroll *Painting of Herb Hut* 藥草山房圖. When Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558-1639), a collector several decades apart from the creators, composed a colophon to document his viewing

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<sup>444</sup> Representative works include Craig Clunas, *Elegant Debts: The Social Art of Wen Zhengming, 1470-1559* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004); Yu Christina Yu, *Building a Community through Painting: Fourteenth Century Chinese Scholars* (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2011); Celia Carrington Riely, *Tung Ch'i-Ch'ang's Life (1555-1636): The Interplay of Politics and Art* (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1996).

<sup>445</sup> Wu Hung, *The Double Screen*, 61.

experience, his literary imagination was still dominated by the shared memory about Wen Zhengming and his time: “Unrolling [the scroll], I reminisce about the peaceful sceneries in the era of elegance and order.” 批翫想見肅廟時太平風物之盛。<sup>446</sup> On the endpaper of another handscroll, Fan Zhongyan’s 范仲淹 *Eulogy for Boyi* 伯夷頌,<sup>447</sup> however, attached colophons show a diverse range of opinions even though the theme of Fan’s work is unanimously accepted as loyalism and integrity. As shown by these two counterexamples, we need a different theoretical framework to transcend the dichotomy between public and private, individual and group, when delving into the interaction between objects, viewers, and their material surroundings.<sup>448</sup>

The previous section demonstrates the ways in which handscrolls can be touched, viewed, and even smelled as objects with multi-sensorial features. It is noteworthy that the audience’s sensorial perception is no less affected by the physical environments than by the objects themselves. A great number of records about viewing practice shows that interactions with physical surroundings condition, structure, and give meaning to visual, tactile, and olfactory experiences. Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 once executed a handscroll painting when living in seclusion in Suzhou, in order to praise a famous local personage. The painting depicts a snowy day on which the central figure, Yuan An 袁安, would rather suffer a life of cold and hunger than bother other people to come to his rescue. Guo Linsun 郭麟孫 (fl.1279), one of Zhao’s friends, obtained this handscroll later. In his colophon,

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<sup>446</sup> The term *sumiao* 肅廟, literally “solemn shrine,” refers to the period of time when the worship of Confucius shrine was regular activity, namely, an culturally prosperous era.

<sup>447</sup> The original work was destroyed in late Qing period. The surviving version is a rubbing copy which was made through 1794 to 1798. See *Yuti gaoyiyuan shibao* 御題高義園世寶, preface dated to 1798, album, ink on paper, 29.4x18 cm, Harvard Yenching Library.

<sup>448</sup> Mirka Rauniomaa and Trine Heinemann, “Organising the soundscape: Participants’ orientation to impending sound when turning on auditory objects in interaction,” *Interacting with Objects*, 146-68.

Guo strikes a stark contrast between the winter scene in the image and the actual season of his viewing: “Summer heat still rages in this fall, [but] I am swept by a gust of frigid air when unrolling the scroll. Is this feeling reminiscent of ‘millet rain’ and ‘white-headed raven?’” 秋暑猶熾，展卷寒氣襲人，體粟烏乎？ While Guo’s comments could be understood outwardly as acclaim for Zhao’s vivid depiction of snowy landscape, the rhetoric question nevertheless reveals his intention at a deeper level. The images of “rain” and “raven” allude to two miraculous scenes that originally appeared in *Shiji* and promoted through *Huainan zi*.<sup>449</sup> They conventionally refer to rare phenomena, such as the heyday of peace or the presence of a sage. Guo’s use of these two allusions not only dramatize the tension between his physical experience and the context, but also establish an analogous relationship between Yuan An, the figure featured in image, and sages of the past. As he sighs afterwards: “How few and far between are those [who are] as fond of moral life as Tongfu (Yuan An’s courtesy name).” 好修如通甫者何可多得。 Guo’s lament here strengthens his previous allusion and turns the subtle analogy between Yuan An and the sages into an overt expression.

Similar modes of expression regularly appear in the textual lives of other renowned works as well. The sensorial feelings could be guided by a multitude of factors such as a handscroll’s theme, creator, or past viewers. When Wang Zhideng 王稚登, a Suzhou literatus, unfolded a handscroll painting of bamboo one summer, he claimed that it was an image that could drive away extreme heat.<sup>450</sup> Zhang Yu’s 張雨 poetry handscroll, as a

<sup>449</sup> *Huainan zi* says there was a millet rain when Cangjie 倉頡 invented Chinese characters. See *Huainan honglie jijie* 淮南鴻烈集解, ed. Liu Wendian 劉文典 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 252.

<sup>450</sup> 是日新薺苦熱，觀此便覺涼思蕭瑟。 See Shen Zhou 沈周, *Replanting Bamboo* 移竹圖, handscroll, ink on paper, 24.5 x 98 cm, auctioned at Christies in Hong Kong, 2018.

surviving witness to late Yuan literati's elegant gatherings, received copious inscriptions from loyalists through the early years of the Ming dynasty. One inscriber wrote: "once [I] burn incense and unroll the scroll, a pure breeze comes out and fills me with awe. It soothes every hair and bone [in my body]." 焚香展卷清風凜然人毛骨頓爽。<sup>451</sup> The ceremonial treatment of the scroll invites a certain historical retrospection of the ink traces left behind by past viewers. The scroll itself is depicted as a pivotal prop in a rite of commemoration. "People who view the scroll should esteem the creators' exemplary refinement, and perfect their own moral personalities" 觀斯卷者當仰其清風素範益勵其德哉。<sup>452</sup>

In contrast to the concise accounts of the handscroll's sensorial effects, depictions of viewing context sometimes evoke much more expansive and sprawling representations of time and space. A handscroll, when situated in a specific environment, not only stirs the senses of its viewer, but can also transcend the spatial boundary between the worlds within and without the scroll. Wang Fu 王紱 (1362-?), a Jiangsu painter venerated for his mastery of ink bamboo, was once invited to a viewing of the handscroll portrait of Deities of Five Stars (*wuxing jun* 五星君), a collaborative work by Qian Xuan 錢選 (1239-1299) and Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 in 1137.<sup>453</sup> Wang's eight-line regulated verse on the endpaper offers an interesting account of his viewing experience. Instead of depicting his own treatment and handling of the scroll, he concentrates on how the physical environment was rapidly and radically transformed by the action of unfolding:

How fortunate I am to have a look at [the scroll],

<sup>451</sup> The colophon on Zhang Yu's 張羽 *Poetry handscroll of Tower of Listening to Rain* 聽雨樓詩卷, see *Zhaoshi tiwang shanhu* 鐵網珊瑚, *juan* 15, *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 815, 763-69.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid.

<sup>453</sup> See "Qian Shunju's sketch of Deities of Five Stars with colophons" 錢舜舉白描五君詠圖. See *Shuhua tiba ji*, in *Siku quanshu*, vol. 13, 696-7.

It dazzles my eyes like a streak of lightning.  
 All across the sky, wind and rain moan with sorrow,  
 On the surrounding shelves, books fly about.  
 [I] hurriedly call Master Chen to cover up the scroll swiftly,  
 [I am] afraid that the portraited figures want to ascend to the cloudy skies.

余生何幸得一覽，耀我雙眸光似電。一天風雨聲淒淒，四壁圖書翻飛飛。忙呼  
 陳公急掩卷，形圖恐欲昇霄漢<sup>454</sup>

It is rather doubtful that the dramatic change of weather in this poem is anything other than literary exaggeration. But Wang Fu's intentions are clear: to establish a causal relationship between the act of unrolling and the extreme elements suddenly bearing down on the studio, even though the casualty hinges on a near hallucination.

Wang's poem follows a conventional representational formula in narrating supernatural encounters, which often foreshadow or are accompanied by unnatural weather phenomena such as fierce winds and startling thunder. We may also recall fictional accounts of fabulous artistic skills, in which legendary painters or sculptors are presented as being capable of literally bringing their works to life. In these types of stories, works or art are intentionally left unfinished, missing one last brush stroke or a final chisel, in order to keep the images or sculptures in a state of tranquility, whether on paper, walls, or wooden boards. One of the earliest versions of this kind of narrative is an anecdote in *Records of Renowned Paintings in Past Dynasties* 歷代名畫記, about a mural painter named Zhang

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<sup>454</sup> Ibid.

Sengyou 張僧繇. At the behest of his patrons, Zhang reluctantly added eyes to the dragons he had painted for a temple, and “instantly, thunder and lightning ripped through walls. Two dragons mounted the clouds and flew into the sky” 須臾雷電破壁，兩龍乘雲騰去上天。<sup>455</sup>

This well-known body of fictional accounts plays with notions of truth and illusion, blurring the boundary between subjective experience and objective reality. In Wang’s poem, the dramatic episode of viewing is rather theatrical. The rapid action sequence from unrolling to covering up is set in a space circumscribed by bookshelves on all four sides, thus imitating the space of a theatrical stage.<sup>456</sup> The scroll becomes intimately, even volatily linked to its physical surroundings, no longer a delicate object to be handled in the tranquil studio. This intensely contingent relationship is further dramatized through reference to a theatrical stage, thus rendering temporal and spatial interactions between the scroll and its environment even more salient to Wang’s readers.

Owing to character limits for a single piece of colophon, depictions of viewing experience or environmental details are necessarily incomplete.<sup>457</sup> The fragmentary nature of colophon writing is counterbalanced by the particularities of displaying the handscroll, namely, the juxtaposition of all textual and visual information on a single surface. Fragmented experience, whether sensorial or textual, are temporally and spatially flattened

<sup>455</sup> “Lidai minghua ji” 歷代名畫記, rpt in *Huaxuewenxian jicheng* 畫學文獻集成, 1005.

<sup>456</sup> The analysis of theatrical elements in this poem is inspired by *Theatricality in Early Modern Arts and Architecture*. 4, 12-13.

<sup>457</sup> Even though there is no shortage of well-organized texts in prose or poetic genres on the endpaper of celebrated handscrolls, most of them are produced by writers of great fame or achievement comparable to the reputation of the scroll. For instance, leading figures in literati circles such as Wu Kuan or Wen Zhengming are allowed to write down their evidential studies or artistic judgment at unrestrained lengths, while common viewers, being conscious of their status and knowledge of connoisseurship, may hold back their creative impulses.



out by the uniformity of the presentational layer, and simultaneously unevenly distributed and thematically unified.

The temporality mentioned here does not necessarily refer to a chronological sequence in which textual accumulation takes place on the surface of a handscroll. The temporal ordering of colophons hardly adheres to any spatial logic because inscribers often squeeze their works into previously existing texts, while mounting craftsmen readily rearrange the order of endpaper through remounting. Likewise, the spatial configuration of a handscroll is also unstable and protean. Therefore, the “presentational mode” of the handscroll should be understood, temporally, spatially, and materially, in terms of the very moment when the handscroll it is unfolded in front of audience.

The handscroll’s particular presentational mode shapes the records of viewing practice into an “intelligible pattern with a beginning, middle and end,”<sup>458</sup> and provides them with relatively unified emotional or cultural coherence. Environmental details also play into such a slow-paced montage of snapshots of either the viewers’ real life or the handscrolls’ cultural life. On the one hand, the sites of viewing practice, as they are depicted in colophons, “provide a fixed point of reference” on which personal and cultural memories are anchored. On the other hand, the evanescent feelings and experiences are objectified in a concrete form, becoming more accessible and evocable, as well as staged for future recollection. This point can be well illustrated by a handscroll painting named “Pleasant Inclinations” (*lezhi tu* 樂志圖),<sup>459</sup> on which one of its owners, Gao Shiqi 高士奇 (1645-

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<sup>458</sup> Ann Rigney, “Dynamics of Remembrance: Texts Between Monumentality and Morphing,” Erll, A., Nünning, A., and Young, S. ed., *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. New York: De Gruyter, 2008. 347.

<sup>459</sup> Wang Hui 王翬, “Pleasant Inclinations” 樂志圖, ink and color on silk, 21x198 cm, 1688, Capital Museum in Beijing.

1704), composed three pieces of colophon documenting his three encounters with the scroll. The scroll, as a memory object, interacts with the changing surroundings, which serve as metaphors for different stages in Gao's life.

Gao's colophons were directly written on the endpaper adjacent to the painting (See figure 5.3). The first one was penned on the occasion of the Double Three Festival in 1690.<sup>460</sup> Gao spills little ink on the content of the image except to provide basic information about the author and the title of the text that is visualized in the image. The information needed only six characters, "Zhong Changtong's 'Lezhi lun'" 仲長統樂志論. He pays more attention to the circumstances that give him impetus to unfold the scroll: "The weather is fine after a drizzly afternoon. Sitting in Bottle Studio, I supervise the servant planting flowers. I boil water from White Sand Spring and try the new Dragon Well tea" 晚雨初晴，坐瓶壚課童種花，烹白沙泉試龍井新茶. The picturesque setting is reminiscent of lines found in one of Su Shi's famous lyric poems: "Use new fire to boil new tea, [one should] enjoy wine and poetry in his prime of life" 且將新火試新茶 詩酒趁年華.<sup>461</sup> Gao retreated from official career several months prior and had just begun to enjoy the leisurely life of a recluse.<sup>462</sup> The scroll, at this juncture, functioned as no more than a canvas for him to "try his brush" (*shibi* 試筆).

More details about the viewing experience in 1690 appear in the subsequent colophon, which was created during Gao's second encounter with the handscroll in 1700.

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<sup>460</sup> April 11th, 1690

<sup>461</sup> Su Shi 蘇軾, "Wang Jiangnan" 望江南, in *Tangsong ci jianshang cidian* 唐宋词鉴赏辞典 (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1988), 322.

<sup>462</sup> Even though Gao was dismissed from official post due to fierce accusation from his colleagues in the winter of 1689, he still enjoyed the favor of Emperor Kangxi. It could be seen not only from Kangxi's letter and gifts to him in early 1690s, but also from his return to the political stage in 1693.

The second piece is governed by a reminiscent tone. Gao expresses elegiac longing for his wife, the co-viewer of the handscroll: “Ten years passed unconsciously since I wrote this. At that time, my wife flattened paper and grounded ink cake [for me]. I lived alone in tranquil solitude since the year of *renshen* (1692) ... Zhuchuang Shiqi writes when facing lotus flower” 書此忽忽十年。是時山荊拂紙磨墨，自壬申來獨居岑寂，論中語未能行之聊展舊藏消永日耳。庚辰六月十四日，竹窗士奇對荷花書。<sup>463</sup> Especially noteworthy is Gao’s emphasis on the location of viewing practice. Despite of the rich symbolic meaning of the lotus, a time-honored literary motif, we can still associate this structured viewing context with Gao’s mourning of his wife. A parallel text can be found in Gao’s self-edited compendium of art collection *Spending Summer in River Village* [insert characters]. The poetic line alludes the love story between Xishi and King of Wu, “Xishi was in sick for three months, several times [the king] inquired how long the lotus flower grows.” 西施一病經三月，數問荷花幾許長。The lotus has been neglected for a long time until the king urgently needs it to please his diseased concubine. The image of the lotus flower, therefore, echoes the universalized regret expressed in Gao’s record of viewing experience. The scroll, as a memory object, also derives its new meaning from the “narrativizing act of remembrance.”<sup>464</sup>

Less than six months later, Gao reopened this handscroll for the third time on the Minor Spring Festival of 1701.<sup>465</sup> The tone of his last piece of colophon appears more

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<sup>463</sup> Wang Hui 王翬, *Pleasant Inclinations* 樂志圖, 1688, handscroll, ink and color on silk, 21x198 cm, Capital Museum in Beijing.

<sup>464</sup> “Dynamics of Remembrance: Texts Between Monumentality and Morphing,” Astrid Erll et al., eds., *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 347.

<sup>465</sup> 辛巳十二月廿四日 (1701).

depressed and somber because Gao lost his younger son the previous autumn. A shadow was cast over the whole family. Thus, previous writings on the scroll take on heavier emotional burdens since they bear witness to the loss of another member in Gao's family: "When I wrote this (the second colophon) in the sixth month of last year, the year of *gengchen*...my second son, sick though he was, still attended me around..." 去年庚辰六月題此時...次兒軒雖病尚日侍余側....<sup>466</sup>

The tragic pathos of this colophon is foregrounded by the raucous surrounding soundscape described in the ending sentence. Originally, Gao wrote "Neighboring families' sound of offering sacrifice to the god of kitchen is loud." 又記鄰家祀竈聲盛. However, he crossed two characters 聲盛 (literally, "abundance of sound"), adding a subject-predicate phrase, "fireworks are roaring" 爆竹甚盛. The whole sentence reads: "In addition, neighboring families are offering sacrifice to the god of kitchen, the sounds of fireworks are roaring." 又記鄰家祀竈, 爆竹甚盛。<sup>467</sup> Here, I am primarily concerned with the role that auditory effect plays in constructing the environment of viewing. Viewers of handscrolls could be influenced not only by their surroundings visually, olfactorily, and tactually, but also aurally. Noise from the neighbors' sacrificial activities contrasts sharply with the silence in Gao's studio, where he viewed the scroll with his son, and highlights feelings of despair and loneliness. The traces of his own ink and brush on the handscroll reminds Gao of his loss, while reflections on the passing of time are punctuated by the boisterous sounds of fireworks. The celebratory connotations of crackling fireworks (*baozhu* 爆竹) appear even more startling due to its indifference to the sufferings of the

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<sup>466</sup> Wang Hui, *Pleasant Inclinations* 樂志圖.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid.

listener. Gao Shiqi's last viewing of this handscroll is frozen in time through his multisensorial representation.

From this example, we gain a better understanding of how interactions between handscroll, the viewer, and the environment of viewing practice compel and structure recollections. Moreover, the temporal and spatial structures forged by the handscroll's presentational mode provide not only material, but also emotional conditions for remembrance.

### **Case Study 1: Mark the Month and the Year: The Handscroll as A Site of Memory**

The previous discussion reveals how the handscroll engages with the body of the viewer in many ways. As a multisensorial object, the handscroll is so versatile that can be used to mediate a wide range of memory practice. This chapter continues to work on the active relationship between viewers and handscrolls, with a special focus on how Suzhou literati's individual and collective memories were constructed through the particular materiality of the handscroll in the process of appreciation. It links beholders to the past and serve as a communicative bridge that facilitates dialogues and the exchange of memories among contemporaries and across generations.<sup>468</sup> On the one hand, a handscroll constitutes a dynamic context within which practice of remembering are evoked, performed, and documented. On the other hand, a handscroll can also be physically and symbolically shaped, and endowed with different meaning by the continuing living force of memory.

The following case studies focus on two series of examples to show what might be

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<sup>468</sup> Ann Rigney, "The Dynamics of Remembrance: Texts Between Monumentality and Morphing," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, eds Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 346-50.

accomplished by historicizing the experience of viewing handscrolls in mid-Ming Suzhou. As is mentioned before, the handscroll possesses distinctive capacity for accommodating ever-growing textual accretions, it therefore can function not only as a static memory object that triggers reminiscence, but also a particular “site” where multifarious acts of remembering take place. I hope in this section to unravel the handscroll’s particular ability of aggregation, memorialization, and commemoration, which were integral to Suzhou literati’s cultural life and informing their sociality.

The concept “sites of memory” developed from Pierre Nora’s theoretical framework about artifacts invested with collective memory and historical significance.<sup>469</sup> Such “sites” not only refer to places and objects which are defined by geographical borders or tangible forms, like a monument, but also signify events, symbols, practices, and expressions. As Jan Assmann and Jay Winter suggest, the concept of the “site” has been extended to many different contexts, rather than merely taking the form of actual locations. Therefore, a wide variety of artifacts can also be deemed as memory sites as long as they engage groups of people to collectively share “the knowledge...of the past on which a group’s sense of unity and individuality is based.”<sup>470</sup>

This definition is applicable to some handscrolls which demonstrate their particular ability to “encapsulate multifarious experience in a limited repertoire of figures,” and facilitating the exchange and transmission of memories.<sup>471</sup> The first case in this chapter is Wen Jia’s poetry handscroll *Mount Hui* (*huishan tu* 惠山圖) and the intensive viewing

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<sup>469</sup> Jay Winter, “Sites of Memory and the Shadow of War,” *Cultural Memory Studies*, 61-62

<sup>470</sup> Jan. Assmann, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” trans. John Czaplicka. *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 125-33.

<sup>471</sup> Ann Rigney, “Portable Monuments: Literature, Cultural Memory, and the Case of Jeanie Deans” *Poetics Today*, vol. 25, 2 (Summer 2004): 361-96; see also Rigney, *Cultural Memory Studies*, 346.

activities of the scroll throughout the sixteenth century.<sup>472</sup> The scroll was first executed to commemorate an outing in Wuxi but then transformed into a “site” with sentimental value and crystalized collective memory. Wen Jia and his friends have revisited the scroll five times since the year of *jiashen*, 1524. They recorded in detail their viewing experience, using the scroll as a mark which could make their time visible and to which they can anchor their memory. The second case is a landscape painting created by Mi Youren, *Dayao Village* (*dayao cun tu* 大姚村圖) and its imitated copy which was made by Shen Zhou after the loss of the original version.<sup>473</sup> As these two paintings gave rise to several waves of collective viewing and literary practice in Suzhou, the vicissitude of their cultural life, loss and return, are symbolically related to Suzhou’s history during the dynastic transition. The endpaper of this handscroll hence became a site for local elites to commemorate the past, to lament the dead, and to strengthen their collective sense of belonging and connection.<sup>474</sup>

My research will rely heavily on colophons that has been handwritten on the endpaper of handscrolls. A conventional idea about these textual accretions tends to understand them as the paratextual element centered around the mounted artwork, always referred to as *huaxin* (畫心, literally, “pictorial core”), which can be a painting or a calligraphic piece, or a combination of both. In a broad sense, all colophons are physically and thematically associated with the artwork to which they are attached. However, not all colophons are

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<sup>472</sup> Wen Jia 文嘉, et al. *Mount Hui* (*huishan tu* 惠山圖), 1524-1525, handscroll, ink on paper, painting: 23.8x101 cm, Shanghai Museum.

<sup>473</sup> The original copy was lost after the painting was confiscated by the Ming official Wang Jinchao 王進朝, but the owner of the scroll cut off the endpaper, and later assemble the colophons with Shen Zhou’s imitated copy. see *Shigutang shuhua huikao* 式古堂書畫匯考, *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 828, 810-12; vol. 829, 351-54.

<sup>474</sup> Harriet Shortt and Michał Izak. “Scarred Objects and Time Marks as Memory Anchors: The Significance of Scuffs and Stains in Organisational Life.” *Human Relations*, (July 2020). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726720938848>.

exclusively devoted to discussing the content and values of the artworks. For some colophon writers, the artwork itself functions merely as a lead-in with which they start off their accounts of personal experience, emotional state, or a wide assortment of memories. Meanwhile, these colophons would spur later generations of viewers to reflect on what had been recalled and to write down their own memories. Looking closely at these colophons, we may gain a glimpse into a “layered history of how people in the past referenced an even more distant past.”<sup>475</sup>

#### Case 1 Mark the Passage of Time: Appreciating Handscroll and

On the last day of the eighth month of 1524, Wen Jia traveled to Mount Hui in Wuxi, in company with a group of friends including Wang Xixuan 王西軒 (d. 1568), a literati painter from Zhejiang, Hua Yun 華雲 (1488-1560, *jinshi* 1531), Hua Dian 華電 (*juren* 1531), and Hua Yun’s three sons. The final destination of this tour is a scenic site in Mount Hui: the Bamboo Studio (*zhulu* 竹籬), the former dwelling of Wang Fu 王紱 (1362-1416), a Wuxi native and one of the most famous landscape painters in early Ming. In his days, Wang Fu formed a close friendship with members of the Hua family, such as Hua Xiyan 華希顏 (1313-1398) and his nephew Hua Jing’an 華景安 (1359-1429) who was Hua Yun’s great-grandfather. Hua Yun and Wen Jia arranged this trip to Wang’s studio in order to study his mural paintings.<sup>476</sup>

<sup>475</sup> Maria Theresia Starzmann and John R. Roby eds., *Excavating Memory: Sites of Remembering and Forgetting* (University Press of Florida, 2016), 3.

<sup>476</sup> The handscroll *Mount Hui* received scarce attention from researchers. Some catalogues of Ming paintings provide descriptive information about it. See Qiu Jiping 裘紀平, *Zhongguo chahua* 中國茶畫 (Hangzhou: Zhongguo sheying chubanshe, 2014), 115-16.



At the end of this outing, Wen Jia was asked to record it in verse and painting. On a horizontal scroll, he transcribed the linked-verse poems that his friends composed at the Bamboo Studio and a nearby temple.<sup>477</sup> One year later, Wen Jia finished an illustration for this scroll and sent it to Hua Yun,<sup>478</sup> who finally had Wen's manuscript and the illustration assembled and mounted into a handscroll. This work is now in the collection of Shanghai Museum and normally referred to as Painting of Mount Hui (*Huishan tu* 惠山圖) in agreement with the frontispiece that reads: "Lingering in Mount Hui" (*huishan you* 慧山遊),<sup>479</sup> although Wen Jia's signature suggests that the painting was no more than a supplementary element attached to the poetry scroll.

Before discussing the content of this handscroll, it is necessary to give a brief look at Hua Yun and his relationship with Suzhou literati. As one of the most time-honored families in Wuxi, the Hua family emerged since the Southern Song and reached its heyday in the Ming dynasty.<sup>480</sup> Across several generations from Chenghua to Wanli period, men of the Hua made a considerable fortune through their shrewd investments of farmland and became

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<sup>477</sup> Wen Jia signed his signature at the end of the transcribed poems as "[We] returned in the night of this day. I wrote [these poems] in the lamplight." 是夜歸燈下書。

<sup>478</sup> Wen Jia signed on the painting as "One day before the full moon night of the eleventh month, year of yiyou 1525, this supplementary painting [is finished] in the Ten Thousand Reed Aerophones Studio." 乙酉十一月望前一日補畫於萬笙軒。

<sup>479</sup> The frontispiece handwritten by Wen Peng reads, *huishan tu* 惠山圖. *Huishan* 惠山 and *huishan* 慧山 were exchangeable when referring to Mount Hui, the mount located two miles west of Wuxi county.

<sup>480</sup> Gao Panlong 高攀龍 praised the Hua family as the biggest family in the city he lived in, "other families do not bear comparison with it." 吾邑為華氏族最大，他族不得望焉。See Gao Panlong, "Huashi chongxiu zupu xu" 華氏重修族譜序, in *Zhongguo jiapu ziliao xuanbian* 中國家譜資料選編, vol. 2, eds. Chen Jiahua 陳建華 and Wang Heming 王鶴鳴 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2013), 304. Wang Shizhen also recounted in a piece of his jotting: "The Hua family is deemed as the most influential families in the East of the Yangtze River." 江表甲族推華氏 See Wang Shizhen 王世貞, *Yanzhou xugao*, juan 46, *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 1279, 606.

increasingly active in local literary and art circles.<sup>481</sup> Hua Xia 華夏 (1490-1563), a generous patron and connoisseur who was praised by his contemporaries as “The great eye in the East of the River” (*jiangdong juyan* 江東巨眼), constructed the True Appreciation Studio (*zhenshang zhai* 真賞齋) at home, amassing a huge collection of antique and art masterpiece in his lifetime. Among artists financially supported by Hua Xia is the talented calligrapher and painter, Wen Zhengming. Hua Yun, one generation younger than Hua Xia, passed the *jinshi* examination and once assumed a position as Secretary of the Ministry of Revenue (*hubu zhushi* 戶部主事), from which he derived a epithet, Hua *hubu* 華戶部. Surviving evidence from colophons, letters, and printed anthologies attest to the intimacy between Hua Xia, Hua Yun, Wen Zhengming and his two sons: Wen Jia and Wen Peng.<sup>482</sup> Besides the Wen family,

This handscroll is a rather obscure work compared to some well-known paintings that Wen Jia and his father Wen Zhengming executed for the Hua family, such as the handscroll named *Painting of The True Appreciation Studio* (*Zhenshang zhai tu* 真賞齋圖), an illustrated verse representing Hua Xia’s life and collection.<sup>483</sup> Wen Jia’s illustration sketches a typical scene of the elegant gathering: two literati are sitting outside a riverside cottage, with three servants standing by or preparing tea. The building and figures are painted in the style of line-drawing (*baimiao* 白描), while the trees and the riverbank are

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<sup>481</sup> Wang Zhaoyu 王照宇, “The Study on Wuxi Hua Family’s Collection of Ancient Calligraphy and Paintings” 奕世尚古：明中葉無錫華氏家族古書畫鑒藏研究 (Ph. D., diss., Zhongguo meishu xueyuan, 2019), 41-45, 92-100.

<sup>482</sup> For instance, Wen Zhengming et al., *Letters from Wen Zhengming and His Sons to the Hua Family* 文徵明父子致華氏家族信札, album, ink on paper, 19 leaves, 31x14 cm, Wuxi Museum. Craig Clunas also points out that Wen Zhengming always wrote congratulatory essays and epitaphs for the Huas at Hua Xia and Hua Yun’s request. See Clunas, *Elegant Debts*, 131-40.

<sup>483</sup> Wen Zhengming, *Zhenshangzhai tu* 真賞齋圖, 1549, handscroll, ink and color on paper, 36x107.8 cm, Shanghai Museum.

rendered with light ink wash, possibly under the influence of Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301-1374). Following the illustration are two linked-verse poems handwritten by Wen Jia in running script. The endpaper section consists of six colophons, five of which record Wen Jia's interactions with the scroll at the age of forty-four, fifty, fifty-one, fifty-seven, and sixty.

The earliest colophon on this handscroll was dated August 25, 1544, in which Wen Jia expresses his surprise on seeing the scroll that he executed about twenty-one years ago:

On the eighth day of the eighth month of the year *jiachen* during Jiajing's reign, I view this again at the Sunshine after Rain Studio. Twenty-one years have passed since the year of *jiashen* (1524). In retrospect, I feel embarrassed about my immature brushwork. Unexpectedly, Bu'an had it mounted into a scroll. How could he indulge a liking for me to such an extent! Bu'an asks me to rewrite on the endpaper of the scroll, which increase my remorse.

嘉靖甲辰八月八日重觀于光霽樓。計甲申抵今二十有一年矣，回視稚筆可愧焉。

補菴乃裝潢成卷，豈愛予而及此耶。補菴命余重識卷末是益予愧也 文嘉

From 1541 to 1544, Hua Yun was given a three-year leave to attend his mother at home. Although we have little information about the location of the Sunshine after Rain Studio, it is safe to infer that Wen Jia was asked to write this colophon when he paid a visit to Hua in Wuxi.<sup>484</sup>

A repetitive character in this colophon is *kui* 愧 which means “regret,” “remorse,” and “abashment.” Wen's narrative indicates that his abashment came from an unexpected favor: Hua Yun preserved his handwriting and painting from his youth, despite their

<sup>484</sup> More detailed information about Wen Jia and his patrons can be found in Alice R.M. Hyland's article: “Wen Chia and Suchou Literati,” in Chu-tsing Li, et al., eds. *Artists and Patrons: Some Social and Economic Aspects of Chinese Painting* (Lawrence, Kan.: University of Kansas Press, 1989), 127-38.

mediocrity and formulaic style. Considering the imperfect brushwork of his illustration and calligraphic manner, as is discussed before, the *kui* can be understood as the expression of Wen Jia's true feelings instead of the clichéd self-abasement that is common in obligatory compositions. Lurking beneath the abashment is the lament for the youth that is gone forever. Different from Hua Yun who succeeded in civil examination and gained a promotion to the Ministry of Revenue, Wen Jia had been struggling as a *gongsheng* 貢生 (the first class of *xiuca* 秀才) for many years. Given the widening gap in social status between them, the reminiscence of the old days they spent together, triggered by the viewing act, appears to be more frustrating and bitter.

Wen Jia's colophon is not a rare case of feeling embarrassed after encounters with one's own previous writings or paintings. In 1531, Wen Zhengming was commissioned to paint a handscroll portrait for his friend Yuan Bao 袁褒 (1499-1577).<sup>485</sup> It was modeled upon Zhao Mengfu's portrait of Yuan Yi 袁易 (1262-1306). One year later, however, Wen had the opportunity to view an authentic portrait by Zhao Mengfu. He was astonished by Zhao's "terse and aloof brushwork, restrained and elegant design." 筆力簡遠意匠高古, saying in his supplemental inscription: "I felt ashamed of my own banal dabbings." 始覺區區沉冗可媿也。<sup>486</sup>

Wen Zhengming's inscription implies that his embarrassment is due to his viewing experience and keen awareness of Zhao Mengfu's unmatched technique and brilliant

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<sup>485</sup> Wen Zhengming. *Yuan An Sleeping during the Great Snow* (*Yuan An woxue* 袁安臥雪), 1531, handscroll, ink and light color on paper, 27.3x78.1 cm, private collection, reprinted in Anne de Coursey Clapp, *Commemorative Landscape Painting in China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 105.

<sup>486</sup> The text is from Wen's colophon on the handscroll *Yuan an Sleeping during the Great Snow*, translated by Anne de Coursey Clapp.

finesse. On many occasions, however, practices of memory on handscrolls “make reference to the self,” rather than outside resource, and evaluate specific works or events “with respect to the self.”<sup>487</sup> In other words, beholders of handscrolls always deal directly with a paradoxical nostalgia complex: the yearning for the past is juxtaposed with critical reflection on “immature self.”

For instance, Wen Peng, Wen Zhengming’s eldest son and Wen Jia’s brother, once expressed deep regret at his “immature brush” (*zhibi* 稚筆) on Chen Chun’s 陳淳 (1483-1544) handscroll painting *Happy Reunion Nightshade* (*hehuan kui tu* 合歡葵圖).<sup>488</sup> The painting was finished no later than 1524 and “mounted into a delicate handscroll” 裝成精卷 before 1528.<sup>489</sup> Chen addressed a traditional visual motif about love, a pair of nightshade flowers on a single stalk, which is named as *bingdi hua* 並蒂花 in Chen’s autographic inscription. On 1524, Wen Peng handwrote two poems in clerical script on the endpaper. The first one elicits an erotic theme from Chen’s painting by comparing the pair of flowers to Empress Zhao Feiyan 趙飛燕 (32-1 BCE) and his sister Consort Zhao Hede 趙合德 (fl. 16 BCE) who were often represented as literary icons referring to beautiful women with irresistible charm and sexual allure. The poem’s last couplet reads: “It is clear that [they are] Hede and Feiyan. Enjoying imperial grace together, they will

<sup>487</sup> See Hans J. Markowitsch’s discussion about “episode memory.” Hans J. Markowitsch, “Cultural Memory and the Neurosciences,” *Cultural Memory Studies* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 275-84.

<sup>488</sup> Chen Chun 陳淳, *Happy Reunion Nightshade* (*hehuan kui tu* 合歡葵圖), 1528, handscroll, ink and color on paper, painting: 23.5x76.9 cm, The Palace Museum, Beijing.

<sup>489</sup> According to Chen Chun’s inscription that is dated 1528, this painting had been mounted as a handscroll: “In the winter of the year *wuzi* (1528), I, the Mountain man Baiyang, passed Shangzhi’s Jade Rhyme Studio and he showed me this...why did he have it mounted into a delicate handscroll?” 戊子之冬，白陽山人偶過尚之玉韻齋，出此示之...何遂裝成精卷？ However, the earliest colophon written by Wang Shou 王守 bears the date “Mid-Autumn of the year *jiashen*” 甲申中秋, namely, September 12, 1524.

spread their fame.” 分明合德同飛燕，並沐新恩出遠條。 Such an erotic interpretation threads through Wen’s second poem which is ended by frank expression of desire: “How can I meet a lady as beautiful as flowers, to drink together with wedding cups.” 安得如花人，同傾合卺卮。 Twenty-five years later, Wen Peng visited Yuan Jiong 袁褰 (1495-1573), the owner of this scroll, and viewed it again, inscribing a short colophon after the second poem:

This poem was composed in the robust years of my life, therefore contains lots of immature sayings. Till now, twenty-five years have passed. My spirit and aspiration became waning. Therefore, I should chant its elegant posture when [the flowers] are withering and falling, which should be viewed with the belief that [life] is a spark-like dreamy illusion.

作此詩時年尚壯，故多稚語，及今二十五年。氣衰志弱，當詠其凋落中清姿，與石火泡影同觀矣。

When writing this piece, Wen Peng was fifty-one years old, going through the phase termed by Confucius as “knowing the decrees of Heaven” (*zhi tianming* 知天命). Life experiences granted him insight into the illusionary nature of erotic allure. Moreover, he had failed the imperial examinations seven times by 1548 which partly accounts for his “waning” aspiration (*zhiruo* 志弱). Lamenting over himself in this colophon, Wen treated the scroll as his witness, an anchor for his literary rumination and self-reflection.

Wen Peng’s signature explicates the circumstance in which he viewed this scroll again: “In the twelfth month of the year *wushen* (1548), I paid a call at Shangzhi’s (Yuan Jiong) Jade Rhyme Studio by chance, inscribing again to mark the year and month. Wen Peng.” 戊申十有二月偶過尚之玉韻齋再題以記歲月。文彭。 Wen had the handscroll imbedded

in an event in his own life trajectory by using it as a “time mark,” which is defined by Kevin Walsh as the mark that make time visible in a material world.<sup>490</sup>

It is noteworthy that inscribing to “mark/commemorate years and months” (*ji suiyue* 記/紀歲月) constitutes a recurrent topic of colophon writing during the Ming period. Practice like re-viewing and rewriting on handscrolls became frequent occurrences in the daily life of Ming literati, although surviving Song Yuan paintings show that “composing poem with previous rhyme patterns to mark the year and month” 次韻識歲月 was traceable to the twelfth century or even earlier period.<sup>491</sup> Partly owing to the dynamic artistic activities and intensive communication among literati from the fifteenth century onwards, if one takes a look at colophons produced in this period, one may easily find an increase in number of writings that treat handscrolls as “points of reference” for self-reflection and reminiscing. Sometimes, objective descriptions about artworks and aesthetic judgement gave way to autobiographical “life writing.”

When viewing a handscroll, beholders always use it as “a material starting point” for recalling their own experience alongside the cultural life of the scroll. On the one hand, the handscroll shares similar archival function as photographs which can “provide a kind of visual evidence that prompts and anchors acts of remembering.”<sup>492</sup> As Wen Peng’s colophon on the handscroll *Mount Hui* says, “Though twenty-one years [passed], the scenes of the distinguished outing and excellent gathering leap before [my] eyes vividly because they have been retained in this scroll.” 二十有一年而勝遊良會儼然在目，以此卷之存

<sup>490</sup> Kevin Walsh, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World* (London, UK and New York, NY: Routledge 1992), 152.

<sup>491</sup> See Zhang Yu 張雨 (1283-1350) inscribed on Qian Xuan’s 錢選 (1239-1301) handscroll painting. Qian Xuan 錢選 (1239-1301). *Dwelling in Mount Floating Jade* 浮玉山居圖卷, late thirteenth century, handscroll, ink and color on paper, 29.6x 98.7 cm, Shanghai Museum.

<sup>492</sup> “The Photograph as Externalization and Trace” 373.

也。On the other hand, the practice of viewing and inscribing should be understood as an integral part of the meaning-making process related to the handscroll. Some handscrolls function as sites of memory that “operate on many levels of aggregation and touches many facets of associative life.”<sup>493</sup> Although there is a sizable body of literature expressing sympathy for handscrolls that are vulnerable to damage caused by fire, water, or wear and tear, ironically, handscrolls are always believed to outlive their owners. A persuasive example is Wang Shizhen’s comment on Zhu Yunming poetry handscroll: “People experience objects, while objects can also experience people, [the handscroll] is just staying before my eyes for a while.”人閱物，物亦能閱人，聊以寓吾一時目而已。<sup>494</sup>

Looking back to the case *Mount Hui*, the handscroll functioned as a “site” for Wen Jia’s continuing acts of remembering from his middle age through later years. Besides his first encounter with the already mounted scroll in 1544, the handscroll saw another four times of his interactions with both Hua Yun and the scroll.

In 1550, Hua Yun retreated from officialdom in order to escape being persecuted by Yan Song and his faction. Wen Jia’s new colophon on *Mount Hui* records the leisure time he spent with Hua Yun at his study, the Splendid Lotus Studio (*jialian tang* 嘉蓮堂): “[We] used Cloudy Forest teapot to brew tea and drank together, which facilitated our pure contemplation.”用雲林壺煮茶對啜，殊發清思。<sup>495</sup> One year later, Wen Jia, in company with Peng Nian 彭年 (1505-1566), paid a call to Hua Yun again. They revisited Mount Hui by boat. In the boat’s cabin, Wen Jia reinscribed on this handscroll: “Master [Hua]

<sup>493</sup> Jay Winter, “Sites of Memory and the Shadow of War” 61.

<sup>494</sup> See Wang Shizhen, *Yanzhou sibu gao* 弇州四部稿, *juan* 132, *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 1279, 200.

<sup>495</sup> See Wen Jia’s colophon that is dated 1550 (the sixteenth day of the sixth month of *gengshu* 庚戌六月十六日).



showed this scroll to me in the boat when we passed Mount Hui. Looking back to the previous composition makes me feel as if one generation has passed. I inscribe this to mark this moment and my gratitude [to him].”先生出示此卷于慧山舟中回是（是 is crossed, replaced by 視）昔年之作真如隔世事矣。因題以識，感感。<sup>496</sup> The following piece bears the date the twentieth day of the second month of *dingsi* year (March 20, 1557). Wen Jia revisited the Splendid Lotus Studio and was asked to inscribe on the same handscroll again. Probably in order to avoid meaningless repetition of previous writing, Wen added the description of surroundings: [I] viewed this scroll again under the Yulan magnolia at Fine Lotus Studio. 再閱于嘉蓮堂之玉蘭花下。

Wen Jia's last colophon was written when he and Hua Yun dwelled at the Green Bamboo Shed, the study of Hua Xia, Hua Yun's uncle. Probably Hua Yun's constant requests of inscription had exhausted Wen Jia's inspiration and words, because this piece reads rather plain and repetitive:

“I viewed this scroll again. Thirty-seven years passed in a twinkle. Gentleman Hua reminisced our old friends as if a generation had passed. Hence I write this to mark this moment and my gratitude to him.”

復覽此卷，轉瞬已三十七年，君憶舊遊真若隔世矣，因書以識，感感。

However, noteworthy is that the colophon was dated the fifth month of *gengshen* 庚申五月 (June 1560), three month before Hua Yun's death on September 23. It seems that Hua's death broke this array of self-referencing reminiscence which otherwise would continue until Wen Jia rejected.

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<sup>496</sup> See Wen Jia's colophon that is dated 1551 (the year of *xinhai* 辛亥).

The handscroll *Mount Hui* was originally executed to preserve the shared memory of the outing among Wen Jia and his friends, finally it turned out to be a platform displaying Wen Jia's individual practice of remembering and the multi-temporal levels of the past. However, despite that *Mount Hui* partly reflects how the handscroll, a witness of a topical event, was literarily transformed into a site of memory, it is inadequate to reveal the manifold and complex ways in which memories are woven into the enduring communal bonds between Suzhou literati. To delve into the commemorative nature of the handscroll and its dramatically expanded "interpretive community,"<sup>497</sup> I will shift my focus to another handscroll, Wen Zhengming's *Painted Poetry Scroll of the Day of Mankind* (*renri shihua juan* 人日詩畫卷).<sup>498</sup>

The main section of this handscroll consists of one painting and seven heptasyllabic regulated verse (*qiyan lushi* 七言絕句) which were composed by Wen Zhengming and his fellows on the Day of Mankind (*renri* 人日), the seventh day of the first month, in the year *yichou* (1505). Wen Zhengming's painting and a short preface provide a sketch of this event. That day, a gathering was held at Wen's residence, the Stopping Cloud Hall (*tingyun guan* 停雲館). The participants include Wen's disciple Chen Chun 陳淳 and his brother Chen Jin 陳津, and three of Wen's friends in Suzhou Zhu Cunli 朱存理, Xing Can 邢參, Qian Tong'ai 錢同愛 and Zhu Zheng 朱正. Wen Zhengming initiated a poetry game, asking

<sup>497</sup> Here I borrow the term "interpretive community" from journalism. According to Dan Berkowitz, "interpretive community" is designated as "lives and acts within shared rules and norms, a professional culture that produces common narratives and consensual meanings." See Dan Berkowitz, "Interpretive Community," *The International Encyclopedia of Journalism Studies*. Eds. Tim P. Vos and Folker Hanusch, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118841570.iejs0024>.

<sup>498</sup> Wen Zhengming, *Painted Poetry Scroll of the Birthday of Human Being* (*renri shihua juan* 人日詩畫卷), 1505, handscroll, ink on paper, 26.8x88.7 cm, 1505 Shanghai Museum (hereafter, *the Day of Mankind*).

his guests to compose a regulated verse, the four couplets of which need to be ended by characters *wei* 帷, *shi* 詩, *qi* 期, and *zhi* 知. Unlike the handscroll *Mount Hui* in which all compositions were transcribed by Wen Jia himself, *Birthday of Human Being* grouped together the poets' autographic pieces. All poems were handwritten in standard script and each character was carefully modulated to fit into pre-existed ink grid. Despite their nuanced calligraphic manner, the participants still tried to demonstrate a stylistic allegiance to the preface and the leading poem written by Wen Zhengming. All participants collaborate to process a collective effort to remember the event.

The first group of four colophons on this handscroll were dated from 1525 through the 1530s. They were left by Wen Zhengming's four disciples and his live-long partner in art enterprise Zhang Jianfu 章簡甫 (1491-1572),<sup>499</sup> bearing strong similarity in compositional structure and concise style. Each identifies the viewer's name, when and where he got the chance to appreciate the handscroll. The character *guan* 觀 (view) is consistently used in all colophons. The uniformity of composition and word choice renders the viewing practice into a ritualistic act to pay homage to their teacher Wen Zhengming.

Various forms of reminiscent actions emerged within the handscroll since 1561. Two years after Wen Zhengming's death in 1559, his sons, Wen Peng and Wen Jia were invited by Zhang Jianfu to inscribe on this scroll which contains their father's handwriting. Wen Peng's retrospective account pays equal attention to two particular moments in the handscroll's material life, the year when it was executed and the year when it started to circulate among Suzhou literati:

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<sup>499</sup> The disciples include Wang Shou 王守, Wang Guxiang 王穀祥, Peng Nian 彭年, and Zhang Zirao 張子饒.

It has been fifty-seven years since the year of *yichou* (1505), while forty-three years have passed since the year of *gengchen* (1520). Only all people who left their names in the scroll, only three still survive: Youshi (Wang Shou), Longchi (Peng Nian) and Yungu (Zhang Jianfu). I sigh for this, attaching my name after [their colophons].

Wen Peng

盖乙丑至今五十有七年，而庚辰至今亦四十有三年。卷中之人惟西室隆池簣谷三人耳，為之一慨，因亦附名其後。 文彭

Wen Peng's lamentation for his father and other dead predecessors received response from Wang Shizhen who viewed the scroll in 1575. By then fifteen years has passed and Wen Peng has also passed away. Therefore, Wang's colophon is filled with the nostalgic sentiment and historical sensibilities for the glory past of Suzhou literati: "Shoucheng (Wen Peng's *zi*) said in his colophon that only three persons who had inscribed on the endpaper survived. All of them, including Shoucheng, expired. The regret at those poets and poems which have withered and slipped from attention, does not reside solely in Gao Shuzhou's (Gao Shi) sigh when he was folding a scroll." 壽承題謂惟跋尾三人在，今併壽承皆亡之，零落之恨，豈惟高蜀州之掩卷三歎。

The last line of Wang Shizhen's colophon adopts the allusion concerning Du Fu's literary friendship with Gao Shi. On February 21, 770, Du Fu found a group of poems under the title "Sent Recalling You on the Day of Mankind" 人日相憶見寄. They were sent from Gao Shi but had been long forgotten by Du Fu.<sup>500</sup> Du felt deep regret because it was too late to reply to Gao who "had been dead for six or seven years."<sup>501</sup> In the short preface

<sup>500</sup> Stephen Owen, et al. eds. *The Poetry of Du Fu* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2015), 162-67.

<sup>501</sup> 自枉詩已十餘年，莫記存沒，又六七年矣。Ibid.

attached to Du Fu's "Retrospective Answer" poem (*zhuichou* 追酬), Du also tried to figure out the number of "his true friends now left in the world" (今海内忘形故人). The similarities of Du Fu's account to the situation in which Wang Shizhen was writing his colophon are strong. Wang Shizhen not only established the connection between Wen Zhengming's poems and Gao Shi's composition, but also assimilated Du Fu's reminiscence into his own memory practice. In one word, Wang made reference to multi-temporal levels of the past within the scroll.

When a handscroll functions as a site of memory, it may possess the ability not only to strengthen share memory but also to redirect memories according to its beholders' personal perceptions and impressions. Sometimes audience may loosen the tie between the handscroll and the specific moment or event that the handscroll was intended to commemorate.<sup>502</sup> A telling example can be found in the poem and short essay handwritten by Wang Shimao 王世懋 on the endpaper of *Day of Mankind*.

Wang viewed his scroll on the Day of Mankind of 1575, which reminded him of the same day of 1568 when he was drinking with his friend Yuan Zunni 袁尊尼 (1523-1574, *jinshi* 1565) in Nanjing. Yuan was a Suzhou poet who passed away in 1574, therefore Wang transcribed the long verse he composed on the Day of Mankind of 1568 to express his deep grieve over his death, although Yuan bears little relevance to this scroll. The ending part of Wang's colophon reads:

This scroll dates back to the former *yichou* year (1505) and spanned a whole of seventy years. When Kaogong (Yuan Zunni's title) started his career as a *jinshi* candidate from the year of latter *yichou* (1565), he became my sworn friend. He was suddenly

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<sup>502</sup> "The Photograph as Externalization and Trace"

transformed into another worldly being. In a nod moment, the present became the past, not to mention a story that is seventy years old.

今此卷遡前乙丑逮今政七十年矣。而考功後乙丑始舉進士與余莫逆曾未幾何化為異物一瞬間便成今古，況七十年前故事耶。

Wang's mourning recalls the past from a present standpoint and encodes new experience, redirecting the original theme and commemorative goal of the handscroll. Such a phenomena reminds us of Birgit Neumann's discussion about "reminiscing narrator" in literature. The handscroll, similar to "fictions of memory," "does not merely establish a consecutive order, not merely a chain of elements along the arrow of time, but a reference frame in which each event is related to others in both a forward and backward direction: Each event is both marked by all preceding events and evokes expectations about events to come."<sup>503</sup>

Compared to the album and hanging scroll, the handscroll format demonstrates superior ability in accommodating miscellaneous writings, which grant it rhetoric, thematic, and emotional richness. On a practical level, viewers and inscribers enjoy more freedom of composition. Such features can be well demonstrated if we compare commemorative handscrolls with those albums of similar authorship, for instance, *Records of the Travel to Two Caves* (*Erdong jiyou tu* 二洞紀遊圖),<sup>504</sup> whose creators substantially overlap that of the aforementioned handscroll projects *Mount Hui* and *Day of Mankind*.

*Records of the Travel to Two Caves* is a album assembled in 1544 to commemorate a travel which was held by Hua Yun, Wen Jia and Yuan Zhi 袁袞 (1502-1547, *jinshi* 1526)

<sup>503</sup> Birgit Neumann, "The Literary Representation of Memory," *Cultural Memory Studies*, 333-44.

<sup>504</sup> Wen Jia, et al., *Records of the Travel to Two Caves* (*erdong jiyou tu* 二洞紀遊圖), 1544, album, ink on paper, 26x28 cm, Shanghai Museum.

in the winter of 1529. The destination of their travel were Zhanggong Cave and Shanjuan Cave, two karst scenic areas located near Yixing 宜興, a county administrated under Wuxi. Later, Hua Yun asked Wen Jia to paint ten album leaves, each depicting a delightful scene that they came across within and outside the caves. Wen's painting and an introductory piece written by Yuan Zhi were assemble and mounted around 1544. On each folio of the album, one painting is "accompanied by one poem on the left which records the travel." 紀遊之作則各綴於左。 Within fifty years after the album was finished, it had evoked sustaining reminiscence and melancholic rumination among Suzhou literati, including Wen Jia, Wen Peng, Yuan Zhi's son Yuan Zunni, and Wang Shizhen.

It is noteworthy that the colophons written by Wen brothers and Yuan are of the similar length, approximately between one hundred and one hundred fifty characters. They probably had to trim their compositions in order to keep them fit for the given space on each album leaf. Although Wen Jia still treat the album as a time mark "recording the year and month" 記歲月 in the similar fashion of the handscroll *Mount Hui*, he could handwrite only once instead of writing every few years.

## Conclusion

This section investigates into the literary and memory practice involved in the appreciation of handscrolls. Handscrolls accommodate a wide range of remembering acts, seeing the evolution, transmission, and transformation of shared memories within Suzhou literati community.

My discussion tends to understand some handscroll as sites of memory. Although this concept is frequently associated with geographical location, colossal appearance and

duality, it can be extended to many types of physical space where commemorative acts take place. Many handscrolls produced in mid-Ming Suzhou “operate on many levels of aggregation and touches many facets” of literati’s life.<sup>505</sup> They functioned as sites of memory associated with memorable figures or events, preserved collective memory, connected the present to the past, and consolidated the identity shared within community.

A handscroll can provide a colophon with a definite temporality, preserving the specific moment in both its own history and the inscriber’s life. Meanwhile, the remembering practice around the handscroll also constantly shape the memory of past events, bygone eras, and dead friends. By virtue of the handscroll, literary memory was translated into material existence, while fragmentary accounts of the past were assembled into a narrative totality.

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<sup>505</sup> *Cultural Memory Studies*, 61.



## Case 2 Unfolding a Handscroll in Suzhou: the Literary Construction of Spatial Identity

The previous case deals with handscroll's functioning as a site of memory and entanglement with Suzhou literati's practice of remembering. In this section, my focus will shift to a broader background against which the practice of viewing and remembering take place. In L. Ryan's hierarchical categorization of narrative space, the physical space such as studio and private garden when literati appreciate handscroll belong to the so-called "spatial frame" which refers to the "immediate surroundings of actual events."<sup>506</sup> Above this initial level there is "story space." The story space consists of not only the settings and scenes to which actions and memories are attached actually and materially, but also the landscape or cityscape mentioned or even implied by texts. My discussion is centered on Suzhou, a city that witnessed booming cultural enterprise and increasing scale of art production and consumption during the mid-Ming period. This section will suggest that, instead of providing merely a static "setting" for viewing practice, the city is dynamically entangled with the representation of the action, cognitive modes of audience, and the formation of cultural identity. On the one hand, the unique spirit of a city crafts the peculiar spatial experience of artistic audience which finally shapes their understanding and taste. On the other hand, the image of the city is also mediated and reshaped through the practice of viewing and the palimpsest of associated memories.

Perfect examples of the interaction between artworks, memory and space can be found in handscroll paintings and calligraphy specimens that were collectively produced,

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<sup>506</sup> See "Space" in *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, ed. Walter de Gruyter, <https://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/55.html>

consumed, and circulated within the literati community in Suzhou. With the increasing body of textual accretion pertaining viewing practice, different attempts could be made in order to establish the connection between the scroll and locality. Correspondingly, a handscroll's entanglement with local culture could be understood in different dimensions.

The first one involves the content of the handscroll works and specific authorship which show apparent links to Suzhou. Handscrolls that were executed by local celebrities or addressed Suzhou's landscape enable audience to experience the lived past of this place. The process of viewing therefore could be labeled as memory practice that enhance the continuity of the cultural vein. On a handscroll containing autographic letters by Fan Zhongyang 范仲淹 (989-1052), a venerable official Suzhou born and bred, Wu Kuan signed as follows: "Now reading his books and viewing his handwriting, one can envision him...After having it mounted as a scroll, I carry it with me and play with it from dusk till dawn. How sincere Master [Fan's] intention is to honor ancestors, esteem his clan, and to unify the mind of his family members."<sup>507</sup>

Material dimension is of comparable significance as textual one in helping to weave personal experience and local memories. As an evocative object, handscroll turns chronological experience of time into a material sensation of the past.<sup>508</sup> The vicissitudes of a handscroll's social life could be related to the history of the place in which it was circulated or collected. The miracles of a handscroll's survival through social turmoil have

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<sup>507</sup> 今讀其書觀其手跡想見其人... 既裝潢成帙從而朝夕玩之嗟夫公之拳拳於尊祖敬宗收族者其心抑何摯也。 See *Inscription in running script on Fan Zhongyan's letters* 行書跋范仲淹手札, handscroll, ink on paper, letters: 25.2x33.1cm, Suzhou Museum.

<sup>508</sup> Inspired by Elise Wortel and Anneke Smelik's idea about spatial histography in their article: "Textures of Time," see Liedeker Plate et al., eds, *Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 2013), 194.

be played out as a metonym of the unshakable “beliefs in the authentic nature of a place.”<sup>509</sup> Mi Youren’s 米友仁 (1052-1107) landscape painting “Dayao Village” 大姚村, for instance, had been held by Suzhou merchants for nearly four centuries before being confiscated in late 1480s. Yang Xunji 楊循吉, a Suzhou official and ardent editor of local gazetteer, argues in his colophon for this scroll:

Yuanhui’s (Mi Youren’s *zi*) painting and poems on Dayao village is manifestly involved in our Su[zhou], it has been the glory of Wuzhong for another hundred years from Wang Yunfu’s obtaining from Yanjing to Shen’s purchase. It is agreeable that this scroll defends this piece of land forever without leaving for other places.

元暉大姚村圖并詩吾蘇大有關涉王雲浦之獲自燕京再從沈氏為吳中光賁者蓋又百年是宜永鎮茲土不復他適可也。

Yang’s manifesto can be partly read as a form of posturing, which grants him an image of protector of local culture. However, it is not a rare case in the huge body of colophons created by Suzhou literati. What underlies the endeavor to construct the scroll’s strict adherence to Suzhou is the emerging consciousness of local identity in mid-Ming period. The textual accretion on handscrolls, with atmospheric and topographic details, goes beyond simply archival records of viewing practice, but “help to invent the city” as an ideal place for virtuosity.<sup>510</sup> Yang and his coevals claimed that the scrolls should be viewed and preserved exclusively in Suzhou, where the audience played leading role in shaping artistic fashion. “What is deemed as elegant by Suzhou people, will be imitatively adored by followers from four directions. What is deemed as vulgar [by Suzhou people], will be

<sup>509</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 220.

<sup>510</sup> Mike Crang, *Cultural Geography*, 39-40.

rejected by followers.”<sup>511</sup>

Handscroll also function as a medium through which personal and collective memories about a city could be performed, narrated, and perceived in a rhizomatic manner. It is hard to deny the fragmentary nature of colophons, given their limited length and abbreviated expression. Multidirectional sensation and memories are scattered in discrete colophons pertaining to viewing practice. However, the surface of an unfolded handscroll creates encounters between them, providing experience of the past a comparatively stable site in the present.<sup>512</sup> Although some pieces of text were not composed with geographic concern, they could be understood, within a narrative frame created by the handscroll, as part of the cultural collage of the city. Take the aforementioned poetry handscroll *Mountain Hut of Herb and Weed* 藥草山房圖 for instance. A series of colophons were composed by later beholders on its endpaper in the three centuries since it was created. Each of these colophons addresses a facet of the handscroll’s aesthetic value or cultural merits and also recounts the author’s personal perception. When being juxtaposed on the handscroll, however, the disjointed experience, referring to each other, delineates the “prosperous cultural image of Suzhou during a peaceful era” 肅廟時太平風物之盛.<sup>513</sup> From a more dynamic view of memory, handscroll provide us with a new form in which historical stories about a city could be told.<sup>514</sup> It may require more active agency from audience of

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<sup>511</sup> 蘇人以為雅者，則四方隨而雅之，俗者，則隨而俗之。See “Two Capitals” 兩都. Wang Shixing 王士性, *Guag Zhiyi* 廣誌繹, annotated by Lü Jinglin 呂景琳 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 32-33.

<sup>512</sup> By “comparatively stable,” I mean that the configuration of inscribed texts on handscrolls are supposed to be mutable when being remounted. The theme of a handscroll could correspondingly change along with the deleting, adding, and altering order of textual accretion.

<sup>513</sup> Wen Zhengming 文徵明 et al. *Mountain Hut of Herb and Weed* 藥草山房圖, 1540, handscroll, ink and color on paper, painting: 28.3x14.8 cm, Shanghai Museum

<sup>514</sup> Plate, *Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture*, 186.

handscrolls, who are expected to decipher the clues left by previous authors and to make sense of the rhizomatic network of temporality and cultural reference.<sup>515</sup>

Textual evidence from extant handscrolls shows that literary elites from Ming Suzhou were used to getting involved in such an interactive process, instead of being passive beholders. A further question is how Suzhou, as a “site of memory,” direct the viewing practice and fashion the narrative of personal and historical remembrance which took place within it. I will try to answer this question through a case study on Mi Youren’s handscroll painting *Dayao Village*.

### Mi Youren and his “Dayao Village”

In 1130s, Mi Youren 米友仁 (1074-1153), the eldest son of Mi Fu (1051-1107), sojourned for several months in Suzhou area. He resided in an obscure village, named Dayao 大姚, which is about twenty miles southeast of Suzhou city. One of the landscape paintings he composed during this period was titled “Painting of Dayao village” 大姚村圖. According to the record in *Shigutang shuhua huikao* 式古堂書畫匯考, the original version was executed in the format of handscroll, consisted of the painting of the river scenery near Dayao and three autographic poems by Mi Youren.<sup>516</sup> Little can be known

<sup>515</sup> Michael Rothberg, “Introduction: Between Memory and Memory: From Lieux de mémoire to Noeuds de mémoire,” *Yale French Studies*, no. 118/119 (2010): 3-12.

<sup>516</sup> This speculation is based on the description in one piece of colophon on this handscroll, which praise the scroll as a synthesis of Mi Youren’s landscape painting, literary composition, and calligraphy: 至若貌江山之勝槩發詞藻之精英翰墨淋漓同為卷軸者則又加少矣。Mi’s painting was confiscated by Wang Jinchao during Hongzhi period, but the inscription and colophons had been cut off in advance by the owner Shen Rurong 沈汝融。The version recorded in *Shigutang shuhua kaohui* is a combination of original colophons and a replica made by Shen Zhou. However, neither of these two versions is extant now. The texts quoted in this chapter is from the entry “Mi Yuanhui’s Painting of Dayao Village and Colophons” 米元暉大姚村圖並題卷, “Shitian’s (Shen Zhou) copy of Mi Fuwen’s Painting of Dayao Village and Colophons” 石田摹米敷文大姚村圖并跋卷, see *Shigutang shuhua huikao* 式古堂書畫匯考, *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 828, 810-12; vol. 829, 351-54.

about the circulation of this handscroll until 1344, when Wang Yunfu 王雲浦 (1314-1372) purchased it in Yanjing, the capital city of the Yuan. Wang was a Suzhou merchant well known for his art collection and affinity with literary community in his hometown. After this transaction, the scroll was brought back to Suzhou, circulating among local collectors until being confiscated by eunuch Wang Jinchao in the late Chenghua period (1465-1487).

The series of poems inscribed by Mi Youren suggest that his expectation of this painting is no more than that of other literati landscape paintings. His choice to depict the scenery in Dayao village is lightly touched on in the second poem. “It is about to rain in a late fall’s morning in Wulin (Hangzhou), which is exactly like the gloomy clouds in this painting. 武林秋高曉欲雨,正若此畫雲冥冥. Wulin, instead of Suzhou, is the only place mentioned in these three poems. For Mi Youren, the landscape in Dayao does not hold particular appeal that can serve as an incentive for his creation. Its significance is supposed merely to evoke the imagination of another city. A more disappointing fact is that the “evocative landscape” is not the real scenery in Dayao but the artistically rendered one on the scroll. The mentioning of Wulin may lead us to assume that the scroll was created for social obligation, dedicated to someone living in Wulin. This assumption is supported by the first poem:

“Although Guangwen got a chilly reception as a minor official,  
How can people stand against his talent of nation-wide fame?  
In some day, gentleman, your family will obtain political power burning to the touch,  
Now, you should endure the solitude life for a moment.”  
廣文當日官雖冷,  
可奈才名振世何。

他日君家須炙手。

而今聊復在堪羅。

The opening line begins with “Guangwen” which alludes to the story of Zheng Qian 鄭虔 (691-759), an unrecognized talent in the Tang dynasty. Zheng was granted with sinecure in Guangwen Palace instead of an official position suited to his abilities. This literary allusion indicates that Mi tried to bring comfort to the depressed dedicatee through his painting. In the ending line, a high hope was set for a promising future as a formulaic expression that many reciprocal poems had in common.

The entanglement of this handscroll with locality has not been touched until the moment when Wang Yunfu unfolded it in Suzhou. Wang conducted careful study on the place in which Mi Youren sojourned and related Mi’s residence to his own houses: “Dayao is about thirty *li* from the southeast quarter of Gusu city, close to a river and a lake. The river is named Wusong...Dayao covers an area of around one hundred acre and is surrounded by waters.”<sup>517</sup> On a small hill near Dayao stands an old temple which preserved a host of inscriptions on its walls and once attracted Mi’s brother to linger around. Wang claims that his old house, “facing Dayao across the river of several feet width,” were located on the other side of riverbank.<sup>518</sup> The geographical adjacency underlined Wang’s persona as the owner of this scroll.

In order to substantiate the textual topography he crafted in this piece of colophon, Wang add on more sentence: “Old site [of Mi’s residence] is still in passable condition for

<sup>517</sup> 大姚去姑蘇城東南三十里臨諸江湖江則曰吳淞江...大姚地可百畝浮諸水之間。

<sup>518</sup> 有小山高不滿數丈上有古剎依山之巔曰文殊院正殿有文殊坐獅像甚奇古周圍有深渠數匝乃誦行道之跡也唐宋名公畱題甚多皆刻諸石以置於壁間米南宮弟兄嘗居於其地舊趾猶可考余別業數椽在笠澤姚澄江之北與大姚隔小龍江相望咫尺

investigation” 舊址猶可考, he not only authenticates the topographic details mentioned before, but also call upon later audience to continue such practice of remembrance.

The cultural significance of this handscroll is largely derived from the marvelous process whereby it changed hands during Yuan-Ming transition. According to Wang's account, the scroll was lost and came back into his possession twice. In 1356, Wang's family left Suzhou for Fujian in order to took refuge from Zhang Shicheng's 张士诚 (1321-1367) rebellion. When he came back one year later, "all family properties had been ransacked except this handscroll" 家業一空而此卷僅存. Before he could celebrate the regaining of this scroll, Suzhou fell into calamity again as Zhu Yuanzhang's (1328-1398) troops inflicted a crushing defeat on Zhang Shicheng in 1367. The scroll was lost when Wang's family was evacuated to countryside. In the year of *yiyou*, 1369, Wang returned to Suzhou. "[My] previous residence has burned into ruin. A lot of wild grass and debris is everywhere. I regained this scroll from a countryman."<sup>519</sup>

The handscroll is related to the fate of Suzhou materially, spatially, and temporally. Within the image crafted by Wang's writing, the handscroll, as a tiny object, is in sharp contrast with the vast cityscape of devastated Suzhou. Its inevitable loss and mysterious return are analogous with the precarious condition of the city in an age of disorder. Complex feelings were wrapped into a quotidian phrase in his signature: "unfolding the scroll with a sigh" 展卷太息.

It is not surprising if Wang's colophon leads to a political reading, given the embedded historical reference and the author's identity as a survivor from dynastic transition. Another

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<sup>519</sup> 己酉復歸田里故居焚蕩荒榛瓦礫不堪舉目又復得此卷於野人家.



piece of colophon on this handscroll, which was written by Wang's friend, Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301-1374), also summarize Wang's colophon as "deploring temporal displacement" 感慨今昔.<sup>520</sup> Mourning the collapse of a state through dealing with old objects is a perennial topic in Chinese literature. Not only could the loss of a beloved object stir lament for a collapsed state, an unchanged one, contrasting to changing contexts, could also evoke retrospection on what has gone forever. On Zhao Fu's 趙芾 *Painting of Rivers and Mountains over Ten Thousand Li* 江山萬里圖, for instance, nostalgic sentiment is conveyed by the comparison between previous viewing experience and present situation in Xu Yikui's 徐一夔 (1315-1400) inscription:

The famous painting has long passed through years                      名畫經年久

The texture strokes become diluted and are disappearing      皴痕澹欲迷

Previously, I saw it in my city,    昔從吾邑見

Now I inscribe on it from a different place.                      今向異方題

In a similar way, the act of unrolling a scroll can serve as the trigger for memory practice. As is written by Qian Liangyou 錢良右 (1278-1344), a Suzhou calligrapher, "Unfolding paintings often reminds [me] of the wind and mist of old days." 展圖時想舊風煙.<sup>521</sup>

However, a close reading of Wang Yunfu's piece shows that his reflection has been channeled to an alternative direction other than mourning for a fallen dynasty. The account

<sup>520</sup> Ni Zan 倪瓚 is one of the Four Master Painting of the Yuan dynasty. His colophon is recorded in the same entry. See *Shigutang shuhua kaohui*, in *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 828, 812.

<sup>521</sup> Yu Fengqing 郁逢慶 (fl. 1630) comp., *Shuhua tiba ji* 書畫題跋記, *Siku quanshu* edition, vol. 816, 617.

of the handscroll's return is rendered in moderate tone as if it was an expectable result. Wang summarizes the whole process with a rhetoric question: "How could it be accidental to encounter certain events or objects!" 事物之遇豈偶然哉. What was foregrounded here is the on-going contest between recurring social turmoil and tenacious possession. However, do this mean that Wang has confidence in himself as a justified owner of the scroll who can assure a mysterious return?

The answer might be not. Wang life experience and the scroll's circulating history may offer another interpretation of the unspoken words behind this rhetorical question. From 1356 to 1369, Wang escaped from Suzhou twice when the city was in danger, yet the handscroll remained in the original location, intact and unaltered, evincing more constancy and "loyalty." Seeing in this light, the union of the scroll and its owner is overshadowed by the scroll's enduring attachment to Suzhou. The handscroll was represented as a "sentient" object which could choose itself an appropriate home, a place with comparable cultural legacies.

### **The miraculous reunion in Suzhou**

The firm belief in Suzhou as an unparalleled place for artistic conservation can be found in numerous colophon writings by literati with same origin as Wang Yunfu. When recounting his reunion with a previously lost calligraphy handscroll, a Song copy of Orchid Pavilion Preface, Song Ke 宋克 (1324-1387) adopted a more rigid stance: <sup>522</sup>

In the year of *dingwei* (1367), a great change happened to Wu city (Suzhou). The

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<sup>522</sup> Miao Yuezao 繆曰藻, "Song version of Dingwu Orchid Pavilion" 宋拓定武蘭亭, *Yuyi lu* 寓意录, *juan* 1 (Shanghai: Hanmuchunhua guan, 1840), 24b.

existence of this calligraphy specimen became unknown. I regained it in Wu in the spring of year (1369). It resembles the scenes when the pearl [trade] revived in Hefu and the pair of swords was taken back to Yanping River. The miraculous reunion of the magic objects is destined, isn't it?

丁未岁吴城变故，此帖不知存亡，己酉春 余复得之吴中，所谓珠还合浦，劍入延平，神物會合，詎不信然。

Song's narrative about his interaction with the scroll also renders this antique object as a metonym of both the national upheavals and personal trauma during the war time. However, not so much ink was spent on a sentimental longing for the past. Instead, a strong sense of local pride is revealed from two literary allusions used in this piece of colophon, the returning of "pearl" and "sword." These two allusions denote two famous stories—the revival of pearl industry in Hefu after Meng Cheng cleaned up the corrupt administration and the pair of swords returned to Yanping river after the demise of their mortal owners.<sup>523</sup> Both of these two anecdotes center around the topic "lost and found," suggesting the significance of the match between objects and owners.

The story about "sword" comes from the biography of Zhang Hua from *Jinshu* 晉書. Lei Huan 雷煥(fl. 330), the magistrate of Fengcheng 鳳城, once excavated a pair of swords and sent one to Zhang Hua 張華(232-300) who was senior to Lei. Several years later, Zhang was decapitated in a mutiny and the sword was lost. Lei Huan's sword of the pair was handed down to his son and was carried to Yanping by chance. When Lei's son

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<sup>523</sup> See "Meng Chang" 孟嘗 entry in "Xunli zhuan" 循吏傳, in *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, ed. Fan Ye 范曄, *juan* 76 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 2472-75. "Zhang Hua zhuan" 張華傳, in *Jinshu* 晉書, Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 et al., eds, *juan* 36 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 1068-77.

walked across River Yan, the sword fell into the water and became a dragon, reunited with another dragon that had been transformed from Zhang Hua's lost sword. Since the Tang dynasty, the compound term "sword return to Yanping" has been figuratively used to address either the reunion of separate components or the return of a lost object. A notable example is the note written by Liu Gongquan 柳公權 (778-865) for Wang Xizhi's autographic letter "Note For Sending Pears" 送梨帖. Liu wrote *jianru yanping* 劍入延平 to celebrate the moment when this calligraphic specimen was plucked from obscurity by Emperor Taizong (r.626-649) and was compiled into the inventory of imperial collection.<sup>524</sup> By quoting these two literary allusions, Song Ke not only authenticated his own possession of the scroll, but also marked Suzhou as the irreplaceable place in which the scroll should be appreciated and stored.

When a handscroll, as a memory object, was increasingly concerned with locality through textual commemoration, a new logical thread would be established to rearrange the recounting and understanding of the circulation course. It is noteworthy that many colophon writers tend to fashion their narrative or memories from a supernatural perspective. The return of a handscroll to certain place could be explained as a "destined coincidence" (*yuan* 緣). Take Yuan Yi's previously mentioned poetry handscroll for instance.<sup>525</sup> Yuan's descendants once sold this calligraphy work to Chen family in Haining 海寧. When the Suzhou scholar Huang Pilie 黃丕烈 (1763-1825) purchased it back, he

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<sup>524</sup> Original text reads: 太宗書卷首見此兩行十字遂連此卷末.若珠遂合浦劍入延平... See *Baojin zhai fatie* 寶晉齋法帖, reproduced in *Zhongguo fatie quanji* 中國法帖全集, ed. Qi Gong 啟功, vol. 11 (Wuhan: Hubei meishu chubanshe, 2002).

<sup>525</sup> See Chapter 3.1, the discussion of Wu Kuan's inscription on Yuan Yi's poetry handscroll.

received ardent encomium from his townsman Pan Yijun 潘奕雋 (1740-1830): <sup>526</sup>

The pair of calligraphy scrolls “Studio of Tranquil Spring” is an object belonging to Yuan family of our Wu (Suzhou). His scions could not protect it..... [It] returns to gentleman Huang Raofu (Huang Pilie’s *zi*) in our Wu notwithstanding. It is a pleasant event that a bow of Chu state is received by Chu’s people. [The scrolls] were displayed in leisure days. The destiny of calligraphy is a matter of rejoicing.

靜春齋翰墨雙卷為吾吳袁氏物，子孫不能守....仍歸於吾吳黃君蕘圃楚弓楚得洵為快事暇日出示翰墨緣深良自慶幸也。

In this piece of colophon, the geographical identity for connoisseurs is foregrounded through Pan’s repeatedly mentioning “our Wu” (*wuwu* 吾吳). Pan and Yuan were two influential families in Qing Suzhou, being related by marriage ties.<sup>527</sup> It is no surprise that Pan Yijun, a *jinshi* candidate spontaneously shouldered the responsibilities for the conservation of artistic inheritance left by predecessors. Pan’s writing attributes the reunion of the scrolls with its native city to a “destined coincidence.” Suzhou is credited with miraculous appeal for things that are stranded outside. “It is not a passive tract of land but an active agent” in protecting its cultural property.<sup>528</sup>

Noteworthy as well is the allusion adduced by Pan, “a bow of Chu state” (*chugong* 楚弓). It refers to a story about the king of Chu state, who went hunting in mountains but

<sup>526</sup> See Lu Xinyuan 陸心源 ed., *Rangli guan guoyanlu* 穰梨館過眼錄, in *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu* 中國書畫全書, ed. Lu Shangfu 盧聖輔, vol. 13 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1993), 34-36.

<sup>527</sup> Pan Yijun’s second concubine is from the Yuan family. Pan Yijun was the first one in his clan who passed the *jinshi* examination. Since he became a *jinshi* candidate in 1769, he started to expand the influence of Pan family in Suzhou. See *Pangu yishi: Qingdai suzhou panshi de shoucang* 攀古奕世：清代蘇州潘氏的收藏, ed. Suzhou Museum (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2018).

<sup>528</sup> Idea is inspired by Craig Clunas’ statement about mutual construction of fame between local celebrities and the city. See *Elegant Debts*, 93.

lost his bow. The king dissuaded his attendants from searching, because he thought that the missing bow must be found by his countryman, “Chu people,” therefore could not be deemed as a “loss.”<sup>529</sup> This allusion conveys Pan’s vicarious pleasure for Huang’s purchase. Even though this pair of handscrolls is supposed to be the heirloom of Yuan family, it is still a great joy that they were passed on to a worthy owner as long as he is a Suzhou native.

A typical example can be found in colophons on the handscroll “Dayao Village.” Viewers of this painting accepted the transition of its ownership from Wang Yunfu to Shen Rurong 沈汝融, a medical practitioner in Suzhou. However, when the pictorial section was confiscated by official Wang Jinzhao and brought to Beijing, Suzhou literati no longer held an open attitude toward the “loss.” As is written by Wen Zhengming in a mournful tone: “[We] cannot face the loss of the bow with a smile” 未能一笑付亡弓。

The story of the king of Chu’s bow has a sequel version in *Kongzi jiaoyu* 孔子家語. The king is criticized because his generosity does not live up to Confucius expectation. From Confucius’ stance, a benevolent (*ren* 仁) ruler should never make a distinction between Chu people and those from other places.<sup>530</sup> It would be better if the king had said “people lost the bow, but people would get it.” Apparently, Confucius doctrine failed to convince artists and collectors in Suzhou, especially in the Ming dynasty when the

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<sup>529</sup> See Wang Liqi 王利器, *Lüshi chunqiu zhushu* 呂氏春秋註疏 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 2002), 107-08. The story is also recorded in “Jifu” 跡府 in *Gongsun longzi* 公孫龍子. See Chen Li 陳澧, *Gongsun longzi zhu* 公孫龍子註, in *Chen Li ji* 陳澧集, vol. 5 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008), 48-49.

<sup>530</sup> 楚王失弓楚人得之又何求之孔子聞之惜乎其不大也不曰人遺弓人得之而已何必楚也。See “Zhisi” 致思, in *Kongzi jiaoyu* 孔子家語, Huang Dunbing 黃敦兵 annotated (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2019), 67.

confluence of identity and local attachment flourished to an unprecedented extent.<sup>531</sup>

A practical reason that accounts for the exclusiveness in the discourse of possession might be the concern about the accessibility of arts. In an era before the invention of daguerreotype, the achievement of artists was essentially determined by the chances of viewing authentic artworks. Even though painting and calligraphy manuals have been produced at large scale since the mid-Ming period, they contribute little to artists in developing their own originality and styles.<sup>532</sup> On the one hand, the viewing practices were characterized by “immediate locality.”<sup>533</sup> A painting or calligraphy specimen was more likely to be viewed, studied, imitated, and canonized if it was collected “in immediate neighborhood.”<sup>534</sup> With increasing public involvement, an artwork would be invested with more symbolic significance in the construction of the Suzhou’s cultural fame.

On the other hand, the opportunities of viewing autographic masterpieces positively correlate with the interaction within local communities. Artists, connoisseurs, and collectors were enmeshed, as Craig Clunas puts it, in “historically and culturally specific networks of obligation.”<sup>535</sup> Practices of collectively viewing and sharing function as a binding force for the nexus between them. For example, senior artists, like Shen Zhou and Wen Zhengming, could extend their influence among the novices by loaning out their notable collections, while young literati could accumulate cultural capital through, say,

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<sup>531</sup> It could be corroborated by the emerging of literary and artistic schools which were inclined to name themselves after their geographic origins.

<sup>532</sup> J. P. Park, *Art by the Book: Painting Manuals and the Leisure Life in Late Ming China* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2012), 10.

<sup>533</sup> Craig Clunas, *Elegant Debts*, 96.

<sup>534</sup> The condition of transportation was improved in Jiangnan area during the Ming dynasty, but it was one of the major obstacles for artistic communication, especially for those professional painters or calligraphers who struggled to earn lives.

<sup>535</sup> Craig Clunas, *Elegant Debts*, 140.

squeezing their colophons into an intensively inscribed masterpiece.<sup>536</sup> Records of viewing acts marked their specific association with the artworks as well as their very presence in a geographic-cultural context. In such a process, personal experience is woven into the fabric of collective memories. Back to the cases of handscrolls, beholders' recalling of the past is not only to satisfy the need of artistic judgement, but also to bolster a "coherent identity" shared within local community.<sup>537</sup>

### **The Permeable Boundary Between the Authentic and the Imitated Copy**

Handscroll's strong attachment to "the place where it happens to be" contributes to the formation of its "aura." As Walter Benjamin defines, the "aura" refers to an art work's unique presence in time and space and is determined by the history through which the artwork suffer changes in physical condition and in its ownership.<sup>538</sup> The former analysis of "Dayao Village" has shown that "ownership" was addressed by successive audience in rather vacillating manners. Personal possession has been downplayed in the discursive practice of locality. A relevant question is whether the prevailing discourse of local identity can also lead to redefinition of "authenticity." To be more specific, could a handscroll, like "Dayao Village" still maintain its "aura" with a great change in physical presence, say, the absence of main pictorial section?

Among fifteen viewers who have left colophons on the handscroll "Dayao Village," Xu Yuan 徐源 (1440-1515) probably is the last one who had seen the authentic painting

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<sup>536</sup> Shen Zhou, for example, was famed for his generosity and always displayed his private collection to young scholars. See Huang Peng 黄朋, *Wumen juyan* 吴门具眼 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2015), 50-73.

<sup>537</sup> Edward W. Said, "Invention, Memory, and Place," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 26, no. 2 (2000): 175-192.

<sup>538</sup> Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), *Illumination: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 220.



by Mi Youren. Xu's colophon was dated Feb 20, 1473.<sup>539</sup> According to the accounts by several viewers, the handscroll was confiscated in late Chenghua period. Shen Rurong, the owner successive to Wang Yunfu, was thrown into deep grief and implored Shen Zhou, who had viewed the scroll before, to make a copy from his memory.<sup>540</sup> Shen refused this challenging task at first, but in 1492, Shen found by chance that a calligraphy scroll collected by his nephew was the poetry section of the lost "Dayao Village." Inspired by this fortuitous event, Shen duplicated the calligraphy scroll and, imitating Mi's style, painted an illustration. The combined scroll was sent to Shen Rurong to console his grief.

Shen Zhou's version received highly favorable reviews from "intended audience." By emphasizing "intended" here, I mean that Shen Zhou has intentionally arranged viewing activities among his friends and disciples. My supposition is based on a poetic line from a colophon on this scroll, "Xiuwen (Shen Zhou's *zi*) asks me to make an unworthy continuation, which can relieve the pain of being apart as a seal on our friendship." 休文索我重續貂欲慰遐思見交厚. It is safe to infer that the handscroll has been circulated within literary community in Suzhou, eliciting inscriptions, before being passed on to Shen Rurong. A possible yet incomplete order of circulation, from Wu Kuan to Xu Yuan, and then to Chen Qi, is also implied in Chen poem.

The records of viewing experience from Shen Zhou's associates can be roughly divided into two groups. Writers from the younger generation, such as Wen Zhengming and Zhu Yunming, had never seen the original version that was lost before they reached the age of sensibility. Their comments therefore consist more of stereotyped compliment than

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<sup>539</sup> 成化癸巳正月廿四日.

<sup>540</sup> 余嘗觀求追寫其所記憶.

sound evaluation from comparison. Both Wen and Zhu have learned painting from Shen. Their colophon expressed admiration for Shen's artistic skills which revitalized the spirit of Mi Youren's lost work, but Shen's contribution was addressed in a prudent manner, limited to "restore the original appearance" 還舊觀. However, scholar-officials coeval with Shen adopted a more radical stance. Wang Ao's colophon suggests that the owner should feel gratified since Shen Zhou "was able to recollect the old one and make a verisimilar replica" 猶能追寫彷彿. Wu Kuan's piece goes further and manifests the artistic superiority of Shen's copy over Mi's original work:

Mountains and rivers in Dayao are same as before, without any change in their nature. The old trace left by Yuanhui (Mi Youren) was not worth longing for. What is imitated by Shitian (Shen Zhou) is a more vivid representation.

大姚山水如故固不改其真彼元暉之陳迹沈君既不足戀而石田翁所做更得其似。

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Zhang Xi's colophon develops the process of executing this replica into a new story, which is different from Shen's narrative in his autographic inscription. Zhang claims that Shen has already made a punctilious copy of Mi Youren's work before it was confiscated.<sup>542</sup> The emergence of this verisimilar replica is ascribed to a "delicate arrangement by the Creator" 造物者巧於謀為, therefore the clear distinction between "authenticity" and "forgery," "loss" and "possession" was blurred.<sup>543</sup> Yang Xunji shared the similar attitude as Zhang Xi. As is mentioned before, Yang praised the handscroll as an object which was so deeply associated with Suzhou that could protect this place. Its mysterious force was not

<sup>541</sup> 大姚山水如故固不改其真彼元暉之陳迹沈君既不足戀而石田翁所做更得其似。

<sup>542</sup> 未失前嘗假以搨一過甚逼真。

<sup>543</sup> 宛然俾其舊物之在目,雖失猶不失矣。

jeopardized in Shen's manual reproduction, so "there is no need to regret for the existence or absence of the original one" 舊物之存不存可無恨也. The new handscroll, consisting of Shen's replica and autographic inscription of a new group of viewers in Hongzhi and Chenghua periods, substituted for Mi Youren's original version. The story about this collectively executed work became a so-called public anecdote (*gongan* 公案) in the circle of Suzhou literati.

## Conclusion

The textual accretion to *Dayao Village* can be read as a microhistory of the process whereby cultural significance of an artwork and the image of a city are mutually constructed through viewing practice. Handscroll can offer a physical medium for the confluence of individual accounts, as well as an unstable yet coherent visual form for collective expression of viewing experience. Personal experience that is documented and circulated with the handscroll become shared memories within local communities and may affect how handscroll was perceived and valued by successive generations of audience.

Admittedly, the images of a place, as a spatial frame for viewing acts, is rather vague in colophons which are always written in an elliptical style. However, one cannot overlook the advantage of short passage over the longer one in collective practice in cultural geography. Sheila Hones argues for this when talking about short stories.<sup>544</sup> It holds truth for inscribed texts as well. Given the limited length of colophons, writers have to make choices from numerous details pertaining viewing acts. Those deliberated selected details,

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<sup>544</sup> Sheila Hones, *Literary Geographies: Narrative Space in Let the Great World Spin* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2018).

being short and “designed to be read intensively,” are more easily engage implied audience into the settings or spatial traps established by the inscribers. Audience from different periods would be drawn to participate into the geographic-imaginative construction of a place’s image. The viewing practice of Suzhou literati should be understood as commemorative activities that make past events be part of an ongoing tradition of their hometown.

The mutual construction of local identity and artistic practice seems to echo in a host of writings in the moment of historical and cultural crisis. In early twentieth century China. The collector and connoisseur Zhang Boju 張伯駒 (1898-1982) said: “My collection is not necessarily in my own possession throughout my life. Yet they should lie on our land forever.”<sup>545</sup> Geographies of memory practice about artistic objects obtain new significance in in the prevailing discourse of nation-state.

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<sup>545</sup> 予所收藏，不必終予身，為予有，但使永存吾土，世傳有緒。

## Coda

### The Handscroll Culture and Suzhou Literati

This dissertation looks into the cultural landscape of mid-Ming Suzhou through the lens of a sizable body of handscrolls collectively executed by Suzhou literati. I use the phrase "handscroll culture" to designate the burgeoning of handscroll production and consumption from the early years of the Chenghua reign (1465-1487) through the first half of the sixteenth century. It is a period that witnessed an unprecedented development of the commercial economy and material culture. Meanwhile, this period also saw the rise of Suzhou literati and the flourishing of Wu School of art. Situating my investigation in such a sociohistorical context, I hope to reveal the multifarious links between the handscroll culture and Suzhou literati.

Adopting an interdisciplinary perspective, I want to expand our understanding of the handscroll by revealing how handscrolls were produced materially, socially, and historically. I suggest that the handscroll is better understood as both a multisensorial object and a mode of communication, rather than simply an art format of painting or a material carrier of texts. I have sought to disclose the multiple and intricate ways in which the handscroll mediated literary and artistic activities, the formation of cultural identity, and the practice of memory in mid-Ming Suzhou. As is shown in the cases discussed before, Suzhou literati has embraced the handscroll as an effective means of manifesting their voice, seizing cultural capital, strengthening shared local identity, and materializing their individual and collective memories.

Running through my research is a concern with the materiality of the handscroll, from

which the handscroll obtains the agency on its own. My inquiries into the materiality not merely include its particular physical attributes that can determine the production, preservation, and circulation of handscroll, but extend to the handscroll's entanglement with its audience and the material context where it is being appreciated. Such an approach is useful for our understanding of the multiple roles that handscrolls have played in multifarious literary communication, historiographical practice, and performance of memory.

This dissertation is divided into three parts in relation to three stages in a handscroll's cultural life. Chapter One focuses on the writing practice related to handscroll, including both collective compositions that have been assembled into handscrolls and the various genres of colophons that accrued as the handscrolls were circulated. Considering handscroll in an artifactual light, I draw attention to the material nature of a handscroll which is of no less importance than its textual nature. The writing practice is therefore understood as inscribers' conscious effort to negotiate with physicality of the handscroll. Meanwhile, the handscroll also induces a particular framework for narrative, namely, to juxtapose different versions of a story in different genres and with variant details in one handscroll and to reorganize fragmentary and trivial accounts into meaningful and coherent totality. As is shown in some handscrolls collectively produced by Suzhou scholar-officials, both the creators and audience were located into culturally defined textual space.

Chapter Two explores the complicated process of making a handscroll, from the initial stage of commissioning and designing to the stage of soliciting colophons from connoisseurs. With rich evidence gleaned from letters, diaries, and academic jottings, I have attempted to recapture the social and economic interactions involved in handscroll

production in mid-Ming Suzhou. Particular attention is paid to craftsmen, intermediaries, and art dealers. They have played pivotal roles in handscroll projects by bridging the connection between artists, writers, and patrons. I foreground these people whose contributions have long been overshadowed by scholar-officials and literati in the Confucian society of the imperial China. The last chapter addresses the issues concerning the appreciation of handscroll. A sizable body of colophons and anecdotal accounts depict handscrolls as multisensorial objects that can be perceived visually, tangibly, and even olfactorily. This chapter also discusses the distinctive spatiotemporal settings formed by handscroll which accommodate memory practice at individual, collective, and cultural levels. I argue that handscrolls function as a "site" that could engage groups of people to shared past and facilitate the exchange and transmission of memory. Some handscrolls could aggregate individual viewing practices and transform them into collective events. Such a communicative mode allowed Suzhou literati to strengthen their geographic and social ties and collectively express their shared identity.

Besides fulfilling my goal of providing a comprehensive understanding of the handscroll culture, this dissertation also presents some rarely studied poetry handscrolls, especially those created for worldly purposes such as fundraising for charitable projects or commemorating local paragons of virtue. For various reasons, literary works on these scrolls have not been included their authors' anthology. The scrolls were not only overlooked by scholars of literature who prefer printed books as reliable source, but also despised by art historians for their quotidian concerns and the lack of high-quality illustrations. However, as is shown in the case studies of Chapter 2, these handscrolls addressing social or cultural events resonated strongly in literati communities of the time

they were created. The comments from their contemporary audience and intellectual echoes demonstrate that these handscrolls on worldly topics were of no less cultural significance than those artworks which were created for art's sake and reflect refined tastes and gracefulness of elites. I have attempted to reevaluate these underrated works and to rethink the multiple roles they played in local administration and in shaping the shared regional identity. These case studies may enrich our understanding of the handscroll culture as well as the sociohistorical contexts of the late imperial China.

At the beginning of my project, I set the goal to present a detailed picture of Suzhou's handscroll culture. To the end, I hope my research does reveal some interesting and important aspects of the handscroll as one of the most distinctive formats of Chinese writing and painting. The handscroll culture and its entanglement with literati life constitute many complicated issues, such as the overlap between commemorative handscrolls and local gazetteers, and the dynamic interaction between literary schools on collaborative handscroll projects. These issues may pose some bigger questions: how should we evaluate the historiographic merits of artistic works? To what degree the material form of literary objects may shape the production of meaning? How are we to understand the dynamic relationship between materiality and memory practice? This dissertation only represents a tentative attempt to address some of these questions. I hope the handscroll culture in late imperial China will invite more scholarly attention in the future.



### List of Handscrolls Used in Dissertation

- Fan Laizong 范來宗, comp. *Yuti gaoyiyuan shibao* 御題高義園世寶, 1794-1798, rubbing from stelae, album, ink on paper, 2 vols, 29.4 x 18 cm. Harvard-Yenching Library.
- Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 et al. *Inscription in running script on Fan Zhongyan's letters* 行書跋范仲淹手札, handscroll, ink on paper, the section of the letters: 25.2x33.1cm, Suzhou Museum.
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- . *Encomium of Taoist Garment*, 1017-1021, handscroll, ink on paper, image: 34.8x47.9 cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.
- Huaisu 懷素. *Huaisu's Autobiography* 自敘帖, handscroll, ink on silk, 28.3x755 cm, Palace Museum in Taipei.
- Li Dongyang 李東陽, *Autographic Poems in Running Script (xingshu zishu shijuan* 行書自書詩卷), 1513, handscroll, ink on silk, 36.4x743.5cm, Hunan Provincial Museum.
- Li Dongyang et, al. *Retiring and Going back to Mount Wu* 吳山歸老圖卷, 1487, handscroll, ink on paper, Dafeng tang in Hongkong.
- Li Yingzhen 李應禎 (1431-1493) et al., *Linked Verse of a Giant Stone* (Dashu lianju 大石聯句), album (adapted from handscroll), ink on paper, 25.5x33.6 cm, Liaoning Provincial Museum.
- Li Yingzhen 李應禎 et al., *Viewing Giant Stone, Linking Verse and Colophons* 觀大石聯句並跋冊, 1478-1504, album adapted from handscroll, ink on paper, Liaoning Provincial Museum;
- Shen Zhou, *Qianrenshi yeyou* 千人石夜遊, 1493, handscroll, ink and color on paper, 30.1x157.1cm, Liaoning Provincial Museum.
- Mi Fu 米芾, *Poems written on Shu Silk* 蜀素帖, 1088, handscroll, ink on silk, 27.8x270.8cm, Palace Museum in Taipei.
- Wang Shizhen's 王世貞 colophon on Qian Gu 錢穀, *The Deep Beauty of Streams and Mountains (Xishan shenxiu tu* 溪山深秀圖), 1571, handscroll, ink on paper, painting: 18.9x359.8 cm, Shanghai Museum.
- Shen Zhou 沈周. *Replanting Bamboo* 移竹圖. the late fourteenth century, handscroll, ink on paper, painting: 24.5 x 98 cm, auction at Christie's in Hongkong, May 28, 2018.
- Shen Zhou 沈周. *Serenely Appreciating Potted Chrysanthemum* 盆菊幽賞圖, the late 15th century, handscroll, ink and color on paper, painting: 23.4x86 cm, Liaoning Provincial Museum.

- Shen Zhou. *A memorial for gathering donations to rebuilt the tower and aisles in Grand Guardian Chen's Shrine* 陳太保堂重建門樓廊廡化緣疏, early sixteenth century, handscroll, ink and color on paper, 33.8x301 cm, Shanghai Museum.
- Shen Zhou. *A Painting of the Southern Studio* 南軒圖, preface dates to 1449, handscroll, ink on paper, 26.8x377.9 cm, National Palace Museum.
- Attributed to Shen Zhou. *The Scroll of Eastern Plain* 東原圖卷, 1530, handscroll, ink and color on paper, 30.2x126.4 cm, Palace Museum, Beijing. Rpt in Weida de yishuchuantong tulu 偉大的藝術傳統圖錄. Ed. Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸, vol. 9, Plate 6. Shanghai: Sanlian shudian, 1989.
- Tang Yin et al., *Farewell at the Bridge of the Hanging Rainbow* 垂虹別意圖, 1508, handscroll, ink on paper, painting: 29.7x107.6 cm, Cleveland Museum of Art.
- Wang Chong 王寵. *Loan Bill in Running Script* 行書借券, handscroll, 24.2x21.2 cm, ink on paper, Zhejiang Provincial Museum.
- Wang Guxiang 王穀祥. *Scroll of Poems about Flowers (Yonghua shijuan 詠花詩卷)*, handscroll, ink on paper, poem section: 28x108cm illustration: 28x107cm, colophons: 28x37cm. Auctioned in Beijing Kuangshi, Autumn Section, 2014.
- Wao Ao 王鏊, *A Preface for Recluse Lu's Seventieth Birthday* 行楷書壽陸隱翁七十序, 1784, handscroll, gold decorated paper, 27.3x218.6cm, Shanghai Museum.
- Wang Ao, *Lu Jun's Epitaph* 陸俊墓志銘, handscroll, ink on gold-decorated paper, 26.7x262 cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.
- Wang Ao, *A lamentation for Lu Jun, in running script* 行書祭陸俊文, handscroll, ink on gold-decorated paper, 26x167.5 cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.
- Wang Ao 王鏊 et al., *Linked Verses of Drinking Together at Sharing Moon Hut, in Running Script* 行書和飲共月庵聯句, 1491, handscroll, ink on paper, 20.3x722cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.
- Wu Kuan 吳寬 et al., *Illustrated Scroll of Yuyan Pavilion* 玉延亭圖卷, handscroll, ink on paper, 24x1200 cm. Auctioned at Sungari International on June 19, 2017. See <http://www.zmsj.cc/?pro/id/1008.html>.
- Wu Kuan, et.al., *Poems in running script* 行書詩卷, 1483, handscroll, ink on paper, 41.5x108 cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.
- Shen Zhou 沈周, *Poetry Scroll of Corresponding Poems of Cushions* 蒲墩倡和詩卷, 1480-1495, handscroll, ink and color on paper, frontispiece: 29.5x95cm, painting: 29.5x84.5cm, colophon paper: 29.5x802cm, auctioned in Beijing Council, December, 2011.

- Wang Hui 王翬, *Pleasant Inclinations* 樂志圖, 1688, handscroll, ink and color on silk, 21x198 cm, Capital Museum in Beijing.
- Wang Mian 王冕 et al., *Painting of Plum Blossom* 梅花圖, 1346, handscroll, ink on paper, painting: 30.8x92.2 cm. Shanghai Museum.
- Wen Jia 文嘉, et al. *Mount Hui (huishan tu 惠山圖)*, 1524-1525, handscroll, ink on paper, painting: 23.8x101 cm, Shanghai Museum.
- Wen Jia 文嘉 et al., *Handscroll of Retaining Bamboo* (Baozhu tu juan 保竹圖卷), 1574, handscroll, ink on paper, painting: 27.1x89.8 cm, Palace Museum.
- Wen Zhengming 文徵明 et al. *Mountain Hut of Herb and Weed* 藥草山房圖, 1540, handscroll, ink and color on paper, painting: 28.3x14.8 cm, Shanghai Museum.
- Wen Zhengming 文徵明. *Promoting agriculture in Xukou* 胥口勸農圖卷, 1525, handscroll, ink on paper, Palace Museum in Beijing.
- Wen Zhengming et al, *Tea Party at Mount Hui (Huishan chahui tu 會山茶會圖)*, ink and color on paper, 21.8x67.5, Palace Museum in Beijing.
- Wen Zhengming, *Canzhuzhai tu* 參竹齋圖, 1540s-1570s, handscroll, ink on paper, Shanghai Museum.
- Wu Kuan 吳寬. *Poetry handscroll of planting bamboo* 種竹詩卷, 1494, handscroll, ink on paper, 28.2x586.2cm, Shanghai Museum.
- Wu Kuan 吳寬, *Preface for Xu, the Filial Child* (Xu Xiaotong xu 徐孝童序), 1478, handscroll, ink on paper, 27.5x512 cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.
- Xie Huan 謝環, *Elegant Gathering in Apricot Garden* 杏園雅集, circa 1437, ink and color on silk, handscroll, image: 37.1 x 243.2 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
- Zhao Jie 趙佶, *Returning boat on snowy river* 雪江歸棹圖, handscroll, ink on silk, 30.3x190.8cm, Palace Museum in Beijing.

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## FIGURES

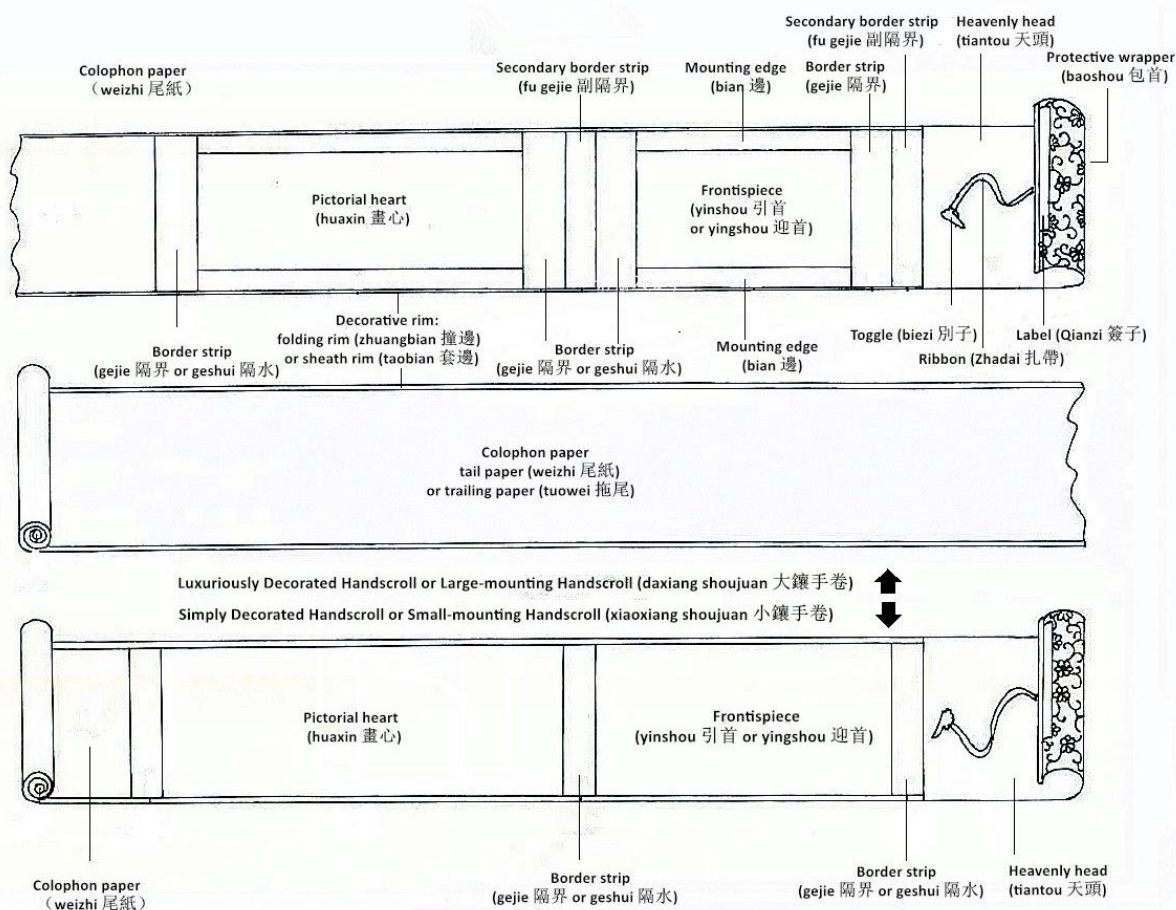


Figure 1. Structure of handscroll

Image is from Yan, Guirong 严桂荣. *Tushuo Zhongguo Shuhua Zhuangbiao* 圖說中國書畫裝裱. Shanghai: Shanghai renminmeishu chubanshe, 2005. Translated by Ji Wang

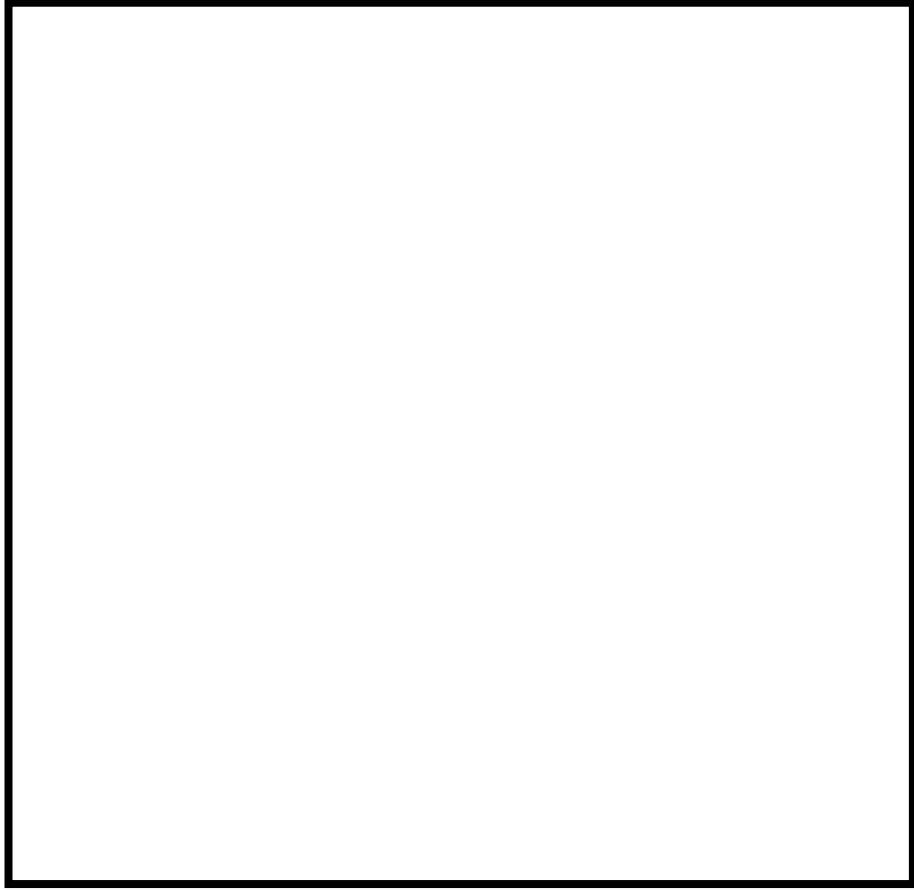


Figure 1.2

Mi Fu, *Poems written on Shu Silk* (*Shusu tie* 蜀素帖), running script, ink on silk, 1088, 27.8x270.8c., National Palace Museum, Taipei. image removed for copyright reasons.



Figure 1.3 Wen Zhengming, et al., *Tea Party at Mount Hui* (*Huishan chahui tu* 會山茶會圖), ink and color on paper, 21.8x67.5, Palace Museum in Beijing, image removed for copyright reasons.



Figure 1.4 Wen Jia 文嘉, et al. *Mount Hui* (*huishan tu* 惠山圖), 1524-1525, handscroll, ink on paper, painting: 23.8x101 cm, Shanghai Museum, image removed for copyright reasons.



Figure 1.5 Wang Mian 王冕 et al. *Painting of Plum Blossom (Meihua tu 梅花圖)*, 1346, handscroll, ink on paper, handscroll, Shanghai Museum.

(After *Zhongguo gudai shuhua tumu*, vol.2, 102-03, image removed for copyright reasons.)

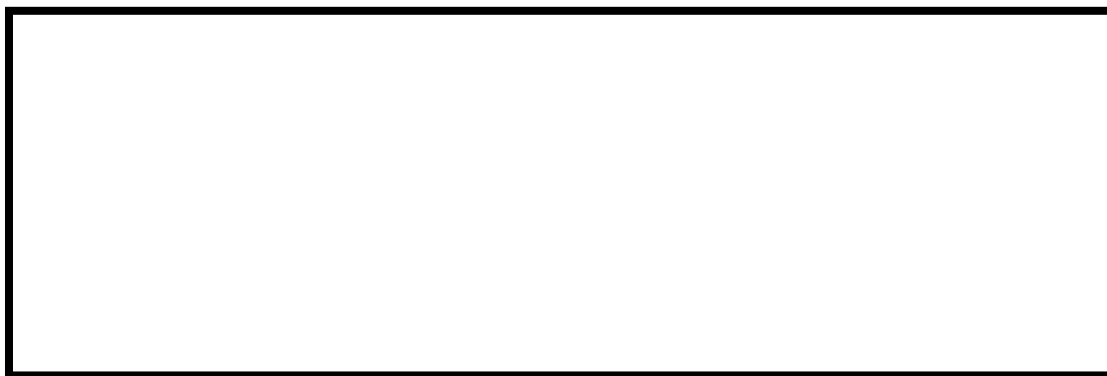


Figure 1.6 Wang Ao 王鏊 and Wu Kuan 吳寬, *Linking Couplets when Drinking Together at Hut of Sharing Moon, in Running Script 行書和飲共月庵聯句*, handscroll, ink on paper, 1491, 20.3×722cm, Palace Museum. (After *Zhongguo gudai shuhua tumu*, vol.20, 149-50, image removed for copyright reasons.)

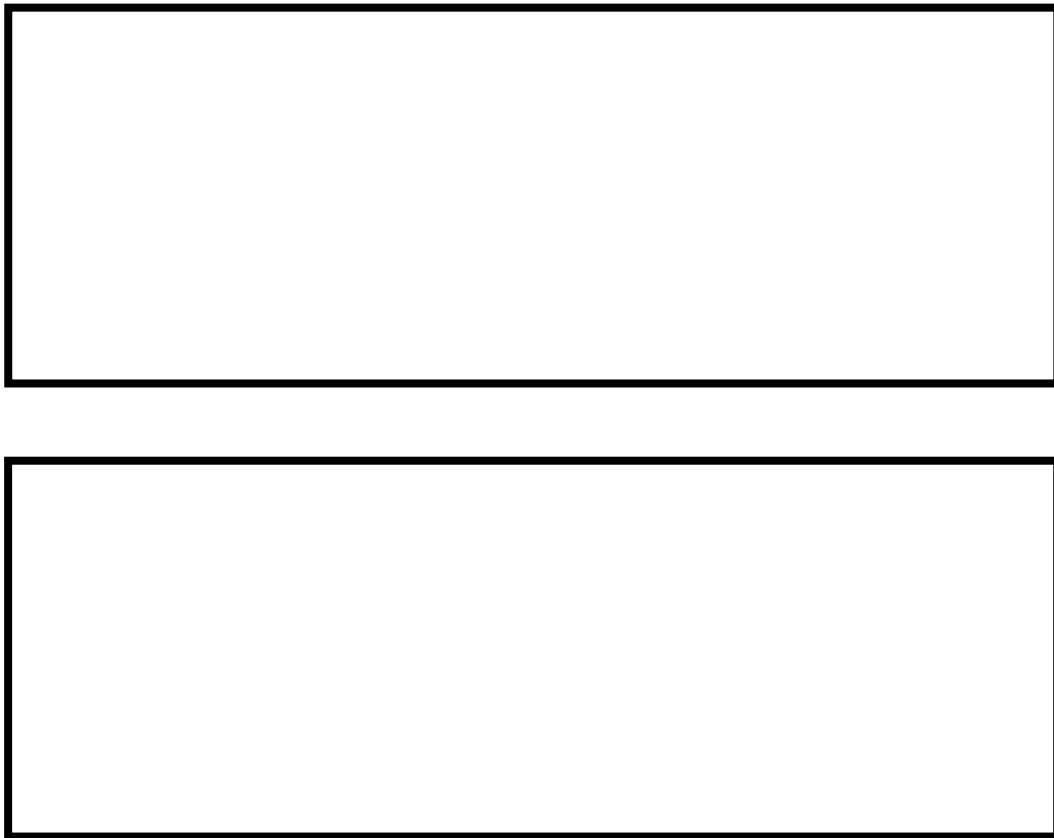


Figure 1.7

Wu Kuan, et al., *Illustrated Scroll of Yuyan Pavilion* (*Yuyanting tujian* 玉延亭圖卷), handscroll, ink on paper, 24x1200 cm. Auctioned at Sungari International, image removed for copyright reasons.

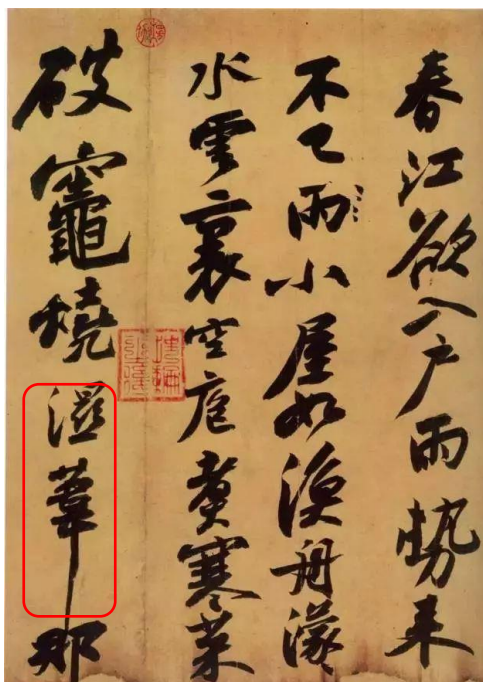


Figure 1.8 Su Shi, *Cold Food Festival* (*hanshi tie* 寒食帖), handscroll, ink on paper, main section: 34.2x18.9 cm, National Palace Museum, Taipei.

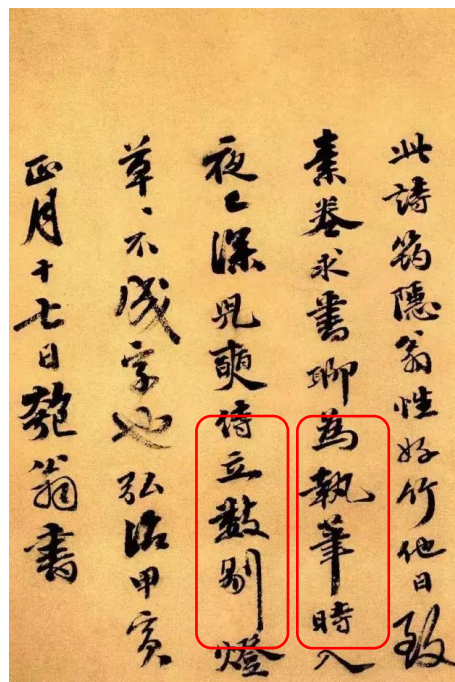


Figure 1.9 Wu Kuan, *Scroll of Planting Bamboo* (*Zhongzhu tujuan* 種竹圖卷), 1494, handscroll, ink on paper, 28.2x586.2cm, Shanghai Museum.



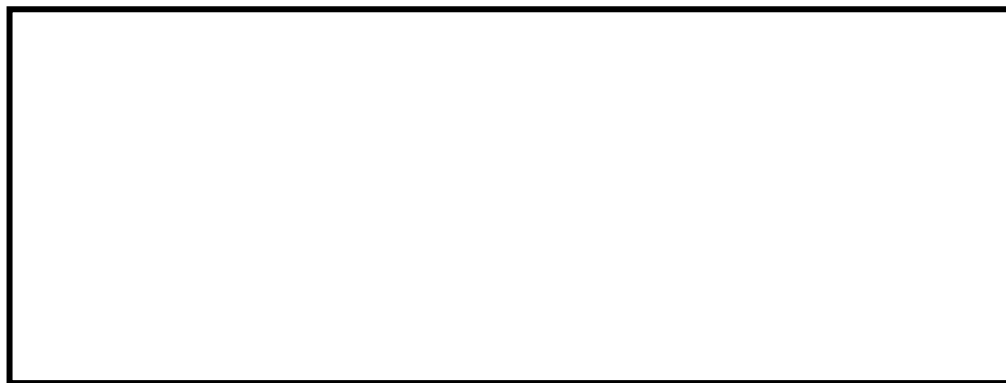


Figure 1.10 Shen Zhou 沈周. *Poetry Handscroll of Poems on Cushions* 蒲墩倡和詩卷, ink and color on paper, handscroll, frontispiece: 29.5x95cm, painting: 29.5x84.5cm, colophon paper: 29.5x802cm, private collection, image removed for copyright reasons.

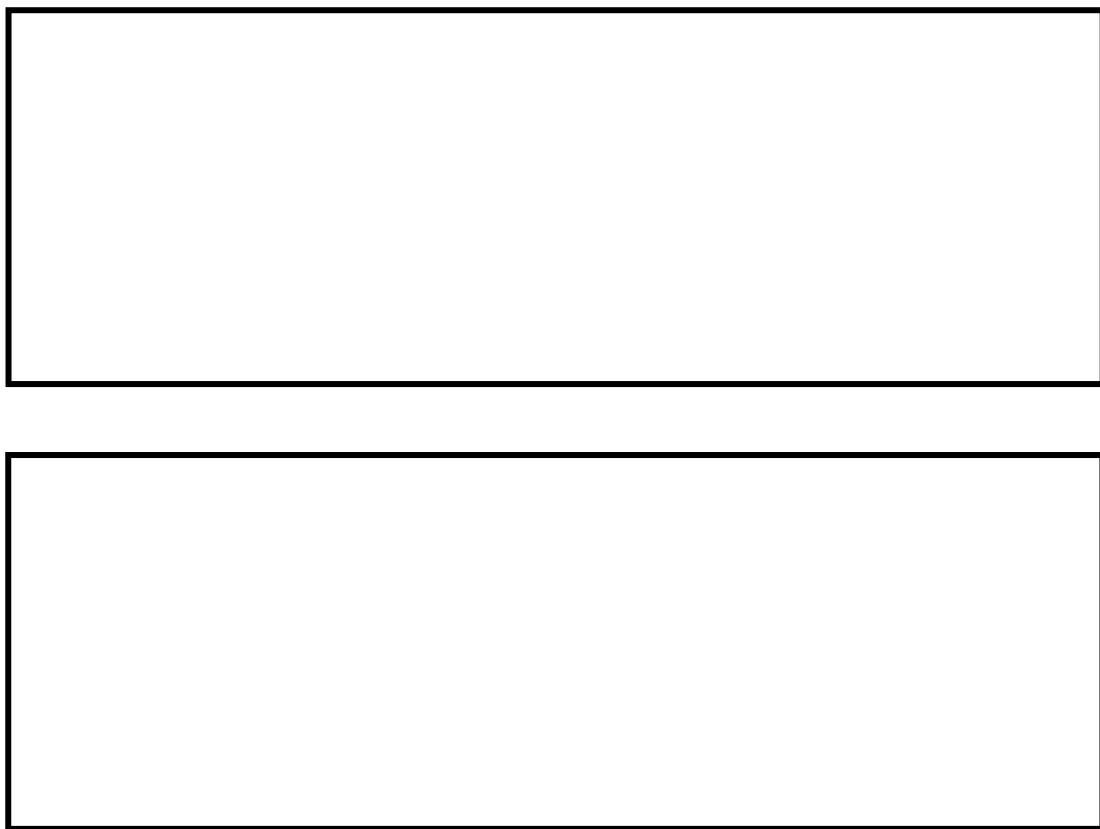


Figure 1.11 Wu Kuan, *A Preface to the Filial Child Xu* (*Xu xiaotong xu* 徐孝童序), 1478, handscroll, ink on paper, 27.5×512 cm, Palace Museum in Beijing, image removed for copyright reasons.



Figure 1.12 Wu's seal on Huaisu's 懷素 *Autobiography* (*zixu tie* 自敘帖), handscroll, ink on silk, 28.3x755 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

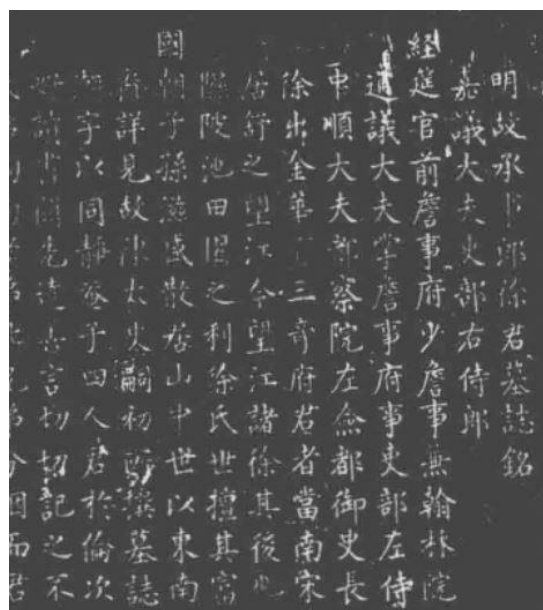


Figure 2.1 A sample of the ink rubbing of epitaph on stele.

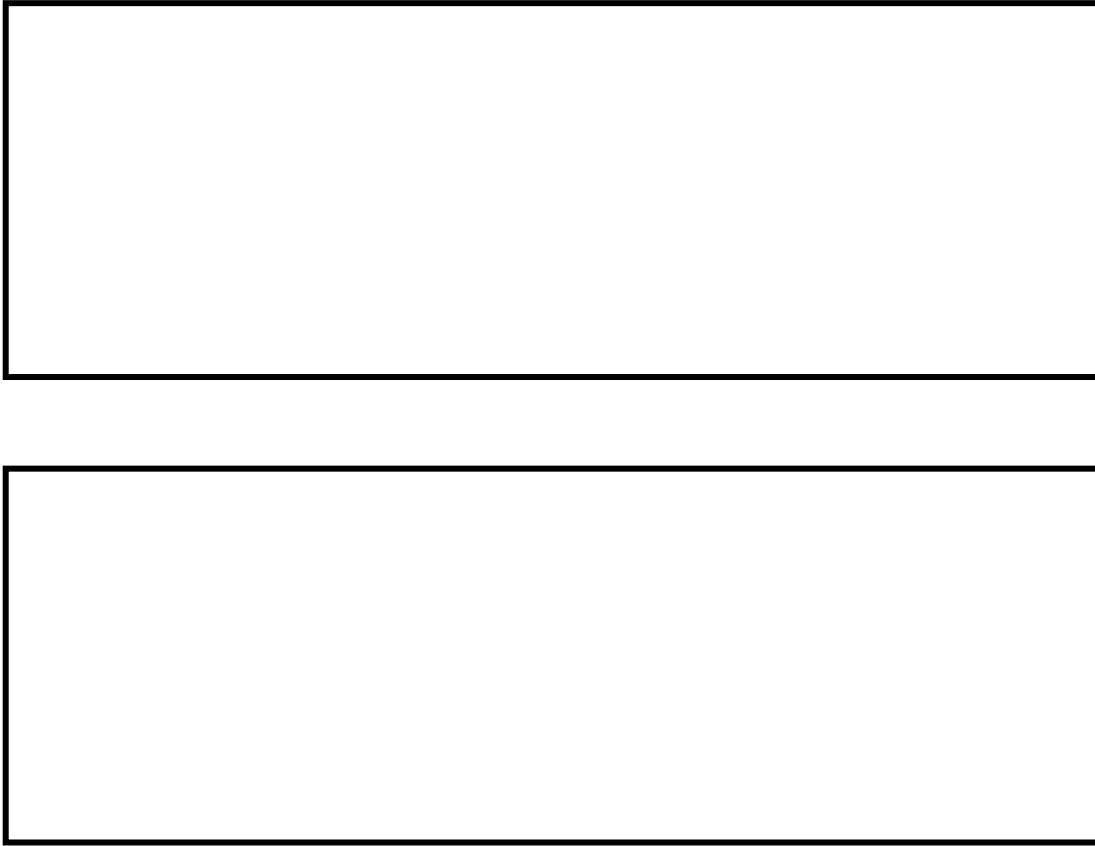


Figure 2.2 Wao Ao 王鏊. *A Preface for Recluse Lu's Seventieth Birthday* 行楷書壽陸隱翁七十序, 1784, handscroll, gold decorated paper, 27.3x218.6cm, Shanghai Museum, image removed for copyright reasons.

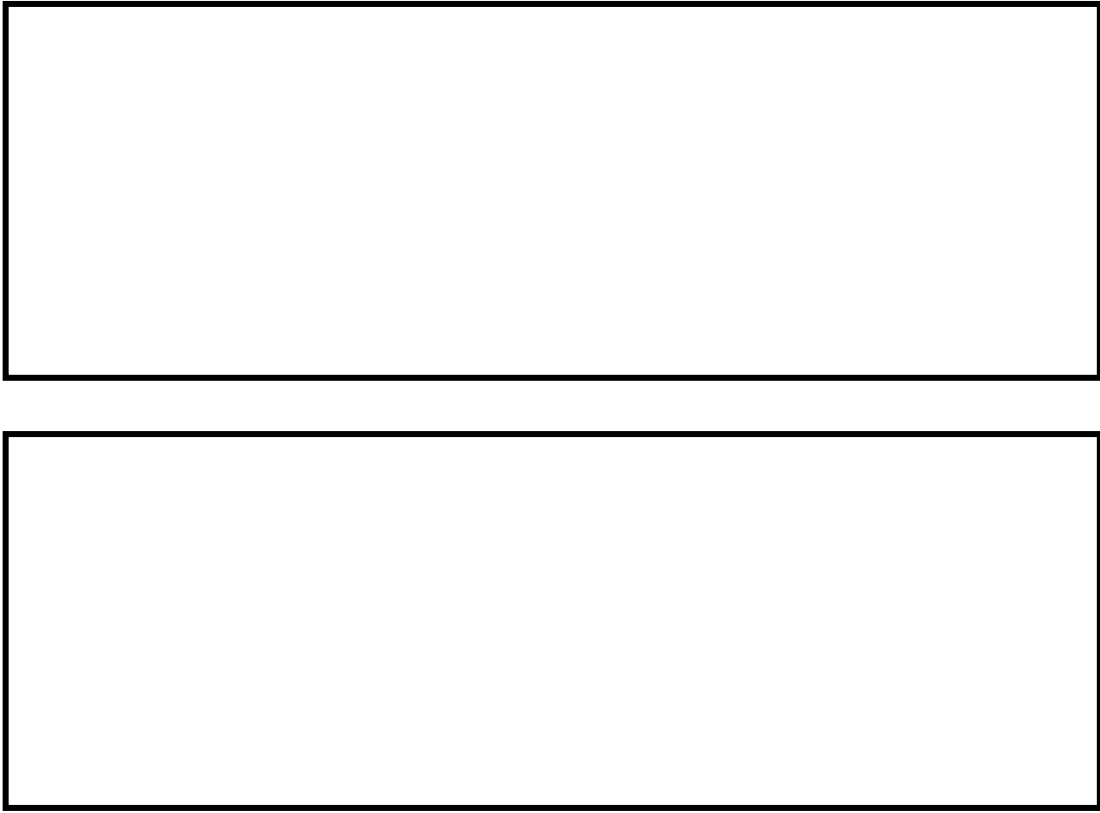


Figure 2.3 Wang Ao, Wang Ao, *A lamentation for Lu Jun, in running script* (*Xingshu ji Lu Jun wen* 行書祭陆俊文), handscroll, ink on gold-decorated paper, 26×167.5 cm, Palace Museum, images removed for copyright reasons.



Figure 3.1

Tang Yin, The Thatched Hut of Dreaming of an Immortal (*mengxian caotang* 夢仙草堂), early 16th century; handscroll; ink and color on paper, Freer Gallery of Art, image removed for copyright reasons.



Figure 3.2 Wen Jia, et al., *Handscroll of Retaining Bamboo* (*Baozhu tujuan* 保竹圖卷), handscroll, ink on paper, 27.1x89.8 cm, 1574, Palace Museum.



Figure 3.3 Attributed to Wang Guxiang 王穀祥 (1501-1568) *Poetry Handscroll On Flowers* (*Yonghua shijuan* 詠花詩卷), handscroll, ink on paper, private collection, image removed for copyright reasons. .



Figure 4.1

Sheng Zhou, *A memorial for gathering donations to rebuild the tower and aisles in Grand Guardian Chen's Shrine* 陳太保堂重建門樓廊廡化緣疏. 1500s, handscroll, ink and color on paper, 33.8x301 cm, Shanghai Museum, images removed for copyright reasons.





Figure 4.2 “Yuanhe xian chengqutu” 元和縣城區圖.

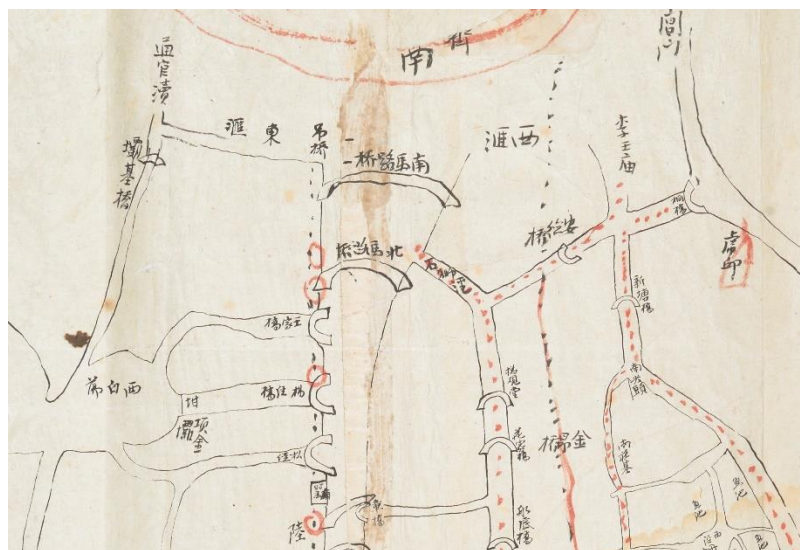


Figure 4.3

Map of Waterways Northern Suburbs of Suzhou 蘇州城北河道圖, 1863, 83x73 cm, British Library.

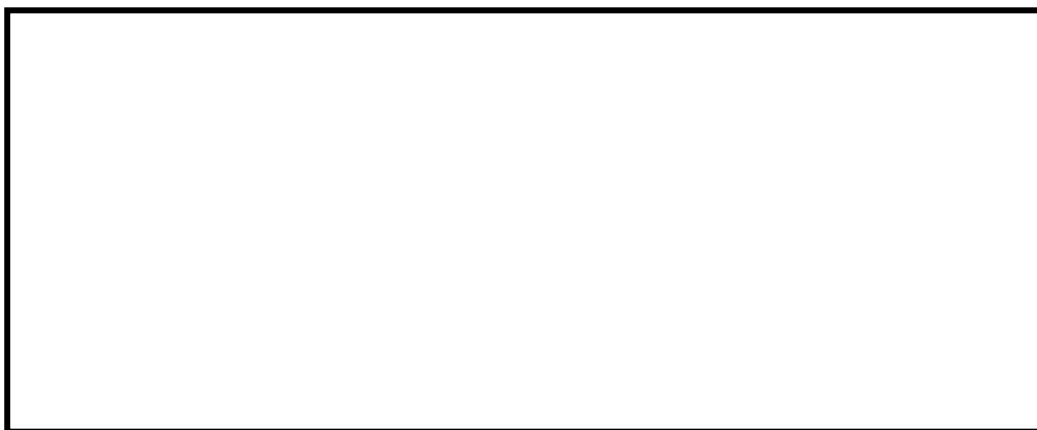


Figure 4.4 Details in *A memorial for gathering donations to rebuild the tower and aisles in Grand Guardian Chen's Shrine*, image removed for copyright reasons.

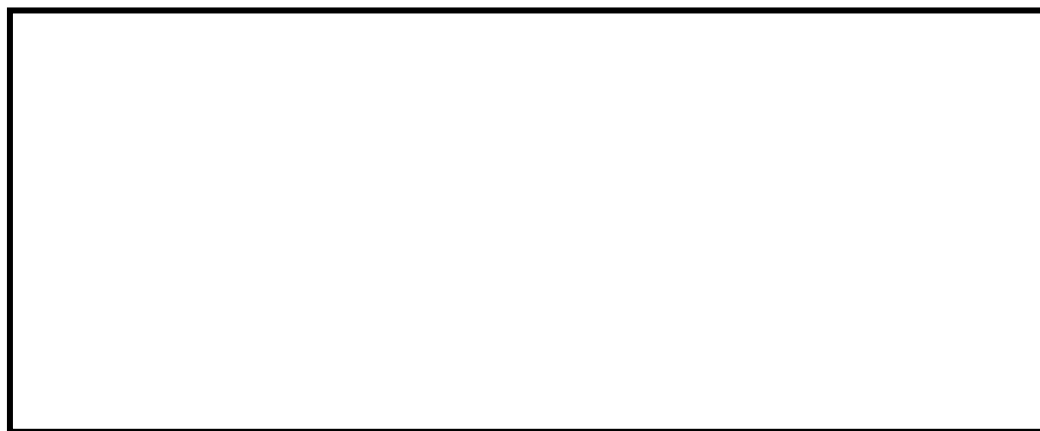


Figure 4.5

Tang Yin's colophon on *A memorial for gathering donations to rebuild the tower and aisles in Grand Guardian Chen's Shrine*, image removed for copyright reasons.

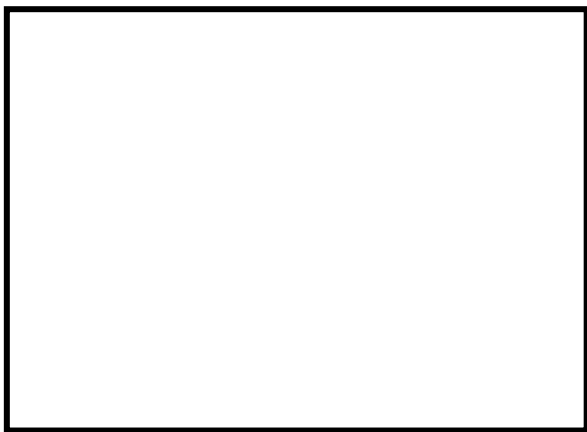


Figure 4.6

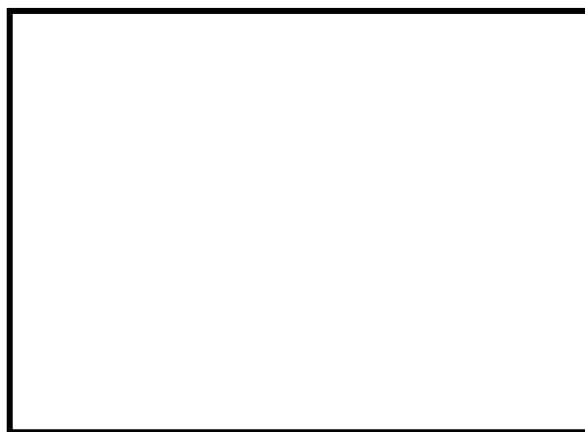


Figure 4.7



Figure 5.1 Structure of Album Leaf

(After Craig Clunas, *Art in China*, image removed for copyright reasons.)



Figure 5.2 Qiu Ying 仇英, *Appreciating Antiques in the Bamboo Courtyard* 竹院品古, album leaf, ink and color on silk, 41.4x33.8cm, Palace Museum



5.3 Wang Hui 王翬, *Pleasant Inclinations (Lezhi tu 樂志圖)*, 1688, handscroll, ink and color on silk, 21x198 cm, Capital Museum in Beijing,