

Chapter 1

The Chinese Religious and Cultural Context

How expansive is your heart,
Hills and rivers cool themselves inside. . . .
A river village with few houses,
A misty hamlet with clusters of old trees.
I know you [Sung Ti] have hidden thoughts,
I examine closely to find them.

—Su Shih

All the enlightened ones and ancestral teachers take this one true thing very seriously. . . . If this matter were in words, then it should be definable in a single statement, with no further change. Why should there be thousands and thousands of sayings imparted by enlightened adepts, with no end to them? From this we know that it is not within words, but we need to use words to illustrate this matter. Sharp-spirited people should directly comprehend this idea.

—Yüan-wu K'o-ch'in

We begin where the Kitayama Japanese monks began their training and education: with Chinese religious and cultural tradition. Members of elite Muromachi Japanese society were, like their predecessors in the Nara (710–784) and Kamakura (1185–1333) periods, fascinated with the mainland. The Five Mountains monks themselves were sinophiles, if nothing else, in their lifestyle in the urban monasteries, in their institutional basis, in their thinking and writing, and in their acculturation. In order to understand the Five Mountains interpretations of the landscape arts we must become acquainted with some of the mainland religious and intellectual traditions in which they were educated and to which they turned as their religious, intellectual, and linguistic resources.

For the present purposes I will briefly introduce two large traditions from Chinese elite culture on which the Japanese Five Mountains monks relied, Zen

Buddhism and the culture of educated scholar-officials, with an emphasis on the Sung and Yüan periods. In these centuries Chinese Zen monks and the literati shared an abiding interest in the role of textual study in spiritual and moral cultivation, but debated vigorously the nature of the best methods, the most appropriate texts, and the role of literary study, as they did the significance of the natural landscape. Many monks and nonordained elites developed syncretic integrations that accommodated and responded to each other's implicit assumptions and explicit views. These Sung and Yüan views, as we shall see in this and subsequent chapters, were in turn crucial to the Japanese Five Mountains Zen understanding of artistic practice and of the landscape.

Views in the Chinese Zen school of textual study or literary and artistic practice have varied over the centuries and among different lineages. The study of canonical Buddhist texts, such as the *Perfection of Wisdom*, the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*, and the *Perfect Enlightenment Sutra*, seems to have been important in some or even all of the earliest Zen schools during the seventh and into the eighth centuries.¹ However, the soteriological value of canonical study was at times questioned pointedly by some teachers of Zen, often when the writings or recorded sayings of the same teacher revealed a familiarity with the canonical tradition. It may suffice here to say that certainly there was some tension in the early Zen tradition with the canonical tradition, perhaps due to the struggle of the newly developing school to establish independence of rival Buddhist schools.²

By the ninth century, however, we find a clear statement of the importance of studying Buddhist canonical texts in the writings of Tsung-mi (780–841), who argues in his important *Zen Preface* (*C. Ch'an-yüan chu-chüan-chi tu-hsü*) that canonical writings were not only complementary to Zen enlightenment but that they were necessary to validate Zen insight.³ While Tsung-mi's views were not directly influential in later generations, as his line of Zen died out soon after his death, they were of interest to later generations of Zen teachers, including, as we shall see below, the Japanese Five Mountains monk Kiyō Hōshū. More generally, Tsung-mi's views represent the type of Zen that was congruent with the values of elite Chinese (and Japanese) culture in the high esteem for textual study. This attracted the interest even during his lifetime of such well-known literati as Po Chü-i (772–846) and Liu Yü-hsi (772–842), a close associate of both the famous poet Han Yü (768–824) and the landscape poet and important essayist Liu Tsung-yüan (773–819).⁴ All of these writers and government officials were involved in one or another of different literary movements seeking through various styles and means to return moral and philosophical value to literary practice, known variously as *fu-ku* or "Return to Antiquity" and *ku-wen* or "Ancient Civilization." This common interest in the religious value of texts helped bring Zen monks who valued textual study such as Tsung-mi together with educated literati elites interested in the spiritual and philosophical dimension to literary practice and other textual study

and expression. This development, perhaps first seen in the mid-T'ang, would recur again and again in Zen history, and represents the same trend in Zen history to which the Japanese Five Mountains monks belong.

Zen monks were becoming known for their poetry in the southeast and in the northern capital already in eighth century on the continent, including Ling-yi (727–62), Chiao-jan (734–c. 792), and Ling-ch'e (746–816).⁵ These monks represent an early strand of Zen that accepted the importance of studying not only Buddhist texts but also the religious, intellectual, and literary writings of non-Buddhists, and participated actively and extensively in regional elite and imperial court cultural circles. Later T'ang Zen artists are relatively well known in twentieth-century Zen studies, such as the Zen lay poet Han-shan (active late eighth to early ninth centuries) and the monk-painter, poet, and calligrapher Kuan-hsiu (832–912). We find in the former's work cultural styles that, unlike those of his predecessors, were outside of the elite tradition and that were virtually ignored by most contemporary artists. Yet we also see that the work of these artists shared a common interest in landscape themes in art with their mid-T'ang predecessors, as well as with earlier monks and lay devotees associated with other Buddhist schools, such as Hui-yüan (344–416/7), and his lay disciples, the landscape poet Hsieh Ling-yün (385–433) and the aesthetician Tsung Ping (375–443).⁶ With Kuan-hsiu and Han-shan we encounter what has come to represent the first independent tradition of Zen art in the popular twentieth-century conception of Zen. However, while appreciating Han-shan's poetry many of the Kitayama Japanese Five Mountains monks, like their Yüan and early Ming Chinese monk-poet contemporaries, seem to trace the origins of their own poetic activities back to pre-T'ang Buddhists such as Hui-yüan and the mid-T'ang Zen poetic heritage more closely associated with mainstream elite Chinese culture.

The T'ang is traditionally known among cultural and religious historians as the classical age and high point of Chinese Zen, in contrast with the Zen of the Sung and later dynasties in China and many Japanese schools. The Zen of these later periods is said in this devolutionary narrative to violate the T'ang Zen spirit by advocating study of canonical and *kōan* (C. *kung-an*) texts, being syncretic or overly emphasizing poetry, and generally possessing inferior insight.⁷ In this historical accounting the common characteristic of post-T'ang Zen, sometimes dubbed "secular" Zen, when contrasted with earlier or "pure" Zen, is often involvement with mainstream Chinese elite, metropolitan culture broadly understood. The differences between "pure" and "secular" Zen are generally described by most Japanese historians in two ways: distinctions of "pure" Zen from either the "eclectic" Zen teachings that incorporate elements of the Esoteric and other Buddhist schools or syncretic beliefs combining Zen ideals with those of Confucianism and Taoism; and those distinguishing "pure" Zen from forms of Zen involving literary or artistic study and practice.⁸

Recently Robert Buswell has reconsidered this narrative of Zen development, which he indicates derives from Sung historical texts but which has also been influential in twentieth-century historical scholarship, particularly from Japan and Euro-American scholars who have studied in Japan. He argues that Sung rather than T'ang dynasty Zen should be seen as the climax of a complex, gradual development of meditation practices, religious language and rhetoric, soteriology, and pedagogical styles. The character of the Zen of this period has been shown by Chün-fang Yü to be based in textual study and a sophisticated pedagogical program that included both Buddhist and non-Buddhist texts. Yü has argued that

Like Chu Hsi and Ch'eng I, [Ch'an or Zen masters in the Sung] liked to quote from the Classics and talk about the ancient sages as exemplary models. I was struck time and again by the Ch'an masters' ecumenical openness toward the classical Confucian and Taoist traditions . . . [for which] we can detect the same kind of loving reverence as expressed by the Neo-Confucian masters. I suggest that both Ch'an and Neo-Confucian masters regarded the classical tradition as their own heritage.⁹

This historical narrative more closely accords with the understanding of Zen history held by the Muromachi Japanese Five Mountains monks, so I have adopted it here.

By the Sung dynasty, Zen had been fully accepted into the mainstream of Chinese elite culture. Many historians believe that as a consequence in the Northern Sung (960–1126) Zen monks and laymen began to compile histories and anthologize Zen anecdotes or “encounter literature” and public cases now known popularly as *kōan*. Such Sung Zen monks as Fen-yang Shan-chao (947–1024) and Hsüeh-tou Ch'ung-hsien (980–1052) also composed poetry on various social occasions, including poems as a form of commentary for these collections. As their poems became known in other Zen temples and in elite social and cultural circles, this movement became known as “literary Zen” (C. *wen-tzu* Ch'an; J. *monji* Zen).¹⁰ The best-known Sung dynasty monks in this movement were both active at the end of the Northern Sung, Chüeh-fan Hui-hung (1071–1128), a younger contemporary and student of influential poet-official Su Shih, and the Tsao-tung (J. *Sōtō*) school monk Hung-chih Cheng-chüeh (1091–1157), whose verses would be immortalized as the core of the 1224 *kōan* collection *Record of Serenity* (C. *Tsung-jung lu*; J. *Shōyōroku*). The former provided the Japanese Five Mountains Zen monks with an important model for Zen literary practice.

With these changes the nature of the relationship between literary practice and the development of Zen insight became a subject of debate within the Sung Zen schools. The response best known in twentieth-century historical scholarship is that of Yüan-wu K'o-ch'in (1063–1135), who compiled the popular *Blue Cliff Records* based on Hsueh-tou's verse collection, and his enormously influential disciple, Tahui Tsung-kao. For different reasons both agreed that the Zen literature tradition of *kōan* collections and verse commentaries should be studied as an aid in realizing

one's own enlightenment for the way in which they reveal the mind of enlightenment of the monk who wrote or whose speech was recorded in the text.¹¹ The mind of enlightenment and insight could be found, Yüan-wu and Ta-hui agreed, in passages that were "live" (C. *huo-chu*) with this state of mind, and hence pointed the reader directly to the innate, enlightened mind of the author.¹² This emphasis on the mind in the Zen textual hermeneutic tradition closely approximates the textual hermeneutic of contemporary literati and Neo-Confucians, as we shall see shortly. In an important development, however, Ta-hui also attacked the "literary Zen" of Hui-hung and the "silent meditation" method of Hung-chih in promoting his "live words" hermeneutical tradition as the basis for what would soon become a very widely influential *k'an-hua* or "observing the phrase" meditation method. His attack on these two poet-monks helped to discredit them in the eyes of some later Lin-chi school monks, and has had continuing effects down to the present day. By way of contrast, however, Ta-hui and Yüan-wu did not oppose the study of other canonical Buddhist texts as subjects of textual study.¹³

In the Southern Sung (1127–1279) and later dynasties Chinese Zen monks quite commonly studied texts and composed poetry in different schools and throughout subsequent centuries despite this attack, just as they also continued to study canonical texts. While we may attribute this continued interest to particular soteriological positions or pedagogical methods, it was also certainly encouraged through the continued social relationships of Zen monks with highly literate, nonordained elite social groups. Indeed, from the late Northern Sung it was commonplace for Chinese Zen monks at leading monasteries not only to compose poetry but also to practice other arts conventionally associated with the literati, such as calligraphy, as well as to read widely in canonical Buddhist texts and in the non-Buddhist Chinese canonical traditions.

It was under these conditions that the early Japanese independent Zen monastic institutions first developed through the efforts of monks from both Japan and the mainland. Many of the Chinese teachers of Zen who wielded a formative influence on the Japanese Five Mountains Zen institution were active during the last half of the Southern Sung dynasty; perhaps the most important monk was Ching-sou (also Pei-chien) Chü-chien (1164–1246), whose extensive writings were collected and read widely in the Japanese monasteries. This was when numerous Japanese visitors came to the mainland in search of the teachings of the Zen sect during the last decades of the twelfth century and in the early thirteenth century. It was also at this same time that the first Chinese teachers of Zen who traveled to Japan received their training.¹⁴

The Southern Sung relationship of textual study and poetic practice to religious insight can be summarized by examining the writings of two prominent members of the Zen community in Southern Sung China, Wu-chun Shih-fan (1177–1249) and Hsu-t'ang Chih-yu (1185–1269), who were quite important for the development of the Japanese Zen tradition. Wu-chun's importance for the

Japanese tradition can be seen from his having taught¹⁵ virtually all of the most highly respected early Chinese masters to come to Japan, including Wu-hsüeh Tsu-yüan (J. Mugaku Sogen), Wu-an Pu-ning (J. Gotta Funei) (1197–1276), and Lan-ch'i (also Lau-hsi) Tao-lung (J. Rankei Dōryū), as well as one of the earliest and most important Japanese monks to study the Zen sect in China, Enni Ben'en.¹⁶ Enni used texts such as the *Tsung-ching lu* (J. *Sugyōroku*)¹⁷ that argue for the unity of Zen and the teaching schools, as did his fellow disciples from the mainland. Wu-hsueh, for example, used the *Perfect Enlightenment Sutra* (C. *Yüan-chueh ching*; J. *Engakukyō*) and the *Śūraṅgama Sutra* or *Ta-fo-ting Ching* (J. *Daibutchōkyō*) for the same general purposes that Enni used the *Tsung-ching lu*: to develop a basis for Zen teachings in terms taken from other Buddhist sects.¹⁸ As we shall see below, these same texts were the subjects of lectures by the leading early Japanese Five Mountains to the shoguns themselves, and in this sense the Muromachi monks inherited the legacy of the Southern Sung dynasty continental Zen tradition.

Their shared interest in these texts also constitutes an important similarity with the teachings of Wu-chun himself, who advocated not only the use of the *Perfect Enlightenment Sutra* but also a syncretism of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, known as the Unity of the Three Creeds (J. *sankyō itchi*).¹⁹ Another Chinese disciple of Wu-chun who played an important, formative role in the development of Japanese Zen, the monk Lan-ch'i Tao-lung, likewise taught in a manner based on three teachings syncretism. We can see that Lan-ch'i studied widely in a number of different textual traditions from his use of Confucian teachings in his relationship with the shogun Hōjō Tokiyori (1227–63).²⁰ Lan-ch'i and Wu-hsüeh both also showed awareness of the recent developments in Neo-Confucian thinking represented by the very important work of Chu Hsi (1130–1200). This awareness is reflected primarily in their study of the *Doctrine of the Mean* and *The Great Learning*, two texts that were raised from positions of little importance to the status of canonical texts by Chu Hsi, as well as in their knowledge of the Neo-Confucian writings of Chou Tun-i (1017–73).²¹ The Zen of both these Chinese masters and their Japanese disciples seems to be founded in a syncretism that did not establish a clear distinction between Zen and other teachings.

With regard to relations with literati elites, Wu-chun, Enni, and Wu-hsüeh all shared a fundamentally accommodating attitude, seen in the willingness of all three to accept the patronage of the highest secular powers in society. Wu-chun accepted the support of Emperor Li-tsung (r. 1225–74), as Enni and Wu-hsüeh accepted the support and patronage of Japanese political leaders in Kyoto and Kamakura respectively.²² Such patronage relationships not only involved financial and institutional support, but certainly led to increased social interchange between Wu-chun and his followers, with consequent pressures to participate in cultural and religious circles at court. Wu-chun's willingness to participate in court life certainly had practical benefits, but it also shows that he felt his integrity as a Buddhist leader would not be compromised by such activity in the "secular" world of court society.

An important example of the close relationship in this period on the continent between literature and Zen is that of Hsü-t'ang Chih-yü, another monk who was also patronized by the Chinese emperor Li-tsung and whose disciples likewise became central to the development of Japanese Zen. Hsü-t'ang's key role is often summarized by historians through his teaching of the Japanese monk Nampo Jōmyō (also Jōmin; 1235–1308), who returned to Japan where he founded the line of Zen known for the rigorous preservation of what is termed "pure" Zen.²³ If we inquire into the character of Hsü-t'ang's Zen, however, we find that it is often characterized by a strong interest in the composition of poetry,²⁴ one of the characteristics associated with secularized or "degenerate" Zen.²⁵ We also find among the Chinese monks who studied under Hsü-t'ang one monk who traveled to Japan, Wu-hsüeh Tsu-yüan, who we have also seen studied under Wu-chun. It is important to note that Wu-hsüeh described his own experience while studying under Hsü-t'ang in terms of achieving "verse samadhi" (*chü-yü san-mei*), a term that indicates his own literary inclinations but also those of the years he spent under Hsü-t'ang's tutelage. In their interest in achieving a Buddhist state of samadhi through writing, Wu-hsüeh and Hsü-t'ang were drawing on a Zen tradition that stretched back at least to Ta-hui in the Northern Sung. We know, for example, that Ta-hui commented on Su Shih's writing that he "always loved to read Su Shih's prose [for] he is someone who is near to achieving the Way. Even though he has not attained the Way, his 'language samadhi' (*yen-yü san-mei*) is truly close to it."²⁶

Hsü-t'ang's interest in poetry is important for understanding the character of Japanese Zen generally, and especially for the views held by the Kitayama monks, for he was a major, early proponent of poetry meetings and their commemoration in poem scrolls, which we shall see were crucial to the early Muromachi Japanese *shigajiku* poem-and-painting scrolls. We see Hsü-t'ang's interest in poetry composition in his relationship with Nampo himself, for Hsü-t'ang chose to express his farewell to Nampo on his return to Japan by assembling one of these poem scrolls. Hsü-t'ang wrote a verse that was to become famous in Japan, forty-one of his disciples wrote poems rhyming with their master's verse, and together these poems were made into a poem scroll and presented to Nampo.²⁷ Hsü-t'ang also participated in literary meetings with secular poets, and this mixing of monks and laymen on such social occasions itself became a subject of poetry and painting.²⁸ Tamamura finds that Hsü-t'ang's literary activities were only one important example of the popularity of poetry meetings during the 1260s and 1270s, a period that saw Chinese Zen literature flourish as never before. These literary meetings were widely popular among such disciples of Hsü-t'ang who traveled to Japan as Wu-hsüeh, Lan-ch'i, and Ta-hsiu Cheng-nien (1214–88) and in Japanese Five Mountains temples of both Kyoto and Kamakura throughout the fourteenth century.²⁹ As we shall see, literary meetings of monks and laity were also among the most important elements in the Japanese development of the poem scrolls of the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

In accord with the popularity of the study and practice of literature among these formative period Chinese monks, we find that they recognized the value of textual study and linguistic expression as a source of religious insight without compromising their awareness of the dangers of overdependence on words and textual study. Many Five Mountains monks admonished their disciples against literary study at the same time that they were skilled in literary expression and obviously learned in the very traditions they seemed to be prohibiting their students from studying. Lan-ch'i wrote one of the most commonly mentioned such admonitions, as did Musō Soseki, whose statement ranked his disciples into three types, with the lowest ranking reserved for those "drunk with literature." Lan-ch'i's approach to textual study became widely influential at the Kamakura temple he founded, Kenchō-ji, which was seen as a model of continental Zen and so became associated with his teachings throughout Japan. Lan-ch'i cautioned his disciples against becoming enamored of textual study, in a vein similar to that of numerous Japanese monks, most importantly Musō Soseki, whose admonition later came to be recited in many of the Five Mountains temples. Lan-ch'i wrote, "For those who practice meditation and study the Way, do not [concentrate on] the parallel prose [writing style]; you should study the living intent of the patriarchs, and not think about their dead 'capping phrases' (C. *hua-t'ou*; J. *watō*)."³⁰ Lan-ch'i followed the typical emphasis placed by Yüan-wu and Ta-hui on reading for the "living intent" in a textual hermeneutic that is centered on the realization of Buddhist enlightenment. While some have interpreted this passage to prohibit all literary study, if read carefully we can see that Lan-ch'i was steering his disciples away from some modes of reading texts, that is, "dead phrases" in the Yüan-wu formulation, and away from some styles of writing, particularly parallel prose, and toward other interpretive approaches and styles. On reading the writings of Wu-hsüeh, we find that he shared with Lan-ch'i a comparable though distinctive view of the role of language in Zen religious practice. In a discussion of writing of verse, for example, Wu-hsüeh suggested that the Zen monk should "search out the path where there is no path, search out language where there is no language."³¹ Wu-hsüeh here seems to suggest that the practitioner should use language only after having developed a nondualistic approach in which the value of language is not based on a dualistic need to use or to rely on language.

While these early monks and their Chinese teachers clearly affirmed the relevance of prose and poetic practice to Zen insight, most scholars agree that it is only with the next generation of teachers from both the mainland and Japan that the Japanese Five Mountains literary tradition truly flourishes.³² During the first quarter of the fourteenth century numerous Japanese monks traveled to the mainland, and after their return in the 1310s and 1320s many of them wrote voluminously in poetry as well as in prose while demonstrating their proficiency in such other arts as calligraphy. This cultural tradition also flourished under guidance of more Chinese monks who made their way to Japan, with poetry receiving particular encourage-

ment from the two monks Ch'ing-cho Cheng-ch'eng (1274–1339) and Chu-hsien Fan-hsien (1292–1348). Throughout we find such cautionary statements as those of Lan-ch'i and Musō, and we know that these approaches to textual hermeneutics continued into the Kitayama period from warnings to students to stay away from excessive poetic study.³³

As we can see from the above discussion of Zen textual and literary hermeneutics, the boundaries between literary study and religious practice were not as clear-cut as we might assume. This also held true in Sung dynasty Chinese traditions that to some may appear to be largely secular in orientation: poetry, prose composition, artistic expression, and even the study of history and government. As in the Zen tradition, the philosophical, moral, and religious value of the study of texts was also a hotly debated topic among literati, officials, and philosophers in Northern Sung China, most of whom took up more than one of these social roles. The Sung experienced a broad revival of interest in how to achieve the Tao or Way of past sages, and this Way was available in the view of most primarily through such texts as histories, philosophical treatises, and even poetry and poetic or artistic commentary. The general view of many in this period might be summarized in the words of an early Neo-Confucian thinker, Chou Tun-i:

Literature is that by which one carries the Way. . . . Artful (*wen*) language is a skill; the Way and virtue are realities. When someone devoted to these realities and skilled writes down [the Way], if it is beautiful, then people will love it, and it will be passed on.³⁴

Similar views were expressed by the Northern Sung literatus and close friend of Su Shih, Huang T'ing-chien (1045–1105): "In his breast there are myriad volumes, and from his brush [comes] not a speck of common spirit."³⁵ Through internalizing Chinese culture as preserved in written texts, the Sung Neo-Confucians and literati believed they could attain great spiritual heights, and we shall see later how important these views were for the Kitayama Japanese monks.

The different Sung schools of thought on how to achieve the sagely Way diverged on how to achieve their goal: what texts to read, what interpretive approaches to use, and what to do with the knowledge gained: serve in government, express oneself in prose or poetry, or teach. In the twentieth century the Sung has become known primarily for the Confucian revival sometimes called Neo-Confucianism and associated with Chu Hsi, yet these Confucian thinkers made up only one of several groups active and they did not come to dominate Chinese philosophy and state policy until later. Other movements were what might be termed Sung Learning,³⁶ which would include those involved in the broad Confucian revival without limiting it to the orthodox lineage of Neo-Confucian thinkers established by Chu Hsi; the *ku-wen* or Ancient Civilization movement, led by the literati official Ou-yang Hsiu (1007–72) and his influential student Su Shih; and the newly defined literati movement among officials and amateur artists, poets,

and calligraphers, for whom Su Shih and members of his circle are the primary spokespersons. Although there was overlap in memberships among these here very broadly defined movements, each can be distinguished fairly clearly in their values and practices.

While generally agreed on the importance of textual study generally, one issue on which these Sung groups divided is the spiritual and moral value of literary practice, which was largely opposed by the Neo-Confucians and many members of Sung Learning but generally supported by proponents of the Ancient Civilization and literati groups. Because of later success by the Neo-Confucians in establishing a state orthodoxy, the views of the other movements on this topic have been somewhat obscured in the scholarship.³⁷ As a result, the Sung Learning and Ancient Civilization movements have been neglected, while the literati movement has been treated by historians not as a literary, intellectual, or philosophic tradition but primarily as a movement of painters and calligraphers. As Peter Bol has pointed out, however, cultural accomplishment was central in the Northern Sung and later dynasties to social prestige, education, and advancement in political office, and it was also held by Ancient Civilization and literati thinkers to be a deeply meaningful means of realizing the Way of the universe.³⁸ As we might expect, what was at stake in these debates over the best way to realize the Way was much more than the role of literature narrowly defined: textual study and cultural practice were the most common means of linking learning, values, and social practice. In this way culture was very much entangled with the establishment of moral authority, access to political and especially governmental power, and the believability of truth claims by those who could argue they best represented the prestige of the vaunted past. While the views of Ou-yang Hsiu and Su Shih may have ultimately lost in these debates on the continent, the Japanese Five Mountains monks found such conceptions of literature in many ways the most congenial for their own interests and purposes as they negotiated their way through the tangled relations of culture with morality, power, and spiritual truth. Because these views laid important groundwork for the early Muromachi Five Mountains monks, I here introduce some of their central features.

The most important criterion for judging the value of literary expression for members of the Ancient Civilization movement was not the mastery of a particular style or the ability to make appropriate allusions, but the degree to which it expressed the Way (*C. Tao*) of the ancients.³⁹ Moral cultivation of the writer led to an understanding of this Way, which in turn was manifested in an individual's literary expression. Many Sung proponents of the Way in literature followed Liu K'ai's (947-1000) lead in arguing that in literature, as in morality, the inner character and spiritual self-cultivation of the writer were the most important elements.⁴⁰

For Ou-yang Hsiu, the Way of the ancients was pursued through both the study of the classics, study that led to moral self-cultivation, and the development of a good writing style. This process, Ou-yang wrote, centered on the individual's

ability when reading the classics to understand the intention or ideas (*i*), and the effect this process had on the individual's mind:

Those who learn ought to make the classics their teacher. To make the classics their teacher they must first uncover their ideas. When the ideas are apprehended the mind will be settled. When the mind is settled their Way will be pure. When the Way is pure then what will fill [them] up inside will be real; when what is filling them up inside is real then what is expressed as *wen* [literature or culture] will be dazzling.⁴¹

Ou-yang Hsiu's theory of self-cultivation also stressed the inner state of mind as the basis for spiritual insight:

When something is reflected in water, if the water is agitated the image will be blurred. But if the water remains still then the smallest detail will be discernible. As for men, who rely upon their ears to hear and their eyes to see, . . . [i]f a person can keep his senses from being dazzled and agitated by external things, then his mind will remain still, and if his mind remains still, then his understanding will be clear. Thereafter, as he praises what is right and finds fault with what is wrong, he will be correct in everything he does.⁴²

Judgment depends on one's inner state, Ou-yang argued, specifically on the achievement of mental quietude. Once this state is reached, then moral judgment will be perfected, and the Way of the ancients will be realized in all activity.

Ou-yang's theory of reading was also a theory of writing: when the student discovered the ideas of the ancients in the texts he read, his own mind would become settled, and so his inner self would be expressed through writing (*wen*) in a worthy manner. Like the study of the classics, for Ou-yang Hsiu the reading and writing of poetry centered on the author's idea (*i*) in the literary work as it expressed the mind (*hsin*). Some indication of his views on this subject can be gathered from a discussion of meaning in poetry with his good friend, the poet Mei Yao-ch'en (1002-60). Of the two criteria Mei held to be necessary for the best poetry, Ou-yang seems most interested in the "inexhaustible meaning which exists beyond words."

[Mei Yao-ch'en] once said to me [Ou-yang Hsiu], "Though the poet may emphasize intention (*i*), it is difficult to choose the proper diction. . . . He must be able to depict a scene that is difficult to describe in such a way that it seems to be right before the eyes of the readers and to express inexhaustible meaning which exists beyond the words—only then can he be regarded as great. . . ." I said, "But what poems illustrate 'depicting a scene that is difficult to describe' and 'expressing inexhaustible meaning'?" [Mei Yao-ch'en] replied, "The author achieves it in his mind (*te yu hsin*) and the reader understands it through the intention."⁴³

Mei emphasized that it was the mind where the poet must grasp what he wanted to express in his poetry if he was to express it well in writing, and the reader must in turn understand the meaning for himself by engaging with (*C. hui*) the intent of the author. We will see in chapter 3 a similar theory of poetic interpretation in the writings of the Japanese monks.

When considering the importance of Ancient Civilization theories for the Kitayama Japanese, it is important to note that Ou-yang's conception of literature centered on the classics and on prose, and not primarily on the composition of poetry. As opposed to the widely accepted moral and social worth of public prose, the value of poetry was a disputed topic in Northern Sung theories of literary interpretation.⁴⁴ In reaction against the writings of the Hsi-k'un school of poetry, many of the early Sung Ancient Civilization writers conceived of prose as the appropriate vehicle for expression of the Way, turning to poetry rarely or only in their less serious moments.⁴⁵ A clear distinction in Ou-yang's conception of literature can be seen between those prose genres associated with government or other activity in the public domain and poetry, together with informal prose genres such as the preface (*C. hsü*) and the account (*C. chi*).⁴⁶ These more personal and informal types of literature were precisely those that most interested the Kitayama Japanese in the documents we are to consider, however, and we must examine the reasons for this.

The poetry of the Northern Sung is often characterized in terms of a lyricism that tended not to themes of sorrow, but to a transcendent joy and carefree simplicity.⁴⁷ For Ou-yang Hsiu, poetry and other personal literature were often written at times of exile from government, when Ou-yang found a source of value outside the structured, hierarchical world of society, society being the proper realm for the Confucian enactment of the Way.⁴⁸ Ou-yang complained of those poets who lamented their distance from the capital and the moral fulfillment of government service,⁴⁹ and instead transformed through his writings this lifestyle into a source of pleasure and fulfillment. In these lyrical writings, such as his well-known "Record of the Old Drunkard's Pavilion," Ou-yang reveled in his dissolute life in exile, a dissolution that, however, was still grounded in Confucian theories of the happiness of the minister for his subjects.⁵⁰

With the writings of Ou-yang's student, Su Shih, we encounter a conception of transcendence in both his poetry and prose freed from conditions of exile or government service. As Su wrote in his famous "Record of the Pavilion of Transcendence," written during his banishment to remote Mi-chou, "Where could I go where I would not be happy?"⁵¹ Unlike Ou-yang Hsiu, Su carried this transcendent attitude not only from the capital into exile, but on his return to government from the hinterlands of the empire.⁵² In his lyrical prose as well as in his poetry we see Su reveling in the playful transcendence of an individual freed from the burdens of the world. As we might imagine, this unobstructed and playful attitude held much appeal for Chinese Zen masters, and this was also the poetry of Su that the Kitayama monks found most appealing, appearing again and again in their inscriptions on paintings.

Of more general significance was Su's development of transcendent value without dependence on government service, always under threat of banishment or exile, combining spiritual cultivation with cultural practice and political involvement. As Peter Bol has pointed out, this model provided individuals in later dynasties a philosophy for participating in a political system while maintaining their own moral integrity and independence, and a powerful means of coming to terms with the inevitable tensions between political power and moral authority.⁵³ Moreover, the literary study and practice of Su and other poet-officials from earlier dynasties, such as T'ao Ch'ien and Po Chü-i, provided later literati scholars and poets with a philosophy for establishing the moral, spiritual, and other enduring value of their own identity without being forced to rely solely on the traditional means for members of elite social strata of government service. This became in turn a central value underlying Chin and Yüan dynasty changes in the social role of the literati, as we will see below. The Japanese Five Mountains monks looked to Su, the earlier poet-officials, and the Yüan literati in supporting their own conceptions of the central role of culture in the practice and propagation of enduring religious value outside of their roles in the meditation hall and master-disciple encounters. The general importance of cultural study and practice suggests that we in the twentieth century might recognize the important place in East Asian culture of this period of culture as much more than a decorative art, but as a major venue for the learning, discovery, and perpetuation of deeply important personal and universal values and meaning.

One of the most important literary genres in which the spiritual value of cultural practice is seen is in the development of a new genre of literature, the painting inscription. Su Shih, together with his close friend Huang T'ing-chien, was also a central figure in the establishment of painting inscriptions as an acceptable poetic subgenre in court literature. Many of Su and Huang's inscriptions were poems rather than prose, and the subgenre came to be known as "poems on paintings" (*C. t'i-hua shih; J. daigashi*).⁵⁴ In these poetic inscriptions Su and Huang together developed an argument for the value of painting equal to that of poetry. The substance of this argument reveals a number of assumptions about how both poetry and painting were valued and interpreted in the Northern Sung, assumptions that were to form the basis for the interpretation of paintings through later centuries on the mainland as well as for the establishment of the *shigajiku* scrolls in Japan.

In eleventh-century mainland theories of painting are found arguments for changing the status of painting as an art from that of a craft done by professionals to that of an art suitable for literati and equal in status to poetry and calligraphy. Su Shih and Huang T'ing-chien effected this change to a status close to that of poetry largely through borrowings from poetic theory.⁵⁵ For the present purposes I can summarize Su and Huang's argument for the new value of painting in terms of two central points: an attack on painting by professionals as not really being "true" painting;⁵⁶ and the assertion that "true" painting consisted in art that upheld the

same values as poetry and, most often, was in fact done by amateur poet-painters.⁵⁷ Since we can uncover in this discussion a number of assumptions underlying the combination of poetry with painting in the Kitayama Japanese poem-and-painting scrolls, let us examine them briefly.

A common way that Su Shih characterizes the "true" painter was in terms of a poet who also painted, and for Su the best painting since the time of the ancients was also by poets. We see this view in a poem he inscribed on a painting by Li Kung-lin (1049-c. 1105):

Since ancient times, painters have not been common men,
 Their miraculous visualizations of reality are produced the same way as
 poetry.
 The retired scholar Dragon Vision [Li Kung-lin] is originally a poet,
 And caused thunderbolts to crash on Dragon Pond.⁵⁸

The verse alludes to a Tu Fu poem that recorded that thunder, a sign of excellence, was heard at the imperial Dragon Pond when a painter painted a favorite horse. The conceptions of art in Su's evaluation of painting were shared by Ou-yang Hsiu and other Ancient Civilization practitioners' conceptions of literature as a means of self-cultivation: the interest in replicating the cultural activities of the ancients; the moral character of the artist; and the interest in reality in literature. For Su Shih the prime example of a great poet who was also an accomplished painter was Wang Wei (701-61), who was known in the Sung and in Kitayama Japan for his landscape paintings in addition to the poetry that Su admired so much. Su's comments on the work of Wang Wei identifying his painting with his poetry was to be referred to again and again by later generations:

Savoring Mo-chieh's poems,
 one finds paintings in them;
 Contemplating Mo-chieh's paintings,
 one finds poems in them.⁵⁹

A similar notion is found in the popular expressions, originating most likely with Huang T'ing-chien, that associate poems and paintings, characterizing paintings as "poems without voices" (*wu-sheng shih*) and poems as "paintings with voices" (*yu-sheng hua*).⁶⁰ Through such explicit identification with poetry by these influential literati, calligraphers, and poets who themselves apparently dabbled in painting, painting began to take on a status equivalent to that of poetry and calligraphy in the artistic as well as spiritual practice of the scholar.

In later centuries this close relationship between painting and poetry led to the appearance in the Sung, Chin, and especially in the Yüan dynasty of paintings illustrating lines to well-known poems of ancient classics, such as the *Book of Poetry*, of T'ang masters of poetry like Tu Fu and Wang Wei, of Su Shih himself, and of early recluse poets such as T'ao Ch'ien⁶¹ (fig. 1.1). Examples of these



Fig. 1.1. T'ao Ch'ien's "Homecoming." Handscroll. Ink and light color on silk. 34.6 x 566.4 cm. 14th century. © Cleveland Museum of Art, 1996. Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Fund, 1982.152. Detail.

paintings are numerous, but it is important to note that the identification in the Northern Sung of painting with poetry contributed to the popularity of poetic subjects, as opposed to themes taken from history or the classics. This type of painting became popular in Japan during the years when the *shigajiku* poem-and-painting scrolls were first being created, and they signal a growth of interest in the identity between painting and poetry among the Japanese Five Mountains monks.

The interest of Su Shih and later literati in the enduring spiritual and moral value of cultural production helped determine their aesthetics and artistic interpretive approach. We can see this in their painting inscriptions, where their interpretations show an abiding interest in the moral character and personality of the artist.⁶² If the reading of poetry had increasingly become centered around an interest in the inner character of the poet, the identification of painting with poetry aroused the interest of the viewer of a painting in the character of the painter. We see such an interest in an inscription by Su Shih on a landscape painting by Sung Ti (c. 1015–c. 1080):

How expansive is your heart,
 Hills and rivers cool themselves inside. . . .
 A river village with few houses,
 A misty hamlet with clusters of old trees.
 I know you have hidden thoughts,
 I examine closely to find them.⁶³

We can see a shift in the underlying approach to painting in Su's lack of interest in the rural images of the painting, an interest that Egan notes was characteristic of earlier poems on paintings.⁶⁴ Instead, in his careful examination of the painting Su was primarily interested in what the art object revealed about the mind or heart (*hsin*) and the innermost thought and character of the painter. Like Mei Yao-ch'en's reading of poetry and Ou-yang Hsiu's reading of the classics, we see that, as the locus of the moral character and innermost nature of the artist, the mind is again at the center of the interpretive act.

Another indication that conventions of painting interpretation closely follow the conventions of reading poetry and other texts discussed above is found in Su Shih's praise for the following comment by the landscapist Chu Hsiang-hsien (active c. 1094–1100), "I write to express my mind and paint to send forth my ideas, that is all."⁶⁵ Here Su Shih approved of Chu's explicit correlation of the importance of mind in literature with an emphasis on idea (*i*) in painting. As we saw above in the literary theory of Ou-yang Hsiu, Mei Yao-ch'en, and Su Shih, writing and reading centered on the expression and interpretation of the author's mind behind the meaning of the text. In the Muromachi Zen painting inscriptions, we will find closely comparable language, assumptions, and interests as seen in these Sung passages.

Su developed his emphasis on the mind and idea or intention and applied it specifically to art in a manner not seen in earlier Ancient Civilization writers.⁶⁶ The deeply spiritual and philosophical significance of this emphasis can be seen in his description of the process leading to the "lodging of his mind" (*yü-i*) in an art object. For the artist to do so, according to Su, he or she must attain a high level of concentration through immersion in creative activity that allows the artist to achieve a high level of freedom and spontaneity.⁶⁷ Significantly, this state of mind is described in terms of the sages who have mastered the Way taken from Taoist and Buddhist religious texts.⁶⁸ In one passage describing a friend's study, the Drunk on Ink Pavilion, Su quotes the *Chuang-tzu* to describe this state: "You say you find 'supreme happiness' in doing calligraphy/ It makes you feel you are "rambling free and easy' / You've built a hall and named it 'Drunk on Ink.'" . . .⁶⁹ "Supreme joy" and "rambling free and easy" are important concepts in the *Chuang-tzu* to be discussed in the final chapter of the present work, and their usage here in a response to a friend's study is very much like the practice of the Japanese Five Mountains monks. We can see Su's specific reference to Buddhism when he encourages a monk friend of his to keep up his calligraphy practice for its ability to help release Buddhist wisdom in him.⁷⁰

Similar theories of artistic interpretation were held by a number of painters and theorists whose views were to be influential in Kitayama Japan. Mi Fu (1052–1107), a painter and calligrapher friend of Su, praised his son Mi Yu-jen's (1086–1165) painting as having "grasped the idea" (*te ch'i i*). This quality, Mi argued, made his son's art better than that of a T'ang dynasty minister, who was

reputed to be good at painting the intention of clouded mountains.⁷¹ The inner, subjective significance of art, including the landscape arts, lay at the center of Sung literati interpretations of painting, as it did in their textual hermeneutic.

The subjective significance of art was often associated in Sung theories of art with the character of the painter as it was expressed in painting, as we saw in Su's inscription on Sung Ti's landscape. One influential statement of this principle is found in the aesthetic writings of Kuo Jo-hsu (dates unknown [d.u.]), a late-eleventh-century contemporary of Su Shih:

I have . . . observed that the majority of the rare works of the past have been done by high officials, talented worthies, superior scholars or [recluses living in] cliffs and caves. . . . Their elevated and refined feelings have all been lodged in their paintings. Since their personal quality was already lofty, their "spirit consonance" (*ch'i-yun*) could not but be lofty.⁷²

The painter lodges his feelings in the painting, and this expression of the painter is what the viewer looks for in interpreting the significance of the artwork.

This emphasis on spiritual development and the moral character of the artist in Sung interpretations of painting can be seen also in a growing aversion to formal representation in painting.⁷³ As Ronald Egan has shown, the model established by Su and Huang for treatment of painting in verse inscriptions was less concerned with the relationship of the painted image to reality than with the relationship of painterly representation to art history and to poetry. This distinguishes their views from those of Tu Fu, the only major literary figure to have written many inscriptions on paintings before the eleventh century.⁷⁴ Su's views on formal likeness in painting again makes explicit the parallel of painting with poetry:

If anyone discusses painting in terms of formal likeness,
His understanding is close to that of a child. . . .
There is one fundamental rule in poetry and painting:
Innate genius and fresh originality.⁷⁵

Stated in such strong terms, Su's interest in the expression of the artist beyond formal likeness was to influence centuries of painting theory both on the continent and abroad in Japan and elsewhere.

We see this influence in an important Zen monk in the "literary Zen" movement who was acquainted with Su Shih and was known to the Japanese Five Mountains monks: Hui-hung. Hui-hung quoted this poem above after noting that Su said, "The skillful painter paints intention (*i*) and does not paint form (*hsing*); the skillful poem speaks intention and does not speak the name."⁷⁶ In my discussion in chapter 5 on the Kitayama monks' views of artistic illusion, we will find how important these views of Su and Hui-hung were in the Southern Sung, particularly in the writings of the poet Ch'en Yü-i (1090–1138), and how the Japanese monks

adapted them to their own purposes. Here it is sufficient to note that the aversion to formal representation in painting of Su and later writers, including Zen monks, is closely associated with the interest in artistic interpretation in discovering the state of mind, moral character, or intention (*i*) of the artist as it enacts a potentially high state of religious insight. These same developments can be found in the origins during this same period of new subjects in Zen and literati painting such as the plum and bamboo, subjects that became important precisely because of their emphasis on moral character and the internal state of mind. It is important to note that, for example, the subject of the plum originated in interactions of Zen monks, in particular the monk Chung-jen and also Hui-hung, with literati fleeing the political turbulence of the late Northern Sung dynasty, showing the centrality of exchange between Zen monks and nonordained literati in the development of Sung culture.⁷⁷

The Sung emphasis on the artistic expression of the painter's mind or inner intent at the expense of formal likeness should not be misunderstood as betraying a solipsistic or subjectivistic orientation.⁷⁸ The expression of a painter's personality in eleventh-century Chinese painting was, in contrast with a Romantic emphasis on private feelings, more a matter of personal character, encompassing both sentiments and the moral maturity whose development was central to the process of self-cultivation touched on above. Character and sentiments were conceived of not as unrelated to the outside world or unavailable to others, however, but as fundamentally connected to the external world and available to the perception of others in important ways.

For the Sung literati and Zen theorists of painting, then, an interest in the expression of inner truths in painting did not conflict with the expression of the truth of the object depicted. Su Shih's famous comments on Wen T'ung's (1019–79) bamboo is just such a statement of the relationship of inner moral truth with the truth of the objective world:

The artisans of the world may be able to create the forms perfectly, but when it comes to principle (*li*), unless one is a superior man of outstanding talent one cannot achieve it. In bamboos and rocks, and withered trees, [Wen T'ung] can truly be said to have grasped their principle. . . . In the roots and stems, joints and leaves, in what is sharp and pointed or veined and striated, there are innumerable changes and transformations never once repeated; yet each part fits in its place, and is in harmony with divine creation and accords with men's conceptions. Is it not because of what the accomplished scholar has lodged in it?⁷⁹

The highest accomplishment in art for Su captures the principle of its subject in a way that expresses not only man's intention but also accords with universal creative processes. Such art is possible only for men of the highest moral cultivation, for not only must they have progressed to an understanding of the principle of things, they must also be able to act it out in creative expression.

When expressed in art, the inner state of the individual and the inner perception of objective truths of his subject were not only "lodged" in the art object, Sung and later critics believed, but were also apparent to their audience in the act of interpretation. The assumption in these interpretive theories that an artist's inner state is available to others in creative expression is a long-standing assumption of Chinese artistic theory.⁸⁰ We have seen this assumption also in Sung theories of self-cultivation, for example, in the belief central to the Ancient Civilization movement that the classics could provide the basis for an understanding of the intent (*i*) or mind (*hsin*) of the ancients. As in textual study, the appreciation of an art object provided a means to acquire knowledge of the innermost moral and spiritual states of their contemporaries and also a means to realizing an understanding of the heights of religious self-cultivation achieved by the sages of ancient times.

This sense of deep interpersonal understanding provided not only a basis for the importance of tradition and the writings of the ancients, it also established the human community as an essential social basis for generalized claims to understanding universal truths common to all human experience.⁸¹ Establishing a human community that bridged the centuries was the foundation for the abiding interest in recovering the Way of the ancients common to the different intellectual movements of the Sung, for the Way was found in the actions and writings of the ancient sages. Textual study was of course central to this project for the Neo-Confucians and members of the Sung Learning movement. Like proponents of the Ancient Civilization and literati positions, for the Neo-Confucians the mind was central to the process of understanding the texts of the ancients and so also to the building of human relations across the centuries and within one's own community. Chu Hsi comments on how to proceed in the study of the texts of sages:

Responding to things, handling affairs, and so on, are similar to studying literature. If we drill and polish ourselves in the principles of things and studies, our minds will naturally be penetrating. [In] reading, for example, . . . even after a great deal of thought, we cannot see through to the real meaning. . . . In a case like this . . . repeated effort will find a way to go through. To go through means that the mind penetrates.⁸²

By honing the mind to recognize the principle (*li*) so important to Neo-Confucian ontology and morality and expressed by the ancients in textual study, the individual may reach the highest level of spiritual achievement and also truly understand the mind of the sages of the Way.

The importance of a community of understanding also formed the basis for social gatherings that were at the center of Northern Sung culture, and that we will see were at the center of Kitayama Five Mountains society as well. In literati culture Su and Huang were the central members of a large group of poets, calligraphers, painters, politicians, and Buddhist monks who met occasionally to enjoy each other's company and to work jointly on creative projects. One such gathering,

which may have occurred in 1087 in Kaifeng and was well known to later generations, was often depicted in paintings showing many of the most prominent scholar-officials, including Su Shih, Mi Fu, Huang T'ing-chien, and Li Kung-lin, together with the Zen monk Fa Hsiu (1027–90), the Taoist calligrapher Ch'en Ching-yüan, and the imperial prince Wang Shen (1036–after 1089) (fig. 1.2).⁸³ These gatherings were not a new phenomenon in Chinese culture, for the Northern Sung literati looked back to such groups as the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, the group that met at the Orchid Pavilion when the calligrapher Wang Hsi-chih (c. 307–365) composed his famous preface, and the group that formed around the influential politician Huan Hsuan (369–404) and included the famous recluse poet T'ao Ch'ien and the important painter Ku K'ai-chih (344–c. 406).

The occasions for meetings of these groups varied from poetry composition gatherings to the departure of a member of the circle of friends, and the artistic objects produced at these meetings served as models for a number of other groups. One such gathering became a popular painting subject in later centuries, a literary meeting convened on the occasion of the departure of a friend of Li Kung-lin, a member of Su Shih's circle, with poems based on lines from a poem by Wang Wei contributed by Su Shih, his brother, and Huang T'ing-chien.⁸⁴ In Yüan dynasty painting and calligraphy, the poetry gathering itself became an important theme, and these paintings reveal the idealization of past gatherings of members of Su's circle, as well as other groups of poets, painters, calligraphers, and officials. These meetings are important in that they also served as important examples for the literary meetings among Zen monks and of Zen monks with literati in the Southern Sung as well as for Japanese Five Mountains Zen culture and society.

Another important dimension to the Kitayama Japanese interpretation of artistic images of landscape is the underlying assumptions concerning the significance of landscape. While of course indigenous conceptions of the landscape were available to the Kitayama Five Mountains monks, their assumptions seem to have been largely determined by their predecessors in China. Landscape had been an important subject in Northern Sung painting by both literati and professional painters, yet it declined in popularity only to revive and again dominate ink painting during the Yüan dynasty. In the Yüan period, landscape subjects retained the associations with transcendence of society and the purity and joy of retreat or exile from government service that they had held in the Sung.⁸⁵ However, the natural world as seen in these paintings was not simply the realm of the Taoist recluse, but had also come to be associated with a number of themes taken from the lifestyle of the Confucian scholar. It is this conception of the landscape, which falls somewhere between Taoist reclusion and Confucian service, that was most important to the Kitayama Japanese interpretation of the landscape arts, and also to Yüan intellectual history.

This change in the significance of landscape reflects some important developments in conceptions of the role of the poet and of the place of the Confucian