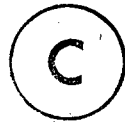


MA SHOU-CHEN: MING DYNASTY COURTESAN/ARTIST

by



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ABSTRACT:

Ma Shou-chen, poet, calligrapher and painter was a courtesan of the Ming dynasty. By studying the life and works of Ma Shou-chen, who was not a member of either the scholar or the academic/professional class of artists but who was very desirous of conforming to literati aesthetic tastes in her artistic works, new light is thrown upon the problem of identifying new aspects of Ming dynasty literati aesthetic taste. A study of Ma Shou-chen's works illuminates the question of identifying qualities of literati painting and also serves to examine the question of female artists in China. Female artists were known for their weak brush stroke and other negative qualities. Was this true, or was the "conventional wisdom" based on an attitude toward a female's social position rather than her ability as an artist? Ma Shou-chen provides us with a good example for examining these points. She is well-known in Chinese art history, yet she is discussed by Siren largely in sections restricted to female artists. In Chinese biographies too, mention of Ma Shou-chen is included with other female artists. The purpose of this thesis is to discuss a limited, though it is felt, a representative cross-section of her works with the aim of determining Ma Shou-chen's place in art history.

In Section I, biographical data concerning Ma Shou-chen is discussed. This includes an estimate of her active period (1570-1604). Her relationship with Wang Chih-teng, a leading literatus of the Suchow area, is examined together with an exploration of the relationship of special courtesans to the

literati as a class.

What this meant in Chinese society and the repercussions on the artistic output of courtesans is also discussed.

Section II includes a discussion of the Chinese historical records which comment on Ma Shou-chen's works. There is also an exploration of the reason why certain artists and not others were named in records as having an influence on Ma Shou-chen's works. A brief discussion of the history of Chinese flower painting explains the relevance of placing Ma Shou-chen's works within the framework of literati rather than academic artists' works. A discussion of the critical comments regarding Ma Shou-chen's works by Chinese art historians gives rise to the possibility that critical comments were often based more upon social status than actual works.

In Section III an analysis of Ma Shou-chen's artistic works, largely concerned with her speciality of orchid paintings, shows an historical process. However, there is no final classification of her undated works. In addition, the typical qualities of her works involves rather stable compositions, a propensity for stretching the brush strokes across the surface of the painting, little concern with atmospheric qualities or far distance. These facts serve to enhance the two dimensional quality of her paintings. This factor in turn serves to focus the attention of the viewer upon Ma Shou-chen's calligraphy.

Section IV discusses the findings of the analysis of Ma Shou-chen's works in relation to Ming dynasty literati artists. This thesis concludes with the theory that smaller and more intimate literati works are more representative of the main-



stream of literati artists in the Ming dynasty. The works of Ma Shou-chen, who was trained to respond to literati tastes and was an accomplished artist, show the more relaxed social atmosphere of the Ming dynasty.

Two appendices are included. The first is a catalogue of the works of Ma Shou-chen discussed in this thesis. The second is a translation of the Chinese literary sources concerning Ma Shou-chen.

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Hanging Scroll. H. 52.5 cm. W. 29.1 cm.

Ink on Paper.

Dated 1572.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Loan 1981.2.12,  
The Edward Elliott Family Collection.

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Hanging Scroll. H. 56 cm. W. 33 cm.

Ink on Paper.

Dated 1603.

Dr. James Caswell Collection,  
Vancouver, B.C.

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Undated

Ostasiatiska Museet, Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities,  
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## INTRODUCTION:

During the Ming dynasty, the literati artists of the Wu school came to be incorporated within the Southern school in the bipolar theory propounded by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang.<sup>1</sup> However, the philosophy of Northern and Southern schools developed by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang often expressed more political ideas than a history of art. The literati, although often vocal in stating art theories, frequently expressed sentiments that did not correspond with perceived reality. This has left the modern student of Chinese art history with an unsure understanding of what were the characteristics of the mainstream, or literati, painting during the Ming dynasty.

This is a study of the works of the female artist, Ma Shou-chen of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). By studying the life and works of Ma Shou-chen, who was not a member of either the scholar or the academic/professional class of artists, but who was very desirous of conforming to literati aesthetic tastes in her artistic works, new light is thrown upon the problem of identifying these characteristics. Thus, this thesis attempts to explore the link between Ma Shou-chen's artistic endeavors and her social status. To do this, information available in Chinese history records regarding Ma Shou-chen is discussed and the critical treatment of her work by Chinese scholars (i.e., literati) is explored. A discussion of the training and the life style of a courtesan in general and Ma Shou-chen in particular demonstrates a definite link between courtesanship and artistic activities. There is also a bond between the literati

and courtesans, as exemplified by Ma Shou-chen and her friend Wang Chih-teng, a leading literatus of the Suchow area. This thesis is addressed to the existence and the limits of this relationship.

An examination of some of Ma Shou-chen's paintings demonstrate her stylistic tendencies and her possible position in the very complicated history of Chinese flower painting. A comparison of Ma Shou-chen's work with major literati artists reveals many common characteristics. Reasons for these similarities are explored in the light of information gleaned from a discussion of the history of Chinese flower painting, literati and courtesans. As courtesans were trained to respond to the wishes of literati, therefore their work is important as an indication of prevailing taste. A comparison with literati painting also presents the possibility of suggesting a new aspect of Ming dynasty painting which would be the natural result of a more relaxed attitude within certain members of groups (e.g. merchants) in Ming society.

SECTION I: LIFE and TIMES

Ma Shou-chen 馬守貞 was called Yüan-erh 元兒 as a child. Her hao is listed as Hsiang-lan 湘蘭, a name given to her for her ability to paint orchids. Her nickname was Yüeh-chiao 月嬌, the name of a person in a southern style opera.<sup>1</sup>

Relatively little is known about Ma Shou-chen. However, we can estimate her active working period by studying the available historical records. We are less confident in identifying her dates of birth and death, as some of the information is in conflict.

Some historical records state that Ma Shou-chen was born in 1548.<sup>2</sup> Siren gives the dates of her activity as an artist to be 1592-1628 though he does not cite the source of his information. This would make her forty-four when, according to Siren, she became active as a painter and eighty at her terminus date.<sup>3</sup> Instead of these dates, I would like to suggest Ma Shou-chen's active period to be 1570/1572-1604, based on the evidence of her dated paintings.

There are two works of Ma Shou-chen in collections that bear the reign year jen-shen 壬申.<sup>4</sup> As well, both bear signed inscriptions by her friend Wang Chih-teng 王穉登. As he died in 1612 this would indicate that the jen-shen year should be 1572 (rather than the potential alternative, 1632). Though there is a record of a painting by Ma Shou-chen that is dated 1570<sup>5</sup> the two 1572 paintings are among the earliest of her works in collections.

One of these paintings the Metropolitan Museum scroll, is

described and the inscription is quoted in a Chinese historical record.<sup>6</sup> This same record reports two more paintings by Ma Shou-chen dated to the reign years of keng-niu 庚午 and wu-yin 戊寅 which would indicate dates of 1570 and 1578 (though they could be interpreted as 1630 and 1638). The same source describes a work done in 1596. There is also a fan painting by Ma Shou-chen that bears an inscription that would date it 1578.<sup>7</sup> Another historical record describes a painting by Ma Shou-chen that bears the signature of the artist and her seals as well as having an inscription by Wang Chih-teng. This painting is dated 1599.<sup>8</sup> Another, also with an inscription by Wang-Chih-teng, is dated 1600.<sup>9</sup> Still another historical record describes a painting signed by her in 1603.<sup>10</sup> This paper will discuss two additional paintings which are dated 1603 and 1604. Thus, all of these paintings are dated between 1570 and 1604.

The Sung Yüan Ming Ch'ing shu hua chia nien piao cites two sources that give 1604 as the date of Ma Shou-chen's death.<sup>11</sup> This tallies fairly well with other reports. The Yo hsueh lou shuhua lu states Ma Shou-chen died shortly after Wang Chih-teng's sixty-ninth birthday celebration on 1602, when she was fifty-six.<sup>12</sup> This is incorrect, according to Goodrich and Fang, who state Wang Chih-teng was sixty-nine in 1604.<sup>13</sup> The Yo hsueh lou shuhua lu also records a 1853 colophon which states Ma Shou-chen died three years after the 1602 erroneously dated birthday celebration of Wang Chih-teng (i.e. 1605).<sup>14</sup> Other records also list her death as occurring



shortly after Wang Chih-teng's birthday celebration.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps the most complete biography of her life, the Lieh-ch'ao shih-chi hsiao-chuan,<sup>16</sup> also states that she was fifty-six years old when she held the birthday party celebration for Wang Chih-teng and then died shortly thereafter.<sup>17</sup>

Ma Shou-chen organized this celebration that so amazed the people of Soochow. Indeed the celebration must have been quite a sight for it is recorded that she brought a multi-storied boat for the occasion and carried down several young ladies to celebrate the occasion with Wang Chih-teng and his friends.<sup>18</sup> The drinking and celebration lasted for several months.<sup>19</sup> Ma Shou-chen apparently had known him years before and had met him again after a long absence. This tallies with our record of Wang Chih-teng's colophons on her paintings. There are some dated the early 1570's and then there is a gap of some years until Wang Chih-teng's inscription next appears on a painting dated 1599.<sup>20</sup> However, it is known that Wang Chih-teng wrote a preface in 1591 to Ma Shou-chen's two chuan of poetry, now not extant.<sup>21</sup>

The birthday celebration thrown by Ma Shou-chen, underlines the special relationship between courtesans and literati. It was at such gatherings that poetry was composed and paintings were made by the literati artist and by talented courtesans such as Ma Shou-chen. Such a relationship was not possible between literati and wives or female relatives, as I shall explain below. In fact, a suggestion that an "improper" gathering (such as a friend being introduced to a wife at a

feast) had taken place, could have disastrous consequences for a literatus' career.<sup>22</sup> The reverse would be true for a literat friend and a courtesan.

The institution of courtesanship and expertise with the brush were not independent activities but were directly related. Thus, the special relationship between the literati and courtesans developed almost independently of sex. But what did the term "courtesan" (chi 妓) mean at the turn of the seventeenth century?<sup>23</sup> We have little direct information regarding Ma Shou-chen's background and training, but enough is known of the institution of courtesanship to allow us to reach some understanding.

Though some sources call Ma Shou-chen a prostitute this is not entirely appropriate. Prostitutes generally were untrained persons. Courtesans were accomplished women who were trained in such entertainment skills as singing and the playing of musical instruments. However, only some had a small proficiency with the written language.<sup>24</sup> Ma Shou-chen was accomplished in the written language--so accomplished that she could compose poetry, tz'u and prose and could write freely and spontaneously.<sup>25</sup> We do not know if she was accomplished with musical instruments. We could presume so, however, for at her own residence she taught apprentices at the Pear Garden, Li Yuan 梨園, named after the music school for ladies in the T'ang dynasty (618-916), and the sounds of musical instruments were heard by feast guests.<sup>26</sup>

There were numerous ways in which girls would have been

recruited into the profession of courtesanship. These would include purchase from poor families, kidnapping or entering of their own free will.<sup>27</sup> Other reasons include having been born in a brothel or being the relatives of criminals, or being women of Mongol descent.<sup>28</sup> The only information we have regarding Ma Shou-chen was that she was the youngest of a family group consisting of three daughters and their mother.<sup>29</sup> However, this may not have been her natural mother as the same term is used for the madam of a house of prostitution. Ma Shou-chen would have started her training as a courtesan in this house at a very early age. During her period of training her feet would have been bound. She would have been regarded as a valuable investment and therefore care would have been taken to attempt achieving the three-inch Golden Lotus, chin-lien 金蓮 feet that were so admired.<sup>30</sup> The Ch'in-huai area of Nanking was the brothel quarters. Its name derives from the canal entering Nanking. During the Ming-Ch'ing dynasties brothels lined both of its banks.<sup>31</sup> Ma Shou-chen lived there in a house that has been described as being in one of the better locations on the Ch'in-huai canal--the implication being that there was a view of the water. The property is described as having a garden and with so many passages and adjoining rooms that the visitor became disoriented.<sup>32</sup> Ma Shou-chen would have spent many years of her life looking over the waters of this canal from within her gardens. As orchids grow naturally in this area and the lotus plant is abundant throughout China, it is most likely that her view included these flowers.<sup>33</sup>

The Ch'in-huai district was conveniently near the Hall of Tribute, the official testing ground of candidates for advancement as officials in the Chinese bureaucracy.<sup>34</sup> In addition to the celebrations of successful candidates, and the consolation parties of the unsuccessful, the courtesans whiled away the hours with the aesthetically inclined scholar who, lacking an official appointment, occupied his time with calligraphy, painting and collections.<sup>35</sup>

The fact that there were many literati not involved in an official capacity was not entirely due to choice. The literary inquisition in the early Ming dynasty had resulted in a cut-back in the degrees being granted.<sup>36</sup> Also, because of a quota system the competition in the Soochow area was intense.<sup>37</sup> With more time available, the social life of the literati and the courtesans became inter-dependent. The most popular political and literary group of the late Ming period was the Revival Society. This Society numbered in the thousands.<sup>38</sup> This society was also called the Little East Forest Society<sup>39</sup> for it resembled the last Forest Society (Tung-lin hui 東林會) both in its ideology and its popularity with the literati.<sup>40</sup> This society was most popular 1604-1625, slightly late for Ma Shou-chen to have been present at any of its meetings, but it is an indication of the prevalence of the mingling of scholars and courtesans throughout the Ming dynasty.

The courtesan was a natural partner to a scholar because of Confucian attitudes, attitudes which are at the very heart of Chinese social and governmental order. To a Confucianist,

stability was the ideal goal and so stability within social relationships was of paramount importance. Consequently, the Confucian classic, the Li Chi, focuses upon the proper relations between a man and his wife and virtually limits all mention of physical contact to the marriage couch.<sup>42</sup> There the age-old belief that a man's yang<sup>陽</sup> essence would be strengthened by replenishment from the female's yin essence during the sexual act was combined with Confucian ideas. The early Chinese believed that a man's semen was the source of his life and health and each emission diminished his force. Therefore, although sexual contact was beneficial, ejaculation was to be reserved for providing children for the family.<sup>43</sup>

With such a belief in the powers of the sexual act, it is not surprising that each well-to-do Chinese gentleman required not only an official wife but also secondary consorts and concubines. The male children of all such unions could make sacrifices to ancestors. But Confucian ideals restricted all wives and concubines to the women's quarters where the only real contact they had with any male was with their men, in bed. It was considered very unseemly for a wife or concubine to associate with her husbands' friends and out of the question for a wife or concubine to be present at a social gathering, such as a banquet.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, a situation arose where there was such a separation between a man and his wives and concubines that a courtesan became the invaluable partner of a scholar during his leisure time. A courtesan would be able to entertain his friends

and encourage his own enjoyment in artistic pursuits. Sex in such a situation was not of primary importance. Indeed, as a Confucian gentleman was required to visit each of his wives every five days and bring each complete satisfaction, it was probably as a rest from carnal love and obligations that he visited courtesans.<sup>45</sup> He would have no sexual obligations to her and either one could break off the relationship at will.

For her part, the courtesan would also not be so likely to promote an active interest in a sexual relationship for simple economic reasons.<sup>46</sup> A courtesan brought in large amounts of money when she was deflowered (after having achieved renown for her skills in entertaining) and at the time she was permanently bought out of a brothel. The remaining time a courtesan acquired money through the feasts at the brothel, where the establishment provided wine and food. Only a small fraction of a brothel's income represented money gained from patrons sleeping with the girls. Also, as intercourse increased the risk of disease<sup>47</sup> as well as pregnancy it thus was naturally not encouraged.

A woman's reputation for being able to entertain her guests would vastly improve her worth.<sup>48</sup> She was encouraged to learn poetry because poetry could be used in a game involving wine drinking, and wine drinking increased the money earned by a brothel.<sup>49</sup> In addition, it was the dream of each courtesan to be bought out, with her name being dropped from the registers, by a well-known scholar.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, a courtesan's skills were considered the most important factor in her position,

certainly more important than physical appearance,<sup>51</sup> and it was to her own as well as the brothel's interest that she be accomplished in the arts and able to entertain a scholar. Therefore, the ability to paint and write to the taste of the scholar class advanced her own and the brothel's interests. Thus, it became financially feasible to invest the quantities of time and money necessary for such training.

Ma Shou-chen falls in very well into this general description of courtesans. Our records mention her pure complexion and charm without really mentioning her beauty.<sup>52</sup> Her ability to entertain and charm people is mentioned as long lasting, at least into her fifties.<sup>53</sup> Also, Ma Shou-chen longed, unsuccessfully as it turned out, to be married to Wang Chih-teng (1535-1612), a poet, calligrapher and leading literatus of the Soochow area. Much of the information we have from Chinese historians concerning her is in regard to her relationship with Wang Chih-teng.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, a study of Ma Shou-chen's life, works and relationship with Wang Chih-teng helps us to understand her not only as a courtesan but as a painter as well. Her artistic endeavors developed from and affected her personal individual experience.

SECTION II: HISTORICAL REFERENCES and CRITICISM

Historical records of Ma Shou-chen's works show frequent references to certain Chinese artists whose works had influenced her own. An exploration of why these artists, and not others, were named in these records advances further evidence of the close relationship between Ma Shou-chen, a courtesan, and literati artists. A brief discussion of the history of flower painting in China helps place Ma Shou-chen's works within the literati tradition of flower painting, a tradition going back to the tenth century which was founded on the paintings of Hsu Hsi 徐熙 rather than on the professional/academic paintings of Huang Ch'uan 黃筌. A discussion of the critical comments by Chinese historians of Ma Shou-chen's works suggests that her social status more than her artistic endeavors influenced these comments.

Chinese historical records note Ma Shou-chen's paintings and the paintings discussed in this paper have flowers, or plants, or rocks as their subject matter and all apparently utilize near or middle, but never far, distance.

The Mustard Seed Manual, the Wu t'ai hua shih and the Chung-kuo hua chia jen ming ta tz'u<sup>lien</sup><sub>A</sub> all note that Ma Shou-chen excelled in painting orchids in the double outline technique (shuang-kou 雙鉤) in the manner of Chao Meng-chien 趙孟堅 (1199-1267?). They add that her bamboo was known to be in the manner of Chao Meng-fu's 趙孟頫 wife, Kuan Tao-Sheng 管道昇 (1263-1319).<sup>1</sup>



In order to understand the relevance of these statements and to fit Ma Shou-chen's paintings within the larger framework of Chinese art history, and not just the smaller framework of paintings by women, it is necessary to give a brief history of flower painting in China.

Flower painting has a different significance in Chinese art than it has in Western art. This fact is underlined by the willingness of Chinese to have their personalities identified with certain flowers. It is hard to imagine, for example, a Western philosopher being referred to by a painting of a flower. In Chinese civilization, flowers have long been closely associated with the arts and therefore are woven into the fabric of Chinese culture.<sup>2</sup> For example, the lotus and the orchid, indigenous to China, through repeated use gradually acquired a rich symbolic meaning while their constant presence in gardens would permit subtleties to be appreciated. To the Chinese, a flower's presence recalls its fragrance which recalls a memory. The memory can relate to a person a place or an emotion. This value fits in well with the literary arts of China. An example of the union of literature, painting and such a symbolic reference is the painting of the poet and sometime official, T'ao Yüan-ming (365-427), whose face is shown in portraits as buried in his favorite flower, the chrysanthemum.<sup>3</sup>

China had an elite class of official scholars with the education and leisure to develop strong artistic traditions. Generally, the literati artists preferred a more spontaneously

rendered representation than the more specifically rendered professional/academic artist. The Confucian scholar preferred not to delineate images because, when putting down the specific, the general might be forgotten. This most important factor was the harmonizing movement of life breath, ch'i yün shen tung 氣韻生動.<sup>4</sup> The artistic traditions of the literati were naturally based upon the interest of the creators. Skill with the brush and learning based upon a Confucian education are at the foundation of Chinese art traditions. Flower painting is no exception to this. But, as Cahill notes<sup>5</sup>, the fundamental difference between literati and non-literati painting was the literati insistence that painting revealed the nature of man and his mood and feeling at that moment. The quality of the personality of the artist became more important than the subject. The schism between literati and non-literati paintings was defined during the time of Su Shih 蘇軾 (1063-1101), but differences were observed before this date.

Bird and flower painting has often been described by the Chinese as having two distinct schools. Although there had been artists specializing in bird and flower painting before the Five Dynasties period, two schools are said to have emerged during this period.<sup>6</sup> The originator of one school, Huang Ch'uan (d.965) was a Szechuan painter known for his realism, detail and rich use of colour. The second school's founder was Hsü Hsi a Nanking artist who first used a sketch technique

of broad strokes of ink and then followed with a colour wash. The difference was that Hsü Hsi did not have Huang Ch'uan's interest in an exact representation of form; Hsü Hsi attempted to capture the essential essence of a particular flower, its life-breath.<sup>7</sup>

The first school started by Huang Ch'uan, quickly became a favorite in the court circles due to its artists' ability to provide a colourful and technically perfect painting. This precise, realistic and colourful painting style was the painting style practised at the Emperor Hui-tsung's painting academy of the Northern Sung (960-1135). There, the principles of hsieh-sheng 寫生 or drawing from life were perfected. The results corresponded to the Emperor Hui-tsung's, and the court's aesthetic taste. Succeeding Emperors and courts naturally wanted to follow this tradition.

Painters following Hsü Hsi's painting technique responded to Taoist and Buddhist beliefs that inanimate objects were an important part of the balance of the universe. Man must be in unity with all things. Indeed, flowers were believed to express their own needs and emotions, though silently, through their perfume and their graceful shapes. It was felt that Huang Ch'uan captured their outer appearance but Hsü Hsi was able to express their inner essence. Perhaps this is more easily understood when it is compared to poetry. There is a belief that poetry naturally lends itself to the expression of an inanimate object. Chinese poetry is particularly able to express these thoughts because the structure of the language

lends itself to concise but indefinite expressions. This is because a character can represent not just words but symbols of ideas.<sup>8</sup> The same desire to capture mood and feeling through concise phrases led the literati painters, whom Su Shih defined as poets who painted,<sup>9</sup> to use a technique of painting whereby relatively simple brush strokes and a simple composition were believed to be more able to capture the spirit or the essence of the subject. In fact, the Hsüan-ho hua-p'u, a twelfth century text exhibiting some literati bias<sup>10</sup>, stated that the intellectual significance of paintings of flowers is the same as poems.

Therefore, Hsü Hsi's school of painting became known for its hsieh-yi 寫意, or idea/concept painting and the concept of hsieh-sheng 寫生 or drawing from life with its emphasis on form-likeness was relegated to a position of secondary importance. The new aim of expressing the artist's inner feelings fits in well with literatus Su Shih's idea that painting existed not to depict things but to express one's own feeling and give lodging for the moment to these feelings.<sup>12</sup>

In the Yüan dynasty the predilection for literati to paint flowers in the manner of Hsü Hsi was reinforced. Chao Meng-chien, 趙孟頫, the artist previously mentioned as influencing Ma Shou-chen, was a relative of the Imperial Sung family and managed to survive in Chekiang Province after the fall of the Northern Sung. He specialized in the kou-le 勾勒 or outline method of painting narcissi, plum-blossoms, epidendrum and bamboo. His scroll Narcissi is almost a botanical drawing of a specific plant in different states of maturity and within

a palpable atmosphere. Chao Meng-chien was able to involve the viewer in the graceful play of the leaves. The viewer can feel the movement of the blades in the breeze. As you draw closer your memory recalls the slight but pervasive perfume that is so characteristic of this flower. The secret perfume, is interpreted by the Chinese as an expression or personification of intimate friendship and love.<sup>14</sup>

Chao Meng-chien apologized for his forms by saying their appearance was due to his failing sight or lack of practise.<sup>15</sup> But Chao Meng-fu, his cousin, praised his painting saying it demonstrated proper order.<sup>16</sup> In other words, Chao Meng-chien's compositional elements and painting technique were right in themselves and not dependent on nature. Huang Ch'uan's emphasis on resemblance to nature had been relegated to non-importance.

The division between academic and literati painting started in the Northern Sung and was exemplified in the Southern Sung by Chao Meng-chien. He, as a member of the Sung Imperial clan and a prefect of Yen-chou, was well away from the academic painting circles in the capital.<sup>17</sup> It has been suggested by Bush that perhaps Chao Meng-chien and others of the Southern Sung literati circle chose non-academic themes such as flowers, instead of the popular academic landscape theme, to purposely separate themselves from academic painters.<sup>18</sup> The argument that literati artists of the Southern Sung deliberately chose styles and themes to separate their painting from those of academic artists is reinforced by the fact that Chao Meng-chien's

outline painting style supposedly followed the style of Yang Pu-chih 楊補之 (active 12th c.). It has been suggested that Yang Pu-chih's works gained their popularity from the fact that he refused to serve Ch'in Kuei who intrigued with the Tartars.<sup>19</sup> For this act Yang Pu-chih became a hero to the Chinese, and his painting style became associated with his political actions. When Chao Meng-chien preferred to disassociate himself from the contemporary government and travel the rivers while painting orchids and narcissi, it was significant that he chose the rebellious hero's, Yang Pu-chih, style of painting.

Chao Meng-chien's paintings were viewed as representing the integrity of a worthy man because they personified a Confucian statement about a worthy man. Confucius said "this orchid's fragrance should be for a king; now it blooms in solitude, with common grasses for companions." This is just like the worthy man (chün-tzu 君子) who in an inopportune time must associate with the common herd (chung 衆).<sup>20</sup> Also, the Chinese classic, the Tso Chüan, also refers to the unique fragrance of an orchid, giving the fragrance its association with a worthy man.<sup>21</sup> Although Chao Meng-chien's paintings were viewed as representing the integrity of a worthy man, there is no text with his paintings to substantiate this belief. A more directly stated message in orchid painting is the painting by Cheng Su-hsiao 鄭思肖, a contemporary of Chao Meng-chien, who is quoted as saying his orchids have no soil because "the earth has been taken away by barbarians".<sup>22</sup>

Later Yüan dynasty artists such as Chang Chung 張忠 (mid 14th) continued this literati style of painting that is characterized by the use of outline with expressive yet minimal use of brush strokes and diminished use of colour. We see this style of painting in Wu Chen's 吳鎮 paintings of bamboo. According to Wu Chen, "ink play" (mo hsi 墨戲) is the scholars' painting.<sup>23</sup> This statement included the outline pai-miao 白描 style narcissi that were originally painted by Yang Pu-chih.<sup>24</sup>

Several factors came to characterize the literati painting at this time. The paintings were non-imitative, demonstrating a disinterest in form likeness. The expressive quality of the brush stroke increased in importance.<sup>25</sup> Also characteristic of literati paintings in the Yüan dynasty was the increased use of colophons on the painting. The word of the artist and his image became interdependent while colour was omitted or at least greatly reduced. When colour was used, for example in Chao Meng-fu's painting Autumn Colors on the Ch'iao and Hua Mountains<sup>26</sup>, it was used to refer back to a happier time in Chinese history, the T'ang dynasty (618-917).

This brief outline of the history of flower painting brings us to the Ming dynasty. It is important to note that a literatus during the Yüan dynasty should not have served as an official in what was regarded as a barbarian government.<sup>27</sup> But it could generally be said that politics prevented a literatus from serving and denied him the opportunity to demonstrate

his learning in the official examinations. This changed in the Ming dynasty.

A literati scholar at the time of the Ming dynasty was not necessarily an official, for many Ming scholars chose not to serve in public office.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, the term literati is hereafter used to denote education rather than official recognition. A literatus may or may not have served as an official but would have been proficient in calligraphy, painting and poetry.

The literati painters of the Ming dynasty belonged mainly to the Wu school. This geographically-derived term refers to the Soochow area in Kiangsu Province, east of T'ai-hu, an area that contained much of the wealth of China.<sup>29</sup> There was a rivalry between the Wu school and the Che school with each side having its supporters. Wang Shih-chen 王世貞 (1526--1540) promoted calligraphy of the Wu school artists and its principal member, Wen Cheng-ming 文徵明, but preferred the Che school painters.<sup>30</sup> Wang Chih-teng, Ma Shou-chen's friend, only considered the painters of the Wu school in his treatise Wu-chun tan-ch'ing chih 吳郡丹青志.<sup>31</sup> Wang Chih-teng did not mention Ma Shou-chen in this treatise.

But there are critical comments of Ma Shou-chen's works at the time of Wang Chih-teng as well as at a later date. Unfortunately, due to the habit of Chinese scholars of carefully recording information but not noting sources, it is difficult to ascertain the dates of critical comments.



Most Chinese historians used the word "accomplished", shan 善, when referring to Ma Shou-chen's paintings, particularly her orchid paintings.<sup>32</sup> Others are rather non-committal, reporting merely that her paintings were in accord with the spirit of the Hsiang River maidens. This reference will be dealt with extensively below during the discussion of Ma Shou-chen's works. Others report that her paintings were elegant and refined, even of financial value. These same writers noted that officials purchased her paintings and she was known as far as Thailand.<sup>34</sup> The praise, however, of Ma Shou-chen's painting is generally rather luke-warm, if respectable. The Shih ku t'ang shu hua lu k'ao was critical of her paintings, saying they demonstrated a weak brush stroke and were not successful.<sup>35</sup> Another writer says that, on the contrary, her brushstroke was elegant and powerful with an individual style.<sup>36</sup>

But more praise is shown Ma Shou-chen for her poetry and calligraphy. Historians note that her poetry demonstrated a spirited rhythm and was extremely excellent.<sup>37</sup> Her friend Wang Chih-teng, totally non-committal as to her paintings, stated that her poetry was so popular that she caused the price of paper to rise.<sup>38</sup>

Wang Chih-teng was much more interested in impressing the reader with Ma Shou-chen's credentials as to her character than as to her artistic ability. Much of his writing about her concerned her credentials as a courtesan. He wanted to link her with the famous courtesans of the past. He felt that she was as good as, or better than, they were. According to Wang

Chih-teng, Ma Shou-chen could wear ornate female clothing and also have the heart of a warrior. In addition, she could write poetry.<sup>39</sup>

The elevation of status of an individual by accomplishment in the literary arts is a traditional device in Chinese history. As previously noted, Su Shih defined a literatus as one who wrote poetry. Wang Chih-teng assured us that Ma Shou-chen expressed herself through her writing.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, he said she did not take money very seriously. This was a further comment on her noble character, for disinterest in financial matters was recognized quite early as being a desirable characteristic of a worthy person (chun tzu) the goal of a literatus.<sup>41</sup>

Ma Shou-chen's calligraphy was infrequently mentioned, and one exuberant report stated that her calligraphy achieved the depth of the Duke of Wu Hsing (Chao Meng-fu) and in fact was so similar that some people were confused.<sup>42</sup> But, in spite of these comments, Chinese historians generally placed her biography with other female artists and not with literati artists.<sup>43</sup> This was considered to be her category. She was primarily a female. This hesitancy to accept Ma Shou-chen's paintings and calligraphy and a willingness to accept her poetry may be due to traditional Chinese prejudices towards women artists. There is a tradition of female poets in China so it was not too unusual and therefore more acceptable.<sup>44</sup> But a painter, poet and calligrapher such as Ma Shou-chen would come up against many prejudices. Lady Pan Chao, (d 1125 A.D.)

the author of Nü Chieh (Women's Precepts), stated that the virtues of women were not brilliant talent, distinction or elegance.<sup>45</sup> Lady Pan Chao's teachings encouraged the education of females, but only in order to teach women their inferiority to men and stress the importance of their obedience. This book became the basis for other similar treatises and enjoyed great popularity, especially during the Ch'ing dynasty.<sup>46</sup> From the teachings, a Chinese proverb was formulated that stated "a virtuous woman has no talents" 女子無才便是德. Ma Shou-chen was not a virtuous woman i.e. a wife or concubine so she was able to develop her talents, but she still may not have been able to overcome prejudices and be judged on her own merit.

Kuan Tao-sheng was a virtuous women who at first glance appears to repudiate the theory that it was generally only courtesans who received the benefit of a scholarly education and that a female artist was not given due credit for her work but critically judged on the basis of her status as a female. Kuan Tao-sheng was the only child of a father that doted on her ability to paint bamboo. While she is famous for her talent, the Chinese give her special note as the partner in a "perfect marriage". This is in spite of the fact that one of her best known poems is a rather sad one lamenting her husband's choice of a new concubine.<sup>48</sup> When art historians mention Kuan Tao-sheng it is usually in a section devoted to talented female artists with a reference to her famous husband. For example, in spite of her supposed ability to paint bamboo, when Siren

mentions the famous masters of the Yüan dynasty who served as guides to later generations of bamboo painters, he does not mention her name.<sup>49</sup> Thus Kuan Tao-sheng received her education as the exception to a rule, and is better known as the wife of a famous man than for her own talent.

A hint that Ma Shou-chen's works were judged on other than their own merit is found in the opera Pai-lien ch'un.<sup>50</sup> This Ming dynasty opera (no longer extant) was very popular in its time. Within the opera, Ma Shou-chen was openly ridiculed. The commentary on this opera states that the purpose was that, by satirizing Ma Shou-chen, ridicule would reach Wang Chih-teng.<sup>51</sup> Censors repressed this opera but it left its mark in history and may account for the comment found in Yo hsüeh lou shu hua lu on her "chicken skin" (chi p'i 鷄皮), not a compliment to any woman, even as a joke.<sup>52</sup> As noted above, physical beauty of a courtesan was unimportant when compared to her talent and charm. Why in spite of this were personal comments regarding her appearance regarded as suitable material for inscriptions on her paintings? Possibly, such criticism of Ma Shou-chen was used to ridicule Wang Chih-teng, the champion of the Wu school, in the rivalry between the Wu and the Che schools. It is very unusual for a mere courtesan to be singled out for such treatment.

Comments in Chinese historical reports about Ma Shou-chen's work, though interesting, are not very illuminating as to her work, as they seem to be involved with her social status more than her creations. It is necessary to now look at her paintings,

poetry and calligraphy in order to objectively be able to understand Ma Shou-chen's place in Chinese art history.

SECTION III: ARTISTIC WORKS

The Metropolitan Museum hanging scroll, Orchid, Bamboo and Rock, by Ma Shou-chen (see figure 1 and Appendix Part 1, Catalogue item I), is dated 1572, which would make it one of the earliest of her works. The compositional elements of the painting are massed at the bottom of the scroll, very slightly off center. An orchid plant (in this case the grass orchid, tsao lan 草蘭) with its flowering spike is rooted in front of a rather large and rounded stone. Bamboo reaches out from behind the stone at the right.

The slight incline of the ground has been rendered with a rather dry and fibrous brush stroke. Some delicate grass plants with a few leaves are sprinkled on the ground. The rock has been rendered with a light outline and various tones of ink. The texture strokes begin with dark ink and then diminish in size and become lighter in tone as they are drawn across the paper. The bamboo provides a compositional balance as well as contrasting sharp detail and dark tones with the rest of the composition.

The orchid plant has been executed in single brush strokes of varying tones. The long, sinuous strokes flow, giving the viewer a sense of fragility and grace. The blossoms accentuate this sense of delicacy and add an element of actual weight and presence.

In this painting the viewer is struck with an impression of a miniature setting; elements of nature seen as a microcosm and with the attempt by the artist to represent a real orchid in a real but miniature setting. All the elements have been

carefully combined to create a rather stable quality. The light blossoms of the orchid appear poised and motionless, waiting for a light breeze to bring them into motion. They wait in vain, for there is no motion in the long blades of the orchid plant.

The rock texture strokes have been rendered in the fei-po 飛白 or "flying white" brush stroke manner that we can see in the works of P'u-ming, a fourteenth century artist.<sup>1</sup> The orchid plant has also been executed in the P'u-ming tradition<sup>2</sup> and not the outline style made popular by Chao Meng-chien. This is rather surprising as Ma Shou-chen was known for her outline style in the Chao Meng-chien manner. Perhaps this painting is representative of her earlier and more experimental period.

The painting composition would be a complete entity without the three colophons at the top of the scroll. However, assuming Ma Shou-chen's inscription was added at the time the painting was done, this would create an imbalance. With her inscription added, there would be an unbalanced composition without the Wang Chih-teng inscription of the far left. The compositional balance require either the two inscriptions or none at all. The Wang Chih-teng inscription, with its very dark and strong ink calligraphy, not only balances the composition of the painting and poetry but also serves to emphasize the dark tone of the brush strokes used to depict the orchid blossoms. It seems therefore safe to assume that Wang Chih-teng's inscription was written the same time that Ma Shou-chen's painting and calligraphy was executed. Therefore, the painting,

Ma Shou-chen's inscription, Wang Chih-teng's inscription and perhaps Hsueh Ming-i's inscription were all executed in 1572.<sup>3</sup> Thus, this painting would be a testimonial to the early friendship between Ma Shou-chen and Wang Chih-teng.

The poetry written by Ma Shou-chen helps explain the meaning of this painting. Her inscription reads:

Green shadows spread over the Hsiang River,  
Clear fen incense flows down to the hidden valley.

Written on the fourth month of 1572 in the little pavilion of Ch'in Huai.

Wang Chih-teng's colophon reads:

The fragrant land is submerged,  
Three months of spring have watered  
The secret orchids of the nine fields.  
In the Green Hills Study  
People sit with wine in front of them and read the Li sao.

These two poems contain similar imagery to the Caswell Collection painting and poem written by Ma Shou-chen that we will discuss later in this paper. The Hsiang River and the "nine fields" of orchids we understand to be a reference to Ch'u Yüan's Li sao.<sup>4</sup> The fragrance that is mentioned is a further allusion to the orchids, for they are associated with their delicate yet pervasive fragrance. It is the leisurely, elegant yet long lasting quality of permeating the atmosphere that cause the orchid fragrance to be linked with a true friend or a perfect man.<sup>5</sup>

Another factor that is brought out by Wang Chih-teng's poem is the link of wine, friendship and scholarly activities--such as painting, calligraphy and reading--while in the company of courtesans.<sup>6</sup> As previously discussed, courtesans often participated in writing poetry while drinking games were in



progress.

Thus, Wang Chih-teng's poem emphasizes the link that courtesans shared with literati endeavors. Ma Shou-chen's poetry refers to China's legendary past. Her individual painting style links her to well known traditional flower painting brush techniques.

The Caswell collection orchid painting by Ma Shou-chen, (see figure 2 and Catalogue item II), shows the leaves, flowers and buds of the orchid cymbidium ensifolium, or Fukien (Min) lan 蘭 . This plant's eight or more flowered spike blooms in the early summer with a less strong fragrance than the spring flowering Ch'un 春 orchid.<sup>7</sup>

The painting's composition is composed of a single broad cluster of the orchid plant, grouped in the lower left hand corner of the scroll with a few long, yet sturdy, blades reaching across to the right border of the painting and also reaching up to gesture to the colophon in the upper right corner. The leaves and stems are indicated as suddenly appearing. That is, they float in mid-air. There is no indication of ground, nor of water, nor of roots.

The painting has been executed in the shuang kou (outline) style that Ma Shou-chen has been described as using. The spikes with blossoms are similar to the ones illustrated in the Mustard Seed Manual.<sup>8</sup>

Different tones of ink have been used throughout the painting. There are different tones used to depict the blades, with the more distant blades rendered in a paler tone. The petals on the blossoms are also painted in a lighter tone with

even paler texture strokes on each petal's body. The tips of the petals have a dark stroke added that give a lively contrast that focuses the eye on the heart of the flowers. The dark tonal wash on each blossom's heart is even further augmented by dark texture dots. Each blossom's heart appears palpably vulnerable yet protected by the sheath of petals. The erotic associations that could be drawn from this description are quite obvious and probably intentional.

The long brush strokes depicting the blades are impressively firm yet delicate. Slight increases of pressure on the hairs of the brush have changed the character of each line along the blade. Yet no extenuated and graceful line is marred by a moment's hesitation in the drawing process.

The calligraphy has been drawn in the "Regular script" (k'ai shu 楷書) style. The hand is quite firm and sure yet each character is regular and even. There is no evidence of eccentricity in the artist, no example of a whim that has been spontaneously carried out. Instead there is evidence of a talented and well-practised artist who confidently, yet cautiously carries out her work.

The effect induced in the observer is one of admiration for the graceful calligraphic lines of the leaves, the delicate intertwining of the blades that wind through each other without being lost in confusion. But there is no real sensation of movement with no suggestion of air or cloud; the effect is of elegance and the distillation of a mood. The sturdy blades and the blossoms appear suspended in a state of dynamic equilibrium. This effect of suspended motion is increased by the artist's

disinterest in depicting ground. However, the lack of motion and the airless quality do not infer a sense of lifelessness. Instead, the massed compositional elements contain a sense of vitality that is conveyed by the animated faces of each blossom's heart, peering out from behind its petals and twisting around the blades. These are the same worthy gentlemen blooming in solitude that Confucius noted.

The painting could not have been an accident of design. The multitude of strokes needed to depict the orchid plant necessitates a careful study to have been previously made by the artist, in order to avoid the painting's elements being lost in a confusion. There is a good possibility that this painting would be the result of numerous previous studies and perhaps a preliminary background charcoal sketch.

The composition of the painting would be complete without the calligraphy. However, the calligraphy has been written in the same firm, regular and controlled brush style of the painting. Indeed, the calligraphy and the painting elements could both have been drawn with the same brush. This factor, with the fact that the orchid blades gesture toward, and almost enclose, the poem, cause the viewer to consider the painting and the colophon as a symbiotic entity.

It is obvious that this painting is derived from the Chinese tradition of orchid painting. Not only is there a similarity with drawing in the Mustard Seed Manual (which although printed after this artist's death, was derived from pre-existing works in the Nanking area), but there are also strong similarities with works of artists that Ma was known

to have been influenced by. When we examine the works of Chao Meng-chien, for example the Narcissi scroll,<sup>9</sup> we can see the double outline technique and agree with Chinese historians' statements linking her style with his.

Ma Shou-chen's poem, which as already been noted as an integral part of the composition, conveys some of the significance of the painting. It reads:

In the air there is a fragrance of nine fields of orchids,  
The dew sparkles in the cool weather;  
Three Hsiang River moons shed their tears,  
Only traces of the dried tears remain;  
The autumn sky is clear,  
Yet so vast and broad it appears limitless.  
Who will travel once more  
To sing of the marsh border scenes?

Painted and composed in the Ch'in-huai Water Pavilion  
At the request of fifth elder sister Su Ching.  
In 1603 at the time of hoar frost descending.

This poem illustrates some of the symbolism mentioned previously. The term nine fields refers to the poem "Encountering Sorrow", by Ch'u Yüan.<sup>10</sup> We are sure the poem refers to the Li sao and not to any other event.<sup>11</sup> The reference to the Li sao is made clear by the word ch'u 楚 which can mean clear/distinct as well as refer to the State of Ch'u, where Ch'u Yüan came from.

The three Hsiang River moons refer to Hsiang Chun and Hsiang Fu-jen, who were originally divinities presiding over the Hsiang River, and later looked on as the daughters of the Emperor Yao.<sup>12</sup> Ma Shou-chen includes herself as the third of the Hsiang River moons as she is also known as Hsiang-lan and Yüeh 月 (moon)-chiao. Yüeh-chiao could be translated as the Beauty of the Moon.

Thus, the poem links the illustration of the blooming orchids to the past, to the literary traditions of pre-Taoist legends and also links the author's identity to these traditions. There is also a suggestion that Ma Shou-chen is using the allusion to orchids in order to equate her stature as a courtesan to that of a noble man in adverse circumstances.

The Indianapolis Museum handscroll (see figure 3 and Catalogue item III) by Ma Shou-chen, is one of the largest of her works. This long scroll, entitled Orchids and Bamboo, is signed and dated the fall of 1604 and does not bear a poem by the artist. It was drawn in the outline style with shading added later. It is almost a botanical treatise with various marsh grasses, water plants and moss executed in exacting detail. Many of these blossoms and plants are recognizable as visually similar to the blossoms and plants illustrated in the Mustard Seed Manual.<sup>13</sup> The artist has displayed an accomplished technical virtuosity in her handling of the various tones of ink in the painting. The small orchid at the base of the water and at the base of the rock formation illustrates an interesting contrast between the lighter tone of the water and the dark strokes used to convey the graceful twists of the leaf blades. In turn, this treatment provides a rich contrast with the short fine lines of the marsh grass and the fibrous brush strokes used to depict the rock formation.

The artist has used the artistic device of employing the long, supple blades of the orchid to gesture to the next pictorial element. Long graceful calligraphic lines point to

the soft rounded shapes of the rocks and the delicate texture of vegetation. At the same time we note these lines have a broad, stretched-out quality that emphasizes the surface of the horizontal scroll. Light tonal washes are anchored by dark and heavy clumps of rocks.

But despite the grace and technical virtuosity there is a certain fragmental and compartmentalized effect that has not been overcome by the artistic devices. The viewer is struck by the realistic quality of the various plants and impressed with the artist's technical virtuosity. However, the compositional elements have been arranged along the lower edge of the scroll in such a way as to provide a visual barrier. The near bank, at the water, has become a blockade and the far bank a barely suggested shape that is depicted without an indication of its relationship to water or to distance. No breeze can be felt to stir the fragrance of these flowers. There is the same sense of suspended animation noted in Orchids of the Caswell collection and Orchid, Bamboo and Rock of the Metropolitan Museum collection.

This is very different to Hsüeh Wu's scroll in the Honolulu Academy of Arts.<sup>14</sup> Hsüeh Wu 薛五 (d. 1637), a contemporary of Ma Shou-chen and a courtesan of Nanking, was also known for her orchid paintings. Hsüeh Wu's painting in Honolulu is a scroll with every element relating to each other in such a way as to create a bold rhythm throughout, with no fragmented effect. Nearby orchids gesture over and across the water to close islands of still more orchids. Hsüeh Wu also

has a far distant bank we can faintly see on the far shore. Thus, the reader can penetrate the surface quality created by the sinuous shape of orchid blades stretched across the surface in Hsüeh Wu's painting to become aware of the far shore. This introduction of far distance does not appear in Ma Shou-chen's work.

Hsüeh Wu was a courtesan, calligrapher, poet and painter of Nanking (although a generation older according to my calculations) and would therefore have had much in common with Ma Shou-chen. However, there were substantial differences in personality. Tseng<sup>15</sup> describes Hsüeh Wu as a person who liked to ride horseback and shoot balls from her maid's head, and called herself "Fifth Boy". Ma Shou-chen was also noted for her boldness and non-conformity,<sup>16</sup> but Hsüeh Wu carried this several steps further. Hsüeh Wu's propensity for archery and horseback riding, traditionally male activities, indicate a female who did not accept her position in life and longed for the freedom enjoyed by males. It is fitting that we can see the far distance, the far side of the bank, in her paintings. This is in contrast to Ma Shou-chen who seemed less of a rebel and more willing to accept her position in society. The fact that Ma Shou-chen had a devoted scholar friend and Hsüeh Wu did not may have helped cause this difference.

In Orchids and Bamboo, the viewer does not obtain so much a feeling for a close and intense fragment of nature as the scroll is unrolled, but instead has a feeling of being restrained with the vision blocked. Perhaps this is the result of the

psychological viewpoint of Ma Shou-chen when she looked from her garden across the Ch'in-huai canal.

Although Ma Shou-chen is best known for her orchid paintings, she painted other subjects.

The Lotus Plant by Ma Shou-chen (see figure 4 and Catalogue item IV), is a tall, slender hanging scroll painting that demonstrates again Ma Shou-chen's very real talent for using the tones of ink in her paintings. The dark tones are contrasted with the light tones, while the fine lines at first glance appear to be so casual and unlaboured that a very spontaneous effect is captured. These lines suggest stems and lotus blossoms that have been so cursively drawn that each line hints of a shape without confusing the composition nor taking away from the painting's simplicity. The composition is very simple and fits in well with the slender hanging scroll shape. The narrow sides of the painting contain and support the weight of the lotus blossoms on their delicate stalks.

Siren has translated the undated colophon the upper left of the scroll to read:

I passed my childhood at the river banks, not knowing any sorrows, but now the storms and rains have brought the autumn chill to Ch'in-huai. I dare not turn my head again to the roads of old along the dykes. The trees are thin, the sun is low, and I am in a public house.<sup>17</sup>

The lotus (ho荷 or lien蓮) is a popular motif in Chinese painting and, like the orchid, has several layers of symbolic meaning. It is rather interesting to note its selection as the subject matter to accompany Ma Shou-chen's poem. Although



the lotus is often associated with Buddhist teachings it was known in China from ancient times. In fact special ideographs were used in ancient times to denote all the different parts of the lotus plant.<sup>18</sup> No doubt a specialized vocabulary developed for this plant because, like the bamboo, all parts of the plant were considered useful.<sup>19</sup> Lotus seed became symbolic of longevity as seeds that are hundreds of years old have been known to germinate.<sup>20</sup> Legends have immortals clothed in fibres from the tubers of this plant.<sup>21</sup> Because these fibres are elastic, a saying developed that states "though the lotus tuber is broken the silks are still connected."<sup>22</sup> This signifies an affair that is fated to continue. More recent symbolism associates the lotus with eleventh-century Confucianism (no doubt via Buddhism). Chou Tun-i 周敦頤 (1017-1173)<sup>23</sup> loved the lotus plant, singling it out for its purity and tranquility. He described the lotus in these words:

It emerges from muddy dirt but is not contaminated; it reposes nobly above the clear water; hollow inside and straight outside, its stems do not straggle or branch. Its subtle perfume pervades the air far and wide...the lotus is the flower of purity and integrity.<sup>24</sup>

It is possibly the reference to Chou Tun-i's symbolism of the lotus plant that inspired Ma Shou-chen to choose the lotus as the subject of a painting to accompany her poetry. We have noted the possible allusions to her own life and the mixture of poetic and subjective allusions in the Caswell collection painting as well as this one. We have also noted that it is Ma Shou-chen's poetry and calligraphy, more than her painting

that has captured the praise of Chinese historians (all Confucian scholars). There is a good possibility that the poem was created before the painting. In this painting Ma Shou-chen has chosen the seemingly frail but resilient, single stemmed flower to suggest her solitude. The disappointments that she resolutely faced in her life were endured with what can only be described as a very resilient strength. This work is a perfect blend of poetry and painting or respectively, suggested imagery and pictorial qualities.

Another interpretation could be that Ma Shou-chen, in painting the lotus, referred to a love affair, perhaps to her affair with Wang Chih-teng. Siren quotes a note added to the inscription on Lotus Plant that expressed Ma Shou-chen's disappointment over the fact that a friend of hers had taken a new concubine.<sup>25</sup> The Lotus Plant could have been painted during the many years that Wang Chih-teng and Ma Shou-chen were separated. It is unlikely that a courtesan such as Ma Shou-chen, having had an affair with such a well known scholar as Wang Chih-teng, would not want to continue. Perhaps the sadness expressed is in response to thoughts of Wang Chih-teng. It is a well known convention for an artist to address the subject matter, such as a flower, coincidentally speaking to a lover. The word lotus, lien, is often used in poetry because of its phonetic similarity to the word beloved, lien.<sup>26</sup> There are precedents to suggest Ma Shou-chen addressed a lover and the subject of her painting at the same time. In Yo hsüeh lou shu hua lu there is a report of a painting by Ma Shou-chen with a

stone added by Wang Chih-teng. Ma Shou-chen addresses the painting in an inscription by saying "I love your tender leaves...".<sup>27</sup>

There are other paintings attributed to Ma Shou-chen. It is not the purpose of this thesis to discuss her complete works, but some of her paintings are reproduced in accessible publications. Among these is the orchid fan painting illustrated in Ku-kung Chou-K'an, see Catalogue item V. This fan painting is signed, bears an inscription by the artist, and is dated 1578. The subject matter primarily involves orchids but there is also some bamboo. The illustration of bamboo is too small to be able to understand why Chinese historians stated that Ma Shou-chen's painting style for bamboo was in the manner of Kuan Tao-shen (1262-1325), Chao Meng-fu's wife, and not any other well known bamboo painter.<sup>28</sup> The linking of Ma Shou-chen and Kuan Tao-sheng may have had more to do with their sex than their painting styles (see Section II).

The orchids in this fan painting are drawn in the outline style of Chao Meng-chien. Although bamboo, and not orchid blossoms are used as textural and tonal contrasts to punctuate the interweaving calligraphic lines of the blades of orchids, this painting is very similar in composition to the horizontal scroll by Ma Shou-chen illustrated in Shina Meiga Hokan (Catalogue item VI). It also has the same quality of being stretched across the surface of the painting with little interest in depicting depth.

Another fan painting of Ma Shou-chen in Ku-kung Chou-k'an

(Catalogue item VII) bears the Ch'ien lung Imperial seal and a signed inscription by Wang Chih-teng as well as by Ma Shou-chen. This painting has no pretensions of being a unified and comprehensive composition. Instead, it is simply a charming and decorative painting of various floral motifs with butterflies. This small fan painting, signed but undated, is a study of nature, lacking in the planned compositional quality of Ma Shou-chen's other works. As a botanical study it is similar to the study of the scroll in the Indianapolis Museum and to the study of orchid blossoms in the National Palace Museum (see Catalogue item VIII). The painting in the National Palace Museum is signed with a seal and shows the orchid blossom painted in both outline and wash technique. The spikes of the blossoms are shown in isolation, not in any imagined setting.

Another painting by Ma Shou-chen in the National Palace Museum is a small signed landscape (see Catalogue item IX). In this painting orchids executed in a wash technique grow out of the bank of a stream. The rocks have been painted with the texture strokes similar to those of P'u Ming.<sup>29</sup> The spikey brambles that off-set the languid appearance of the orchid can be found in other P'u Ming paintings.<sup>30</sup> Again the viewer has the impression of seeing nature in miniature. In this painting, the dark diagonal line, used to demarcate the near ground from the blank void beyond, gives the composition an effect of being stretched across the picture plane with no real depth. The conscious use of many brush techniques and tonal effects in such a small composition also give the effect of this being a

study more than a finished painting.

In a different category is the painting Epidendrums (see Catalogue item X), by Ma Shou-chen in the Soyeshima collection. This small album leaf shows a tall, elongated rock with a single spike of orchid blossoms and a few blades of orchid leaves. This composition is similar to the painting by Ma Shou-chen illustrated in Chung-kuo Ming hua chi (see Catalogue item XI). In this painting, Slender Rock, Orchids and Bamboo, a convoluted rock has an orchid plant growing at its base and a bamboo plant stretching above the rock. Both Epidendrums and Slender Rock, Orchids and Bamboo have a similar composition and motifs. Also, both paintings share the elongated vertical shape with a diagonal composition held in balance by a prominent vertical element. In the Slender Rock, Orchids and Bamboo painting this vertical element is a branch of bamboo while in the Epidendrums, the vertical element is a spike of orchid blossoms. The Slender Rock, Orchids and Bamboo painting bears a seal and signed inscription by Wang Chih-teng and a signed inscription with two seals by Ma Shou-chen, dated 1572. Neither inscription is a visual necessity to the balance of the composition of the painting. Additional inscriptions are above.

Unusual rock shapes are a popular element in Chinese painting.<sup>31</sup> But the similarity in the two paintings by Ma Shou-chen would suggest that one painting was a study for a later work. It is possible that the album leaf is the earlier work, as album leaves characteristically lend themselves to a more experimental approach.<sup>32</sup> However, the undated Soyeshima album leaf may be

a simplified version of earlier studies and like the undated Stockholm lotus painting, an indication that Ma Shou-chen's works became simpler in composition as she grew older.

Both the painting Slender Rock, Orchids and Bamboo and the album leaf in the Soyeshima collection have orchids done in the outline technique. But the manner used to paint the rock is different in each case. The rock painted in Slender Rock, Orchids and Bamboo demonstrates the fibrous brush stroke or fei-po technique made famous by ChaoMeng-fu.<sup>33</sup> In the fei-po technique, many parts of the ground are left untouched by the separating hairs of the brush. This is very different to the rock illustrated in the Soyeshima collection, which is more similar to the works of Ma Lin.<sup>34</sup> Both the Petrucci and the Sze translations of the Mustard Seed Manual have illustrations of orchids painted in the style of Ma Lin and Ma Hsiang-lan.<sup>35</sup> In both cases the illustrations appear to be switched. This may be because both use reproductions of later editions rather than the original woodcut illustrations, or it may be because there is a genuine confusion due to a similar painting style sometimes used by Ma Shou-chen.

From this visual analysis of a few of Ma Shou-chen's works, we can see a pattern emerge. According to Chinese historians, she was famous for her outline technique of painting orchids in the manner of Chao Meng-chien, and famous for her technique of painting bamboo in the manner of Kuan Tao-sheng. But Ma Shou-chen was accomplished in painting with other techniques as well. She was able to paint with similar techniques used by such

artists as P'u Ming and Ma Lin. Her painting compositions tend to be stable, in fact rather more static than the compositions of Chao Meng-chien or Hsueh Wu. Ma Shou-chen had a propensity for stretching her brush strokes across the surface of the painting, not being overly concerned with atmospheric qualities or far distance. This may be deliberate as the sense of suspended animation noted above and the emphasis on the brush strokes stretched across the paintings both serve to enhance the two-dimensional quality of her paintings. This factor in turn serves to focus the attention of the viewer upon the calligraphy which is often present on Ma Shou-chen's paintings.

The same skill and care that is shown in Ma Shou-chen's painting is present in her calligraphy. Though there is mention of Ma Shou-chen's "Running style" (hsing-shu 行書) calligraphy, the examples we have seen reveal a preference of a style that is rather conservative in its tradition.<sup>36</sup> We can see an example of her "Running style" script on the Orchid and Bamboo fan (see Catalogue item V). There, the "Running style" flowing lines fit in well with the orchids' very long blades. However, all other examples of Ma Shou-chen's calligraphy (see Catalogue items I-XI) are of the "Regular script". Chao Meng-fu was also noted for calligraphy that seldom deviated from the traditional accepted standards.<sup>37</sup> It may be this factor that led one Chinese historian to state Ma Shou-chen's calligraphy was similar to Chao Meng-fu's.<sup>38</sup>

The imagery present in Ma Shou-chen's poetry links past traditions to the subject matter and the author. The sad, world-weary note present in these images, such as the Stockholm

painting and inscription, may be more a convention than an actual reality. Men originally wrote love poems from a female viewpoint, ascribing emotions that they felt were appropriate, and this later became a convention.<sup>39</sup>

Ma Shou-chen's most inspired and creative works are in paintings with simple compositions and few elements. In fact, in her larger works, such as the Indianapolis scroll there is a tendency to treat the whole composition by separating various components. Simple compositional elements complement her poetry. The rather straight-forward allusions in the poetry, upon examination, give up layer upon layer of possible symbolic meaning, conveyed with a direct and intense feeling. Ma Shou-chen's simple compositions enforce this and lead the viewer to contemplate the possible symbolism. Both poetry and painting can be appreciated on several levels of understanding. However, the viewer is directed back to the poetry and, indeed, the poetry seems to have been foremost in Ma Shou-chen's mind.



SECTION IV: MING DYNASTY LITERATI ARTISTS

If Ma Shou-chen's work is representative of a painting style handed down by the traditions of centuries past, how can we compare her style of painting to the painting style of her contemporaries in the established mainstream of Chinese painting, that is to say the literati artists? Through her social contacts with Wang Chih-teng, it is likely that Ma Shou-chen knew many literati artists of the Suchow area. Ch'en Shun 陳淳 (1483-1584) was greatly admired by Wang Chih-teng, who gave him a prominent spot in his history of painting.<sup>1</sup> Thus, although Ma Shou-chen would not have known him personally, she would have been aware of Ch'en Shun's work. As Ch'en Shun was a friend of Shen Chou 沈周 (1427-1509) and a pupil of Wen Cheng-ming 文徵明 (1470-1567), we begin to see how entirely feasible it would be that Ma Shou-chen was in turn familiar with these artists' works. Hsiang Yüan-pien 項元汴 (1525-1590) was a friend of the Wen family, in particular Wen Chia 文嘉 (1501-1583). Also, there is a record of an inscription and seal of Wen Chao-chih 文肇祉, Wen Cheng-ming's grandson, on a painting by Ma Shou-chen.<sup>2</sup> Hsiang Yüan-pien was also close to Tung Ch'i-ch'ung 董其昌 (1555-1636), who served the Hsiang family as a tutor. Hsiang Yüan-pien was also an influential collector who was an intrinsic part of the literati Wu school painters.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Hsiang Yüan-pien was said to have operated a pawn shop where painting scrolls were a part of his inventory.<sup>4</sup> Ma Shou-chen is recorded as having often visited pawn shops and may have been his customer.<sup>5</sup>

In this closely connected society, it is quite likely that Ma Shou-chen would have been familiar with the works of Ch'en Shun, Shen Chou, Wen Cheng-ming and Hsiang Yüan-pien. Her own studies of their works would have been used to refine her artistic techniques.

Within the Wu school of the Ming dynasty, flower painting continued to be a popular theme. Shen Chou and Wen Cheng-ming, the acknowledged leaders of the Wu school artists, were both known for their flower painting, although these paintings were minor works supposedly done only as amusement.<sup>6</sup> When we examine these works we see definite correlations between their works (and their students' works), and the paintings of Ma Shou-chen.

Shen Chou's Duck in a Lotus Pond<sup>7</sup> illustrates the accomplished tonal variations that we have also come to recognize as characteristic of Ma Shou-chen's work. However, his compositional arrangement is only reminiscent of Ma Shou-chen's composition in the Stockholm painting. The two compositions are only generally similar, in their vertical shape, theme and painting technique with the brush. Also, Shen Chou's painting is dissimilar in its very tangible treatment of atmosphere. Another painting, by Ch'en Shun, Shen Chou's friend and Wen Cheng-ming's pupil, the Lotus and Duck,<sup>8</sup> perhaps provides us with the link between the literati painting and the Stockholm painting by Ma Shou-chen. In his painting, Ch'en Shun shows little interest in retaining Shen Chou's atmospheric quality but retains interest in tonal variations and gives the long stems the

calligraphic quality so strongly present in Ma Shou-chen's painting. Ch'en Shun's painting has similar composition, shape, theme and brush technique to Ma Shou-chen's painting.

Another painting by Ch'en Shun, Studies from Life,<sup>9</sup> is a study of flowers done in the outline style used by Ma Shou-chen. Shen Chou's Fungus, Orchid and Magnolia<sup>10</sup> has a compositional arrangement that is quite reminiscent of Ma Shou-chen's painting Slender Rock, Orchids and Bamboo. In both paintings we see the diagonal composition held in balance by the same vertical element reaching up and beyond the twisted rock shape. Both rocks have been rendered with similar fei-po brush strokes. The ground is sloping in both paintings giving a tilted effect and establishing a rather "uncertain equilibrium" that we later recognize as typical in Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's works.<sup>11</sup>

This is not to say that Ma Shou-chen copied Shen Chou's painting. There are numerous paintings that have this same compositional arrangement. In fact tall, narrow compositions are rather typical of the Wu school.<sup>12</sup> An example of another painting like this would be Hsiang Yuan-pien's painting, Longevity Wishes.<sup>13</sup> There we see a similar rock, with the bamboo beyond, on a sparsely rendered and slanted ground. Hsiang Yuan-pien's stylistic technique is similar to Shen Chou's but also reminiscent of Ni Tsan, whom he also admired. It is interesting that such a painting, with so few compositional elements, can bring to mind the work of such different artists as Shen Chou and Ni Tsan. This emphasizes how varied a "copy" can be and how it is possible to have the Chinese method of "copying" or "in the manner of" without stifling the artistic

expression of individual artists.

Wen Cheng-ming has been called the greatest orchid painter since the Yuan dynasty.<sup>14</sup> When we look at an example of one of these paintings, such as Orchid and Bamboo,<sup>15</sup> we see the same asymmetrical one corner compositional arrangement, the tonal variation between various elements, and the fei-po brush strokes in his painting that is also characteristic of P'u-ming, the fourteenth century Ch'an artist.<sup>16</sup> This painting's composition and theme is repeated, though in a much simpler composition, by Hsiang Yüan-pien in Ink Orchids.<sup>17</sup> Here we see the same technique and composition that we noted in Ma Shou-chen's painting Orchid, Bamboo and Rock (Catalogue item I), as well as her small study in the National Palace Museum (see Catalogue item VIII). Wen Cheng-ming also did orchids in the outline technique used by Ma Shou-chen.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, Ma Shou-chen fits in well with contemporary literati artists. That is to say, her works are comparable in theme, composition, technical execution of the brush and ink tones to the major literati painters of her time. Also, the majority of her paintings bear the prominent inscriptions that are also present in the majority of the works by Shen Chou, Wen Cheng-ming, Ch'en Shun and Hsiang Yüan-pien.<sup>19</sup>

This is not to say that Ma Shou-chen's work was of the same scope. For the samples given of Shen Chou, Wen Cheng-ming, Ch'en Shun and Hsiang Yuan-pien are but a small selected sampling of their many diverse works. Ma Shou-chen was known only for her paintings of flowers. But within her chosen sphere

her works were of a style and quality that reached the standards of Ch'en Shun or Hsiang Yüan-pien.

Cahill in Parting at the Shore, notes a correspondence between an artist's position in society and his style of painting.<sup>20</sup> This observation is quite applicable to Ma Shou-chen. Ma Shou-chen, educated, talented and obviously cognitive of traditions of flower painting, was a courtesan and would be trained and anxious to please the literati - her patrons. This desire to please the literati would most likely have been shared by Hsiang Yüan-pien. Because his fortune was based on pawnshops, Hsiang Yüan-pien would have been a member of the merchant class.<sup>21</sup> This class was not one of the four classes recognized by Confucius. Thus, merchants theoretically were not to mix with literati. However, in Nanking and Suchow there was an intermingling of merchants and literati during the Ming dynasty.<sup>22</sup> This was a new phenomenon. However, neither Hsiang Yuan-pien nor Ma Shou-chen, nor anyone in a similar position, could be expected to stray far beyond the borders of the accepted taste of their desired peer group. Voyages into non-conformity would be left for individuals who genuinely did not care about social acceptance or else were so firmly entrenched socially that they had no fear of being rejected. Shen Chou could be considered an example of this.

But while Ma Shou-chen and Hsiang Yüan-pien did not go beyond any established literati taste in their paintings, we can appreciate their works for their own genuine merit and in fact, use Ma Shou-chen's works as a window to the understanding

of the literati at the end of the Ming dynasty, a time of shifting values. As a courtesan, Ma Shou-chen was trained to respond to the wishes of the literati; therefore her work is important as an indication of their taste. Her close association with them can show them in a new light.

As to Ma Shou-chen's and other female artists' predilection for painting flowers, it is unfair to denigrate their activity as merely a suitable feminine interest.<sup>23</sup> Ma Shou-chen referred to the Li sao in her poetry and used orchids as its allegory in her paintings. The Li sao is a major work in Chinese classical literature. This poem is particularly noted for its mystery and magic, its hint of eroticism and its sincerity of purpose in one person's journey of passionate integrity. To achieve this, the poem suggests multiple allegories of fragrant plants. When Ma Shou-chen painted a reference to the Li sao and emphasized this with her own poetic references, she linked herself to this image of mystery, sexuality and magic. Ma Shou-chen used the flowers as an artistic convention. This is an inescapable factor in all Chinese art forms. Every scholar is trained to know the past and to use its traditions to express himself, whether in essay writing, poetry, calligraphy or painting. Ma Shou-chen did not try to escape this tradition but used the existing framework to express her own feelings.

Her poetry and paintings both referred to something without tightly defining it. This leaves the viewer, assumed to be educated and sensitive, able to transmit his or her own senses and interpret the artist's exact sentiments as he feels fit.

The transmission of an allegorical allusion requires the involvement of the imagination of the viewer. An evocative, but not totally representational image is more successful in this process because a specific and detailed work would not stimulate the imagination.

How Ma Shou-chen felt about the interpretations of tragic allusions to her own life is impossible to say.<sup>24</sup> We cannot be sure that she regretted the circumstances of her life as much as her Chinese biographers and Siren (all male) think. But this is unimportant -- just as it is relatively unimportant to decide if all the artists who painted scenes of Taoist fishermen really wanted to live a life of simplicity.

Contag speaks of the adoration of the eternal in Chinese art.<sup>25</sup> It is this desire to abstract the general feeling and yet remain detached from anything specific that we can see in Ma Shou-chen's painting. Ma Shou-chen was able to transmit a feeling to the viewer but we are unable to tightly define it. We do not know if the orchids refer to her own despair in undesirable circumstances or are the symbol of a carefree spirit. Hers was a spirit that had matured, uncultivated in a secluded valley, where the wind traces its path across the field of orchids and carries a pervasive perfume. Ma Shou-chen expressed so much in both her poetry and her painting with just the suggestion of a brush stroke and the allusion to a historical reference.

Wang Chih-teng praised Ma Shou-chen's poetry and calligraphy because ability in calligraphy and poetry are the criteria of a

noble person. She would have to be accepted as a poet before there could be any acceptance of her painting. As noted by Su Shih, an artist is first a poet. But the conventions against such acceptance are very strong in Chinese society. The fact that Ma Shou-chen was a woman would always be considered first in Confucian China.<sup>26</sup> This would be one of the reasons why Ma Shou-chen's paintings were not given very much attention by Chinese art historians. It appears that sometimes, when a woman's paintings were found to show some talent, it was suggested that they must be the work of another. Thus, in Ma Shou-chen's case it was suggested that her paintings could have been done by Wang Chih-teng.<sup>27</sup>

Ma Shou-chen's painting demonstrated a continuing tradition of flower painting based on an ancestry of Hsu Hsi's painting technique. Hsu Hsi's method of painting flowers first was used because it was felt it lent itself better to what the literati artists wanted to express. In the Yüan dynasty this desire to paint in a non-academic style was reinforced by the previous association of academic style painting with the court artists of the Southern Sung dynasty. Academic/court artists became associated with the downfall of a Chinese dynasty and the domination by foreign barbarians in the succeeding dynasty. Thus, a painting style was also a badge of membership within a group. The literati (Wu school) and the non-literati (Che school) painting styles were less strongly defined in the Ming dynasty, but it still is a fact that a painting style can signal acceptance or non-acceptance within a group. While it



may seem that restrictions on permitted painting styles of an artist would be damaging to creativity, what happened was that the artist learned to express himself or herself within the established conventions. Ma Shou-chen was able to express herself within this system. It is significant that she chose to become known for a painting style strongly associated with the literati of the Ming dynasty.

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CONCLUSION:

In this thesis I have discussed the life and artistic works of the Ming dynasty courtesan, Ma Shou-chen. Ma Shou-chen's works were created with real talent and a desire to please one of the most discerning of Chinese art historians - Wang Chih-teng. We could generalize Ma Shou-chen's works as being rather small and intimate with a decorative quality in their interest in rhythmic calligraphic brush strokes that sweep across the painting surface and emphasize the picture plane. There is little interest in atmosphere or depth. The composition is focused upon depicting a segment of nature and thus can appear to be hastily done. But examination reveals the composition, like the brush work and ink tones, were carefully and skillfully done to incorporate the poetry and inscriptions that are frequently present. The total effect is lyrical and evocative with a sense of unobtrusive quiet.

If this could be said about Ma Shou-chen's works, the same could be said about many of Shen Chou's works. Yet Siren, for example, has stated that Shen Chou's fame "was based rather on his personality as a whole than... as a painter."<sup>1</sup> while Edwards stressed Shen Chou's non-conformity,<sup>2</sup> and Wang Chih-teng stated that Shen Chou was in the divine class of painting.<sup>3</sup> The opinions of Shen Chou's works by Siren, Edwards and Wang Chih-teng are all based upon the personal qualities of the artist. In spite of the fact that their opinions of the artist are based upon his personal qualities (qualities that

are more often expressed in small and intimate works), Shen Chou's major works are not likely to be represented by, for example, his small album leaves. Historians have often fallen into the trap of looking for the grand moment in each period by examining the major (large) works of the most important artists. Perhaps this is not the case in the Ming dynasty.

After examining Ma Shou-chen's works it is possible for us to appreciate the more informal characteristics of Ming dynasty society and the changing role of the literati artist. The literati artists enjoyed their leisure hours, often without the restraints of official appointments, in a mixed company that often included merchants and courtesans. The focus of their lives was no longer upon public service but on private pleasures and expressions. There would be no better person to express the new aesthetics of the Ming dynasty literati than the courtesan who was trained to respond to their desires.

## INTRODUCTION NOTES

1. Susan Bush, Chinese Literati, page 175.

## SECTION I NOTES

1. Non-English language literary sources have been translated for this thesis (see Appendix 2). Most sources state that Ma Shou-chen was called Yuan-erh as a child but Chung-kuo jen ming ta tzu tien, by Liho Tsang states she was called Yueh-chiao as a child. T'a Sun in Chung-kuo hua chia jen ming ta tz'u tien states she was given the name Yueh-chiao after a person in a southern style opera.
2. Wei-ch'u Kuo, Sung Yuan Ming Ch'ing shu hua chia nien piao, pages 160,183,186,189.
3. Osvald Siren, Chinese Painting, Vol.7 page 218.
4. Orchid, Bamboo and Rock (see Appendix 1, Catalogue item I) and Slender Rock, Orchids and Bamboo (see Catalogue item XI) bear an inscription dating them 1572.
5. E Li in Yu t'ai shu shih records a painting dated keng-niu or 1570.
6. E Li in Yu t'ai shu shih and Sou-yu T'ang in Yu t'ai hua shih.
7. See Catalogue item V, Appendix 1.
8. Kuang-t'ao K'ung in Yo hsueh lou shu hua lu.

SECTION I NOTES (cont'd)

9. Yuan-chi P'ang in Hsu chai ming hua lu.
10. Shang-jen K'ung in Hsiang chin pu.
11. Wei-ch'u Kuo in Sung Yuan Ming Ch'ing shu hua chia nien piao cites two sources for giving 1604 as the date of Ma Shou-chen's death. These are 伏魔書畫錄 and 疑年錄彙編.
12. Kuang-t'ao K'ung in Yo hsueh lou shu hua lu. The Chinese method of dating would call this his seventieth birthday. All ages given in the body of this thesis are stated according to the Western method. However, in an attempt to give a literal translation, the ages are stated according to the Chinese method in Appendix 2.
13. Good<sup>rich</sup> and Fang, Dictionary of Ming Biography, Vol. 2, page 1362.
14. Kuang-t'ao K'ung in Yo hsueh lou shu hua lu.
15. Li-ho Tsang in Chung-kuo jen ming ta tz'u tien.
16. Ch'ien-i Ch'ien in Lieh ch'ao shih chi hsiao chuan.
17. Ibid. However, Fan-t'ing Wang in Chung hua li tai fu nu disagrees stating she lived until she was sixty-nine years.
18. Kuang-t'ao K'ung in Yo hsueh lou shu hua lu gives an interesting account of this event.

SECTION I NOTES (cont'd)

19. Ch'ien -i Ch'ien in Lieh ch'ao shih and I-tsun Chu in Ming shih tsung and Li-ho Tsang in Chung-kuo jen ming.
  
20. Kuang-t'ao K'ung in Yo hsueh lou shu hua lu describes a painting by Ma Shou-chen that bears a signature dating it 1599 and also has an inscription by Wang Chih-teng.
  
21. Ch'ien-i Ch'ien in Lieh Ch'ao shih and I-tsun Chu in Ming shih tsung.
  
22. Such a situation occurred in the late sixteenth century to T'u Lung who was introduced to a close friend's wife only to be accused by his enemies of attending an improper gathering. Goodrich and Fang, Vol. 2, p.1325.
  
23. E Li in Yu t'ai shu shih and Ch'ien-i Ch'ien in Lieh ch'ao shih call Ma Shou-chen chi 姬. Chi was the royal surname of the ruling family of the Chou dynasty (1027-256 B.C.). Thus, chi is an honorific term. However, Kuang-t'ao K'ung in Yo hsueh lou shu, I-tsun Chu and Ch'ang Wang in Ming tz'u tsung, I-tsun Chu in Ming shih tsung and Li-ho Tsang in Chung-kuo jen ming call Ma Shou-chen, chi 妓. This chi means prostitute or sing-song girl.
  
24. Howard Levy in A Feast of Mist p. 9 lists the skills of courtesans.
  
25. Fan-t'ing Wang in Chung hua li tai fu nu.
  
26. Ch'ien-i Ch'ien in Lieh ch'ao shih. It is interesting to note that according to Cahill in Parting, p. 198, the p'i-p'a

SECTION I NOTES (cont'd)

was associated with women entertainers while the ch'in was associated with scholarly activities. Levy in Feast of Mist, p. 141, states that mention of the deerskin drums allude to the drum favored by the T'ang Emperor Hsuan-tsung. All of these instruments were referred to in reports of Ma Shou-chen's residence.

27. Van Gulik, Sexual Life in China, p. 171.

28. Levy, A Feast of Mist, p.18. This may explain why Ma Shou-chen and her family were involved in prostitution. Ma is a well known Moslem name.

29. Fan-t'ing Wang in Chung hua li tai fu nu.

30. Van Gulik, p. 265 mentions the frequency of foot-binding during the Ming dynasty. However, for a more complete description of this phenomenon see Levy, Chinese Footbinding.

31. Van Gulik, p. 308 and Levy, A Feast of Mist, p. 9.

32. Ch'ien-i Ch'ien in Lieh ch'ao shih.

33. H.L. Li, Garden Flowers of China, p. 73 describes orchids growing wild and p. 64 describes lotus plants growing throughout China.

34. Levy, A Feast of Mist p. 25 states the Hall of Tribute, where examinations were held every three years, had 20,644 tiny rooms for the examinees.

SECTION I NOTES (cont'd)

35. According to Levy, A Feast of Mist, pg.17, the concept of the aesthetically inclined scholar developed with Yang Wei-chen (Yuan/Ming dynasty poet), who showed no interest in becoming an official.

36. According to Bush, p.151, only one-half the chin-shih degrees granted during the Sung dynasty were granted at the time of the Ming dynasty. The chu-jen degree became more important and harder to achieve in a quota system.

37. Ibid.

38. Levy, A Feast of Mist, p. 26.

39. Ibid. p. 27.

40. Ibid. p. 27.

41. Ibid. p. 26.

42. Van Gulik, p. 59, explains that the paucity of contact between couples did not imply a belief that the sexual act was a sin, instead a desire to regulate the family life and procreation. In Yuan dynasty time, the Neo-Confucian Chu Hsi took this one step further, stressing the inferiority of women while limiting sexual contact to the wedding couch. Van Gulik, p. 223, states that it was Chu Hsi who laid the foundations of Neo-Confucianism as the only State religion.

43. According to Van Gulik, p. 47, the Chinese believed



SECTION I NOTES (cont'd)

a man's essence could be strengthened by acquiring yin essence X  
from a woman who has reached orgasm.

44. See note 22, this section.

45. Van Gulik, p. 60 quotes from the Li Chi for this regulation.

46. Van Gulik, p. 182.

47. Syphilis was not introduced to China until the beginning of the sixteenth century, according to Van Gulik, p. 311.

48. Shang-ren K'ung, Peach Blossom Fan, p. 43 describes a game where a courtesan encouraged guests to drink wine by suggesting games involved with poetry. Each participant would recite his own poetry after every cup of wine.

49. Levy, A Feast of Mist, p. 9 & 74 and Van Gulik, p. 178. Courtesans were praised when they could hold a large volume of liquor and still record the number of drinks consumed at a feast. Another story praises a girl who could encourage others to drink.

50. Levy, A Feast of Mist, p. 42, states that the Bureau of Rites Preservation could eliminate a girl's name from the register. Van Gulik, p. 171 discusses the cases of courtesans being bought out by distinguished guests.

51. Van Gulik, p. 181, stresses that skills were more important than beauty to a courtesan.

SECTION I NOTES (cont'd)

52. Ch'ien-i Ch'ien in Lieh ch'ao shih.
53. Fan-t'ing Wang in Chung hua li tai fu nu. Li-ho Tsang in Chung-kuo jen ming ta tz'u tien states that she was not only charming but also good at guessing people's intentions (a very valuable talent for a courtesan).
54. Goodrich and Fang, Vol. 2, p.1361-1363.

SECTION II NOTES

1. There are numerous references to this in Chinese literary sources. See Sou-yu T'ang, Yu t'ai hua shih, T'a sun, Chung-kuo hua chia and translations of the Mustard Seed Manual.
2. H. Li, Garden Flowers, p. 8, discusses Emperor Wu Ti of the Han dynasty who had a well known garden of exotic flowers.
3. Cahill, Chinese Painting, p. 157, illustrates an example of this.
4. Contag, "Unique Characteristics", p. 57.
5. Cahill, "Confucian Elements", p.129.
6. Chu-tsing Li, A Thousand Peaks, p. 263 and 264 discusses the two schools of flower painting.
7. Ledderose, Mi Fu, p. 30, explains that the interest in expressing subjective qualities in painting is a development of the belief in the subjective qualities of calligraphy. As early as the fourth century it was believed a brush stroke could reveal the character of the calligrapher. A desire to express character increased a spontaneous use of the brush.
8. Hummel, Autobiography of a Chinese Historian, p.XL, quotes Arthur Legge's explanation of this.
9. Bush, p. 29 quotes Su Shih stating that an artist is a poet not a painter.

SECTION II NOTES (cont'd)

10. The Hsuan-ho hua-p'u was the catalogue of the Emperor Hui-tsung's painting collection. It was compiled after the fall of the N. Sung dynasty by literati and reveals its literati bias in such ways as quoting the Confucian Analects in the preface - according to Cahill, "Confucian Elements", p.139.
11. Siren, Chinese Painting, Vol.II, p.61.
12. Michael Sullivan, Symbols of Eternity, p. 80.
13. For an illustration of an example of this see Wen Fong, Sung and Yuan Paintings, plate no. 12.
14. Siren, Chinese Painting, Vol. IV, p. 73.
15. Bush, p. 123.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Siren, Chinese Painting, Vol. II, p.158.
20. Chu-tsing Li, "Freer Sheep and Goat", p. 321 quotes this poem by Confucius. He includes the sentence "this is just like the worthy man who in an inopportune time must associate with the common herd" as among the words of Confucius. In two Chinese literary sources, I could not see this sentence included with the words of Confucius. Perhaps the quotation marks were

SECTION II NOTES (cont'd)

inserted wrongly in Li's article.

21. Chu-tsing Li, "Freer Sheep and Goat", p. 321.

22. Chu-tsing Li, "Oberlin Orchid", p. 52.

23. Bush, p. 131.

24. Ibid.

25. Bush, p. 139, quotes Chao Meng-fu as saying that when sketching bamboo, eight strokes of calligraphy are used. It is statements like this that stress the link between calligraphy and painting.

26. An illustration of an example of this can be seen in Cahill, Chinese Painting, p. 103.

27. Chao Meng-fu is the exception to this rule and the critical comments of his work often reflect the sentiment that he was a traitor to the Chinese people. See Li, "Freer Goat".

28. Bush, p. 151.

29. Cahill, Parting, p. 59.

30. Goodrich and Fang, Vol. 2, p.1402, states that the most prominent member of the classicist school during the Ming dynasty was Wang Shih-chen (1526-1590).

31. Goodrich and Fang. Vol. 2, p.1362, states that this

SECTION II NOTES (cont'd)

treatise concerned the painters of the Soochow area while Ma Shou-chen lived in Nanking. However, it is quite likely he would not have included her in any case.

32. Kuang-t'ao K'ung, Yo hsueh lou shu and T'a Sun, Chung-kuo hua chia.

34. Sou-yu T'ang, Yu t'ai hua shih.

35. Ibid.

36. Shang-jen K'ung, Hsiang chin pu.

37. E Li, Yu t'ai shu shih.

38. Ch'ien-i Ch'ien, Lieh ch'ao shih.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid. Wang Chih-teng uses the same terms as Su Shih when speaking of Ma Shou-chen's writing. According to Bush, p. 35, Su Shih said that writing is like a flow of water as a force of nature. Wang Chih-teng described Ma Shou-chen's writing in these same words.

41. Cahill, Parting, p. 216 addresses himself to this problem. Apparently the literati, such as Wen Cheng-ming, solved the problem of money by accepting services in exchange for their paintings.

SECTION II NOTES (cont'd)

42. Fan-t'ing Wang, Chung hua li tai fu nu.
43. Ch'ien-i Ch'ien in Lieh ch'ao shih lists Ma Shou-chen with other female artists. The Yu t'ai shu shih by E Li is a separate volume of a series. It is a compilation of female artists. Chinese editors traditionally separate people according to classification (e.g. literati, Taoist).
44. Lucy Ho, Life and Works of Li Ch'ing-chao discusses the works of possibly China's most famous female poet.
45. F.Ayscough, Chinese Women, p. 237-249.
46. Van Gulik, p. 98.
47. Ibid. p. 257.
48. Ibid.
49. Siren, Chinese Painting, Vol. V, p. 74.
50. Hsi-hua Fu, Ming tai chuan ch'i ch'uan ch'ieh.
51. Ibid.
52. Kuang-t'ao K'ung, Yo hsüeh lou shu hua lu.

### SECTION III NOTES

1. For an illustration of this painting, see Sherman Lee, Colours of Ink, p. 47.
2. Chu-tsing Li, "Oberlin Orchid", p. 50.
3. See Section I for a discussion of this.
4. Ch'u Yüan was a statesman of Ch'u in Chou dynasty times. He was banished to the region of the Yangtze River (in particular to the Yüan, Hsiang and Mi-lo tributaries), where he eventually committed suicide in despair that his king had rejected his counsel. Today, the Dragon Boat Festival commemorates this event on the fifth day of the fifth month. The "orchids of the nine fields", in Wang Chih-teng's poem, refer to Ch'u Yüan's line in the Li sao that reads, "I have tended many an acre (nine fields of orchids". For a translation of this poem see David Hawkes, Ch'u Tz'u, p. 23.
5. See Section II
6. Van Gulik, p. 178, gives an example of this. He mentions Li Po and Confucian scholars in countless poems with such titles as "composed on an excursion to x, taking courtesans with us".
7. H. Li, Garden Flowers, p. 77.
8. Mai-mai Sze, The Tao of Painting, Vol 2, p.356.
9. For an illustration of this painting see Wen Fong, Sung and Yüan Painting, plate no. 12.



SECTION III NOTES (cont'd)

10. See note 4, Section III.
11. Chu-tsing Li in "Oberlin Orchid" discusses another poem that used the image of "nine fields of orchids" to criticize those who served the Yüan dynasty foreigners and in doing so betrayed the Chinese. x
12. Hummel, Autobiography, p.121.
13. For an illustration of various plants see the Mai-mai Sze, The Tao of Painting, Vol. II, p.65,66,&67.
14. Yu-ho Tseng, "Hsueh Wu and Her Orchids", Arts Asiatiques II, No. 3 (1955): 197-208.
15. Ibid.
16. Ch'ien-i Ch'ien, Lieh ch'ao shih.
17. Siren, Chinese Painting, Vol. V, p.72.
18. H. Li, Garden Flowers, p.65-69.
19. Ibid. For example, underground stems and seeds are edible and leaves are used for wrapping.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Chou Tun-i, the pioneer of Neo-Confucianism, assimilated

SECTION III NOTES (cont'd)

the Taoist element of non-being into Confucian thought. Wing-tsit Chan, Source Book in Chinese Philosophy, p. 460.

24. H. Li, Garden Flowers, p. 66.
25. Siren, History of Later Chinese Painting, Vol. 2, p. 54.
26. Burton, Chinese Lyricism, p. 54.
27. Kuang-t'ao K'ung, Yo hsüeh lou shu hua lu.
28. T'a Sun, Chung-kuo hua and Sou-yu T'ang, Yu t'ai hua shih.
29. For an illustration of this see Lee, Colours, illustration number 16.
30. Chu-tsing Li, "Oberlin Orchid", p. 50 discusses other P'u Ming Paintings.
31. Alfreda Murck and Wen Fong, "Astor Court: Chinese Garden Court", Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin (1980/81), p. 51-57, "Rocks and Plantings".
32. Cahill in Parting, p. 92 suggests that the album paintings done in the Ming dynasty encouraged experimentation, intimacy and immediacy.
33. There are several Chinese terms that describe the fibres of a brush separating -- ma p'i ts'un 麻皮皴, p'i ma ts'un 披麻皴 & fei-po 飛白. All these terms

SECTION III NOTES (cont'd)

describe a separation of the fibres of the brush, (see March, Some Technical Terms of Chinese Painting, nos. 209, 210 and 117). The brushstroke used to paint the rock in Slender Rock, Orchids and Bamboo, by Ma Shou-chen is similar to the brushstroke used by Chao Meng-fu in Rock, Bamboo and Old Tree (see Cahill, Hills, plate 80). Perhaps Ma Shou-chen was adapting a brush stroke she used for her calligraphy as did Chao Meng-fu (see Cahill, Hills, p. 162).

34. For an illustration of Ma Lin's work see Wen Fong, Sung and Yuan Painting, plate 11.

35. Raphael Petrucci, Kiai-Tseu-Yüan Houa Tchouan (translation of the Mustard Seed Manual), p. 255.

36. Kuang-t'ao K'ung, Yo hsüeh lou shu hua lu mentions "Running style" script used by Ma Shou-chen.

37. Richard Barnhart, "Chinese Calligraphy", p. 237.

38. Fan-t'ing Wang, Chung hua li tai fu nu.

39. Van Gulik, p. 172 discusses the doubted authenticity of various courtesan poems and notes the distressing uniformity.

SECTION IV NOTES (cont'd)

1. Siren, Chinese Painting, Vol.IV, p.219 quotes what Wang Chih-teng said about Ch'en Shun: "he possessed a beautiful talent by nature and his brushwork was highly original...his paintings were done in such a free and spontaneous fashion that they seemed like living things before the eye".
2. In Hsu chai ming hua lu by Yuan-chi P'ang, Wen Chao-chih is referred to as being from the district of Heng. According to Goodrich and Fang, Dictionary of Ming Biography Vol.II p.1471, Wen Cheng-ming's hao is Heng-shan 衡山 because he traced his ancestry back to that district where an ancestor defended the Sung dynasty. Therefore, the Wen Chao-chih referred to must be the grandson of Wen Cheng-ming. However, Wen Chao-chih, according to the Dictionary of Ming Biography, Vol.I p.405, died in 1587 and Ma Shou-chen's painting is dated by an inscription to 1600. I would like to point out at this time that the relationship between Wang Chih-teng and Wen Cheng-ming was further cemented by the marriage of Wang Chih-teng's daughter to Wen Cheng-ming's grandson and Wen Chia's son (Dictionary of Ming Biography, Vol.II p. 1362).
3. Chu-ting Li, A Thousand Peaks, p. 267.
4. Wai-kam Ho, Collection of the Nelson Gallery, Kansas City and the Cleveland Museum of Art, p. xxxvi.
5. Kuang-t'ao K'ung, Yo hsüeh lou shu hua lu.

SECTION IV NOTES (cont'd)

6. Siren, History of Later Chinese Painting Vol. 1, p. 148.
7. Duck in a Lotus Pond can be seen illustrated in Paintings by Ming and Ch'ing Masters, plate no. 14.
8. Lotus and Duck is illustrated in Siren, History of Later Chinese Painting, plate no. 108.
9. Studies From Life, National Palace Museum archive no. 6144.
10. Fungus, Orchid and Magnolia, National Palace Museum archive number 5498.
11. Cahill, Chinese Painting, p. 153 speaks of Tung Ch'ieh-ch'ang's "uncertain equilibrium".
12. Cahill, Parting, p. 85.
13. Longevity Wishes, National Palace Museum archive no. 5567.
14. Chu-tsing Li, "Oberlin Orchid", p. 62.
15. Orchid and Bamboo, National Palace Museum archive number 884.
16. Chu-tsing Li, "Oberlin Orchid", p. 59.
17. Ink Orchids, National Palace Museum archive number 2007.

SECTION IV NOTES (cont'd)

18.        Flowers, National Palace Museum archive number 1517.
19.        Flowers by Wen Cheng-ming, Ink Orchids by Hsiang Yüan-pien, Orchids and Bamboo by Wen Cheng-ming, Longevity Wishes by Hsiang Yüan-pien, Fungus, Orchid and Magnolia by Shen Chou, Studies from Life by Ch'en Shun, Duck in a Lotus Pond by Shen Chou -- all bear long and visually dominating inscriptions by the artists.
20.        Cahill, Parting, p. 163.
21.        Sullivan, Symbols of Eternity, p. 109.
22.        Cahill, Parting, p. 97.
23.        Flower painting, as a suitable female interest, is mentioned in Petrucci's (page 235,236) translation of the Mustard Seed Manual. There it is explained that courtesans who painted orchids hoped to allude to themselves and thereby relate themselves and orchids to the daughters of the Emperor Yao.
24.        We have conflicting information because several sources speak of her fondness of giving young men gifts. She did this so often she was a frequent visitor at pawnshops. Fan-t'ing Wang in Chung hua li tai fu nu says Ma Shou-chen turned down a rich merchant's offer of marriage saying that although she was old, there was plenty of time to get married.

SECTION IV NOTES (cont'd)

25. Contag, "Unique Characteristics", p. 62.

26. Kuang-t'ao K'ung, Yo hsüeh lou shu hua lu. The only words that Confucius spoke on the subject of his attitude to women were that "women and small minded people are like this, if you are far away they are resentful and if you are close they are insubordinate". 唯女子與小人為難養也  
近之則不遜 遠之則怨

27. Yü-ho Tseng, "Hsüeh Wu", p. 199.

CONCLUSION NOTES

1. Siren, History of Later Chinese Painting, Vol. 1, p.73.
2. Richard Edwards, The Field of Stones: A Study of the Art of Shen Chou.
3. Bush, p.153.



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APPENDIX I - CATALOGUE

Notes to the reader:

This catalogue of Ma Shou-chen's works is not entirely chronological. The Chinese painting titles may be the one inscribed on the painting or recorded in literature or assigned by myself in the interest of identifying the work by a distinctive feature. Inscriptions refer to calligraphy written on the painting surface while colophons refer to calligraphy on component parts added to the painting surface.

I. Orchid, Bamboo and Rock (see figure 1)

Metropolitan Museum Collection,

Dated 1572.

Hanging scroll. Paper, ink. Height 52.5 cm., width 29.1 cm.

Inscriptions:

Ma Shou-chen :

Green shadows spread over the Hsiang River,  
Clear fen incense flows down to the hidden valley.

Written on the fourth month of 1572 in the  
little pavilion of Ch'in-huai.  
Ma Shou-chen.

Hsueh Ming-i<sup>1</sup> -

The empty valley's hidden orchids flourish,  
No one follows the fragrance,  
Or goes to see the leisurely,  
Yet elegant and colourful moist dew  
Send out a clear fragrance.  
Hsueh Ming-i.

Wang Chih-teng -

The fragrant land is submerged,  
Three months of spring have watered  
The secret orchids of the nine fields.  
In the Green Hills Study  
People sit with wine in front of them  
And read the Li sao.  
Wang Chih-teng.

Colophon:  
Sung Ch'uang<sup>2</sup>-

Faint fragrance and thin shadows are lodged  
on the silk,  
The red of the small seal identifies Yueh-chiao,  
The charm of the old gathering place has  
dispersed.  
The old scholar and the old cypress mourn the  
willing dynasty,  
Now I recall the curtain and the old smile that  
welcomed me.  
The profusion of orchids diminish like the people  
in the scroll,  
But the sound of shattering jade bring back to me  
The southern court and recalls spring.

Written on the sixteenth day of the twelfth month  
of yi-mao (1639), in front of the lamp.  
Sung Ch'uang.

Seals:

Ma Shou-chen, two seals.<sup>3</sup>  
Hsueh Ming-i, one seal.<sup>4</sup>  
Wang Chih-teng, one seal.<sup>5</sup>  
Two unidentified seals at the lower left of the scroll.

Remarks:

Previously in the C.C. Wang Collection, N.Y.  
It is presently in the Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
Loan 1981.2.12; The Edward Elliott Family Collection.

II. Orchid (see figure 2)

Dr. James Caswell Collection.

Dated 1603.

Hanging scroll. Paper, ink. Height 56 cm., width  
33 cm.

Inscription:

Ma Shou-chen -

In the air there is a fragrance of nine fields  
of orchids,  
The dew sparkles in the cool weather;  
Three Hsiang River moons shed their tears,  
Only traces of the dried tears remain;  
The autumn sky is clear,  
Yet so vast and broad it appears limitless.  
Who will travel once more  
To sing of the marsh border scenes?



Painted and composed in the Ch'in-huai Water Pavilion  
At the request of fifth elder sister Su Ching  
In 1603 at the time of hoar frost descending.  
Hsiang-lan, Ma Shou-chen.

Seals:

Ma Shou-chen, two seals.<sup>6</sup>  
Ku Yun, one seal,<sup>7</sup> on the lower right of the scroll.  
One unidentified on the lower right of the scroll.  
Two unidentified on the lower left of the scroll.

Remarks:

The painting has been drawn with ink line on a paper that has turned putty colour with age. The putty colour quite attractively rests on the plain cream coloured background of the hanging scroll. There is one damaged spot on the central flowered spike in the painting. This spot has been repaired from the back but has not been touched up on the front. There is a horizontal crease towards the bottom of the scroll that has obliterated any traces of ink on that crease. This has also not been touched up. There are some damaged spots at the top and at the bottom of the painting that would have occurred before the present mounting. But in spite of this moderate damage the painting remains in quite remarkable shape considering its age.

III. Orchids and Bamboo (see figure 3(A) to (F))

Indianapolis Museum of Art.

Dated 1604.

Handscroll. Paper, ink colour. Dimensions unknown.

Inscription:

Ma Shou-chen -

The fall month of 1604, seated in the Ch'in-huai Water Pavilion.  
Lady Hsiang-lan, Ma Shou-chen.

Seals:

Ma Shou-chen, two seals.<sup>8</sup>  
One unidentified seal at the end of the scroll.  
Three unidentified seals at the beginning of the scroll.

Remarks:

This painting was formerly in the E. Lilly Collection. It is presently in the Indianapolis Museum of Art, accession number 60.25. The gold flecks on the paper were present before the painting was executed. The title on the outside roll is unsigned but could be translated as "Lady Hsiang-lan's Coloured Orchids and Bamboo". The mounting consists of three colours of silk, cut in a manner that the silk designs are

continuous. For this information and for his assistance I would like to thank James Robinson, Assistant Curator of Oriental Art, Indianapolis Museum of Art.

IV. Lotus Plant (see figure 4)

National Museum, Stockholm Collection.

Undated.

Hanging scroll. Materials and dimensions unknown.

Inscription:

Ma Shou-chen -

I passed my childhood at the river banks, not knowing any sorrows, but now the storms and rains have brought the autumn chill to Ch'in-huai. I dare not turn my head again to the roads of old along the dykes. The trees are thin, the sun is low, and I am in a public house.<sup>9</sup>

Siren quotes a note added to the inscription that expressed Ma Shou-chen's disappointment over the fact that a friend of hers had taken a new concubine.<sup>10</sup>

Seals:

Ma Shou-chen, one seal.<sup>11</sup>

One unidentified seal on the upper right.

Four unidentified seals on the lower left.

V. Orchid and Bamboo Fan

Collection unknown.

Dated the ninth month of 1578.

Folding fan. Paper, ink, colour (?). Dimensions unknown.

Inscription:

Ma Shou-chen -

A trace of the spring wind's fragrance comes  
from afar  
Through the half opened window  
The misty, unshrouded image of the moon  
Begins to cast its beams.

Ninth month of 1578, drawn by  
Ma Hsiang-lan.

Seals:

Ma Shou-chen, one seal.<sup>12</sup>

One unidentified seal on the upper right.

Remarks:

This fan is illustrated in Ku kung chou k'an, Vol. 4, page 759.

VI. Orchids

Collection unknown.

Remarks:

This painting is illustrated in Shina Meiga Hokan, page 646. Nothing is known of this seldom reproduced painting by Ma Shou-chen and unfortunately the reproduction is of such poor quality that it is impossible to decipher the three small seals at the middle of the scroll. It is not known if this illustration shows the complete handscroll or merely a section of it.

VII. Flowers and Butterfly Fan

Collection unknown.

Undated.

Folding fan. Gold-flecked paper, ink with colour. Total height 1 ch'ih 4 fen 8 li, fan face width 1 ch'ih 6 ts'un, fan face height 3 ts'un 3 fen 6 li.

Inscriptions:

Ma Shou-chen -

Creation of Nanking Lady  
Ma Shou-chen.

Wang Chih-teng --

A variety of flowers; two or three crowded together,  
Planted to contend with each others' seductive and bewitching beauty.  
In response, butterflies fly toward them  
Dipping and hovering,  
They could not endure leaving.

Wang Chih-teng of T'ai Yuan.

Seals:

Ma Shou-chen, one seal.<sup>13</sup>  
Wang Chih-teng, one seal.<sup>14</sup>  
Ch'ien lung Emperor, one seal.

Remarks:

This fan is illustrated in Ku kung chou k'an, Vol. 5, page 1504. The outside ribs of the fan are of Hunan bamboo, the inside ribs are of ordinary bamboo. There are sixteen ribs in total.

VIII. Orchid Blossom Study

National Palace Museum, Taiwan Collection.

Undated.

Materials and dimensions unknown.

Inscription:

Ma Shou-chen -

Hsiang-lan tzu, drawn by Ma Shou-chen.

Seals:

Ma Shou-chen, one seal.<sup>15</sup>

One unidentified seal on the lower left.

Remarks:

National Palace Museum accession number 5880.

IX. Landscape Study

National Palace Museum, Taiwan Collection.

Undated.

Materials and dimensions unknown.

Inscriptions:

Ma Shou-chen -

Yueh-chiao, Ma Shou-chen.

Seals:

Ma Shou-chen, one seal.<sup>16</sup>

Remarks:

National Palace Museum accession number 5880.

X. Epidendrums

Soyeshima Collection.

Undated.

Album leaf. Materials and dimensions unknown.

Inscriptions:

none

Seals:

One unidentified seal on lower left of album leaf.

Remarks:

This album leaf is illustrated in Siren, History of Later Chinese Painting, plate 163B.

XI. Slender Rock, Orchids and Bamboo

Collection unknown.

Dated 1572.

Hanging scroll. Materials and dimensions unknown.  
Inscriptions:

Ma Shou-chen -

Two days before the second month of jen-shen {  
(1572), in Ch'in-huai Water Pavilion.  
Hsiang-lan, Ma Shou-chen.

Wang Chih-teng -

Leaves clothe the early morning fog  
The green of Lu-ho<sup>17</sup> is in the distance.  
Flowers savour the spring fog  
There is the purple of the Wei-jui<sup>18</sup>  
A beautiful lady is separated  
From me by the waters of the Hsiang River.  
Who am I going to send the fragrance to?

Inscription by Wang Chih-teng.

Hsueh Ming-i<sup>19</sup> -

There is a fragrance from the islands of abundant  
plants and the Tu Jo.<sup>20</sup>  
The Yüan River of Hunan in the spring flows dry  
When the river becomes small and indistinct  
The ingenious young bamboo departs  
And we hear no more of it.  
But there is an irregular band of its clothing  
Left along the bank.

Hsueh Ming-i.

Wen Ts'ung-kuang<sup>21</sup> -

Beautiful ladies love to paint the garments  
of the Hsiang River's Imperial Concubines.  
After one thousand years the painting's fragrance  
is still concentrated.  
Last night the spring wind penetrated the  
secluded valley.  
Dwelling high on a cliff the idea elegantly grows.

Wen Ts'ung-kuang.

Tu Ta-shou<sup>22</sup> -

The beginning fragrance was the peach and plum  
of the abundant spring.  
Their brightness does not entertain the roadsides  
of the coming autumn  
How could it compare with the abundance of the  
islets of the Hsiang River?  
On a pure wind there is never a day without the  
breath of fragrance.

Tu Ta-shou.

Wen Ch'ong-kuang<sup>23</sup> -

In the empty courtyard the birds announce  
the rising sun of a new day  
The wind sends a fragrance which brushes against  
the hempen robe.  
I arise from sleep and peer through the  
little window  
There are no worldly worries  
The bamboo bed supports the pillows and I read  
The Li sao.

Wen Ch'ong-kuang.

Seals:

Ma Shou-chen, one seal.<sup>24</sup>  
Wang Chih-teng, one seal.<sup>25</sup>  
Hsüeh Ming-i, two seals.<sup>26</sup>  
Wen Ts'ung-kuang, two seals.<sup>27</sup>  
Tu Ta-shou, one seal.<sup>28</sup>  
Wen Ch'ong-kuang, one seal.<sup>29</sup>

Remarks:

This painting is illustrated in Chung-kuo ming hua chi,  
Vol. 15, page 8.

## APPENDIX II - TRANSLATIONS

### Notes:

Although I do not have a special proficiency with the classical Chinese language, I have included these translations in the hope that they will be of some help to the reader. There has been every attempt to keep the translation as literal as possible with explanations of literary references kept separate in the notes. Where some passages have been paraphrased they are noted by being enclosed in brackets. The more romantic and evocative descriptions are, by nature, the most difficult to translate. Though I included my translations of these passages, it is with a note of caution to the reader. The translations were made to provide raw data for my thesis. Therefore, the sense of these works was used with the full knowledge that it is beyond my present capabilities to achieve a translation that is correct and as evocative as the original. Where possible, I have included dates of the authors or compilers in order to give some idea of the dates of the sources.

Ch'ien-i Ch'ien, Lieh ch'ao shih chi hsiao, Vol. 2, page 765.

Ch'ien-i Ch'ien 1582-1664.

Ma Hsiang-lan; Concubine Ma named Shou-chen, was also called Hsuan-erh and Yüeh-chiao. Because of her accomplished orchid paintings, she became known by the name of Hsiang-lan. Her facial appearance was like that of an ordinary person. Her spirit and feelings were open and pure. She glistened

like the spring willow and early oriole.<sup>1</sup> She could spit out words and let fly anger. She was a clever observer of people's intentions. No one who saw her did not loose himself.

She dwelt at a superior place at Ch'in-huai. There, the waters and dwellings were fine and not crowded. The flowers and stones (of a garden) were secluded and pure. Curving passages and convenient rooms (were so numerous that the visitor) became confused and he could not get out.

She taught small slaves and apprentices at the Pear Garden.<sup>2</sup> Daily, she provided feast for guests. The sounds of the deer skin drum and pipa mingled with the sounds of the hong-ya and chin-lu.<sup>3</sup>

By nature she delighted in light and bold themes. Sometimes she squandered money in order to present (gifts) to youths. Her head-dress and bracelet were always at the pawnbroker but she did not look back.

She was often distressed by Mo-tz'u.<sup>4</sup> Mister Wang, Bo-gu, fled from her. She proposed to Wang but Wang couldn't accept. In the fall of the wan-li reign era, the year of chia-chen (1604), Bo-gu turned seventy years old.<sup>5</sup> Hsiang-lan came from Nanking and set wine (in front of him to celebrate his) longevity. They ate and drank for several months; singing and dancing until morning. This was counted as an expensive affair by the people of Chin-ch'ang<sup>6</sup> for several years.

She returned home and not long afterwards fell ill. She lit a lamp and paid respects to Buddha.



She took a bath and changed her clothes, sat up properly and passed away. It was her fifty-seventh year.

There were two chuan of poetry. In the wan-li era of hsing-mao (1591), Bo-gu wrote a preface, saying:

Mo-ling is a place of excellence and beauty; a house of courtesans amidst debauchery. The peach trees annotate love and the willow strands draw out resentment. Confused heaven and confused Emperor<sup>7</sup> Teng-t'u<sup>8</sup>, if here, would have worn out his eyes. Because clouds make rain and because of Sung-yu,<sup>9</sup> the heart is in turmoil. This is the rare realm of qualities of warmth and softness.

There is a beautiful person (here). The most charming of an era. If you would like to know her surname then it is the steed<sup>10</sup> of a thousand pieces of gold from the town of Yan. Her name is the herb that grows in the area of the Hsiang River.

She takes money as lightly as earth. Surprisingly, she has kingfishers' green sleeves with the spirit of the Chu family.<sup>11</sup> This is as weighty in importance as a mountain -- to not regard oneself (worthy of) the joyous decorations of Chi-pu.<sup>12</sup>

As for the jade ornament, it is not for Chiao-fu to decline separation.<sup>13</sup> As for the weaver's shuttle it is not tenderly given when it is thrown. Culture is shamed by Ma. The Lu and the Ch'in are chosen and not thrown away. The ability to greet the music teacher and women's handicrafts disappoint her quiet and comfort. She is the refined spirit of six ages; the spiritual power and grace of San-shan<sup>14</sup>, combined together, to express her beauty.

Your holding in the hand a glazed pipe (part of a musical instrument), each word is like the wind and clouds. Letters of pieces of jade with each speech are like dew under the moon.

"Small as fly heads characters" describe her resentments. This heart is tied. Fish stomach<sup>15</sup> seals shut emotions and anyone who listens to her spirit will fly away. She entrusts tranquillity and happiness to five character poems. The sound resembles the early morning oriole's singing melodiously in the valley. She expresses her inner feelings in four lines. The feeling is akin to the spring silkworms regurgitating silk.

She is in accord with the new sound of the tz'u and yi poems. She innovates the old songs of the courtyard flowers.<sup>16</sup> In the flow beneath the tiled official pavilion, I want to cross over but the song is broken off. At the tree in front of the pavilion, happiness is not seen and the song breaks off. I would like to ride the fog with the beauty of the Lo River nymph.<sup>17</sup>

(By) avoiding troubles of the Empress Chao, (she) instead is able to write poems about the bright moon. Don't call it weak or gross, (her) tz'u poetry combines the white snow. Surely you can speak of an attractive and charming lady.<sup>18</sup> She is capable and able, like a green suitcase.

(She caused the price of paper to rise).<sup>19</sup>

Thus the flowing Chiang-su is deeply dissatisfied. The night moon covers it and spies on men. In front of the jade mirror tower, she recites (poems) and the early mist enshrouds trees.

How is it that there is only Chin-chiang's Yüeh-t'ao<sup>20</sup> who was put down in the catalogues? How is it that they stop at (the trouble) of Soochow's Du-wei?<sup>21</sup>

Hsiang-lan died, Bo-gu wrote a biography and a funerary poem. Now when poets pass through official places they compose poetry to mourn her.

I-tsun Chü, Ming shih tsung, Vol. 30, chuan 98, leaf 3.  
I-tsun Chü<sup>111</sup>  
I-tsun Chü 1629-1709.

Ma Shou-chen: Shou-chen, tz'u Hsiang-lan was called Hsuan-erh and Yüeh-chiao. She was a Nanking prostitute. The Tz'u hua (criticism of poetry) said her appearance was only average. She was boastful and talented in letters but unconventional in life style. She was good at observing people's intentions. By nature, she was repeatedly outstanding and bold. She always squandered money by presenting (gifts) to young men. She assisted Wang Bo-gu of Wu in his

difficulty. She proposed to Bo-gu but he could not (accept). In the wan-li reign era, the fall of 1604, Bo-gu turned seventy years old and Hsiang-lan bought a multi-storied boat to carry fifteen small slaves to the Willow Catlin Garden. She set up the wine to celebrate Wang's longevity. Morning and evening, they sang and danced; enjoying themselves for several months. This became a famous event. Bo-gu prefaced her poems by saying:

Note: This source then quotes the preface reported by Ch'ien-i Ch'ien in Lieh ch'ao shih chi hsiao chüan. See above translation. This source ends with a shih (poem) by Ma Shou-chen. It has not been translated for this thesis.

I-tsun Chü and Ch'ang Wang, Ming tz'u tsung, Vol. 2, chüan 12, page 3. I-tsun Chu 1629-1709 and Ch'ang Wang 1725-1807.

Ma Shou-chen, tzü Yüeh-chiao, hao Hsiang-lan; Nanking prostitute.

Note: This source quotes a tz'u by Ma Shou-chen that was sent to Chen Hu-shan (unidentified). This has not been translated for this thesis.

Hsi-hua Fu, Ming tai chüan ch'i ch'uan ch'ieh, pages 124-125.

Hsi-hua Fu is a contemporary author and editor.

According to the Lu t'ien ch'eng ch'u lu, which comments on this drama; when Cheng (Cheng Chih-wen)<sup>22</sup> was a hsiao-lien degree, he was romantic but not vulgar, and casual and elegant. When he was in Ch'in-huai, he made a satire of an old prostitute, ridiculing her in the Pai lien ch'un. This was

criticized by an official, Ta Chung, and consequently (this opera was) not distributed.<sup>23</sup> The songs were not of a proper pattern but they were humorous and full of flavour.

According to the Yüan shan t'ang ch'u lu; Pao-hsien (Cheng Chih-wen), when he was a hsiao lien degree, wandered around Ch'in-huai. Many operas were written at this time. He wrote in great richness about a famous singing song girl. He gave himself a role in this drama. Moreover, by satirizing the courtesan Ma Hsiang-lan, simultaneously ridicule reached Wang Bo-gu. At that time a grand censor scolded and one half the edition was printed before it was stopped.

Also, the Ku ch'u tsa yen says that at the time, the price of paper was high (because of such great demand). The next year, li Chiu-wo<sup>24</sup> was appointed (as administrator). He sought out the bookstores and print shops, destroying the printing blocks, so the opera could not be transmitted. He did not pay any attention to what was already in circulation.

Ch'in Hsü, Ming hua lu, Section 3, Part 7, page 135.

Prostitutes/sing song girls: Ma Shou-chen, hao Hsiang-lan of Nanking was well known for her poetry and painting. She had an individual style for painting ink orchids unperturbed and elegant. She was extremely charming.

Kuang-t'ao K'ung, Yo hsüeh lou shu hua lu, Vol. 5, chüan 5, double leaf 17. Kuang-t'ao K'ung is a nineteenth century author.

Ming dynasty Ma Hsiang-lan's narcissus. Wang Bo-gu added a stone to this long scroll. The height of the paper

is one ch'ih two ts'un four fen. The length of the scroll is ten chang four ch'ih nine ts'un five fen. It is a flax paper scroll of four sections, no colour was used.

There are two seals: one with the character "Ta"<sup>25</sup>, one with the characters "chiang shang ta shih t'u shu yin".<sup>26</sup>

I love your tender leaves. Lush flowers blossom often to be frozen. (Yet) the fragrance flourishes. Now if you had been together with an orchid then certainly it would have been like the sentences of the poet Ch'u.<sup>27</sup>

Created in the third month of 1599 for Bo-gu, elder brother. Written by Hsiang-lan, Ma Shou-chen.

Two seals: one with the characters "Yüeh-chiao", another with the characters "Shou-chen, Yüan-tzu". Six lines of "Running style" script, on the upper part at the end of the scroll.

The robe of spring is thin and bland. With light make-up and elegance she stands, swaying. There is a countryside of water and clouds. Her green skirt shakes and drags. Her waist and limbs are soft. Her powdered neck and hands (bend and bow) low. The make-up on her brow is fragrant. The wind penetrates the little window. She is not polluted by dust. The moon's profile is jade. The Nymph of the Lo River's refined form is overwhelmingly the same.<sup>28</sup> Would she be willing to compete with the ordinary blossom's beauty and fragrance.

Wang Chih-teng supplied the stone and also added this inscription.

Two seals: one seal with the characters "ching yang chun, another with the characters "Wang yin Chih-teng". Four lines of "Running style" script at the end of the scroll.

Ma Shou-chen, a famous prostitute (chi ~~支~~) of Ch'in-huai. Due to her accomplished paintings of orchids her hao was Hsiang-lan. She was an outstanding and bold person whose colourful skill poured out. At

one time Mister Bo-gu had already escaped from Hsiang-lan. During the wan-li era's thirty years of trouble, in the fall of 1602, Mister (Wang) was seventy years old. Hsiang-lan bought a multi-storied boat to carry several tens of young maids to the Willow Catlin Garden to set up wine (and celebrate). Amongst the people of Wu this became a famous affair. At this time Hsiang-lan was fifty-seven years old. Her youthful beauty was decreased but she had the same style as before. Mister Wang jokingly spoke to her, saying: "(you are a) country-bumpkin, a real chicken skin" (hsiang chen chi p'i 鄉真雞皮). Three pities for the shen kung wu witch". This scroll was drawn (by her and presented to Wang, who added a stone and an inscription in a winter month of 1599. It was presented to him three years previous to (her) death. Huang Fu-weng's<sup>30</sup> poetry says that when the waves advance a fairy is born. With dust bearing socks, she steps on the lightly reflected moon on the water. Her style is like an immortal's. Isn't this like a self-portrait of Hsiang-lan?"

Colophon by Kuang-t'ao, on a spring day of 1853.<sup>31</sup>

Shang-jên K'ung, Hsiang chin pu, Part 7, pages 221 and 222.

Shang-jên K'ung was born 1648.

Nanking professional singer/dancer, Ma Hsiang-lan painted an orchid painting with double outline style of orchid leaf. Her brushstroke is elegant and powerful. In the background are bamboo and stones. All (elements) have a distinct style. Her own inscription says:

Distant, desolate and orderly. (These qualities) are not worthy of the valuable nine fields of orchids of the high land along the Hsiang River.<sup>32</sup> (When the orchid) enters a room, it is able to forget odours and aromas. I begin to understand that the empty valley has superior people.

Written on the fourth day of the fourth month of 1603, by Hsiang-lan, Ma Shou-chen.

There are two seals, one "Hsiang-lan, and one "Shou-chen, Yüan-yüantzu. They were obtained at the Yellow Sunflower Pavilion.

E Li, Yü t'ai shu shih, Vol. 8, chüan 8, double leaf 71.

E Li, 1692-1752.

Ma Hsiang-lan: courtesan Ma Shou-chen as a child was called Yüan-erh. Her hao was Yüeh-chiao. Because of her accomplished orchid paintings she was called Hsiang-lan. She lived in a better section of Ch'in-huai. (Lieh ch'ao shih chi).

There is a vertical hanging scroll with double outline ink orchids. It is composed of closely grown and slender bamboo, narrow stone and has a spirited rhythm that is extremely excellent. The inscription says:

Green shadows spread over the Hsiang River, clear fen incense flows down to the hidden valley.

Written on the fourth month of 1572, in Ch'in-huai's little pavilion. Hsiang-lan tzu, Ma Shou-chen.<sup>33</sup>

Another small scroll also has double outline ink orchids. an inscription says:

Mysterious orchid is born in the vast valley. No one follows to savour the fragrance. I want to express wholeheartedly and leave the long and vast river road.

Written by Hsiang-lan, Shou-chen tzu on a spring day of 1596.

These two scrolls are now stored at my friend Ma Pan-  
cha's Kuang ling studio.<sup>34</sup>

Yüan-chi P'ang, Hsü chai ming hua lu, Vol 8, chüan 8, double leaf 71.

Ming dynasty Ma Hsiang-lan's orchid, bamboo and stone scroll. On paper with ink, double outline technique of painting orchids. The background uses bamboo, stones and

a withered branch. Height is two ch'ih six ts'un seven fen and the width is seven ts'un six fen. The bottom half is painted while the upper half bears an inscription dating it a fall day in 1600 and signed Hsiang-lan, Ma Shou-chen.

Two seals are shown: one in red characters "Shou-chen, Hsüan-erh-tzu" and one with white characters "Hsiang-lan".

When you describe bamboo and arrange orchids, you rely on Juan-lang.<sup>35</sup> Traces of powder (pollen?) and subtle (yet) glossy ink traces and fragrance rely on the rare flowers of the daughters of heaven. The profusion readily drives out the spring winds.

On a stone bed, Wang Chih-teng. Three seals: one with red characters "chih", one with red character "teng", and one with white characters "Wang shih bo-gu".

New snow accumulates. Lush growth, stones, Hao-lan<sup>36</sup> and a practised blossom. A beautiful lady blends the Lu-ch'i (musical instrument) with abstruse thoughts in Fan's t'ien-kuei.<sup>37</sup>

One seal: white characters "chu chih fan".

The empty valley gives birth to the secluded orchid. No one follows to savour the fragrance. I want to rely upon the child that has the same mind. The river is far away and long. Ta Chung.<sup>38</sup>

Two seals: one with red characters "Tu ta chung" another with red characters "k'ang-tzu".<sup>39</sup>

I have heard of the princesses of the Hsiang River. This painting is truly like the place of nine fields of orchids. Oh! Surely a beautiful man is in accord with a woman? Ju Chin.<sup>40</sup>

One seal: red characters "Ju Chin".<sup>41</sup>

(If) leaves scatter, why not the flower's many fragrances? Certainly, in spring the chilly disposition of the Hsiang River's highlands and the appropriate deepness of the water permit us to see the (delicacy) of the image of the branch. Yet



the same elegant and graceful heart is not collectively stored and indulged. It is destroyed by frost. The withdrawal of spring should change the endless nine fields of orchids of a poet. A vagrant woman resents the three Hsiang orchids. The lady is sweet and alone. It is not for her that the fragrant empty valley is silent. There is no one who is secluded and fragrant at any place. Spring arrives at the countryside of Ch'in-huai. The soul disperses and the Ch'u River women<sup>42</sup> spill out to gather the spring winds. Flowers are threaded to make spring clothing. Green leaves are worn. Chien lang kan's purple heart cuts the turtle hawkbill.<sup>43</sup> Nanking, at the same time, the frosted grass is not willing to flatter spring. (But here) sunshine and jade (coloured) legions of trees float. This is so and the ones who rule are fragrant. For instance, the flowers abundantly clothe that peach tree and that plum tree. Clearly and single mindedly I sniff the real water and speak. The original plan of both you and me was to (include) the Lu-ch'in (musical instrument), to exercise and to open up the green fields of orchids. This world's flat highland along a river is endless. It jealously kills passers-by along the Hsiang River. The orchid tower is bare. A game of "go" and Kuei Garden both hasten to contain its brilliant (yet) subtle colours. The court is filled with rooms. The clear and fragrant night inherits its clothing.

Written on the sixteenth day of the eleventh month of 1600 by Wen Chao-chih of the district of Heng, in Ch'in-huai's Accumulated Brocade Studio.

Four seals: one with white characters "Wen Chao-chih yin", one with red character "yüeh hsing t'ien chih feng yueh", another with white characters "t'ing li kuan chu jen" and another with red characters "t'ai p'ei chih chia chen tsang."<sup>48</sup>  
T'a Sun, Chung-kuo hua chia jên ming ta tz'u tien, page 340.

Ming dynasty Ma Shou-chen was a woman of Nanking. According to the Lieh ch'ao shih chi hsiao chüan; she became Ma Hsiang-lan because she was said to be an accomplished painter. Therefore she was named Hsiang-lan. Ming hua lu lists her hao as Hsiang-lan. As a child she was called

Yüan-erh and her name Yüeh-chiao came from the name of a person in a southern style opera. She lived in a better section of Ch'in-huai. She was a great friend of Wang Bo-gu, and for a while wrote poetry with him. Misty flowers (prostitution) was not her intention. Some say her orchids imitated Chao Tzu-gu (Chao Meng-chien) while her bamboos followed the method of Kuan Chung-chi (Kuan Tao-sheng). Her manner was casual and elegant, sedate and refined. Others say she spoke with abundant charm. (Ming hua lu; Wu sheng shih shih; T'u hui pao chien hsu tsuan; and Lieh ch'ao shih chi hsiao chüan).

Sou-yu T'ang, Yü t'ai hua shih, Section 4, Part 3, page 219, 220

According to the Lieh ch'ao shih chi hsiao chüan:

Courtesan Ma Shou-chen (as a child was called Yüan-erh), was also named Yüeh-chiao. Because of her accomplished paintings of orchids she was called Hsiang-lan. She lived in a better section of Ch'in-huai. She was joyful, light-hearted and bold. Sometimes she squandered money in order to present (gifts) to youths. Her head-dress and bracelets were left at the pawnbroker's, but she never looked back. Wang Bo-gu prefaced her poetry saying:

She regards money lightly. This is as (important as) an earthquake. (She has) green sleeves and the Chu family (heart).<sup>49</sup> To regard as important a promise is like Mount Ch'iu's red decorated seasonal cloth.<sup>50</sup>

According to the Shih ku t'ang shu hua lu k'ao: Ma Hsiang-lan's orchid flower scroll is of gold sprinkled paper with applied colour. There is one flower with numerous leaves.

(It demonstrates) a weak brushstroke and is not successful. The signature indicates a summer day of 1570. It is signed by Hsiang-lan, who composed this "ink play" for Lung-chih, elder brother.<sup>51</sup> On the right of the painting is a seal with red characters "hsien t'ing".<sup>52</sup>

Also, there is Lady Ma Hsiang-lan's flower and stone painting on plain white silk with no colour. The inscription dates the painting to a dark day of chrysanthemum month, in 1578. The inscription is signed Hsüan-tzu for Wen Mao-hsieh.<sup>53</sup>

According to the Wu sheng shih shih: Hsiang-lan's (style) of orchids followed (the style of) Chao Tzu-ku (Chao Meng-chien). Her technique of bamboo painting (followed) the method of Lady Kuan (Kuan Tao-sheng). In both cases she is able to utilize the surplus from literature and apply it to her painting. Her drawings were not only elegant and refined, but also were of (financial) value. Moreover, her name is heard beyond the seas to Thailand. Officials also know to purchase her paintings and fans and to store them.

According to the Yü t'ai shu shih: Ma Hsiang-lan's double outline ink (painting). At the side she painted slips of bamboo and a narrow stone. The spirited rhythm is extremely fine. The inscription says:

Green shadows spread over the Hsiang River, clear  
fen incense flows down to the hidden valley.

Written on the fourth month of 1572 in the little pavilion of Ch'in-huai. Hsiang-lan tzu, Ma Shou-chen.<sup>54</sup>

There is also a small scroll with double outline ink orchids. The inscription says:

The mysterious orchid is born in the vast valley.  
No one follows to savour the fragrance. I want  
to be at one (with the idea of travelling) along  
a long river road).

Written by Hsiang-lan, Shou-chen tzu on a spring day  
of 1596.

Today these two scrolls are stored at Kuang-ling, the  
studio of Ma Pan-cha.<sup>55</sup>

Li-ho Tsang, Chung-kuo jen ming ta tz'u tien, page 868

Li-ho Tsang is a contemporary author.

Ma Hsiang-lan was a Ming dynasty prostitute in Nanking.  
She was called Shou-chen and Yüan-erh. As a child she was  
called Yüeh-chiao. She composed poetry and was an accomplished  
orchid painter. She lived in the better section of Ch'in-huai.  
She was talented in letters, unconventional in life style  
and boastful. She was good at observing people's intentions.  
She proposed to Wang Chih-teng but Chih-teng could not (accept).  
During the Wan-li reign era, Chih-teng was seventy years old.  
Hsiang-lan went to set up the wine to celebrate (his)  
longevity. They ate and drank for several months. This  
became a renowned affair in Chiang-su. After returning home  
she fell ill. She paid her respects to Buddha, sat up  
properly and passed away. There were two chüan of poems.  
Chih-teng wrote the preface for her.

Fan-t'ing Wang, Chung hua li tai fu nu, pages 429, 430

Fan-t'ing Wang is a contemporary author.

Ma Ma Hsiang-lan was named Shou-chen. She was also called  
Yüeh-chiao. (At this time) during the Ming Dynasty, the

country was at peace. The dynasty was wildly prosperous. Nanking flourished with its center on the left bank. On the Ch'in-huai riverbank, at the entrance to Ping k'ang lane (there was a person) distinguished in letters but unconventional in life style. (She) was in accord with the prosperous times. At that time, there was a new building; a lovely, splendid house with twelve women. Hsiang-lan was the chief person in a group of mothers and daughters that numbered four. She was the youngest.

(Ma Shou-chen composed) various rhythms of high spirit. Glowing like a young willow she (could) spit out words like a golden oriole (or a) swallow. She looked after the grain harvest and the water. She skilfully and excellently could take care of men. The sound of flowers filled the southern part of the Yangtze. Those up to the rank of kung , noble men, and those below (including) peddlers and soldiers could not (help but) know of her fame. All looked for the fragrant, noble guest. In her youth, when she travelled to Ma Chang t'ai, all took not knowing her as a shame.

Where she lived; the courtyard, pond and hall were clear and spacious. Flowers and stones were deep and clean. There were curved rooms and deeply arched doors. The (visitor) became so confused he could not get out. By nature, she was an outstanding and bold person of good actions. Passers-by (could) hire a harlot (ch'an t'ou ) for 1000 pieces of gold. Without hesitation, she squandered (money), exhausting each day's (supply). Although the day often (brought) an

accumulation of jade and full beds, poverty was extreme.

(Her) life for several decades was colourful and famous throughout Kiangsu and Anhwei. In her later years, when she was past fifty, she was as charming as before. Anyone who saw her said she was as great as Hsia dynasty courtesans.

There was a wealthy person who travelled to Nanking. (When) he saw her he was amazed and extravagantly spent 10,000 pieces of gold to buy a mansion at Ch'in-huai. He wanted to marry her. Hsiang-lan said:

I am old and the traffic has lessened; soon to become sparse. Even if I marry this merchant, I couldn't tolerate (the situation). I would rather have fifty men from the brothels. I still can grasp the dust pan and broom and become a new wife (later).

She laughed and refused him.

Hsiang-lan understood poetry and prose. She (could write a letter in reply with flowing words). She filled in lines of poetry with a clear and elegant meaning. People spoke of her poetry saying:

It is like the spotted clothing of shadows of flowers

and

drifting smoke method of writing.

She excelled in painting orchids, achieving the depth of the writing method of Wu Hsing-chao, Tzu-ang (Chao Meng-fu). Several people were confused.

In her sixty-ninth year, she became ill in Nanking. Several tz'u were gathered and recorded.

Note: This source then quotes three tz'u not translated in

this thesis. The selection ends with a letter from Ma Shou-chen to Wang Bo-gu. It is an evocative, poetic passage that states how she misses him and how often she thinks of him. This passage has also not been translated in this thesis.

APPENDIX III - ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURE I

Orchid, Bamboo and Rock

Hanging Scroll

H. 52.5 cm. W. 29.1 cm.

Ink on Paper

Dated 1572

The Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
Loan 1981.2.12, The Edward Elliott  
Family Collection.



FIGURE 1

澹香瘦影寄冰綃  
 小軒猩紅認月嬌  
 苑風淡銷歌盡寒  
 流古柏翠葉朝  
 曾憶丁巳歲舊笑輝  
 蘇蘭省識卷中人  
 聲碎玉忽聽遠盡  
 南朝又送春

乙卯十月十二  
 夕蘭館松齋

湘平影拂湘江清  
 主中清和風於春  
 湘蘭香玉山

空谷幽蘭  
 迎春舒芳色  
 蘇明

芳澤三春雨  
 青山三齋人  
 勝佳



FIGURE 2

Orchid

Hanging Scroll

H. 56 cm. W. 33 cm.

Ink on paper.

Dated 1603

Dr. James Caswell Collection,  
Vancouver, B.C.

FIGURE 2



FIGURE 3(A) to (F)

Orchids and Bamboo

Handscroll.

Ink and Colour on paper.

Dated 1604

Indianapolis Museum of Art,  
Indianapolis, U.S.A.



FIGURE 3(A)



FIGURE 3(B)





FIGURE 3(C)



FIGURE 3(D)



FIGURE 3(E)



FIGURE 3(F)



FIGURE 4

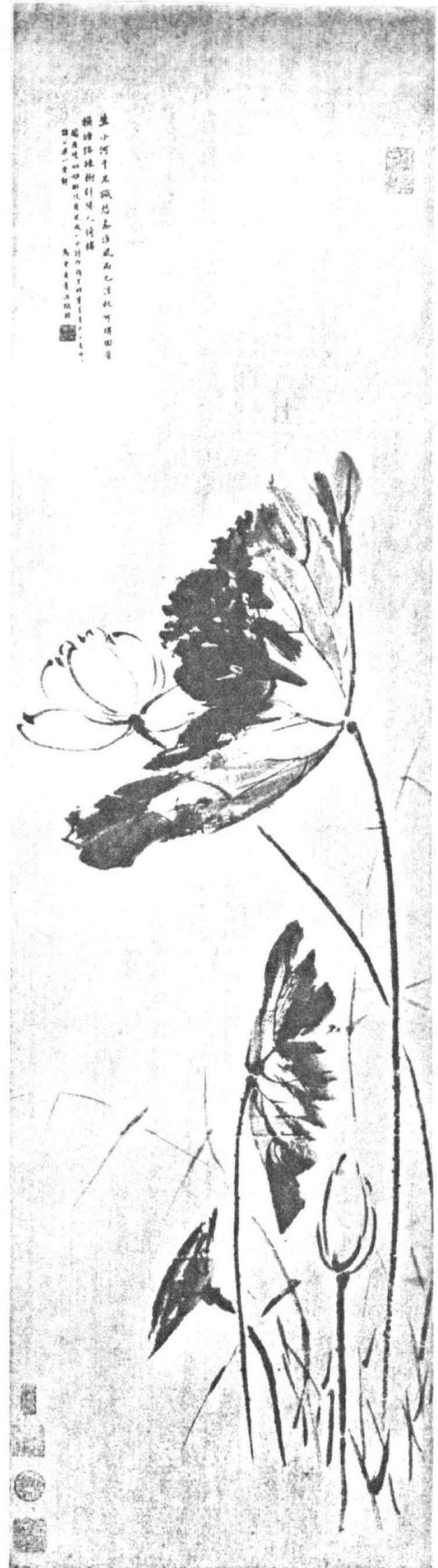
Lotus Plant

Hanging Scroll

Undated

Ostasiatiska Museet,  
Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities,  
Stockholm, Sweden.

FIGURE 4



APPENDIX I - CATALOGUE NOTES

1. According to Taipei, Taiwan, National Palace Museum and National Central Museum, Signature and Seals, Vol. 4, p. 388, Hsueh Ming-i, Ming dynasty, alias Yu-ch'ing. His calligraphy of formal script was the best after Wen-Cheng-ming.
2. Unidentified.
3. Unidentified.
4. Unidentified.
5. Taipei, National Palace Museum, Signature and Seals, Vol. 2, page 52 bottom row second from left.
6. Both unidentified.
7. Ku Yun (1835-1896).
8. Bottom seal unidentified. Top seal, according to Taipei, National Palace Museum, Signature and Seals, Vol. II, page 207, left seal.
9. Siren, Chinese Painting, Vol. V, page 72.
10. Ibid.
11. Unidentified.
12. Taipei, National Palace Museum, Signature and Seals, Vol. V, page 278, left seal.
13. Unidentified.

APPENDIX I - CATALOGUE NOTES (cont'd)

14. Unidentified.

15. Taipei, National Palace Museum, Signature and Seals, Vol. 2, page 207, left seal.

16. Ibid.

17. Lu-ho is a county of Chiangsu.

18. Wei-jui is a plant (poly gonatum vulgare), or a description of a maiden of tender years.

19. See note 1, this section.

20. Tu Jo is a plant (pollia japonica).

21. Unidentified.

22. According to Taipei, National Palace Museum, Signature and Seals, Vol. 4, page 329 Tu Ta-shou, alias Tzu-yu was a native of Wu-hsien of Kiangsu Province. He was excellent in calligraphy and landscape painting. His seal is the same as shown in Vol. 2 page 779. Ming dynasty.

23. Unidentified.

24. Taipei, National Palace Museum, Signature and Seals, Vol. V. 278, middle seal.

25. Taipei, National Palace Museum, Signature and Seals, Vol. II, page 52, bottom left seal.

-APPENDIX I - CATALOGUE NOTES (cont'd)

- 26. Taipei, National Palace Museum, Signature and Seals,  
Vol. 2, page 360, seal number 1210.
- 27. Unidentified.
- 28. See note 22, this section.
- 29. Unidentified.

APPENDIX II - TRANSLATION NOTES

1. This refers to her nice complexion.
2. This refers to the music school for ladies during the T'ang dynasty.
3. See note 26, Section I
4. Possibly someone at the Gay Quarters.
5. Seventy years by Chinese count, sixty-nine years by Western count. Dates in this appendix have been left in the Chinese system.
6. Soochow.
7. This is a quote from the Shih ching, from a passage that describes beautiful women.
8. A Han dynasty person associated with debauchery.
9. An ancient poet of the Chou dynasty.
10. A pun on the name Ma (horse).
11. The Chü family was famous for sword fighting. Therefore, he is saying that she wears female clothing but has the heart of a woman warrior.
12. A woman famous for her word.
13. This is a reference to a goddess who gave a jade ornament to Chiao-fu.



APPENDIX II - TRANSLATION NOTES (cont'd)

14. The legendary spiritual mountains of China.
15. A fish stomach was often used to transmit secret letters.
16. Women's poems.
17. According to Hummel, Autobiography, page 138, the Nymph of the Lo River was the daughter of the legendary Emperor Fu Hsi, who became the spirit of the River Lo after drowning herself. This goddess was the subject of a miraculous vision that inspired the poem by Ts'ao Chih (192-232 A.D.). However, some say the poem involves an allegorical interpretation of loyalty or youth. For the purposes of this thesis, it is sufficient to note that many of the images and evocative passages found in this poem are repeated in the literary works concerning Ma Shou-chen. A translation of this poem is available (Watson, Chinese Rhyme-Prose) pages 55-60.
18. This is a metaphor for a son who follows his father's scholarship.
19. People were in such a hurry to get copies of her poems they tore down forests to make the prints.
20. Yüeh-t'ao was a T'ang dynasty courtesan from a good family of scholars.
21. Du-wei was a courtesan who was deceived by a lover and drowned herself after throwing her fortune in jewels into the river. See Yang, The Courtesan's Jewel Box.

APPENDIX II - TRANSLATION NOTES (cont'd)

22. According to Goodrich and Fang, Dictionary of Ming Biography, page 1362, Cheng Chih-wen was the author of the opera Pai lien ch'un.
23. Ta Chung is unidentified but his signature and seal have been recorded as being on a painting by Ma Shou-chen. See note 38 this section.
24. Unidentified.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Reference to Ch'u Yüan. See note 4, Section III.
28. See note 17, this section.
29. It has been suggested that this refers to a passage in the Tso chuan.
30. Unidentified.
31. Contag, Seals of Chinese Painters, page 530, lists the signature and seals of this 19th century scholar. Note that Kuang-t'ao Kuang is also the editor of this selection.
32. See note 4, Section III.
33. This is the same inscription and probably the same painting now in the Metropolitan Museum. See Catalogue item I. Also note that this painting has not been executed in the double outline technique.
34. Unidentified.

APPENDIX II - TRANSLATION NOTES (cont'd.)

35. The ideal of a handsome man.
36. Perhaps the name of a specific type of orchid.
37. Unidentified.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Unidentified.
41. Ibid.
42. See note 4, Section III.
43. Unidentified.
44. Wen Cheng-ming's grandson. See note 2, Section IV.
45. Ibid.
46. Unidentified.
47. Unidentified.
48. Contag, Seals of Chinese Painters, page 627, states T'ai P'ei-chih was a 19th century collector.
49. See note 11, this section.
50. Meaning of this passage is unclear. Perhaps this is the fall season.
51. Unidentified.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. See note 33, this section.
55. Unidentified.