

# Zhen 眞 as the Ideal of Landscape Painting in Bifaji 筆法記

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**Abstract:** *Bifaji* 筆法記 by Jing Hao 荆浩 (ca. 855–915) is one of the most critical writings on painting in the Chinese art tradition. It reflects the shifting artistic trends of the late Tang and Five Dynasties periods from portraits to landscapes and from color to ink and wash. The emphasis on *zhen* (眞, “genuineness”) as an aesthetic goal in *Bifaji* is an essential feature in its discourse on the nature of painting. This essay explores the concept of *zhen* as an ideal state of pictorial reality in *Bifaji*. Illuminating the meaning of *zhen* is vital to understanding Jing Hao’s and his contemporaries’ artistic aspirations. Considering its aesthetic connotations reveals *zhen* in *Bifaji* to be multivalent, involving a number of qualities required for the creation of a landscape painting, from the observation of nature to the method of brush technique. To elucidate the aesthetic ideals of *Bifaji*, this paper examines the relationship between the concept of *zhen* and other key terms such as *qiyun* (氣韻, “character”), *qishi* (氣勢, “dynamic configuration”), and *xiang* (象, “image”) along with the additional conceptual layer of *qi* applied in the Six Essentials (*Liuyao* 六要) and the Four Forces (*Sishi* 四勢).

**Keywords:** *Bifaji* 筆法記, painting theory 畫論, landscape painting 山水畫, *zhen* 眞, *qiyun* 氣韻, *qishi* 氣勢

## Introduction

The period from the Middle Tang to the Five Dynasties (roughly the eighth to tenth centuries) was marked by one of the most significant artistic breakthroughs in China. Landscapes (*shanshui* 山水) began to overtake portraits as the main subjects of paintings, and the use of colors began to be phased out in favor of monochromic ink and wash (*shuimo* 水墨). As a product of the period, *A Note on the Method of the Brush* (*Bifaji* 筆法記, tenth century CE)<sup>1</sup> reflects these trends as Jing Hao 荆浩 (ca. 855–915) enunciates his theories on painting in the format of a story in which a young painter meets an old hermit living in the mountains who offers him teachings. This old master in the story of *Bifaji* is a fictional character who speaks for Jing Hao himself. In his pedagogy based on the Six Essentials (*Liuyao* 六要)<sup>2</sup> and the Four Forces (*Sishi* 四勢),<sup>3</sup> Jing Hao offers comprehensive technical and theoretical lessons.

*Bifaji* is distinguished from previous writings on painting in a number of respects. It is commonly noted that *Bifaji* is one of the earliest texts to treat landscape as an independent subject. Moreover, it was the first to assert the superiority of the ink-and-wash technique over the use of colors in landscape painting. In this essay, however, I will illuminate yet another feature worthy of note in *Bifaji*’s

discussion on painting: it uses the term *zhen* (眞, “genuineness”) to address the ideals of landscape painting, extending its conceptual significance. Other scholars of *Bifaji* have suggested a number of interpretations for *zhen*, and their choices of English translations for the term are not identical. For example, West (2000: 203) translates *zhen* as “authenticity” or “genuineness” yet admits the difficulty of pinpointing the exact meaning of the term, as it could mean “from the untouched representation of phenomena in nature—both outward appearance and as inner power—to authenticity of feeling, to honesty,” depending on context. Munakata and Munakata (1974: 3–4, 21–22) translate *zhen* as “reality” or “truthfulness,” the completeness in every aspect of true existence equipped with *qi* 氣, *zhi* 質, and *xing* 形 or *shi* 實 and *hua* 華 (“inner reality” and “outer experience,” according to the Munakatas translation). Bush and Shih (2012: 146) also translate *zhen* as “reality.” Powers (2000: 225–29) translates *zhen* as “genuine,” the condition in which “character (implicit motion)—*qi* 氣—and “substance (accuracy of shape, volume and texture)—*zhi* 質—are equally present in painting, pointing out that it is a concept that is “not independent of human presence” or “human interests.”<sup>4</sup>

While previous scholars have mentioned the multilayered nature of the term *zhen* and listed some of its different aspects, further investigation is required to elucidate the significance of the term as applied in landscape painting. This essay aims to provide a deeper understanding of the term and to illuminate the necessary requirements for achieving *zhen* in landscape painting by exploring its aesthetic implications in relation to other key concepts, especially the significance of *xiang* and the multiple dimensions of *qi* employed in *qiyun* as well as *Qi* of the Six Essentials and the Four Forces.

Although the term *zhen* appears in earlier texts on painting, such as Xie He’s 謝赫 (ca. fifth and sixth centuries CE) *The Record of the Classification of Old Painters* (Guhua pinlu 古畫品錄, ca. 532 CE), Yao Zui’s 姚最 (536–603 CE) *Continuation of Classification of Classical Paintings* (Xu Huapin 續畫品, ca. 550 CE), and Zhang Yanyuan’s 張彥遠 (815–77 CE) *Famous Paintings through History* (Lidai Minghua Ji 歷代名畫記, ca. 835 CE), *zhen* as used in *Bifaji* suggests aesthetic implications that cannot be found in other texts. The significance of *zhen* in *Bifaji* should be understood in conjunction with the new artistic aspirations of landscape painting and the use of ink and wash. Indeed, Jing Hao redefined the nature of painting around the concept of *zhen*. This essay explores the significance of *zhen* as a crucial concept that epitomizes the aesthetic aspiration of *Bifaji*. I will first examine how the meaning of *zhen* was expanded in comparison with its usage in previous texts on painting; then I will illuminate the aesthetic implications of *zhen* that are conceptually linked to the terms *qiyun*, *qishi*, and *xiang*.

### The Implications of *Zhen* 眞

While philosophical terms such as *xiang* 象, *qi* 氣, or *shen* 神 had been established as aesthetic concepts since the Six Dynasties period (220–589 CE), when many artistic discussions on calligraphy and painting as well as literature began to emerge, it was only much later that *zhen*<sup>5</sup> began to be used in art theories as a meaningful term charged with aesthetic connotations. The use of *zhen* in *Bifaji*

is particularly noteworthy, as its significance is interconnected with changes in painting of the time—the increase of landscape painting and the stress on the ink-and-wash technique.

The use of *zhen* can be found in other treatises on painting prior to *Bifaji*. For example, *zhen* was used in evaluating the works of other painters in Xie He's *Guhua pinlu*, Yao Zui's *Xu Huapin*, and Zhang Yanyuan's *Lidai Minghua Ji*. Comparing Shi Daoshuo's 史道碩 (ca. fifth century CE) and Wang Wei's 王微 (414–53 CE) works, Xie He commented that although they learned from the same teacher, Wang was skilled at detailed description (*xi* 細), whereas Shi achieved genuineness (*zhen* 真). He concluded that Wang therefore was inferior to Shi.<sup>6</sup> The contrast between *xi* and *zhen* can be also found elsewhere in *Guhua pinlu*. For example, evaluating Liu Xu's 劉頊 (ca. fifth century CE) work, Xie He commented that his excessive detail was the reason that he failed to achieve *zhen*.<sup>7</sup> In both cases, *zhen* is used in contrast to *xi* 細, suggesting that *zhen* cannot be achieved merely through meticulous imitation of forms.

Still, the meaning of *zhen* in painting referred mainly to verisimilitude or lifelikeness in representing an object. For example, in Yao Zui's *Xu Huapin*, *zhen* as applied in the evaluation of a work indicates mainly a realistic depiction. For example, Yao praises Xiao Bi 蕭贲 (?–550 CE) for his skill in creating a realistic depiction of a landscape and for creating an illusion of depth and space even on a small canvas such as a round fan. Yao also used the expression “skill in *zhen*” (*zhenqiao* 真巧) to refer to the skill of drawing realistically to achieve visual similitude.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, Zhang Yanyuan's use of *zhen* in the *Lidai Minghua Ji* seems to suggest aesthetic implications beyond mere visual similitude. Other than the ordinary meaning of *zhen*,<sup>9</sup> there are a few occasions when *zhen* is used to imply artistic values, as when Zhang described Wu Daozi's 吳道子 (680–759 CE) painting as “genuine painting” (*zhenhua* 真畫) in praise of Wu's spontaneous technique that did not make use of a line-brush or ruler, emphasizing the importance of “keeping one's mind [pure], devoted to complete union [with the universe]” (守其神, 專其一).<sup>10</sup> However, Zhang did not further elaborate on the implications of *zhen* as an artistic ideal.

It was not until Jing Hao's use of *zhen* in *Bifaji* that the concept of *zhen* was expounded as an ideal of pictorial representation involving not only technical achievements but also perceptual and intellectual endeavors. In the following passage, *zhen* refers to the ideal state of painting that a painter should strive to achieve:

I [the young painter] said, “Painting (*hua* 畫) is superficiality (*hua* 華). One can achieve *zhen* 真 just through attaining likeness (*si* 似). How could this be so complicated?” The old man said, “It is not so. Painting is painting (*hua* 畫). One fathoms the image of the object and grasps its genuineness (*zhen* 真). [When painting] the outer appearance, one should grasp the outer appearance; [when painting] the substance (*shi* 實), one should grasp the substance. You cannot take the outer appearance and regard it as the substance. If you do not know this method, you might still barely achieve likeness, but you cannot succeed in attaining genuineness (*zhen* 真).” I asked, “What do you call likeness and what do you call genuineness?” The old man replied, “A painting of likeness achieves the form

(*xing* 形), yet leaves out its character (*qi* 氣).<sup>11</sup> A painting of genuineness is abundant in both inner character (*qi* 氣) and material quality (*zhi* 質). If *qi* is transmitted through the outer appearance, while missing in the image (*xiang* 象), this image is dead.”<sup>12</sup>

Dismissing the view of the young painter who believed that “painting is about superficiality,” the old man asserted that a painter should pursue *zhen* by reaching deeper than mere appearance. The statement “painting is painting (*hua* 畫)” is not a mere tautology but a provocative remark to redefine the meaning of *zhen* in painting, which the young painter believed erroneously to be superficiality (*hua* 華). In response to the young painter’s ignorant declaration, the old master suggests that “painting” (*hua* 畫) is a word that sounds similar to “superficiality” (*hua* 華)<sup>13</sup> but is something that requires much more than the conditions to achieve a superficial likeness. Superficiality or outer appearance is what partly constitutes painting, but the master’s assertion induces one to rethink the ideal of painting as something that cannot be reduced to mere imitation of forms. The contrast between the inner quality and the visible is an essential element in comprehending the implications of *zhen* in *Bifaji*, which is reflected in the relationship between *hua* 華 and *shi* 實 as well as in the relationship between *qi* and *zhi* 質.<sup>14</sup>

The meaning of “painting is painting” (畫者畫也) can be interpreted in many different ways.<sup>15</sup> However, the meaning of the latter *hua* should be understood in the overall context of *Bifaji*. In other words, it is important to note that the old master’s intention is to redefine what “painting” is, thus breaking away from the young man’s narrow view. The latter *hua*, therefore, implies “painting genuineness” (畫真).<sup>16</sup> In *Bifaji*, *zhen* is presented as something that should be created (*chuang* 創),<sup>17</sup> not as something that can be simply imitated (*si* 似).<sup>18</sup> Instead of copying what is superficially visible, one needs to examine and investigate its nature.<sup>19</sup>

### The Conditions of *Zhen* in *Bifaji*: Aspects of Reality and the Importance of *Xiang* 象

The contrast between *shi* 實 and *hua* 華 is made to elucidate the meaning of “painting genuineness” (*tuzhen* 圖真). The old master says that if painters pursue only superficiality by imitating the surface of what they see, they will eventually fail to convey the substance of what they paint, thus rendering themselves unable to achieve genuineness in their works. Literally meaning “flower” (*hua*) and “fruit” (*shi*), *hua* refers to the outer, superficial aspect of something that is alluring but is ultimately vain and transient, while *shi* refers to the inner substance of something wherein its true value resides.<sup>20</sup> In *Bifaji*, while *hua* refers to the visual elements of reality that can be imitated, *shi* refers to that which cannot be captured solely through mechanically copying something’s appearance.

According to the *Bifaji*, there are two layers of reality that should be conveyed in painting to achieve the ideal state of representation, *zhen*. The first aspect is *xing* 形—the physical features of an object. The second aspect is the inner quality underlying the visible phenomena of reality, represented as *qi* 氣 or *qiyun* 氣韻<sup>21</sup>—the object’s character that is to be conveyed in the image (*xiang* 象) (Powers 1998: 14). While the physical features of an object can be ascribed to the realm of

*hua* 華, *qi* can be referred to as *shi* 實. The old master explained that the reason why the painting of the likeness (*si*) that only copies its form (*xing*) cannot achieve genuineness (*zhen*) is because it omits *qi*. In response to the young painter's request to clarify the difference between "imitation" (似 *si*) and "genuine representation" (*zhen*), the old master states that both *qi* and *zhi*, the immaterial and the material, need to be fulfilled in order to achieve *zhen*.<sup>22</sup>

In *Lidai Minghua Ji*, Zhang Yanyuan criticized contemporary painters who lacked the ability to express *qiyun* even while they were able to achieve likeness of forms (*xingsi* 形似) as a precise depiction of visual features.<sup>23</sup> Zhang believed that learning how to depict the form of an object was easier than capturing its character. In other words, not all paintings that are meticulous in imitating forms have succeeded in conveying the essential quality of their subjects. Zhang stated that even *xingsi* can be achieved by expressing *qiyun*.<sup>24</sup> According to his standards, a painter should not produce a meticulously detailed depiction of something lacking the sense of liveliness but rather an image that effectively captures its character and gives the viewer a sense of its presence. However, Zhang's perspective on *qiyun* was relatively limited. He believed that nonhuman objects, such as trees and rocks, were inanimate and lacked *qiyun*.<sup>25</sup> Although he praised Wu Daozi and Zhang Zao 張瓘 (eighth century) for their depictions of natural objects such as rocks, water, and mountains, he did not use the term *qiyun* to describe them.<sup>26</sup>

On the other hand, Jing Hao's *qiyun* expanded the concept from people in portraits to things in a landscape (*shanshui* 山水). The implications of *qiyun* that used to be confined to a person's invisible qualities,<sup>27</sup> in the case of Zhang Yanyuan as well as Xie He, was now extended to things in nature.<sup>28</sup> In *Bifaji*, *qiyun* means the way essential qualities of objects are felt in the world. The concept of character is now applied to all parts of nature, including the rocks or streams that Zhang Yanyuan regarded as having no *qiyun*. For Jing Hao, the landscape comprised living things imbued with inner qualities distinctive from one another. Therefore, he regarded *qi* as the most fundamental feature of reality that a painter should convey in his or her work.

It is important to note the meaning of *yun* 韻 in understanding the conceptual expansion of *qiyun* 氣韻 in *Bifaji*. *Yun* is a term that had been used in various contexts, including music, literature, and evaluation of character, as well as in painting. In the expression *qiyun shengdong* 氣韻生動,<sup>29</sup> Xie He takes the *yun* used in the evaluation of individual character (*renwupinzao* 人物品藻) and adapts it to the context of figure painting. *Yun* in a figure painting is the way that a person's spiritual qualities and mental characteristics, namely *qi*, manifest themselves through bodily traits and demeanor.<sup>30</sup> Just as an individual displays distinctive qualities that represent his or her character and traits, a painter should be able to single out visual features that represent an object's nature. "There are paintings [that depict pine trees] like flying dragons or coiling serpents, with their branches and leaves growing chaotically, but this is not the character (*qiyun*) of pine trees."<sup>31</sup>

This sentence is from a discussion in *Bifaji* on the various characters of different kinds of trees.<sup>32</sup> The nature (*xing* 性) that a tree is born with determines the *qiyun* through which its innate nature is visually manifested. In this context, *qiyun*

is reminiscent of its use in the evaluation of character reflected in the discussion about portraits, as it indicates that pine trees have their own particular qualities that distinguish them from other kinds of trees.<sup>33</sup> In this remark, the old master is stressing that a painter should capture the subject's characteristic features in order to make it identifiable in a painting. Conveying the *qiyun* of natural objects, therefore, is a prerequisite for achieving *zhen*.

Regarding how to fulfil the conditions of *zhen* in landscape painting, there is another term to consider in relation to *qi*. As the objects of painting expand from individual objects to the configuration of various elements in a landscape, *Bifaji* emphasizes *shi* 勢 (dynamic configuration or force). In a landscape, dynamic interactions and tension, contrast and harmony, arise in constant flux. The combination of *qi* and *shi* is suggested to address this essential aspect of a landscape in *Bifaji*:

The image of landscapes is formed by the combination of character (*qi*) and dynamic configuration (*shi*).<sup>34</sup> Thus, those pointed on top are called peaks; those flat on top are called summits; those with round shapes are called hills; . . . a stream in a ravine is called a gully; a stream lined by mountains is called a creek. Although the peaks and hills described above are different, ridges and ranges are connected together at the bottom. Hiding or revealing these elements with the [rendering of] forests and streams [in paintings], one can subtly create the effect of the far and the near.<sup>35</sup>

Following his description of the *qiyun* of various trees, the old master moves on to discuss the *qishi* of landscapes, enumerating different topological features of mountains and rivers that should be properly expressed when painting them. While *qiyun* is applicable to individual objects, *qishi* applies to the configuration of multiple things.<sup>36</sup> In addition to extending the implication of *qiyun* to natural objects such as trees, *Bifaji* also introduced the concept of character and *qishi* when discussing a landscape as a complex of various things and conditions in constant change.

*Shi* 勢 is a critical term reflecting the tendency of Chinese thought to perceive the world as a process of transformation (Jullien 1999: 13). Change and transition are inherent in the word *shi*. In the context of figure painting, *shi* was used to suggest the figure's motion or gesture.<sup>37</sup> *Shi* is also a critical concept in calligraphy that articulates the force created in the process through which the forms of sinographs are transformed into dynamic images through the brushwork. The use of *shi* in the context of landscape painting can also be found in texts earlier than *Bifaji*. In *Painting Yuntai Mountain* (Hua Yuntaishan Ji 畫雲台山記, ca. 380 CE), Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (ca. 344–406 CE) argues that the painter should achieve the *shi* of various physical features of the mountain; for example, the *shi* of clouds ascending between slopes should be like a surging dragon, the *shi* of a red cliff at the edge of the water should be precipitous, and so on (Yu 1998: 581–82). Whether the case be calligraphy, figure painting, or landscape painting, *shi* becomes visible through the dynamism conjured as forms and brushstrokes interact with one another.<sup>38</sup>

The *shi* of landscape in *Bifaji* seems to conform to Gu Kaizhi's dictum, but it also adds another aesthetic implication juxtaposed to *qi*. The effect of *shi* in *qishi*



arises between the visible and the invisible. *Shi* in a landscape painting is the dynamic configuration that visually epitomizes the interaction and tension among various elements of the landscape. The artist must convey not only the *qiyun* of depicted objects, such as trees and rocks in a landscape, but also the movement and flow arising in their interaction—namely, the dynamic configuration of the whole scene.

Capturing *qiyun* or *qishi* is fundamentally different from the imitation or mimesis of appearance. *Qishi* is inherent in reality. One can feel and perceive its effects in the world. However, this experience cannot be conveyed in painting simply by achieving visual likeness. The old master says that one should “grasp the most essential” of a landscape instead of delineating all the details of the scene. “Therefore, if one paints a landscape without these images (*xiang* 象), that is wrong. . . . Fog, clouds, mist, and haze are light or heavy depending on the time. Their dynamic configurations (*shi* 勢) might be influenced by the wind, and, therefore, each image cannot be fixed. You must leave those complications and grasp the most essential [elements].”<sup>39</sup>

Achieving *qishi* in painting involves a process of editing—exaggeration, simplification, omission, rearrangement, and so on. The painter is required to reconfigure the arrangements of the landscape in such a way as to bring out the essence of the dynamic configurations. This is a representation of the essential quality of landscape as a configuration of various elements rather than a mimesis of a scene (Jullien 1999: 79–82) in which the construction of *xiang* becomes critical in achieving pictorial *zhen*.

The old master said that one should “fathom the image of the object (*wuxiang* 物象)” in order to achieve *zhen*.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the first of the Six Essentials, *Qi* 氣, concerns grasping the image (*quxiang* 取象).<sup>41</sup> One of the essential aspects of Chinese art is to regard the work as a medium to convey through sensory experience what cannot be fully expressed by the logic of language. *Xiang* is a bridge between the visible and the invisible, the concrete and the abstract, the actual and the imagined, and imitation and creation.<sup>42</sup>

According to *Bifaji*, the process of painting involves observing the landscape, extracting the core elements that can display the effect of *qishi*, and constructing an image that can best convey its impression. Thus, the power of thought (*si* 思) is emphasized when creating the *xiang* in *Bifaji*. While form (*xing*) is an object’s shape, which should be imitated, the *xiang* is that which must be constructed in painting. *Xiang* is the mental image that is created when one observes concrete forms and then processes their various qualities by selecting, editing, and rearranging them.<sup>43</sup>

*Xiang* in painting is closely related to the transition from portraits to landscapes that occurred during this time as well. As the focus of painting shifted from the *qiyun* of a person to the *qishi* of a landscape, *xiang* became more important. When drawing a figure, the *xing* that should be depicted is specific, whether it is a face, body, or some other physical feature of the subject. It is through this *xing* that the subject’s *qiyun* is represented and communicated.

However, the interplay of the inner quality and the invisible form works differently in landscape painting. In order to represent the dynamic features of a land-

scape, the painter must construct a new *xiang*. The process of creative formulation or composition is inherent in *xiang* (Bush and Shih 2012: 3; Owen 2000: 214–17; Peterson 2000: 239). The old master said that one should “illuminate the source (*yuan* 源) of the image of things” when painting a landscape.<sup>44</sup> The source (*yuan*) here is no different from the *dao*,<sup>45</sup> the ultimate principle and source of nature that brings forth and forms all things. In other words, the *qiyun* of natural objects and the *qishi* of landscapes are how the invisible source (*yuan*) visually manifests itself. The *xiang* of a landscape is the vehicle through which the *yuan* of nature that is otherwise ineffable and imperceptible is conveyed. Thus, a *xiang* is a crucial bridge that connects the two different tasks of pictorial representation to achieve the state of *zhen*: to imitate forms and to convey the invisible principles of nature.

The old master emphasizes the role of *Si* for constructing a *xiang*.<sup>46</sup> He exhorts the young painter to muster his best consciousness in order to observe and identify the nature (*xing* 性) of different things.<sup>47</sup> The third and the fourth of the Six Essentials, *Si* (思 “thought”) and *Jing* (景 “scene”), are in fact two different aspects of thought. The old man says, “*Si* is to condense [the painting] into the most essential [features] and visualize one’s ideas into concrete forms. *Jing* is to properly examine the principles of changing times and grasp the profound (*miao* 妙) to create genuineness (*zhen*).”<sup>48</sup> In fact, “visualizing ideas into concrete forms” (*ningxiang xingwu* 凝想开物) is none other than constructing a *xiang*. Both *Si* and *Jing* are conscious, intellectual endeavors conducted to comprehend the essence of the ever-changing phenomena of reality. They constitute insight into the laws of nature.<sup>49</sup> *Zhen* in painting can be attained when the essence of nature as represented by its principle of forms and the law of temporal change is conveyed through a *xiang*.

### How to Paint *Zhen*: Dimensions of *Qi* and Their Convergence in Painting

As the title *A Note on the Method of the Brush* (*Bifaji* 筆法) suggests, the work is a guide for how to embody aesthetic ideals through the method of brush and ink, which ultimately comes down to questions of style and technique—the practical means to paint the image of *zhen*. *Bifaji* stresses the importance of both intellectual effort and brush-and-ink technique in achieving *zhen*. The goal of painting in *Bifaji* is to convey the *qiyun* and *qishi* in a landscape, both of which are manifestations of the fundamental principles of nature (*yuan*). Content and form are reciprocal, so new painting styles are often instigated by the pursuit of new ideological or aesthetic ideals. In *Bifaji*, the stylistic and technical methods required for achieving *zhen* are ink and wash (*shuimo* 水墨).<sup>50</sup>

The overall teaching of the old master, from the cognitive endeavors for constructing a *xiang* to the practice of brush and ink techniques, are summarized in the Six Essentials (六要) and Four Forces (四勢):

There are Six Essentials in painting. . . . I will explain the Essentials of painting to you in detail. Vital energy (*qi* 氣) is that which your mind follows with the movement of the brush, grasping the image without hesitation. Resonance (*yun* 韻) is that which conceals traces [of the brush] when constructing forms, satisfying a sense of propriety and avoid-



ing vulgarity. Thought (*si* 思) is to condense [the painting] into the most essential [features] and to manifest one's ideas in concrete forms. Scene (*jing* 景) is to properly examine the principles of the changing times and seasons and grasp the profound (*miao* 妙) to create genuineness (*zhen* 真). Brush (*bi* 筆) is, while adhering to basic rules, to move the brush fluently and effortlessly with variations and changes, [confined] neither in texture nor in form, as if flying and running. Ink (*mo* 墨) is [to express] the depth of all things with the density [of the ink] and the thickness [of the strokes], creating expressions so natural that they appear as if they had not been done with a brush.<sup>51</sup>

It is important to note that *Qi* and *Yun*, the first two of the Six Essentials, point to a different layer of *qi* than the *qiyun*, which I discussed in the previous section.<sup>52</sup> By comparing the implications of *Qi* and *Yun* of the Six Essentials and that of *qiyun*, we can discover the different layers of *qi* involved in the process of painting a landscape. As I have demonstrated, *qiyun* refers to the characteristic quality of natural objects. On the other hand, *Qi* of the Six Essentials should be attributed to the artist. *Qi* in the Six Essentials refers to the *qi* of the artist related to creativity and state of mind, as well as to the degree of technical perfection. In order to move the brush effortlessly without hesitation, the artist's mind should be completely absorbed in the act of painting. As the text quoted above suggests, *Yun* is the desirable state of painting in which the physical and material aspects of elements of the painting—the forms, brush strokes, shades of ink, and so on—are harmonized (Hwang 2006: 187–89). In other words, *Yun* is the visible result whereby the artist's *qi* is visually conveyed through the appropriate rendering of ink and wash.

The Six Essentials begin with *Qi* and end with *Bi* and *Mo*. *Qi* suggests the attitude or state of the painter, and *Yun* the norms of painterly expression. Whereas *Si* and *Jing* are the mental processes behind the creative process of painting, *Bi* (筆 “brush”) and *Mo* (墨 “ink”)—the last two rules of the Six Essentials—concern the physical and material aspects of painting. While the Six Essentials give general instructions encompassing all the features of the painting process, the Four Forces concern the technical methods in dealing with ink and brush. The last two of the Six Essentials, *Bi* and *Mo*, naturally move on to the teaching of the Four Forces:

There are Four Forces (*sishi* 四勢) in the brush called Muscle (*jin* 筋), Flesh (*rou* 肉), Bone (*gu* 骨), and Vital Energy (*qi* 氣). If the [trace] of a brushstroke stops but [its force] is not discontinued, it is called Muscle. If the thickening and thinning of a brushstroke forms substance, it is called Flesh. If a brushstroke, whether it is thickening or tapering, is strong and solid, it is called Bone. If the traces and painted lines are not subject to [becoming weak anywhere],<sup>53</sup> it is called Vital Energy.<sup>54</sup>

From *Qi* (氣, “vital energy”) to *Mo* (墨, “ink”), the Six Essentials are listed from the immaterial and invisible quality to the physical and visible features of the painting process. On the other hand, the description of the Four Forces, which are a metaphor for the human body (West 2000: 207),<sup>55</sup> begins with the most concrete feature and moves on to the most subtle element, from the most visceral element of the body to the invisible energy of the body, which is the source of all the other

visible elements—from *Jin* (筋, “muscle”), *Rou* (肉, “flesh”), and *Gu* (骨, “bone”) to *Qi* (氣, “vital energy”), the invisible but most fundamental quality. Technical instructions on brushwork are followed by a description of *Qi*, which cannot be achieved by technical skills alone.

In Chinese philosophy *qi* is a critical concept in explaining how we experience the world both physiologically and psychologically (i.e., how we interpret the world). In particular, the multiple dimensions of *qi* from the primal *qi* (*yuanqi* 元氣) to an individual’s *qiyun*, and the connectivity between different dimensions of *qi*, underlie the Chinese view that regards the reality of the world as a process of constant change. This view is also reflected in the teachings of *Bifaji*.<sup>56</sup>

It is important to note that the term *qi* is used both in the Six Essentials and in the Four Forces. *Qi* is the first among the Six Essentials and the last among the Four Forces. Here we can identify yet another layer of *qi* between the Six Essentials and the Four Forces. The connotations of *Qi* in the Six Essentials and that of *Qi* in the Four Forces are not identical, but they are nonetheless interlinked, and they mutually influence each other. *Qi* of the Four Forces should be attributed to the work of art itself. In the process that begins with *Qi*, the first of the Six Essentials, and ends with *Qi*, the last of the Four Forces, the implication of *qi* transfers from that of the painter to that of the painting.

Above I have used different English terms for *qiyun* and the *Qi* in the Six Essentials and the Four Forces—“character” and “vital energy,” respectively.<sup>57</sup> The use of “vital energy” is to emphasize the connection and flow between the *qi* of the artist and that of his or her work in the process of creation. However, on a fundamental level, the nature of *Qi* in the Six Essentials and the Four Forces is not unrelated to the meaning of character. It can be helpful here to recall briefly the implications of *qi* used in early literary theories such as Cao Pi’s 曹丕 (187–226 CE) *Dianlun: Lunwen* (典論: 論文, Standard treatise: On literature) and Liu Xie’s 劉勰 (ca. 465–521 CE) *Wenxin diaolong* (文心雕龍, The literary mind and the carving of dragons). In Cao Pi’s theory, the quality of a literary work is inevitably influenced by the *qi* of the writer (Cao 1979: 60). This *qi* that a person is born with determines one’s character and talent that is to be reflected in his or her creation.<sup>58</sup>

On the other hand, we can discover another conceptual layer of *qi* in Liu Xie’s use of the term. In the same vein with Cao Pi’s *Lunwen*, in his discussion of “style and nature” (*tixing* 體性), Liu Xie also stated that *qi* or *caiqi* 才氣—namely, the natural talent or genius that a person is born with—is critical in one’s literary achievement.<sup>59</sup> However, he also used *qi* to address the quality and character of a literary work. The term *ciqu* 辭氣 is used in his discussion of literary styles of various masters (*zhuzi* 諸子) and the art of writing.<sup>60</sup> It refers to the distinctive quality and force felt from the work in which the writer’s own *qi* is reflected. The individual quality or character of *qi* varies by person. Yet its origin is ultimately attributed to the primal *qi* that pervades the world as the source of all creatures, including men.<sup>61</sup>

The aesthetic implications of *qi* in the Six Essentials and the Four Forces echo this layered meaning of *qi* found in early literary theories as above. In *Bifaji*, therefore, we can discover the three different conceptual layers of *qi*. The first is

the *qiyun* that is attributed to the subject of painting, such as trees and mountains. This *qi* is how the inner principle of the world (*yuan* 源) manifests itself in natural objects. It is the true character that a painter should observe in nature and skillfully represent in his or her painting. Secondly, there is the *qi* that belongs to the painter. As the painter perceives *qiyun* and *qishi* in a landscape and conveys them through a painting, his or her own *qi* is reflected in the creative process. *Qi*, the first element of the Six Essentials, refers to this category of *qi* (Chi 2005: 193–94). Lastly, *qi* is also applied to a painting itself. *Qi*, the last element of the Four Forces, implies an understanding of *qi* as the result of the creative process in which the painter's *qi* is transmitted.

The meaning of “character” is emphasized in painting theories because its main concern is the representation of an object. The term *qiyun* was mostly used in connection with painting and cannot be found in early criticism of calligraphy, which nonetheless shared many common terms with painting regarding brush and ink (Soper 1949: 418). This is due to the nature of representational painting that aims to convey the properties of the object—a concern that does not apply to calligraphy. On the other hand, in the case of literary creation, the content of writing is the subject's thoughts, reflections, sentiments, and so on. Therefore, *qiyun* as the inner quality or character of the artist comes to the fore. In *Bifaji* these layers of *qi* are interconnected from observing the object in nature to constructing an image in painting according to the method of the Six Essentials and the Four Forces.

The concept of *qi* plays a critical role throughout the entire process, from the artist's creation of a painting to the viewer's appreciation of it. The *qiyun* and *qishi* of a landscape are conveyed through the *qi* of a painter, culminating in a painted image that has its own *qi* that is felt by viewers. The interaction between these different dimensions of *qi* are critical in realizing *zhen*, the ideal of pictorial representation. The teaching of the Six Essentials and the Four Forces can be summarized as the process through which these various dimensions of *qi* converge in a painted image. When this process is carried out successfully, *zhen*, the pictorial ideal of a landscape, is attained. It is a fluid and interactive process that is made possible through the medium of ink and wash.

The prominence of ink and wash in *Bifaji* is an essential element that facilitates the conceptual extension of *zhen*, from the lifelikeness of a portrait to conveying the *qiyun* and *qishi* of a landscape in painting. The state of *zhen* in which “a painting . . . is abundant in both inner character (*qi*) and material quality (*zhi*)”<sup>62</sup> is eventually made possible through the ink-and-wash brush technique. For the painters of the mid-Tang, the ink-and-wash technique was regarded adequate for realizing the new ideals of landscape painting. The dynamism of movement and change that cannot be captured by mere meticulous imitation of forms can be conveyed through a skillful rendering of ink and wash that allows for more dynamism and expressiveness. Ink and wash combined with brush technique was considered the most effective medium to transfer the painter's *qi* into the painted image.<sup>63</sup> In other words, ink and wash applied to landscape painting is the most adequate means of creating a *xiang* that conveys both *qiyun* and *qishi* and projects the artist's creative traits in the painting.

Compared to the exuberant colors used in religious and narrative paintings in the preceding era, the monochromatic shades of ink and wash might appear limiting. However, Jing Hao and other Tang dynasty masters, such as Wang Wei 王微 (414–53 CE) and Zhang Zao 張皞 (eighth century CE), exalted in the quality of ink and wash while disparaging the use of colors. In evaluating previous painters, Jing Hao praised some artists for their excellent brush technique while criticizing their ink technique and vice versa.<sup>64</sup> Even Wu Daozi 吳道子 (680–759 CE), who was celebrated as the best painter of all time in *Lidai Minghua Ji*, was criticized by Jing Hao for his lack of ink (*mo*) technique. On the other hand, Jing praised Zhang Zao's subtle use of ink and regarded him as the best painter. It is particularly striking that Jing complimented him for not valuing the use of colors.<sup>65</sup>

This preference for ink and wash over color was related to the concept of pictorial *zhen*, which held the expression of *qi* and the essential of *shi* 實 in higher regard than the imitation of forms (*xing* 形) and the element of *hua* 華. In other words, the shift from the use of color to monochrome painting was partly the result of pursuing what lies beyond superficial colors and shapes.

According to *Bifaji*, an ideal *xiang* representing the state of *zhen* cannot be created by the meticulous method of imitation of forms (*xingsi*) but instead can be achieved through the spontaneous and unrestricted rendering of the brush. Introducing a set of criteria for evaluating painters,<sup>66</sup> the old master described the two best classes, Shen 神 (“supreme”) and Miao 妙 (“ingenious”), as follows: “[Painters of] the Shen class are free from artificiality and simply allow the brush to move spontaneously to form images. [Painters of] the Miao class fathom the principle of the sky and the earth and the essential nature of all things with thought and make the outer pattern and the inner principle accord with the subject's proprieties, thus letting all things flow from the brush.”<sup>67</sup>

While thought is mentioned as an important element in capturing the essential nature of all things in the Miao class, the supreme class Shen stresses neither intellectual endeavor nor technical perfection. Instead, Jing Hao brought up non-artificiality and spontaneity as prerequisites for the best painters. In order to perform effortlessly and spontaneously, one's mind must be calm and free of afflictions and distractions.<sup>68</sup> This requirement is why the self-cultivation of painters is as important as tenacious study and training, as the old master stressed. Before beginning his teaching of the Six Essentials, the old master emphasized the importance of keeping the mind untainted by worldly desires, considering painting as one of the methods for such self-cultivation.<sup>69</sup> In other words, it is necessary for a painter to collect his *qi* to create a genuine painting.

After delivering all his teachings, the old master finally said that one should “forget the brush and ink” (忘筆墨) in order to paint a “genuine landscape” (*zhen-jing* 真景).<sup>70</sup> One must forget (*wang* 忘) what they are doing and their sense of themselves, completely immersing themselves in the action of the moment. This final remark describes a state in which every act or movement is performed spontaneously and effortlessly without any conscious thought.<sup>71</sup>

The significance of *wang* (to forget) is also essentially related to *qi*. The state of *wang*, in which the painter is completely absorbed in the act of painting itself,

is made possible when the *qi* becomes the medium through which one communicates with the world. It is in fact not different from Zhuangzi's "sitting down and forgetting everything" (*zuowang* 坐忘),<sup>72</sup> the state followed by "emptying the mind" (*xinzhai* 心齋), in which all the borders between the self and the world are dismantled as one perceives things through *qi* rather than through some limited sensory boundary or cognitive preconception.<sup>73</sup>

Forgetting (*wang* 忘) in *Bifaji* implies that the separation between the painter and the painting tools—brush and ink—disappears, which eventually enables the flux of *qi* from the artist to the painting. It is through this state of complete absorption that the three layers of *qi*—the *qiyun* and *qishi* of landscape, the *qi* of the artist, and the *qi* of the painted image—are finally brought into coalescence, resulting in *zhen* in painting.

### Concluding Remarks

In exploring the meaning of *zhen* in *Bifaji*, various terms and concepts involved in achieving genuineness (*zhen*) in pictorial reality have been discussed. Delineating the principles of landscape painting in *Bifaji* is not only about manual skill and technique but also, and more significantly, about the intellectual learning and self-cultivation of the painter. *Zhen* as advanced in *Bifaji* is an aesthetic concept in which the view of nature and the cultural values of painting are integrated through the method of brush and ink.

*Bifaji* marks a transition of the meaning of *zhen* as applied in painting, from visual verisimilitude to the ideal state of pictorial construction. The significance of *zhen* as an aesthetic term is multifaceted. Above all, its use in *Bifaji* suggests new aims in landscape painting whereby the interplay between immaterial quality and invisible form plays an important role. In *Bifaji* the contrast between substance (*shi* 實) and superficiality (*hua* 華) is presented to emphasize that painting *zhen* can be achieved only when the painting succeeds in conveying the intangible aspects of reality through visible forms.

*Bifaji* offers conceptual and technical prerequisites for attaining genuineness (*zhen*), encompassing various elements and stages in the painting process: what to observe in nature in order to capture the essence of the landscape and how to construct an image that effectively represents the essentials, as well as how to use brush and ink to best create an image conveying the essence. What the painter should capture by observing a landscape are inner character (*qiyun*), dynamic configuration (*qishi*), and the substance (*shi*) underlying the visual phenomena *hua* 華. The mind of the painter should then construct an image (*xiang*) to convey this substance (*shi*); finally, this image should be rendered in ink and wash in a state of complete immersion in which one forgets (*wang* 忘) or lets go of the technique itself.

Therefore, it takes capabilities on different levels for a painter to achieve the goal of *zhen*: the power of observation to perceive the *qiyun* and *qishi* of a landscape rather than its mere superficial appearance; the ability to grasp the most essential features to construct a *xiang* that can effectively convey them; and the perfection of brush technique to effortlessly render that image in ink and wash. These processes

require a trained sensibility, mental rigor, and technical skills. *Zhen* in *Bifaji* is the ideal state of pictorial representation that can be achieved when these processes have been fulfilled harmoniously.

The conceptual expansion of *zhen* should also be understood in conjunction with the implications of *qi* as it pertains to the process of creating a landscape painting. Reflecting the worldview of the time, *qi* in *Bifaji* plays an essential role in establishing the relationship between the world and the painter, between the painter and artistic practice, and between the artwork and the viewer. From the *qiyun* and *qishi* of a landscape to the painter's *qi* represented as Qi among the Six Essentials and the *qi* of the image rendered in ink and wash as reflected in Qi among the Four Forces, the connectivity between these different dimensions of *qi* underlies the meaning of *zhen* in *Bifaji*. Interwoven with the meaning of *xiang* and *qi* in painting, *zhen*, then, is a concept that enables a landscape painting as an aesthetic medium that represents the worldview of the time.

## NOTES

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1. This essay uses original texts of *Bifaji* 筆法記 as reprinted in Yu 1998.
2. Qi 氣 (“vital energy”), Yun 韻 (“resonance”), Si 思 (“thought”), Jing 景 (“scene”), Bi 筆 (“brush”), and Mo 墨 (“ink”) (Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “夫畫有六要。一曰氣，二曰韻，三曰思，四曰景，五曰筆，六曰墨”).
3. Jin 筋 (“muscle”), Rou 肉 (“flesh”), Gu 骨 (“bone”), and Qi 氣 (“vital energy”) (Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “凡筆有四勢，調筋，肉，骨，氣”).
4. Powers’s emphasis on human ideation in determining the meaning of *zhen* shares some common ground with the argument in this essay that *zhen* is a representation of reality, concerned with a way of understanding which aspects of reality are deemed the most essential. This idea will be further elaborated in this essay.
5. *Zhen* as a philosophical term dates back to the Laozi and Zhuangzi. In Daoism, *zhen* stands in opposition to *wei* 偽 (“artificiality”), implying that one should return to the state of *su* 素 (“purity”) and *pu* 樸 (“simplicity”) of nature. For the meanings of *zhen* 真 and *zhenren* 真人, see Coyle 1998. As for the implications of *zhen* in Buddhism and Confucianism, see Buswell and Lopez 2014: 1055; No 2008; and Ames 1985.
6. Xie He, *Guhua pinlu*: “王微. 史道碩. 五代晉時. 並師荀. 衛, 各體善能. 然王得其細, 史傳以似真. 細而論之, 景玄為劣.” See Yu 1998: 364.
7. Yu 1998: 364–65: “劉頊. 用意綿密, 畫體簡細, 而筆迹困弱. 形制單省. 其于所長, 婦人為最. 但纖細過度, 翻更失真, 然觀察祥審, 甚得姿態.”
8. In his comment on Mao Leng (毛稜), Yao claimed that although his skill in realistic depiction was insufficient, his ability in composition compensated for this the defect. Yao Zui, *Xu Huapin*. See Yu 1998: 373.
9. For example, *zhen* in *Lidai Minghua Ji* may range in meaning from “real” or “actual” to “original” or “authentic” when referring to a portrait painting.



10. Lidai Minghua Ji, “Lun Gu Lu Zhang Wu yongbi 論顧陸張吳用筆” (“On the brushwork of Gu Kaizhi, Lu Tanwei, Zhang Sengyao, and Wu Daozi”): “夫用界筆直尺，是死畫也。守其神，專其一，是真畫也” [If one uses linebrush or ruler, he or she will create a dead painting. If one keeps one’s mind (pure), devoted to complete union (with the universe), it will be a genuine painting]. See Zhang 1971: 70.

11. I have adopted “character” or “inner character” for the translation of *qiyun* in *Bifaji*, as suggested by Powers. The perspective of this essay is largely indebted to his interpretation of *qiyun*. See Powers 1992, 1998. In line with Powers, Goldin (2018: 504–9) also emphasized the early usage of *qiyun* as “character” not only in evaluation of individual character (*renwupinzao* 人物品藻), but also in literature and painting theory. Other English translations of *qi* or *qiyun* in *Bifaji* by contemporary scholars include “spirit resonance” (Bush and Shih 2012: 147), “vital energy” (West 2000: 204), and “living breath (*lebendigen Atmen*)” (Obert 2007: 149).

12. Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “曰：畫者華也。但貴似得真，豈此撓矣。叟曰：不然。畫者畫也。度物象而取其真。物之華，取其華。物之實，取其實。不可執華爲實。若不知術，苟似，可也。圖真，不可及也。曰：何以爲似？何以爲真？叟曰：似者得其形，遭其氣。真者氣質俱盛。凡氣傳於華，遭於象。象之死也。” See Yu 1998: 605.

13. “華 (*hwae*)” and “畫 (*hweaH*)” in Baxter and Sagart’s notation for Middle Chinese. See Baxter and Sagart 2013: 342.

14. *Zhi* in this context should be regarded as the physical aspect of the object. See Obert 2007: 149. *Zhi* as the physical aspect of the object in contrast to its intangible essence also can be found in Zong Bing’s 宗炳 (375–444) *Hua shanshui hsu* (畫山水序, “Comments on *Shanshui* [landscape] painting”). Zong regarded *shanshui* as a physical existence (*zhi* 質) that is connected to the invisible spirit (*ling* 靈). See Yu 1998: 583. This contrast and harmony between *zhi* and *ling* is echoed in the relationship between *zhi* and *qi* in *Bifaji*.

15. The interpretation of this sentence, especially the meaning of the latter *hua* 畫, varies among scholars. For example, Xu (1990: 327) explained it as “painting what is in the mind.” Munakata and Munakata (1974: 12) translated it as “painting is equivalent to measuring,” equating the second *hua* with *tu* 度 in the next sentence. West’s (2000: 204) translation is “painting is to etch lines.” Kim (2012: 111) sees the second *hua* as “thinking” or “planning.”

16. Chi (2005: 213) also suggests that the latter *hua* should be read as “painting *zhen*” (*huazhen* 畫真) but did not further elaborate on the meaning of *zhen*.

17. Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “景者，制度時因，搜妙創真。” See note 51.

18. See note 12.

19. See note 12: “度物象而取其真。”

20. The opposing pair of *hua* and *shi* can be found as far back as the *Laozi*. *Laozi* 老子, chap. 38: “前識者，道之華，而愚之始，是以大丈夫處其厚，不居其薄，處其實，不居其華，故去彼取此 (Foreknowledge is the flower of the *dao*, yet the beginning of obscurity. Therefore, the mature man resides in the substantial not in the superficial, resides in the fruit, not in the flower, rejecting the one and accepting the other).” See Laozi 1986: 23.

21. The importance of *qiyun* in painting traces back to Xie He’s Six Laws (*liufa* 六法). (Xie He, *Guhua Pinlu*: “氣韻生動，骨法用筆，應物象形，隨類賦彩，經營位置，轉移模寫”). See Yu 1998: 355. For interpretations of the first law “*qiyun shengdong*,” see Goldin 2018; Bush and Shih 2012: 11–13; Hwang 2006: 139–43, 160–64.

22. Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “真者，氣質俱盛，凡氣傳於華，遭於象，象之死也。” See note 12.

23. *Lun hua liu fa* 論畫六法 (Discussion of the Six Laws): “今之畫，縱得形似，而氣韻不生 (Paintings of today might have achieved likeness of forms, but the sense of *qiyun* does not arise in them)” (Zhang 1971: 51).

24. *Lun hua liu fa*: “以氣韻求其畫，則形似在其間矣 (if one creates a painting by [conveying] *qiyun*, visual likeness follows in it).” (Zhang 1971: 51).

25. *Lun hua liu fa*: “至於臺閣樹石車輿器物，無生動之可擬，無氣韻之可侔” (As for buildings, trees, rocks, carriages, and other objects, there is no vitality to express, so *qiyun* cannot be accompanied) (Zhang 1971: 52–53).

26. See “Lun hua shan shui shu shi” 論畫山水樹石 (On painting mountains and rivers, trees and rocks) in Zhang 1998: 55–58.

27. The meaning of *qiyun* applied in portrait painting is similar to *shen* as used by Gu Kaizhi. See Cai 2004: 315.

28. For the conceptual extension of *qiyun* from people to nature, see Kang 2019.

29. See note 21.

30. For the implications of *qi* and *yun* in the evaluation of individual character (*ren-wupinzao* 人物品藻), and their application to painting, see Kim I. 1983; Hwang 2006: 107–15; Kwön 1997: 291–301; Min 2009: 23. Ye (1985: 220–21) also pointed out that this *yun* is related to the *yun* used in the evaluation of individual character.

31. Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “有畫如飛龍蟠虬，狂生枝葉者，非松之氣韻也” (“There are paintings [that depict pine trees] like flying dragons or coiling serpents, with their branches and leaves growing chaotically, but this is not the character [*qiyun*] of pine trees”). See Yu 1998: 607.

32. Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “夫木之生，爲受其性。松之生也，枉而不曲遇，．．．其有楸，桐，椿，櫟，榆，柳，桑，槐，形質皆異” (“A tree grows in accordance with its given nature. The pine tree may grow curved, but never crooked. . . . Other kinds of trees such as the catalpa, the paulownia, the cedrela, the oak, the elm, the willow, the mulberry, and the sophora all are different in their nature of forms”).

33. For a further analysis on the above quote from *Bifaji* and *qiyun* as “character” or “inner (true) character,” see Powers 1998: 12–13.

34. I have adopted Bush’s translation of *shi* as “dynamic configuration.” See Bush and Shih 2012: 164.

35. Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “山水之象，氣勢相生。故尖曰峰，平曰頂，圓曰巒，相連曰嶺，有穴曰岫，峻壁曰崖，崖間崖下曰巖。路通山中曰谷，不通曰峪，峪中有水曰溪，山夾水曰澗。其上峰巒雖異，其下岡嶺相連。掩映林泉，依稀遠近。” See Yu 1998: 607.

36. This transition from *qiyun* to *qishi*, i.e., the relationship between individual objects and *shi* as a conglomeration of multiple things, or even forces or environments formed by an accumulation of things, can be found in *Laozi* chap. 51: “道生之，德畜之，物形之，勢成之” (*Dao* gives birth to them, *De* raises them, things manifest, and forces/configurations are formed). See Laozi 1986: 31.

37. For example, in Gu Kaizhi’s *Wei Jin Shengliu Hua Zan* 魏晉勝流畫贊 (“In praise of famous paintings of the Wei and Jin dynasties”), *shi* is used to describe the impression of movement such as running figures or galloping horses. See Yu 1998: 348. *Shi* in the young painter’s description of the old pine tree at the beginning of the *Bifaji* text has the same connotation: “中獨暈大者，皮老蒼蘚，翔騰乘空，蟠虬之勢，欲附雲漢” (Among them was a particularly grand pine tree. Its aged bark was covered with green lichen. Its scales soaring into the air had the *shi* of a coiling dragon about to reach the Milky Way). See Yu 1998: 605. For further discussion of the meaning of movement and gesture implied in *shi*, see Powers 1992: 913–14.

38. Jullien (1999: 75) describes the effect of *shi* in art as “the actualization of universal dynamism”—namely, a process that produces “a particular configuration of the dynamism inherent in reality.”

39. Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “夫畫山水無此象亦非也。．．．夫霧雲烟靄，輕重有時，勢或因風，象皆不定。須去其繁章，採其大要，先能知此是非，然後受其筆法。” See Yu 1998: 607.

40. See note 12.
41. Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “氣者，心隨筆運，取象不惑” (As for Qi, the mind should follow the movement of the brush and capture the image without hesitation). See Yu 1998: 606.
42. The establishment of *xiang* (“image or symbolic image”) as an aesthetic term was influenced by Wang Bi’s epistemological interpretation of the structure of words (言 *yan*), symbolic images (象 *xiang*), and meaning (意 *yi*) in the *I Ching*. See Zhou Yi *Lue* 周易略例, “Ming Xiang” 明象, in Wang Bi. 1992: 609.
43. As a term used in discussion of the arts, *xiang* (“image”) first appeared in Six Dynasties literature and painting theories and later emerged as an important aesthetic concept during the Tang dynasty. See Li 2010: 220–21.
44. Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “子既好寫雲山山水，須明物象之源 (Because you already like sketching clouds, trees, mountains, and streams, you must illuminate the source (*yuan* 源) of the image (*xiang* 象) of things).” See Yu 1998: 607.
45. In Zong Bing’s *Hua shan shui xu*, in discussing the nature of landscape painting, *dao* is regarded as what a painter should pursue just as a sage sees *dao* in all things. See Yu 1998: 583. This meaning of *dao* in landscape painting was echoed in *Bifaji*’s *yuan*, the source of all images.
46. For the importance of *si* in relation to *xiang*, see Kang 2019: 35–39.
47. Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “夫木之生，爲受其性。 . . . 形質皆異，其如遠思即，合一—分明也” (A tree grows in accordance with its given nature. . . . [Various trees] are different in their nature of forms. If you contemplate deeply, you will clearly realize each one of these). See Yu 1998: 607.
48. Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “思者，刪撥大要，凝想形物。景者，制度時因，搜妙創真。” See note 51. While *Si* (“thought”) concerns the spatial aspects of reality, *Jing* (“scene”) deals with its temporal aspects. See Rowley 1970: 40.
49. Sullivan (1979: 59) also stated that thought may refer to efforts to distill visual experience into type-forms. Rowley (1970: 35–36) saw thought as a collateral principle of *li* 理—“the universal principles behind everything.”
50. The term *shuimo* 水墨 is believed to have first appeared in Wang Wei’s 王維 (699–759) *Shan Shui Jue* (山水訣, “Essentials of landscape”). See Yu 1998: 592–93. However, it was not until Jing Hao that *Mo* (“ink”) was included in the list of integral elements of painting as in his Six Essentials.
51. Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “夫畫有六要。 . . . 圖畫之要，與子備言。氣者，心隨筆運，取象不惑。韻者，隱跡立形，備儀不俗。思者，刪撥大要，凝想形物。景者，制度時因，搜妙創真。筆者，雖依法則，運轉變通，不質不形，如飛如動。墨者，高低暈淡，品物淺深，文采自然，似非因筆。” See Yu 1998: 606.
52. Yu 1998: 606–7: “是如此之病，尚可改圖。無形之病，氣韻俱混，物象全乖，筆墨雖行，類同死物，以期格拙，不可刪” (A painting with these kinds of defects can be corrected. In the paintings with defects regarding the formless, *qiyun* is all absent, and therefore, images of objects are severely distorted; although brush and ink are applied, they are as good as dead objects. Because these paintings are of inferior quality, they cannot be trimmed or adjusted): “有畫如飛龍蟠蚪，狂生枝葉者，非松之氣韻” (There are paintings [that depict pine trees] like flying dragons or coiling serpents, with their branches and leaves growing chaotically, but this is not the *qiyun* of pine trees).
53. Translation of this sentence is adopted from Obert 2007: 164.
54. Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “凡筆有四勢。調筋，肉，骨，氣。筆絕而不斷 謂之筋。起伏成實謂之肉。生死剛正謂之骨。迹畫不敗謂之氣。” See Yu 1998: 606.
55. West translates *Qi* in the Four Forces as “breath,” distinguishing it from his translation of *Qi* in the Six Essentials as “vital energy.” However, I maintain that “vital energy” can serve as a good translation both in terms of the Six Essentials and the Four Forces, especially considering the connection and flow between them.

56. For the significance of *qi* in East Asian art in general, see Gu 2009 and Elberfeld 2018.
57. “Character” is adopted from Powers and “vital energy” from West. See notes 11 and 55.
58. For the interpretation of Cao Pi’s *qi*, see J. Liu 1975: 6; Powers 1992: 920.
59. See “Tixing” (體性, “Style and nature”) in Liu X. 1975: 222–26.
60. See “Zhuzi” (諸子, “Various masters”) and “Zongshu” (總術, “Discussion on the art of writing”) in Liu X. 1975: 135, 330.
61. J. Liu (1975: 70–71) states that Cao Pi’s concept of *qi* is likely derived from the *Guanzi* 管子 or the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, in which the *yuanqi* 元氣 serves as an important conceptual background of their worldview.
62. Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “真者, 氣質俱盛.” See Yu 1998: 605.
63. The idea that the brush is a medium through which the artist’s *qi* is transmitted into the work can be traced back to the tradition of calligraphy.
64. Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “吳道子筆勝於象, . . . 亦恨無墨” (“Wu Daozi’s brushwork is better than [his rendering of] images. . . . It is also a pity that he was weak in ink”); “項容山人樹石頑澀, . . . 用墨獨得玄門, 用筆全無其骨” (“The hermit Xiang Rong’s paintings of trees and rocks are coarse and rough. . . . He attained the most profound state only in the use of ink, but his use of brush has no bone”). See Yu 1998: 608.
65. Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “故張璪員外樹石, 氣韻俱盛. . . 不貴五彩, 曠古絕今, 未之有也” (“Therefore, the paintings of trees and rocks by Zhang Zao, the Second Secretary, are abundant in *qiyun* . . . and he did not consider five colors important. He is such an artist unprecedented in the past and unsurpassed in the present—there is no artist like him”). See Yu 1998: 608.
66. Shen 神, *Miao* 妙, *Qi* 奇, *Qiao* 巧.
67. Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “神者, 亡有所爲, 任運成象. 妙者, 思經天地, 萬類性情, 文理合儀, 品物流筆.” See Yu 1998: 606.
68. Although Jing Hao did not use the term *wuwei* 無爲 (“effortless action”), its importance and value are quite evident in the overall sentiment of *Bifaji*.
69. By describing painting as a method of self-cultivation along with playing the *qin* (琴, “Chinese zither”) and practicing calligraphy (*shu* 書) in *Bifaji*, Jing Hao elevates the status of painting to equal calligraphy, which had long been regarded as a noble activity of the literati.
70. Jing Hao, *Bifaji*: “願子勤之, 可忘筆墨而有真景” (“I hope you will keep practicing it diligently. Only when you can forget brush and ink can you also achieve the genuine landscape”). See Yu 1998: 608.
71. For an extensive discussion of the origin of the concept of *wuwei* and its implications, see Slingerland 2003. Slingerland (11) argues that *wuwei* refers to “a metaphorically conceived situation where a ‘subject’ is no longer having to exert effort in order to act.” Still, in this phenomenological state of *wuwei*, the actor is, in fact, quite active. Also, according to Slingerland, forgetting (*wang* 忘) is one of the conceptual metaphors that conveys a sense of effortlessness and unselfconsciousness.
72. *Zhuangzi*, “Dazongshi” (大宗師, “The great and venerable teacher”): “墮肢體, 黜聰明, 離形去知, 同於大通, 此謂坐忘.” For a translation, see Watson 2013: 53.
73. *Zhuangzi*, “Renjianshi” (人間世, “In the world of men”): “若一志, 無聽之以耳, 而聽之以心. 無聽之以心, 而聽之以氣, 聽止於耳, 心止於符. 氣也者, 虛而待物者也. 唯道集虛, 虛者心齋也.” For a translation, see Watson 2013: 25. The pervasive nature of *qi* as the primal vital energy or force is the central concern of this sentence. This nature of *qi* enables knowing through an aesthetic experience beyond conceptual thinking. See Liu 1975: 31; Chǒng 1997: 134.

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