



## THE LIKENESS IN THE CHINESE PORTRAIT PAINTING

EVA RYCHTEROVÁ, PRAHA

A portrait is the representation of a human figure executed for the purpose of depicting an individual through the medium of art. In this sense portraiture forms a special category in the broader division of figure painting, the relation between the two (as far as the content is concerned) being that delimited by the relation between the individual and the general. Whereas for the most part figure painting is based on the selection of features typical for a great number of individuals, and to this extent is therefore capable of manifold interpretation, the portrait is unequivocal. It depicts one individual and bears witness to that individual alone; it is the representation of a unique and inimitable personality. Thus instead of the figure painter's approach, looking for traits of *more general validity*, the portrait painter treats his subject in the opposite way, seeking out and stressing that which is valid for a specific individual, in other words, what is *unique*. This unique quality is the specific structure of physical and psychological qualities in one individual which finds expression in the art of portrait painting. In this sense likeness is an attribute of the portrait, but with differences in the actual content according to the environment and the time concerned.

It is obvious that in China, as elsewhere, the idea of likeness in portrait painting was interpreted differently at different ti-

mes, and influenced not only by the painters themselves but by the lay public as well, and in particular by those who commissioned portraits. This created as it were a norm of likeness in portrait painting in each period, seen in practice in the greater or lesser degree to which use of "likeness elements" was made and in the selection of these elements. As the views on the content of portrait likenes changed, so did the means of expression employed, and the techniques adopted, and in this context we shall also be concerned with them.

We read in the Chinese encyclopaedia *Yü-hai* (1)<sup>1</sup>, in Book 169: "In *Chia-yü*<sup>2</sup> it is said that when Confucius visited the imperial Hall of Ancestors, on a wall with four doors he saw portraits of Yao, Shun, Chie and Chou, each with his kind or malevolent expression." [4]<sup>3</sup>) This reference dating from the lifetime of Confucius (second half of the sixth century B.C.) is probably the earliest mention of portrait painting to be found in China; indeed it is almost the only literary reference to the art in the country not only during this period, but for another three centuries as well,<sup>4</sup>) when the different houses were struggling for domination of the whole kingdom. Nor is there anything to add to our knowledge of portrait painting in sources dealing with the short-lived Ch'in dynasty [8], under which the state was united in 221 B.C.

It was not until the Han period [9] (206 B.C. — 220 A.D.) with its political and economic consolidation and the consequent flourishing cultural life, that a new spirit can be discerned throughout Chinese life, arising from a revival of traditional thought. The chronicles of this time are full of references to portraits of great figures at court, the old rulers or famous scholars and philosophers, commissioned for the walls of the royal palaces and schools. The names of some portrait painters are already known, and it can be assumed from the occasions for which the portraits were painted, and the choice of subjects, that the portrait was already considered a form of historical information. This can be seen, for example, in the remarks of the philosopher Wang Ch'ung [10], in the first century A.D., who said of portraits: "People enjoy looking at portraits. The people depicted there were famous in olden times. But how can the looking at the faces of these famous men enable us to recognize their words and deeds? The portrait painted on the bare wall has preserved

for us their outward appearance, but cannot arouse the viewer's emotions, since the words and deeds cannot be seen. The literary legacy of the wise men of the past, recorded on silk and bamboo, is highly to be valued. How empty, by comparison, do the portraits on walls seem!" [11]<sup>5</sup>) Its is true that in this passage Wang Ch'ung is critical of painted portraits, preferring the "portraits" bequeathed in the written word, but nevertheless it is clear that painted portraits were considered a historical record of a certain individual.

This documentary aspect, which was undoubtedly marked in Chinese portraiture at the beginning of our era, could also be taken as discharge of one of the prerequisites, necessary for the existence of speculation on the portrait likeness and the desire to express it in pictorial form. There is even more reason to suppose that this was so, since there are three references in the writings of the then observers of men and portraits, which can be taken as evidence. The first of these comes from the book Chia-yü, quoted above, where the pictures of the mythical emperors Yao, Shun, Chie and Chou are described as portraits in which "each had his kind or malevolent expression".<sup>6</sup>) The same question is touched on in the reference to the painter Mao Yen-shou [13] of the first half of the first century B.C., who was said to have "painted the portraits of old and young, handsome and ugly, and produced a true likeness". [14]<sup>7</sup>) The third and last reference to likeness in early Chinese portrait painting concerns an event in the year 51 B.C. A Hün chief, Shan-yü [16], came to the court of the Chinese emperor Hsüan-ti (15) with his retinue. Hsüan-ti noticed the unusual appearance of the chief's attendants, and in the words of the Annals "mused on the beauty of his ministers and had their portraits painted in the Ch'i-lin pavilion, recording their appearance and inscribing their functions and names." [17]<sup>8</sup>)

Considering the content of the idea of likeness as revealed in these remarks, we find that it is taken as the expression of certain dominant features of the subject portrayed, primarily physical. Within these terms of reference the individual was shown to be young or old, handsome or ugly, kind or malevolent, that is to say in the extreme and therefore somewhat simplified category of each characteristic.

This somewhat simplified view of likeness in portrait painting is in keeping with the character of some of the portraits painted during the first centuries of our era, which have survived in the form of stone carvings and lacquer paintings. Here too we find the earliest phase of portraiture, as it is described in historical writings; typical of this phase is the portrayal of certain traits in the physical appearance of the subject. A good example is the treatment of the three figures portrayed on the doors of a tomb near the Northern Gate in Ch'eng-tu [19], representing Mr. Chao, Mai by name, his son Chao Yüan, and his wife I Wen [20].<sup>9</sup>) The figures of the father and son are almost identical, including the costume, the position of the body and the hands; it is the face which distinguishes them. Although some of the detailed traits have been lost in the course of the two thousand years since the portraits were executed, the outline of the face attributed to the father is that of an old man, while the outline of the face of his son is decidedly that of a young face. The third figure in the group, representing the wife of Mr. Chao, differs from the previous two in several fundamental features, including costume and the outline of the head and face; this is clear although again the details have been lost.

Differences in the drawing of the face, apparent in this case only from the outlines, can be seen more effectively in two further portraits from the same tomb, on another door. They represent two of the town guards.<sup>10</sup>) The treatment of detail in the drawing of these two faces is so distinct that in spite of the fact that the two figures are dressed the same, their posture and the position of the arms is the same, and their weapons are arranged in the same way, we are left with the impression of two distinct individualities, the impression that the artist set out to portray faithfully two different individuals.

Similarly the portraits of the "devoted sons" on the famous Lo-lang [23] basket<sup>11</sup>) suggest distinctive individuals. Although it cannot be said of all the figures to the same degree, in some cases the painter's attempt to portray individual features is clear; this is particularly so in the figures of Hsing Ch'ü [24] the devoted son, and his father.<sup>12</sup>)

It is evident from these last examples that portraits were being painted in China at the beginning of our era, in which certain

individual features of the subject were portrayed. The likeness is such that we who view the portraits today, without the possibility of comparing them with the living subject, are given the impression of decided individual personalities. The individuality emerges through the medium of the outlines of the head and face, and perhaps in a few instances individual treatment of details within the contours of the face.

It thus involved the use of those means of expression which were capable of reproducing fairly accurately the physiological traits of the subject, but could not depict successfully the more intricate spiritual aspect. Yet it is clear that the need for this was already being felt; from further literary references<sup>13</sup>) and from some surviving portraits, we find that it was precisely for their exceptional intellectual and moral qualities that certain individuals were chosen for portrayal. In these cases the painters of that time had probably recourse to symbolism; the name and office of the subject of a portrait, or a symbolic reference to some deed for which he was famous, would suffice to place the portrait in the context of common knowledge of the subject, and thus to suggest the spiritual context as well. In such a case the portrait did not act directly on the viewer, but created the impression of the subject's personality indirectly; the physical likeness and the symbol chosen by the painter revise in the viewer existing knowledge of the subject (otherwise acquired) so that he completes the portrait in his own mind.

Besides historical record, a contribution to the understanding of the approach to likeness in the portraiture of the time can be deduced from a study of surviving portraits. They appear to agree with the references to likeness in portraiture quoted above and lead us to conclude that the idea of likeness already existed as a conscious criterion in the art of portrait painting. The content was determined by the artist's depiction of certain physical features and states of his subject, whereas the spiritual aspect was probably expressed by other formal means, not those of pictorial art.

The following period probably saw the emergence of the necessary conditions for a new, more profound approach to the portrayal of individual personalities. This new approach brought to the forefront the urge to recognize spiritual values from traits

of physiognomy susceptible to perception by the senses. This was formulated in words as early as the third century B.C. in the short "Study of Human Abilities",<sup>14</sup>) by Liu Shao [29]. On the basis of philosophical argument he attempted to determine the place of an individual in society according to his talents and abilities. This practical anthropological study, although simple, is a compendium of contemporary knowledge of different human types and the relation between their physical characteristics and their nature; it describes a method by which character can be read from the face. The mutual influence of physical traits and character is explained by the old Chinese theory that the five fundamental elements given to the body at birth form the outer and the inner man. This theory gave rise to somewhat unscientific ideas (from our modern point of view), that a man's fate could be read from his face and body, but it was a step towards the explanation of how a human individuality was formed.<sup>15</sup>)

Although there is no evidence from the literature dealing with portrait painting during this period that would suggest that any painter consciously applied these philosophical ideas, it is probable that the theories evolved on the subject of man's appearance and evaluation were extended to the sphere of his portrayal, thus encouraging a shift in the content of the idea of likeness in portrait painting. Anthropological data were not the only factors encouraging the artist to attempt to add intellectual and spiritual characteristics to his portraits. A deeper understanding of the expression of the human soul and the urge to reveal it in portrait painting was probably also intensified by the growing influence of Buddhism and its demand that the painter should portray man free from human desire, that he should paint portraits which would express the soul.

This new demand for understanding of the human mind was probably one factor behind the changed attitude towards the painter. The routine craftsman recording what he saw gave way to the artist-psychologist who in addition to formal mastery of the means of expression was expected to reveal penetrating powers of observation. It was in this sense that Ku K'ai-chih [29] enjoyed such a reputation in the China on the turn of the fourth and fifth centuries. It was in connection with Ku K'ai-chih that

the principle was first formulated, that a likeness should be based on knowledge of the character of the subject; this comes close to the European Renaissance principle expressed in the words of Leonardo da Vinci that "portraiture should express man in terms of his mind".

There is much historical record and many reminiscences by people who remembered him and by later admirers of his picturers, all stressing the personality of Ku K'ai-chih and his work. Many of the commentators praise his portrait for this very faculty of revealing the inner life of his subjects. One critical note compares the painters Chang, Lu and Ku; "Chang showed (his subject's) outer build, his muscles; Lu his inner build, his bones; while Ku revealed his soul." [30]<sup>16</sup>)

For lack of material evidence we shall probably never be able to answer the question whether Ku K'ai-chih was really the first Chinese painter to reveal the soul of his models, or whether he simply personified the opportunities discovered by portrait painters in his day. His portraits, like those of his contemporaries, that decorating the walls of the palaces and monasteries built in the fourth and fifth centuries, passed away in the changes that followed. It is most likely, however, that the almost legendary fame of Ku K'ai-chih and his work was due to the historical chance that in his time and in his work the essential conditions were created which shifted portrait painting from the merely documentary to the sphere of art.

The process which began in the previous period, by which the painter gradually revealed the human subject, observing and presenting in his portraits the inner individuality, developed still further under the T'ang dynasty (618—905). For three hundred years activity in political and cultural spheres, combined with a fair degree of religious toleration, gave painters the opportunity to portray leading figures of secular and religious life.

Of the surviving works of Yen Li-pen [32], Ch'en Hung [33] and Li Chen [34]<sup>17</sup>) the most effective examples of the treatment of likeness at that period are Li Chen's portrait of the monk Pu-kung chin-kang [35] and the portraits of Eight Civilian and Military Officials, attributed to Ch'en Hung. The features and the gestures of some of the figures portrayed are remarkably

individual, while the portrait of the monk is a convincing revelation of his spiritual life.<sup>18</sup>)

Although there was as yet no theory of portrait painting worked out, to include the idea that the individuality of the subject should be expressed in his portrait, the principle nevertheless appears to have been accepted in practice. This is illustrated by an anecdote current among Chinese painters to this day: one of the most famous generals in the history of China, Kuo Tzū-i, had a very high opinion of the talents of his son-in-law, a high official, and decided to have his portrait painted. He commissioned two famous painters of great reputation, Han Kan and Chou Fang, to paint the young man's portrait. When in the course of time the two portraits were delivered, the General was equally delighted with both of them and could not decide which one to keep. He had them both hung up, and when his daughter came to visit him he asked her who was portrayed on them. She replied without hesitation that they were portraits of her husband. To her father's question as to which portrait was the better likeness, she replied that both were good but that Chou Fang's portrait was much the better one. When the General asked her to explain what she meant by this, she answered: "The first portrait shows the appearance of my husband, but the second reveals his soul. It shows his character, the way he speaks and the way he smiles." [36]<sup>19</sup>)

Although this anecdote is clearly influenced by literary fashion, it nevertheless reveals the views of the time on the subject of likeness in portraiture. Although both portraits are a "good likeness", the viewer who is acquainted with the subject attaches greater value to the portrait which shows that the painter has understood and found a way of expressing characteristic features of his subject's temperament.

This new development in the criteria applied to portrait painting inevitably provoked the question as to which means of expression were the vehicle for likeness, understood as the sum of physical and spiritual elements. Here we must go back once more to Ku K'ai-chih and his experience as a portrait painter. He believed the most important thing in portraying the inner likeness of his subject were the eyes, and when he was called upon to paint a portrait or a picture of a holy man, he would

sometimes study his models for years before painting their eyes.

This dictum, first applied to portrait painting at the turn of the fourth and fifth centuries, was known to Chinese philosophy seven centuries earlier. It was Mencius, who was the first who recommended to judge men by the pupils of their eyes: "A man of open and honest mind has clear pupils, while the pupils of a man who is not straightforward are dull". [37]<sup>20</sup>) It is all the more interesting to recall that the author of this remark was a Chinese philosopher of the third century B.C., when we turn to Socrates advising Parrhasios to remember when portraying a man to "express his state of mind as seen in his eyes". This view was probably reached in all cultures at a certain stage of their development, and can be found reflected in literary expressions too. There are many popular phrases about the eye being "the window of the soul", "eloquent eyes"; in Chinese one can "hear with one's eyes". There are expressions in all languages in which the eyes or the gaze reveal a state of mind, like "merry eyes", "a fearful, frightened look", "intelligent eyes", and so on. The frequency of these expressions in literary and everyday language, like the stress laid on the eyes in portraiture, is probably based on the common experience that the eyes play the most important part in creating our impressions of the external world, and the consequent tendency to attribute to the eyes the faculty of revealing in the reverse direction the life going on within man.

The painter and poet Su Shih [38]<sup>21</sup>) based his comments on the subject on Ku K'ai-chih's conviction that the treatment of the eyes in portrait painting was both difficult and supremely important; but Su Shih did not consider the eyes the only determining factor. He distinguished between the outer — physical — and inner — mental — picture of a man. For the former he believed the decisive features were the cheeks and chin; in proof of this he watched his own shadow thrown on the wall by a lamp — even a chance onlooker would recognise him by it. Nevertheless Su Shih, too, considered the real essential in portrait painting (which he called *ch'uan-shen* [40], literally "transcribing the soul") to be the revelation of the spiritual qualities of the subject. In this connection he said that "portrait painting has the same principle as physiognomics, for it aims at knowledge of the human character." [41]<sup>22</sup>) The method of observation

recommended by Su Shih is that of "secretly watching a man in a crowd", [43]<sup>23</sup>) for at such a moment he is exercising less conscious control of himself, and his real nature is revealed. Not until the painter is acquainted with the character of his subject does he approach the most responsible aspect of his task: looking for the signs of this character in the face. These are features which — unlike those static, determined by the shape of the bones and muscles — are only formed in the course of man's life, and are therefore termed dynamic. The most important influence on the process of their forming comes from the spiritual and mental qualities of the individual, and from the outward events which affect his life in accordance with those qualities. It is these dynamic features, seen and perceived as characteristic lines, planes or sometimes colours in the face, that complete the expression of the human mind.

The painter and art critic Wang I, who lived three centuries later, dealt with the question of likeness in portrait painting, in a short work entitled "The Secrets of Portrait Painting". [44] In the theoretical part he deals with the appearance of the human face, distinguishing the unchanging from the changeable elements. "The arrangement of the human face, the 'five mountain peaks and the four river's, is different in any face; naturally the physical arrangement is the same, but the appearance is different in each of the four seasons of the human life." [45]<sup>24</sup>)

He, too, considers it most important to express these changeable elements in the human face and to reveal the inner life, which the painter appreciates only after close observation of his subject. The final stage of getting to know his model is the work of the painter alone: "he quietly calls (his subject) to mind, so that whether his eyes are open or shut he has the picture constantly before him"; [48]<sup>25</sup>) at this stage he can begin to paint. Both Su Shih and Wang I agreed in their condemnation of painters who attempted portraits without this thorough knowledge of their subject. Su Shih said: "When (the painters) of today take a model clad in ceremonial robes and seat him to gaze fixedly at one object, the result is an expression of absolute self-control. How can they possibly see what he is really like?". [49] Wang I took a similar view: "The routine portrait painters of

today are foolish (literally: sticking bridges on the strings of their lutes and then trying to play), for they are ignorant of the principles of adaptation. They ask their models to sit up stiffly like statues of clay, and then they paint a portrait. Is it any wonder that they cannot be successful?“. [50]<sup>26</sup>)

Both these authorities are agreed that the painter must seek out the character of the subject, for that is the essence of the phenomenon, and must not concentrate on the external phenomenon alone — on the signs of the character as shown in the face. Understanding of the essence of the phenomena enables the painter to determine which of his subject's features are decisive for his inner life and on the basis of this selection to reveal his true likeness. And it is this, which brings to the art of portrait painting a creative contribution on the part of the artist.

This process of gradual realization of the principle of likeness, beginning in the fifth century A.D., was completed in the fourteenth. By this time a philosophy of portrait painting had been worked out, the theory and the practical principles of the genre had been laid down. Likeness is taken to be the sum of the physical and spiritual qualities of the individual, recognised by the painter, who selects the most important and presents them to the viewer. In this sense likeness becomes the criterion of success in portrait painting in China, and thus an aesthetic category.

The representation of likeness, the recognition of which was accepted as part of the creative artistic process, also stimulated the kind of formal expression. These portraits are executed in ink, using line drawing with only the minimum of tone wash; this was the rule in classical Chinese painting, where the most economical means of expression were considered ideal. In portrait painting this type of drawing involves complete understanding of the physical appearance of the subject and of the signs of his inner life revealed therein, the classification of these signs into more and less significant, and finally the representation of the former to the viewer. In this sense the draughtsmanship is also the criterion of success in reaching the artistic goal set, for if the painter selects features which are not decisively significant for his subject, the portrait does not present a likeness, and the painter has failed in his task. Although we who view these

portraits in a later age cannot compare them with their living models, we can nevertheless judge them within the terms of reference of our own appreciation of works of art and of our knowledge of human physiognomy and psychological states. Our criterion must be the degree to which such a portrait convinces us, and the quality of the impressions of the subject which the portrait arouses in us.<sup>27</sup>) The more the portrait fascinates us, the better the painter is as a medium between us and the man he has portrayed. And the simpler and therefore more precise his means of expression, the stronger our conviction that he has studied his subject thoroughly, and consequently the stronger our conviction that his portrait is of value as a work of art.

In the last phase of development, then, portrait painting in China in the fifteenth century already followed precisely formulated criteria and tested rules of theory and practice. The portrait painters of the preceding period had already attempted most of the types of composition; their subjects were portrayed singly, either sitting or standing, and also accompanied by other figures or as part of a broader composition, against a background of nature or as taking part in some event. Judging from the portraits which have come down to us, they also knew all the positions for portraiture. The most frequent position is that of three-quarter face, but the seven-eighths position is also used, as is full face, profile, and in one of the paintings by Su Han-ch'en [51] there is even an attempt at showing the whole head — the woman portrayed is seen from the rear while her face is visible in a mirror.<sup>28</sup>)

There was not much room left for experiment in portrait painting for the painters of the two following dynasties, Ming (1368—1644) and Ch'ing [52] (1644—1911). Compared with the work of previous periods we find more full face portraits, providing the viewer with that fascinating illusion of contact with the subject, but other positions were also employed. The types of composition also remained more or less the same, and the only innovation was the more frequent use of colour applied in layers, and ink wash on smaller surfaces. Although this is an earlier technique in Chinese art, as can be seen not only from some portraits<sup>29</sup>) but also from the introduction to the practical part of Wang I's "Secrets of Portrait Painting", it became parti-

cularly popular later. It was used in later documentary portraits, which may have been due to the specific circumstances and the demands made of this type of portrait.

One of the fundamental characteristics of this type of portrait was the fact that they were commissioned, so that in most cases the first approach to the portrait — the choice of subject, was not the privilege of the painter himself. The person to be painted was not an object, a means to an artistic end set himself freely by the painter, but decidedly a subject, who acted as a subject during the whole course of work on the portrait. The relation between the painter and his model or patron was permanently, or at least for a time, that of a subordinate to a superior, and rarely can it have been one of equality. The decisive features regulating his relationship were the different (rarely similar) social standing of the two parties, their personalities, and in the case of the painter the talent and the artistic ability. This is in fact characteristic of portrait painting as a genre, but it is a special feature of portrait painting in China where the social barriers between the two parties prevented the painter from acquiring that knowledge of his subject which Chinese art theory regarded as the fundamental prerequisite for a successful portrait.

It was another specific characteristic of these portraits that they stand less in the context of art than in that of social convention. The reason for their existence was not usually the desire for artistic experience, but the need to meet an emotional or social demand aimed in general at preserving the memory of a certain individual. They were thus primarily seen as functional objects, and only in the second place as works of art.

The attitude towards likeness in portrait painting naturally adapted itself to the role attributed to portraits in the emotional and social conventions of the time. It was understood as sensually perceived reality seen in the sum of "likeness elements" in the human face.<sup>30</sup>) The more exactly and the more fully these features were depicted, the better was the "likeness". The phrase "to paint a portrait like a reflection in a mirror", [55] which was formulated earlier<sup>31</sup>), became now the aim of most portrait painters.

The demand expressed in this phrase was probably what

created the fashion for illusionist painting (painting giving the impression of reality) in documentary portraits. They are no longer drawn in the simple lines typical for Chinese portraits which have been thoughtfully conceived and profoundly experienced, but painted in a style which clearly bases itself only on the reproduction of the visual perception of reality. The brush lines are broader and softer, with an ill-defined edge, and modelling of the face is made easier by the use of paler and darker surfaces.<sup>32)</sup> As a result most of these portraits present a credible picture of the human face, giving the illusion of reality created by the painter with his powers of surface observation and his technical skill, but without deploying creative artistic intuition.

The demands laid on the practice of portrait painting in this later period are clearly reflected in the new development in the theory of art. Unlike the critical writings of the previous period, in which the philosophy of the likeness was the central theme, the writers' interest is now transferred to descriptions of the best methods to use in reproducing the perceived sensual reality. Although here, too, the idea that the subject should be "followed until he reveals his true nature", and that the painter should be able to see it "even with his eyes closed", appears in various guises, the very process of the portrait-painting practice prevents in most cases these principles from being followed. The painter determined his model's likeness sitting vis-à-vis to him, that is to say he based his knowledge on the sensual perception of physical phenomena gradually transferring them to the picture.

Thus in the latest phase of Chinese portrait painting we find two different types of method illustrated in the material which has come down to us: portraits painted by the illusionist method, which roughly corresponds to the genre of documentary portraits; and those executed in the classical Chinese ink drawing, roughly corresponding to the portraits created as works of art. Among the former are numerous unsigned portraits, while in some the painter has signed his work. One of these, a masterly example of the method, is the self-portrait of eighty-year-old Shen Chou [58]<sup>33)</sup> and the work of a later painter, Tseng Ch'ing [59]<sup>34)</sup> who also used the ink drawing technique.<sup>35)</sup> In the second

group of portraits as works of art we have the works of Chin Nung [61]<sup>36</sup>) and Jen I, [62]<sup>37</sup>) as well as several anonymous portraits. The most interesting of these, from the point of view of the treatment of likeness, is the "Portrait of the Emperor Ch'ien-lung and his portrait", which can be considered direct evidence of this treatment of likeness. The painter "sees" the likeness of the human face free from insignificant visual impressions, and draws this abstracted likeness on to the "real" figure and the portrait of it.

The changing attitude towards likeness in Chinese portrait painting over more than two thousand years is today primarily concerned with the documentary aspect. The specific conditions of modern portrait painting, particularly the different function assigned to it, and also the fact that people of other walks of life are also portrayed today, and not only public figures, all sets new problems before the painter. These problems require a special study and an appreciation of contemporary Chinese portrait painting, and therefore are the generalizations put forward in this article only partially applicable to it, that is to say only so far as all contemporary art is bound up with the historical roots of its own traditions.

Summing up the principles of Chinese portrait painting with respect to the question of likeness, we will stress first of all those, which are of general validity in the matter. Portrait painting aimed at presenting the likeness of the individual subject, in the sense of the sum of his physical, spiritual and mental qualities. The theory of portrait painting drew on simple anthropological observations which are built on the assumption of psychophysical unity of the outward appearance and the inner life of the individual. Both kinds of these elements (physical and spiritual), are primarily visible in the face, but it is only possible to understand them and to stress the significant traits if we are conversant with the character and the behaviour of the individual. It is only this rational or intuitive knowledge which enables the painter to reveal the essence of the traits of the human face and thus lay the foundations for the artistic portrait. In this case the likeness, revealed in the face of the man, but in the process of portraiture abstracted from the qualities of his mind and his behaviour, becomes the object of the artist's work — one of the

aesthetic elements of the portrait. This does not happen when the portrait is based purely on sensual perception of the model and the artist does not help to reveal new reality. In this latter case the likeness is merely the content of the communication already known to the narrow circle concerned, and as such only a functional component in the portrait.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup>) An encyclopaedia compiled in the Sung [2] period (960—1279) by Wang Ying-lin [3].

<sup>2</sup>) Attributed to Confucius. The original text has been lost, but several later versions have come down to us, differing in length and sometimes in content as well.

<sup>3</sup>) Yü-hai, T'ai-wan hua-wen shu-chü edition, p. 3193.

<sup>4</sup>) Besides the reference contained in Chia-yü, there is a reference to a portrait painted in the Ch'i state [5] (which lasted from the end of the twelfth to the middle of the third century A.D.) but which cannot be assigned a more exact date. It says here: "When King Ch'i was building a nine-storeyed tower, he commissioned Ching Chün to paint it. For a long time Ching Chün was not able to return home. Thinking of his wife, he painted her. When King Ch'i saw how beautiful the woman was he gave the painter a large sum of money and married his wife." [6] (Chang Yen-yüan, Li-tai ming-hua chi [7], in the collection Ts'ung-shu chi ch'eng, Shanghai, 1935, pp. 155, 156).

<sup>5</sup>) Wang Ch'ung, Lun Heng, in the Liu P'an-sui edition [12], Peking, 1957, pp. 274, 275.

<sup>6</sup>) The words *shan* and *o*, kind and malevolent respectively, when used in connection with personal appearance can also be translated as "handsome" and "ugly". Even in this second alternative, however, the significance of them is one of moral quality.

<sup>7</sup>) Chang Yen-yüan, op. cit., p. 157.

<sup>8</sup>) Han shu pu-chu, edited by Wan Hsien-ch'ien [18] in the collection Wan yu wen k'u, p. 3957.

<sup>9</sup>) See illustrations Fig. 1 and 2. The reproductions of these portraits, as well as those of the town guards (3 and 4), are taken from Wen Yu: Szü-ch'uan Han-tai hua-hsiang hsüan-chi [21], Peking, 1956, ill. 21, 22, 15, 17.

<sup>10</sup>) Fig. 3 and 4.I am of the opinion that both these pictures are portraits, and not symbolical figures, although it is not actually said in the text. I came to this conclusion on the strength of the four characters worn on the belt of one of the guards; of the two legible characters in the centre, *shih* and *ming* [22], *shih* often follows a family name.

<sup>11</sup>) Found in a tomb in Lo-lang (Korea) dating from the end of the second and beginning of the third cen-

tury A.D. Reproduced e. g. in O. Sirén, *Chinese Painting*, Vol. III, pl. 8.

<sup>12)</sup> Cf. Sirén III, pl. 8, in the lower plane, the second and third figure from the right.

<sup>13)</sup> E. g. the reference in the T'ai-p'ing yü-lan encyclopaedia, in the Szü-pu ts'ung k'an san-pien edition [25], chap. 201, 4a—5b: "It is said in Hua Ch'iao's Hou Han shu: In the first year of the reign of Yüan-ho (84 A.D.), after the founding of the school in Hung-tu, the portraits of Confucius and his seventy-two disciples were painted." [26]. The same statement is quoted by the commentator of another official chronicle Hou Han shu, written, by Fan Yeh [27], and is included in the list of events which took place in the year 178 A. D.

<sup>14)</sup> In the original: Jen wu chih, written by Liu Shao [28], translated by J. K. Shryock as *The Study of Human Abilities*, Amer. Orient. Soc., No. 11, New Haven, 1937.

<sup>15)</sup> Cf. A. Forke, *Geschichte der mittelalterlichen chinesischen Philosophie*, Hamburg, 1934, pp. 152—153.

<sup>16)</sup> Chung-kuo hua-chia jen-ming ta tz'ü-tien [31], Shanghai, 1941, p. 734.

<sup>17)</sup> Yen Li-pen (active in the middle of the seventh century), Ch'en Hung (active in the first half of the eighth century), Li Chen (end of the eighth and early ninth century).

<sup>18)</sup> See e. g. reproductions in Sirén III, pl. 113 and 103.

<sup>19)</sup> Free translation according to Chung-kuo hua-chia jen-ming ta tz'ü-tien, p. 242.

<sup>20)</sup> Mencius, Book IV, Part I, Chapter 15; James Legge, *The Four Books*, The Commercial Press, China, p. 715.

<sup>21)</sup> Su Shih, also known as Su Tung-p'o [39], 1036—1101. Besides his paintings he is known as a critic and theoretical writer on art.

<sup>22)</sup> Su Shih: Ch'uan-shen chi, in the collection Chung-kuo hua lun lei pien [42], Peking, 1957, p. 154.

<sup>23)</sup> As in note 22.

<sup>24)</sup> Wang I (active about 1360), Hsie-hsiang pi-chüe [46], in the collection Chung-kuo hua lun lei pien, Peking 1957, p. 485. The "five mountain peaks and the four rivers" is the original way of referring to the five sacred mountains and the four greatest rivers of China: the mountains Heng, Heng (using a different character), Sung, Hua and T'ai, and the rivers Yang-tz'ü-chiang, Huang-ho, Huai and Chi [47]. The names were taken over by Chinese physiognomists and applied to the separate items of the human face. Heng was the forehead.

the second Heng the chin, Sung the nose, Hua the left cheekbone and T'ai the right cheekbone, Yang-tzü-chiang the ears, Huang-ho the eyes, Hwai the mouth and Chi another word for the nose. (These terms are taken from a popular handbook of physiognomics of which no further bibliographical data are given.)

<sup>25)</sup> Hsie-hsiang pi-chüe, *op. cit.*, p. 485.

<sup>26)</sup> *Op. cit.*, see bibliographical data in notes 22 and 24.

<sup>27)</sup> For comparison we may take the "Portrait of Mrs. Wang", probably dating from the ninth or early tenth century, Fig. 5, and the "Portrait of an Official", attributed to the Sung period (960—1279), Fig. 6. While in the former portrait the woman's face gives no more than the physical features of the model, the latter shows a clear attempt to reveal not only the outward appearance but also the inner thoughts forming the facial expression.

<sup>28)</sup> Su Han-ch'en (active about 1150); the picture known as "A Lady at her dressing-table on a garden terrace", reproduced e. g. by Sirén, II, frontispiece.

<sup>29)</sup> e. g. the "Portraits of Mongolian Emperors and Empresses", reproduced in the Illustrated Catalogue of Chinese Government Exhibits for the International Exhibition in London, Shanghai, 1936, III, pp. 177—185.

<sup>30)</sup> Compare e. g. the portraits of the Emperor K'ang-hsi (53), Fig. 8 and 9. (These reproductions, like that in Fig. 10, are taken from the illustrated publication Ch'ing-tai ti-hou hsiang [54], Peking, 1935.)

<sup>31)</sup> As far as I am aware it was first used by the scholar Ch'en Tsao [56] about the year 1190, in his work on portraits (*op. cit.* Chung-kuo-hua lun lei pien, p. 471).

<sup>32)</sup> Compare e. g. the drawing of the face in the early Ming "Portrait of an Official" (Fig. 7), where this type of drawing is not yet very marked, with that in the "Portrait of Mr. P'an Shih-cho" [57] of 1804 (Fig. 11), where the illusionist character of the drawing is quite clear.

<sup>33)</sup> Shen Chou (1427—1509), painter of landscapes, flowers and birds. For a reproduction see François Fourcade, *The Peking Museum Paintings and Ceramics*, London, 1965, p. 71.

<sup>34)</sup> Tseng Ch'ing (1568—1650). See e. g. the portrait reproduced in Li-tai jen-wu-hua hsüan-chi [60], Shanghai, 1959, ill. 54.

<sup>35)</sup> Cf. the "Portrait of Wang Shih-min", published in Sirén, VI, pl. 322.

<sup>36)</sup> Chin-nung (1687—1764), painter of bamboo, horses and human figures. Compare his self-portrait in Li-tai jen-wu-hua hsüan-chi, ill. 65.

<sup>37)</sup> Jen I (1840—1896). See the portrait published in Chung-kuo chin-pai-nien hui-hua chan-lan hsüan-chi [63], Peking, 1959, p. 19.

<sup>38)</sup> See Fig. 10.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

宋故部府君夫人王氏之象



宋故部府君夫人王氏之象

Fig. 5



Portrait of a man in official attire, wearing a black hat with long horizontal wings and holding a vertical staff.

Portrait of a man in official attire, wearing a black hat with long horizontal wings and holding a vertical staff.



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

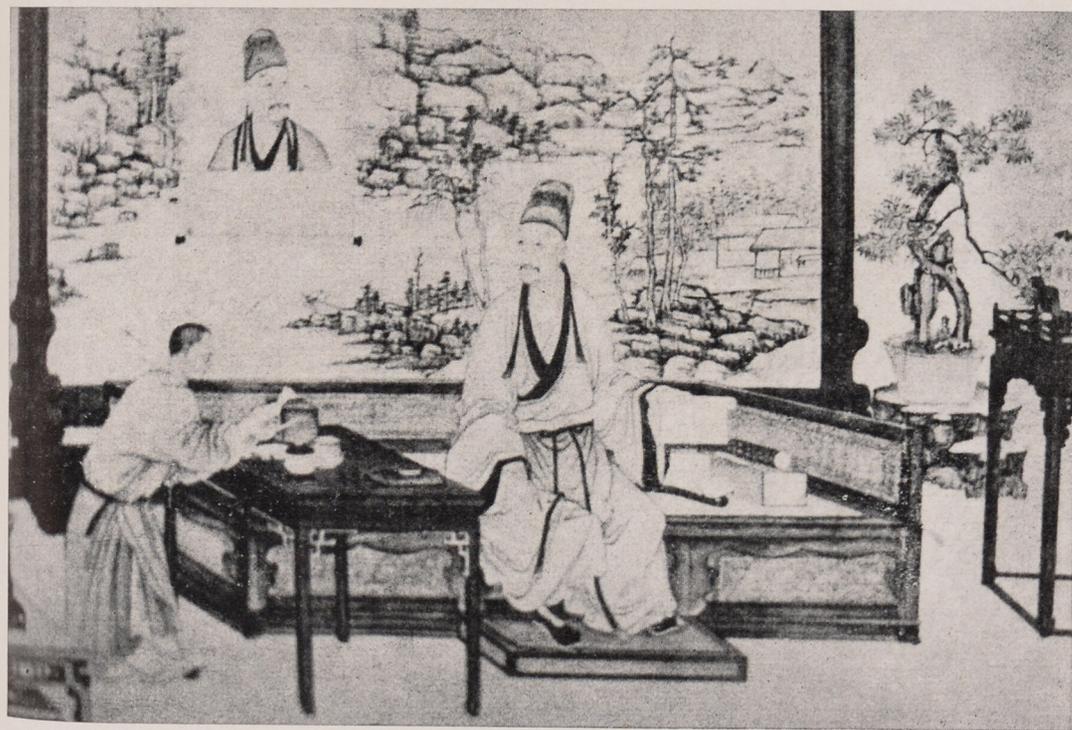


Fig. 10



賜... 金... 萬... 閣... 閣... 閣...

... 萬... 閣... 閣... 閣...

Fig. 11

[1] 玉滄 [2] 宋 [3] 王應麟 [4] 家語觀周  
篇孔子觀乎明堂觀四門墉有堯舜之  
容桀紂之像而各有善惡之狀 [5] 齊 [6] 齊  
王起九皇臺召敬君畫之敬君久不得歸思  
其妻乃畫妻對之齊王知其妻美與錢百萬  
納其妻 [7] 張彥遠，歷代名畫記 [8] 秦 [9] 漢  
[10] 王充 [11] 人好觀圖畫者圖上所畫古之  
列人也見列人之面孰與觀其言行置之  
空壁形容具存人不激勸者不見言行也  
古賢之遺文竹帛之所載粲然豈徒牆壁  
之畫哉 [12] 論衡，劉盼遂 [13] 毛延壽 [14]  
畫人老少美惡皆得其真 [15] 宣帝 [16] 單于

同上思股肱之美迺圖畫其人於麤麤  
閤法其形貌畧其官爵姓名如[1]漢書補注。  
王先謙補注[19]成都北門[20]趙買，趙元，  
義文[21]聞者，四川漢代畫象選集[22]氏。  
如[23]樂浪[24]邢渠[25]太平御覽，四部叢  
刊三編[26]華嶠後漢書日元和元年遂  
置鴻都學畫孔子及七十二弟子像[27]  
范曄[28]人物志，劉邵[29]顧愷文[30]張  
得其肉陸得其骨顧得其神[31]中國畫  
家人大辭典[32]閻立本[33]陳閱[34]李  
真[35]不空金剛[36]郭子儀，韓幹，周昉。  
前畫者空得趙郎狀貌後畫者兼緜其

神氣得趙郎情性笑言又姿 [37] 胸  
中正則眸子瞭焉 [38] 蘇軾 [39] 蘇東坡  
[40] 傳神 [41] 傳神與相一道欲得其人  
之天 [42] 傳神記，中國畫論類編 [43]  
法當於衆中陰察又 [44] 王繹 [45] 蓋人之  
面貌部位與夫五岳四瀆各各不作  
自有相對照處而因時氣色亦異 [46] 寫  
像 秋 訣 [47] 衡，恒，嵩，華，泰，江，河，淮，濟  
[48] 我則靜而求之... 閉目如在目前 [49] 今乃  
使人具衣冠坐注視一物彼斂容自持豈  
復見其天乎 [50] 近代俗工膠柱鼓瑟不知  
變通又道必欲其正襟危坐如泥塑人

方乃傳寫因是萬無一得此又何足怪哉  
[4] 蘇漢臣 [5] 明, 清 [53] 康熙 [54] 清代帝  
后像 [55] 工寫照如鏡取影 [56] 陳造 [57] 潘  
士偉 [58] 沈周 [59] 曾鯨 [60] 歷代人物畫選  
集 [61] 金農 [62] 任頤 [63] 中國近百年繪畫  
展覽選集