

Preface and Acknowledgments

I first encountered commemorative landscape paintings as a discrete and distinctive genre of Chinese painting in a study of the Ming master Tang Yin. A majority of his oeuvre consists of works made to honor a particular person whose character, history, and ambitions shaped the theme and style of the painting made for him. Further study revealed that the genre was already widespread in Ming dynasty Suzhou and that it was a fully developed social institution with its own rules of usage. I searched for its origins in the Yuan dynasty and found again that it was already mature and centered in Suzhou, but the gist of it was simpler and the favored theme was the house, studio, or estate of the owner. Traces of its origins emerged only in the Song dynasty, when six surviving examples of memorial landscapes appeared, all evincing only a few varied traits of the full-fledged form. But these few examples, differing markedly from one another, gave witness to a desire among the Song literati for a pictorial monument, other than the formal

portrait, devoted to the private person and within the gift of their caste.

This book examines the early history of the genre, from the eleventh to the sixteenth century. The works that illustrate it were chosen to reveal its range of subject matter, the occasions on which it was requested or awarded, the ideals most frequently celebrated by the scholar class, and the styles that recipient and artist, separately or together, found most apt to their purpose.

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