

purportedly compiled in 1329 was actually produced in the mid-sixteenth century by the Yang lineage as a way to avoid tax and service obligations to the state. The 1329 inscription “proved” that the lineages’ extensive lands were actually ancestral graveyards established during the Yuan period, which according to Ming dynastic law, were tax-free.

In the conclusion, the author pulls back to briefly consider broader issues such as a) the interplay of Mongolian political culture and indigenous office-holding families elsewhere in the Mongolian empire such as Iran and Anatolia and b) the place of north China in Eurasian history.

Although the sheer volume of detail that Iiyama includes in *Genealogy and Status* threatens at times to overwhelm clear lines of analysis and argumentation, his book is a most welcomed addition to the study of north China under Mongol rule. It may be read profitably in conjunction with Wang Jinping’s *In the Wake of the Mongols: The Making of A New Social Order in North China, 1200–1600* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2018), another important work that offers a fresh and nuanced examination of a region less well explored than many other parts of China. Finally, *Genealogy and Status* makes excellent use of a large body of past scholarship on the Mongol empire, on the Liao, Jin, Yuan, and Ming periods, and on north China, but it owes most to the outstanding work produced by generations of Japanese historians, a salutary reminder of their admirable commitment to unearthing new sources and pursuing clearly focused topics in great depth.

## *Transmedial Landscapes and Modern Chinese Painting*

By Juliane Noth. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022.  
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It is probably an apocryphal tale that the nineteenth-century French painter Paul Delaroche (1797–1856), on seeing the first photographs, gestured towards his own work and (quoting Victor Hugo) remarked, “This, will kill off that.” But certainly some cartoons produced in the very first years of mechanical reproduction imagined droves of engravers and other craftsmen of the multiple image hanging themselves in despair at their redundancy. In fact, as research in the history of photography has shown, the new technology initially massively *increased* the need for engravers, whose craft flourished in a world saturated more and more and more with pictures. And painting did not perish, as it and photography worked out a complicated mutual dependency throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. But how did that dependency operate specifically in East Asia, where the most prestigious forms of painting all claimed to eschew mimetic realism, the transcription of the look of the world, at which photography supposedly excelled? This important new volume makes a major contribution to advancing our understanding of this question. By

means of a deep dive, looking at a relatively narrow time frame and just a few key actors, and supported by excellent illustrations that make the argument visually in an exemplary fashion, *Transmedial Landscapes and Modern Chinese Painting* makes it impossible to look at painting in the second quarter of the twentieth century without reference to what the author calls a “photographic turn” in the work of some of its most influential practitioners.

No serious scholar today would unthinkingly refer to *guohua* 國畫 as “traditional Chinese painting,” although the concept (like “tradition” itself) stubbornly refuses to die in the wider world, including the art market. Central to this book are three *guohua* practitioners: Huang Binhong (1865–1955), and two men of a younger generation, He Tianjian (1891–1977) and Yu Jianhua (1895–1979). Three thematic chapters alternate with three others, each devoted to the output of one of the men in the key years 1934–35. All three wrote and theorized about art, contemporary and historical, as well as producing it, and all were linked together through dense networks of association and publication. All three were also involved in varying degrees with the ambitious “Southeastern Infrastructure Tour” of 1934, and its memorialization in print and picture in 1935. As part of the Nanjing regime’s consolidation of its grip on the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Anhui, and Jiangxi, a program of road- and rail-building conveniently combined improved access for its military forces with aims of economic and cultural development in the region. The tight nature of the elites drawn into the orbit of this project is very marked; someone like Ye Gongchuo (1881–1968), one of its impresarios, was both a former minister of transportation *and* a founder of the Chinese Painting Association, while Zhang Renjie (1877–1950) was not only a former governor of Zhejiang, but also a board member of the National Palace Museum and an entrepreneur in the global export of Chinese artworks. In maintaining a strong sense of how the actions and statements of individual artists fit into this wider world, the book makes a compelling case for seeing art (often thought of as very peripheral to the Kuomintang) as closely allied to aims of a distinctive Chinese modernity clustered around the project of national regeneration.

Noth derives the central concept of “transmedial practice” explicitly from the well-known coinage (by Lydia Liu) of “translingual practice,” and also explicitly ties the concept to that of “remediation,” defined as “the representation of one medium in another.” The transfers taking place, and the boundaries constantly being crossed here, are those between painting and photography, which Noth sees as locked in a “productive tension” (the phrase is used more than once) that was at the same time a competition. Using a wealth of specific examples, carefully explicated in a range of striking comparisons, the author demonstrates, for instance, how the composition of landscape painting in the period under study appropriated the framing of photographic “view-taking,” and how artists drew on photographs as the subject matter of landscape painting, at the same time as photography drew upon conventions of painting to make its work look like “art” to the mass audience for the illustrated periodicals that were its principal mode of dissemination. Throughout, Noth pays close attention to the materiality of reproduction, as for instance to the fact that the relatively poor-quality reproductions in certain key publications of the early Republican period have the effect (deliberate or not) of making the Chinese and Western artworks compared there look much more like each other than they would do if the pictures were sharper. Reproduction of older artworks was central to the creation of a canon of “Chinese art,” and Huang Binhong not only had extensive experience with the publication of such artworks, but he is also shown here to have consciously manipulated various existing technologies

according to the nature of the object being reproduced. It is not irrelevant to the volume's argument, therefore, to praise the publishers for reproducing the monochrome images taken from journals and books of the period "in colour," giving the reader a much better way of appreciating them, and of understanding their impact on audiences at the time. In fact, it is appropriate to commend this volume generally for its excellent illustrations. Anyone who has ever tried to source the pictures for a book will keenly appreciate how much silent labor and effort have been involved. There are many works here that will be new even to specialists, drawn from collections in China and abroad, showcasing Noth's impressive degree of familiarity with the illustrated publications of the period, some of them now very rare. Together, the journal illustrations and collected original artworks published here constitute evidence for what Noth refers to as a "pool of visual material and texts shared among different publishers (private and government-sponsored), publication formats (travel guides, academic journals, pictorials and photographic atlases), and editorial boards" (128).

One of the results of the concentration of attention on "the southeast" in these years was the emergence of Mount Huang in southern Anhui as *the* quintessence both of Chinese landscape and the essential subject matter of "Chinese landscape painting." Although an elite tourist destination from at least the late Ming, it was (it is convincingly argued here) only in the 1930s that it emerged as the *biaozhun shan* 標準山, the "standard" (or normative) mountain. For instance, it was the site of the photographer Lang Jingshan's first essay in the "composite photograph" genre that made his name, and that helped to install Mount Huang firmly as everybody's idea of what "China" and its most spectacular scenery ought to look like. It also certainly helped that the increasingly prestigious Huang Binhong was a native of the area, who had painted the mountain "countless times," in compositions that sometimes themselves drew on a photographic visuality, as well as on sketches executed in the equally modern technology of the pencil (manufactured in Shanghai from 1935). It was in the 1930s, too, that the mountain's single most celebrated tree, the "Tamed Dragon Pine," often painted in the Ming and Qing, lost its pre-eminence to the "Guest-Greeting Pine," now very much a "stock item in Huangshan iconography," as any quick internet search will confirm. This happened principally because its positioning made it easier to photograph. Such a transition supports the conclusion that "if we regard the relationship between painting and photography in the 1930s as a competitive one, *guohua* paintings were in a much weaker position, at least in the context of print media" (215).

Painting and photography are both central to this excellent book, so it is perhaps noteworthy that it is the former and not the latter term that makes it into the title. This has the effect of ensuring that, while photography is presented as the essential framing of the enquiry, painting is still in the end what the enquiry is "about." And certainly, the three figures at its heart are painters, not photographers—and painters whose work continues to command ever-greater prices as carriers of precious cultural capital. Could we imagine a book, of almost identical contents, but entitled *Transmedial Landscapes and Modern Chinese Photography*? Perhaps the competition is unresolved. The challenge for art history as a discipline is perhaps to move beyond the trap of the famous "rabbit-duck illusion," where the drawing *can* look like either animal, but can only be seen as one of them at any given time. It remains the aim of many scholars to move beyond the restrictions imposed by the study of a single medium, and to engage with the full range of visual images operating in any given historical context. This very fine study certainly points the way to such an objective, and it will be necessary reading for all scholars of Republican China's cultural politics.