

## Two Notes on Xie He's 謝赫 "Six Criteria" (*liufa* 六法), Aided by Digital Databases

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The Six Criteria (*liufa* 六法) of painting listed by Xie He 謝赫 (d. after 532)<sup>1</sup> in the preface to his *Gu huapin lu* 古畫品錄 are among the most important sources in the history of Chinese aesthetics. Partly because of their terse formulation, which permitted a fruitful array of interpretations, the Six Criteria gained currency almost immediately after Xie He articulated them; in later centuries, literati painters knew them as a matter of course, and strived to exemplify them in their work.<sup>2</sup> This paper uses evidence from digital databases to re-examine two controversial issues: (1) the syntax and phrasing of the Six Criteria, and (2) the origin and connotations of *qiyun* 氣韻, the most famous of them.<sup>3</sup> Some of the sources cited below have been located and discussed by previous scholars, but digital databases offer two unprecedented benefits: they provide rich and instantaneous information about the relative frequen-

<sup>1</sup> For Xie He's dates, see Chen Chuanxi 陳傳席, *Liuchao hualun yanjiu* 六朝畫論研究, rev. ed. (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1991), 184-85; and Li Zehou 李澤厚 and Liu Gangji 劉綱紀, *Zhongguo meixue shi: Wei Jin nanbeichao bian* 中國美學史：魏晉南北朝編 (Hefei: Anhui wenyi chubanshe, 1999), vol. 2, 769-75.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1958-65), vol. 1, 23.

<sup>3</sup> My primary resource has been the Scripta Sinica database 漢籍電子文獻資料庫 (Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, Taipei) because of its admirable combination of coverage and accuracy, but I have also consulted the CHANT database 漢達文庫 (D.C. Lau Research Centre for Chinese Ancient Texts, Chinese Univ. of Hong Kong), the Chinese Text Project, and the digital *Siku quanshu* 文淵閣四庫全書電子版. Because my searches were targeted, this is not a project in algorithmic criticism or distant reading. For these terms, see, respectively, Stephen Ramsay, *Reading Machines: Toward an Algorithmic Criticism* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2011); and Franco Moretti, *Distant Reading* (London: Verso, 2013).

cy of classical phrases and constructions, and they can point us to relevant passages that have been neglected.

## I. Syntax and Phrasing

Xie He's syntax and phrasing are sometimes cited to support larger theories about the origin of his Six Criteria, yet databases show that their structure is not unusual. In addition, the significance of their sequence has been overlooked.

First, the Chinese text and a working translation. Constraints of space preclude a defense of each term; there have been many thoughtful explanations of each of the Six Criteria,<sup>4</sup> and I do not have new insights into any of them except *qi Yun*, which will be treated below.

(1) *Qiyun*; this is engendering movement. (2) Bone method; this is using the brush. (3) Responding to objects; this is making images of their shape. (4) Complying with categories; this is applying colors. (5) Arrangement; this is composition. (6) Transmitting and reproducing; this is copying from a model.

一，氣韻，生動是也；二，骨法，用筆是也；三，應物，象形是也；四，隨類，賦彩是也；五，經營，位置是也；六，傳移，模寫是也。<sup>5</sup>

The only syntactic difficulty, namely the sequence of six successive clauses marked by "... *shi ye* 是也," was solved by W.R.B. Acker several decades ago: in each of the six sentences, the first bisyllabic phrase is an opaque term immediately explained by the second, which is easier to

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Wang Shixiang 王世襄, *Zhongguo hualun yanjiu* 中國畫論研究 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2013), vol. 1, 24-26; Chen Shouxiang 陳綬祥, *Zhongguo huihua duandaishi: Wei Jin nanbeichao huihua* 中國繪畫斷代史：魏晉南北朝繪畫 (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 2004), 96-101; Chen Chuanxi, *Liuchao hualun yanjiu*, 200, n.7-12; and William Reynolds Beal Acker, *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1954), vol. 1, xxviii-xliii.

<sup>5</sup> Chen Chuanxi, *Liuchao hualun yanjiu*, 194. Compare the translations in Victor H. Mair, "Xie He's 'Six Laws' of Painting and Their Indian Parallels," in *Chinese Aesthetics: The Ordering of Literature, the Arts, and the Universe in the Six Dynasties*, ed. Zong-qi Cai (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 94-95; Yolaine Escande, *Traité chinois de peinture et de calligraphie* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2003-10), vol. 1, 297-98; James F. Cahill, "The Six Laws and How to Read Them," *Ars Orientalis* 4 (1961): 380; Acker, *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting*, vol. 1, 4; Alexander C. Soper, "The First Two Laws of Hsieh Ho," *Far Eastern Quarterly* 8 (1949): 423; and Osvald Sirén, *The Chinese on the Art of Painting: Translations and Comments* (Peiping: Henri Vetch, 1936), 219. (This is only a selected list.)

comprehend (e.g., “Bone method; this is using the brush”).<sup>6</sup> I shall call this the “X, Y *shi ye*” construction. Recently, Victor H. Mair, while endorsing Acker’s parsing, has made two demonstrably incorrect statements about the Six Criteria: (1) “it was rare in pre-Buddhist times to list sequentially the individual items of such groupings with bulleted numbers in front of each one, especially if they were expressed in whole sentences and not merely individual words”; and (2) “it is uncommon to find *shi ye* occupying the final position at all, especially in sentences that begin with a number.”<sup>7</sup> These are major planks in his new defense of the old theory that the Six Criteria derive from the *ṣaḍaṅga*, or Six Limbs of Indian art.<sup>8</sup>

Straightforward concordance work shows that there are dozens of explicitly numbered sequences in pre-Buddhist Chinese literature and literally hundreds of examples of *shi ye*.<sup>9</sup> Naturally, it would not be possible to discuss each instance here.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Acker, *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting*, vol. 1, xxii-xxviii. Cf. Shao Hong 邵宏, *Yanyi de “qiyun”: Zhongguo hualun de guannianshi yanjiu* 衍義的「氣韻」：中國畫論觀念史研究 (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2005), 92-106; Peter Way, “How to Read Xie Ho’s [sic] Six Principles: A Re-Review,” *East and West* 47 (1997): 283-87; Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書, *Guanzhui bian* 管錐編, second ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), vol. 4, 1353; and Nakamura Shigeo 中村茂夫, *Chūgoku garon no tenkai: Shin Tō Sō Gen hen* 中國畫論の展開：晉唐宋元編 (Kyoto: Nakayama bunkadō, 1965), 140. Acker’s parsing is widely accepted today, but two important studies objected to it: Wen C. Fong, “Ch’i-yun-sheng-tung: Vitality, Harmonious Manner, and Aliveness,” *Oriental Art* 12.3 (1966): 159-64; and Cahill, “The Six Laws and How to Read Them.”

<sup>7</sup> Mair, “Xie He’s ‘Six Laws’ of Painting and Their Indian Parallels,” 85-86.

<sup>8</sup> For earlier discussions, see, e.g., Erik Zürcher, “Recent Studies on Chinese Painting: A Review Article,” *T’oung Pao* 51 (1964): 389-92; Acker, *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting*, vol. 1, xliii-xlv; Clay Lancaster, “Keys to the Understanding of Indian and Chinese Painting: The ‘Six Limbs’ of Yaśodhara and the ‘Six Principles’ of Hsieh Ho,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 11.2 (1952): 95-104; and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1934), 20, 186-89. Zürcher and Acker were neutral; Lancaster supported a connection; Coomaraswamy was doubtful. For a review of speculations about the significance of the number six, also with possible Indian connections, see Han Gang 韓剛, “Xie He ‘liufa’ yuanyuan kao” 謝赫“六法”淵源考, *Meishushi yanjiu* 美術史研究 2010.2: 65-73.

<sup>9</sup> What is indeed unusual, as Cahill, “The Six Laws and How to Read Them,” 373-74, noted long ago, is for the numbers introducing the listed items to appear without *yue* 曰 (i.e. “yi 一 ... er 二 ... san 三 ...” instead of “yi yue 一曰 ... er yue 二曰 ... san yue 三曰 ...”). But for rejoinders, see Shao Hong, *Yanyi de “qiyun”: Zhongguo hualun de guannianshi yanjiu*, 96-97, 102-3, and Way, “How to Read Xie Ho’s [sic] Six Principles,” 280-81, both of whom offer other examples.

<sup>10</sup> Several numbered lists appear in texts that Mair himself has translated, e.g., *Laozi* 老子

I have found as many as four passages that combine numbered lists with the "X, Y *shi ye*" construction, just as in Xie He's "Six Criteria."<sup>11</sup> One is from *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍, by Xie He's contemporary Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 465-ca. 521):

Thus there are three principles in the Way of establishing patterns: (1) patterns of shape, namely the Five Colors; (2) patterns of sound, namely the Five Tones; (3) patterns of disposition, namely the Five [Human] Natures.

故立文之道，其理有三：一曰形文，五色是也；二曰聲文，五音是也；三曰情文，五性是也。<sup>12</sup>

As *Wenxin diaolong* was not well-circulated at the time, Xie He might not have known this passage,<sup>13</sup> but it does demonstrate that such patterns were not alien to sixth-century prose.

A second, scarcely recognized, passage is from *Yin Wenzi* 尹文子; perhaps not much stock can be put in this example, because the extant text is often dismissed as a forgery, but it still probably dates to no later than the Six Dynasties.<sup>14</sup>

There are three classes of names and four categories of standards: (1) Names for naming objects; "square," "round," "white," and "black" are examples. (2) Names of disparagement or renown; "good," "bad," "noble," and "base" are examples. (3)

67 (see his translation in *Tao te ching: The Classic Book of Integrity and the Way* [New York: Bantam, 1990], 41); the "Tiandi" 天地 chapter of *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩 [1844-1896], *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋, ed. Wang Xiaoyu 王孝魚 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961], 5A.12.453, which Mair translated in *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu* [New York: Bantam, 1994; rpt., Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 1998], 117); and the "ji" 計 chapter of *Sunzi* 孫子 (*Shiyi jia zhu Sunzi jiaoli* 十一家注孫子校理, ed. Yang Bing'an 楊丙安 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999], A.2-3, which he translated in *The Art of War: Sun Zi's Military Methods* [New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2007], 76-77).

<sup>11</sup> A fifth deserves mention even though it is from slightly later than Xie He: the annotated list of twelve principles of chess in the preface by Wang Bao 王褒 (fl. 532-573) to *Xiangjing* 象經, preserved in *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚, ed. Wang Shaoying 汪紹楹, second ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999), 74.1281-82.

<sup>12</sup> Zhan Ying 詹鍔, *Wenxin diaolong yizheng* 文心雕龍義證 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1989), 7.31.1151 ("Qingcai" 情采). Compare the translation in Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Asia Center, 1992), 241.

<sup>13</sup> Both Shao Hong, *Yanyi de "qiyun"*: *Zhongguo hualun de guannianshi yanjiu*, 79, and Zürcher, "Recent Studies on Chinese Painting," 388, surmise that Xie He did know *Wenxin diaolong*.

<sup>14</sup> For a recent well-annotated discussion, see Lin Zhipeng 林志鵬, *Song Xing xuepai yizhu kaolun* 宋鉅學派遺著考論 (Taipei: Wanjuanlou, 2009), 403-8.

Names referring to qualities; “worthy,” “foolish,” “love,” and “hate” are examples. (1) Standards that do not change; [relations between] lord and minister, superior and inferior, are examples. (2) Standards for regulating the vulgar; [standards applying to the] capable and good-for-nothing, conformist and non-conformist, are examples. (3) Standards for governing the multitude; rewards and punishments are examples. (4) Standards of specification; weights and measures are examples.

名有三科，法有四呈。一曰命物之名，方圓白黑是也；二曰毀譽之名，善惡貴賤是也；三曰況謂之名，賢愚愛憎是也。一曰不變之法，君臣上下是也；二曰齊俗之法，能鄙同異是也；三曰治眾之法，慶賞刑罰是也；四曰平準之法，律度權量是也。<sup>15</sup>

The third example is much better known and surely not forged: the postface to *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字:

According to the *Rites of Zhou*, in one's eighth year one begins primary education. When the palace instructor teaches the scions of the state, he begins with the six kinds of graphs: (1) “Indicating a thing.” Such graphs can be recognized by looking at them; their meaning is apparent when one examines them. *Shang* and *xia* are examples. (2) “Making an image of the shape” (i.e. pictographs). In such graphs, the object is completed by drawing it, following the contours of its body. *Ri* and *yue* are examples. (3) “Shape and sound” (i.e. graphs invented on the rebus principle). In such graphs, a name is made on the basis of a thing; they are completed by taking [a phonetic] analogy. *Jiang* and *he* are examples. (4) “Combining meanings.” Such graphs juxtapose categories and conjoin their meanings, so that their indication is apparent. *Wu* and *xin* are examples. (5) “Revolving glosses.” In such graphs, a category is established under a single graphic classifier; as they have the same meaning, they are interchangeable. *Kao* and *lao* are examples. (6) “Borrowing.” Such graphs do not have a thing as their basic [meaning]; they are assigned this thing on account of their sound. *Ling* and *zhang* are examples.

《周禮》：八歲入小學，保氏教國子，先以六書。一曰指事。指事者，視而可識，察而見意，上、下是也。二曰象形。象形者，畫成其物，隨體詰詘，日、月是也。三曰形聲。形聲者，以事為名，取譬相成，江、河是也。四曰會意。會意者，比類合誼 [= 義]<sup>16</sup>，以見指撝，武、信是也。五曰轉注。轉注者，建類一首，同意相受，考、老是也。六曰假借。假借者，本無其事，依聲託事，令、長是也。<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Qian Xizuo 錢熙祚 (d. 1844), *Yin Wenzi* 尹文子 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1954), 1 (“Dadao shang” 大道上).

<sup>16</sup> Following the commentary of Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735-1815).

<sup>17</sup> Jiang Renjie 蔣人傑, *Shuowen jiezi jizhu* 說文解字集注, ed. Liu Rui 劉銳 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1996), 15A.3125-29. Compare the translations in Timothy Michael O'Neill, *Ideography and Chinese Language Theory: A History* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 261; Qiu Xigui, *Chinese Writing*, tr. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman (Berkeley: The Society for

While he might not have known the passages from *Wenxin diaolong* and *Yin Wenzhi*, there is every reason to believe that, as a connoisseur of brushwork, Xie He was conversant with the sixfold classification of graphs in *Shuowen jiezi*. Wei Heng 衛恆 (d. 291), who also lived long before Xie He, repeated this passage, in abbreviated form, in an essay on calligraphy preserved in *Jinshu* 晉書.<sup>18</sup>

The last of the four passages is noteworthy because Acker stated that it helped him understand the "X, Y *shi ye*" structure of Xie He's Six Criteria.<sup>19</sup>

Yan Guanglu (i.e. Yan Yanzhi 顏延之, 364-456) said: "Diagrams convey meaning in three ways: (1) diagramming cosmic principles, as in the hexagrams and images [of the *Yijing* 易經]; (2) diagramming concepts, as in the study of script; (3) diagramming shapes, as in painting.

顏光祿云：圖載之意有三：一曰圖理，卦象是也；二曰圖識，字學是也；三曰圖形，繪畫是也。<sup>20</sup>

This quotation, which appears in the preface to *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記, by Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠 (fl. 841), is tantalizing because it is not corroborated by any other source (and Zhang was notorious for his inaccurate quotations),<sup>21</sup> yet informative because it shows that Zhang was perfectly familiar with "X, Y *shi ye*" constructions.<sup>22</sup>

the Study of Early China and The Institute of East Asian Studies, Univ. of California, 2000), 152; and Françoise Bottéro, *Sémantisme et classification dans l'écriture chinoise: Les systèmes de classement des caractères par clés du Shuowen jiezi au Kangxi zidian* (Paris: Collège de France, Institut des hautes études chinoises, 1996), 21-23.

<sup>18</sup> *Jinshu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 36.1061. Cf. Mair, "Xie He's 'Six Laws' of Painting and Their Indian Parallels," 88-89; and Cahill, "The Six Laws and How to Read Them," 373.

<sup>19</sup> Acker, *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting*, vol. 1, xxii-xxiii.

<sup>20</sup> *Lidai minghua ji* (SKQS), 1.2a. Compare the translations in Escande, *Traité chinois de peinture et de calligraphie*, vol. 2, 607; Acker, *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting*, vol. 1, 65-66; and Sirén, *The Chinese on the Art of Painting*, 225.

<sup>21</sup> For example, soon after citing Yan Yanzhi, Zhang misquotes the definition of *hua* 畫 in *Shuowen jiezi*: he writes *Hua, zhen ye, xiang tian zhenpan, suoyi hua ye* 畫，畛也，象田畛畔，所以畫也，which ends in gibberish (*Lidai minghua ji*, 1.2a). The received text (*Shuowen jiezi jizhu* 3B.608), which must be correct in this instance, states: *Hua, jie ye, xiang tian sijie; yu, suoyi hua zhi* 畫，界也，象田四界；聿，所以畫之 ("To paint is to make boundaries. [The graph] is an image of the four boundaries of a field; a brush is what one paints with"). Without *yu* 聿 (brush), Zhang's *suoyi hua* 所以畫 makes no sense.

<sup>22</sup> This counterexample refutes yet another hypothesis by Mair ("Xie He's 'Six Laws' of Painting and Their Indian Parallels," 86): that Zhang restated Xie He's Six Criteria without *shi ye* after each item simply because he did not grasp the original syntax.



Thus there are no syntactic or structural irregularities in Xie He's Six Criteria to suggest a foreign origin. Maybe they do, directly or indirectly, descend from the *ṣaḍaṅga*; we know altogether too little about early Chinese painting theory to rule out that possibility. But the text itself does not give any hint that Xie He's sources were non-Chinese. Moreover, there is a deeper methodological problem: merely tracing the source of an idea or motif is never adequate in cultural studies, even if one's thesis turns out to be correct, because the more consequential question is how and why it was accepted in its new context. (Thus, in the study of Buddhism, the issue is never whether such-and-such a thing is originally "Buddhist," but how and why people adopted Buddhist ideas and motifs—both in South Asia and beyond.)<sup>23</sup>

In this vein, identifying Xie He's Six Criteria with the *ṣaḍaṅga* does nothing to explain a crucial feature: their sequence. The biographies in *Gu huapin lu* make it clear that the Six Criteria are listed in decreasing order of importance.<sup>24</sup> The disproportionate scholarly emphasis on the first two of the six<sup>25</sup> suggests that they are rightly understood as the most important, but it is less frequently observed that the sixth criterion, copying from models, is the least important. The painters whom Xie praises most highly for their *qi* 氣 (Wei Xie 衛協, Zhang Mo 張墨, and Xun Xu 荀勗) or their "bone" (Cao Buxing 曹不興) are all ranked in the first class. In the second class, we find painters like Gu Junzhi 顧駿之, who was still outstanding but whose "spirit accord and *qi* strength did not reach those of the former worthies" 神韻氣力不逮前賢.<sup>26</sup> Yuan Qian 袁蒨, who is generally esteemed and likewise ranked in the second class, is criticized for "intending only to hold to his teacher's methods and having no new ideas" 但志守師法, 更無新意,<sup>27</sup> a foretaste of the complaints about mindless copying that appear in the final pages.

<sup>23</sup> For a similar critical stance in art history, see Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1985), 58–62.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Wang Shixiang, *Zhongguo hualun yanjiu*, vol. 1, 24–26; and Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, *Zhongguo yishu jingshen* 中國藝術精神 (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1966), 207–10.

<sup>25</sup> E.g., Xiaoyan Hu, "The Notion of 'qi yun' (Spirit Consonance) in Chinese Painting," *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics* 8 (2016): 247–68; Li Zehou and Liu Gangji, *Zhongguo meixue shi*, vol. 2, 782–802; John Hay, "Values and History in Chinese Painting, I: Hsieh Ho Revisited," *Res* 6 (1983): 72–111; as well as the studies by Wen and Soper noted above.

<sup>26</sup> Chen Chuanxi, *Liuchao hualun yanjiu*, 195.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

Consider the harsh judgment of Liu Shaozu 劉紹祖, who is assigned to the fifth of the six ranks:

He was adept at copying, but did not fathom the thoughts [of those who produced the originals]. When it came to sparrows and rodents, his brushwork was distinct and meticulous; he would usually stand out from the crowd. His contemporaries had a nickname for him: The Reproducer. But "transmitting without creating" (an allusion to *Analekts* 7/1) is not what ranks first in painting.

善於傳寫，不闡其思。至於雀鼠，筆迹歷落，往往出群。時人為之語，號曰：移畫。然述而不作，非畫所先。<sup>28</sup>

Liu Shaozu earns a spot in Xie He's pantheon because he did, after all, master one of the "Six Criteria," but he must be placed toward the rear, because he excelled at the skill that carries the least weight. No self-respecting literatus would want to go down in history as nothing more than a meticulous copyist of sparrows and rodents.

This aspect of *liufa*, finally, justifies my rendering of the phrase as Six Criteria rather than simply "six standards" (let alone "six laws"): Xie He employs them as *standards of judgment*.<sup>29</sup> The fundamental goal of Xie's work is to rank (*pin* 品) the masters of the past, a commonplace literary project parallel to the bureaucratic practice of ranking candidates for office.<sup>30</sup> (A common term is *pinzao* 品藻, literally "to rank [people's] floridity," which refers to evaluating persons in this fashion, and serves as the title of chapter 9 of *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語.) The *liufa* are the criteria by which Xie He carries out this task.

## II. The Most Difficult of the Six Criteria: *Qiyun*

Almost immediately after Xie He used *qiyun* as the first of his Six Criteria, it became an indispensable term in art criticism (though its precise

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 198. Compare the translations in Escande, *Traité chinois de peinture et de calligraphie*, vol. 1, 312-13; and Acker, *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting*, vol. 1, 30.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Harold Osborne, *Aesthetics and Art Theory: An Historical Introduction* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1968), 80-81; for the opposite view, see Acker, *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting*, vol. 1, xlii.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Shao Hong, 72; John Timothy Wixted, "The Nature of Evaluation in the *Shih-p'in* (Gradings of Poets) by Chung Hung," in *Theories of the Arts in China*, ed. Susan Bush and Christian Murck (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1983), 227-28; and Zürcher, "Recent Studies on Chinese Painting," 380-83.



meaning has varied from one author to another). Alexander C. Soper's explanation is still as good as any:

The painter must see to it that the *ch'i* of everything animate within his picture shall be able to find and respond to its like, not merely elsewhere on the silk but by infinite extension throughout all the universe. So, and so only, can it reach the ultimate source of life. In mystical language, this seems a paraphrase of the injunction that later will be more clearly stated: the artist must first of all seek out and stress the ultimate, quintessential character of his subject, the horsiness of horses, the humanity of man; on a more general level, the quickness of intelligence, the pulse of life, in contrast to brute matter.<sup>31</sup>

Despite Qian Zhongshu's 錢鍾書 lucid note on Xie He and the Six Criteria in *Guanzhui bian* 管錐編,<sup>32</sup> some questions regarding the phrase *qi-yun* remain unresolved, such as its origin and early connotations. While Xie He could scarcely have invented *qiyun*, digital databases also show that it was not a very old term.<sup>33</sup> In the surviving literature, the first juxtaposition of *qi* and *yun* seems to be in *Shishuo xinyu*: "Ruan Hun, [styled] Changcheng, was similar to his father [i.e. Ruan Ji 阮籍, 210-263] in his character and complaisance; he too wished to make himself eccentric" 阮渾長成，風氣韻度似父，亦欲作達。<sup>34</sup> *Shishuo xinyu* dates to approximately 430,<sup>35</sup> and the line is sometimes cited as though it were

31) "The First Two Laws of Hsieh Ho," 422. See also Martin J. Powers, "Character (*ch'i*) and Gesture (*shih*) in Early Chinese Art and Criticism," in *International Colloquium on Chinese Art History, 1991, Proceedings* 中華民國建國八十年中國藝術文物討論會論文集 (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1992), volume 2, 919-24. One can tell that Tong Shuye 童書業 must have struggled with the term *qiyun* throughout his life, as his posthumously published *Tong Shuye huihua shi lunji* 童書業繪畫史論集, ed. Tong Jiaoying 童教英 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), contains many explications, in varying states of completion (27-28, 30-33, 111-14, 254-55, 361, 644-46, and 767).

32) *Guanzhui bian*, vol. 3, 1352-66; tr. Ronald Egan, *Limited Views: Essays on Ideas and Letters* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Asia Center, 1998), 97-115.

33) Despite Mair, "Xie He's 'Six Laws' of Painting and Their Indian Parallels," 120, n.59; Zongqi Cai, "The Conceptual Origins and Aesthetic Significance of '*shen*' in Six Dynasties Texts on Literature and Painting," in Cai, ed., 332; and Acker, *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting*, vol. 1, xli.

34) Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫, *Shishuo xinyu jianshu* 世說新語箋疏, ed. Zhou Zumo 周祖謨 *et al.*, rev. ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1993), 23.734. Compare the translation in Richard B. Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü: A New Account of Tales of the World*, second ed. (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, Univ. of Michigan, 2002), 404.

35) Cf. Kawakatsu Yoshio 川勝義雄, "Sesetsu shingo no hensan o megutte" 世說新語の編纂をめぐって, *Tōhō gaku* 東方學報 41 (1970): 226-32.

an early instance of *qiyun*.<sup>36</sup> But this merely reflects a misinterpretation of the syntax: the relevant clause reads *fengqi, yundu si fu* 風氣、韻度似父, not *feng, qiyun, du si fu* 風、氣韻、度似父 (which would not make much sense). To be sure, the sense of *fengqi yundu* (rendered above as "character and complaisance") is similar to that of *qiyun*, but it is not the same phrase.

The next possible appearance of *qiyun* is in the biography of Liu Huan 劉瓛 (434-489) in *Nanshi* 南史. Liu's contemporary Cai Zhongxiong 蔡仲熊 is quoted as saying: "The Five Tones are based on the terrain of the center; thus their *qiyun* is attuned and balanced" 五音本在中土，故氣韻調平.<sup>37</sup> But this oft-repeated sentence (which is cited in many dictionaries under the headword *diaoping* 調平)<sup>38</sup> is not entirely trustworthy, because the parallel in *Nan-Qi shu* 南齊書, though similar in its general import, is worded differently: "In the past, the Five Tones [were produced] by bells and chimes; they were based on the terrain of the center" 昔五音金石，本在中土.<sup>39</sup> No *qiyun* here.

There is no way to determine which of these two variants is correct, but there might be one reason to favor the latter (i.e. without *qiyun*). Xiao Zixian 蕭子顯 (489-537), the author of *Nan-Qi shu*, used *qiyun* in his disquisition on literature included in that text.<sup>40</sup>

As one's wandering heart revolves internally, one unleashes one's words and sets them down on the page. The *qiyun* is naturally perfect.

遊心內運，放言落紙，氣韻天成.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> E.g., Hu Jiexiang 胡家祥, "Jianlun 'qiyun' fanchou de jichu lilun yiyi" 簡論 "氣韻" 範疇的基礎理論意義, *Wenxue pinglun* 文學評論 2007.6: 107. Qian Zhongshu, vol. 4, 1355, also cited this passage, though without indicating whether he took it as an example of *qiyun*.

<sup>37</sup> *Nanshi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 50.1238. *Qiyun* also appears in the "Wenxue" 文學 chapter (*Nanshi*, 72.1792), which is culled from *Nan-Qi shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1972), 52.907 (see below).

<sup>38</sup> E.g., *Hanyu dacidian* 漢語大詞典 (Shanghai: Cishu chubanshe, 1986-94), vol. 11, 298.

<sup>39</sup> *Nan-Qi shu*, 39.680.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Yuan Jixi 袁濟喜, "Cong wenshi jiaohui kan nanchao Xiao Zixian wenxue piping zhi tezhi" 從文史交匯看南朝蕭子顯文學批評之特質, *Jianghai xuekan* 江海學刊 2016.2: 196; Hu Jiexiang, "Jianlun 'qiyun' fanchou de jichu lilun yiyi," 107; Shao Hong, *Yanyi de "qiyun"*: *Zhongguo hualun de guannianshi yanjiu*, 66; and Li Zehou and Liu Gangji, *Zhongguo meixue shi*, vol. 2, 790.

<sup>41</sup> *Nan-Qi shu*, 52.907.

If Xiao Zixian believed that Cai Zhongxiong had used the same phrase a generation earlier, he might have had particular reason to present the quote accordingly. To be sure, this is a speculative inference.

At any rate, Xiao Zixian is said to have started compiling *Nan-Qi shu* during the Tianjian 天監 reign period (502-519) of Emperor Wu of Liang 梁武帝 (r. 502-549).<sup>42</sup> This is around the same time when Xie He would have been writing his “Six Criteria.” It is also worth noting that Xiao, like Xie He, used *qiyun* as an aesthetic term (though the precise sense of either author’s usage is far from clear). The main difference is that Xiao applied it to literature, Xie to painting.

Qian Zhongshu wrote: “Xie He took language [that had been previously used] to characterize real people and applied it to refer to [things] ranging from people’s appearance to images of animals in painting” 赫取風鑑真人之語，推以目畫中之人貌以至物象。<sup>43</sup> In other words, according to Qian, phrases like *qiyun* emerged from the discourse of *pinzao*, of evaluating people’s strengths and weaknesses. Qian’s distinction between what I shall call the commendatory and aesthetic senses of *qiyun* was astute, but he was not right that the commendatory sense came first.

One of the most common uses of *qiyun* was to eulogize the deceased in epitaphs (*muzhi ming* 墓誌銘). In such contexts, *qiyun* means something like “complaisance of temperament,”<sup>44</sup> i.e. a person’s laudable tendency to accord with his or her surroundings. *Qiyun* is found in this commendatory sense in several epitaphs from the late Northern Wei (386-535), of which the oldest (to my knowledge) is from 519.<sup>45</sup> And this

<sup>42</sup> Thus Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661-721) in his *Shitong* 史通; see Pu Qilong 浦起龍 (1679-1762), *Shitong tongshi* 史通通釋, ed. Wang Xuhua 王煦華 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2009), 12.329.

<sup>43</sup> *Guanzhui bian*, vol. 3, 1355; compare the translation in Egan, 101. Cf. Li Zehou and Liu Gangji, *Zhongguo meixue shi*, vol. 2, 783-92; Xu Fuguan, *Zhongguo yishu jingshen*, 172-79; and Zürcher, “Recent Studies on Chinese Painting,” 385-86.

<sup>44</sup> For *qi* in the sense of “temperament,” see, for example, the “Jiyi” 祭義 chapter of *Liji* 禮記: “A filial son who has deep love [for his parents] must have a harmonious temperament” 孝子之有深愛者，必有和氣; *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義 (*Shisan jing zhushu* 十三經注疏), 47.9a.

<sup>45</sup> Zhao Chao 趙超, *Han Wei nanbeichao muzhi huibian* 漢魏南北朝墓誌彙編 (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1992), 104. For other sixth-century examples, see *ibid.*, 130, 232, 273, and 389; as well as Wang Lianlong 王連龍, “Bei-Wei Gao Shusheng ji qi Han Qiji muzhi kao” 北魏高樹生及妻韓期姬墓志考, *Wenwu* 2014.2: 80.

relatively late date presents a problem for Qian Zhongshu's thesis: it is difficult to argue that Xie He "took" (*qu* 取) such language when not a single example unambiguously precedes him. Qian also observed that, for Xie He, *qiyun* was interchangeable with *shenyun* 神韻,<sup>46</sup> which is indeed slightly older. The clearest example is an imperial edict from 479 bestowing the posthumous title Wenzhen 文貞 on the grandee Wang Yuzhi 王裕之 (360-447).<sup>47</sup> But this still does not bring us back further than about a generation before Xie He.

There is a similar phrase, however, that is substantially older: *fengyun* 風韻, for which I have found three examples from long before Xie He's time, all commendatory: (1) a lament for Ji Kang 嵇康 (223-262) by Li Chong 李充 (d. after 349);<sup>48</sup> (2) an edict by Emperor Xiaowu of (Eastern) Jin 晉孝武帝 (r. 372-396) praising the monk Dao'an 道安 (312-385);<sup>49</sup> and (3) Sengzhao's 僧肇 (384-414) preface to Kumārajīva's (334-413) translation of *Śataśāstra* (*Bailun* 百論), which praises an official named Yao Song 姚嵩 (d. 416).<sup>50</sup>

But the history of the word *yun* does not bear out Qian Zhongshu's hypothesis that its aesthetic senses were derived from earlier commendatory ones. The graph *yun* 韻 (Old Chinese \*m-q<sup>w</sup>in-s)<sup>51</sup> does not appear before the Eastern Han. Li Shan 李善 (630-689) asserted, plausibly, that it is interchangeable with 均,<sup>52</sup> which is abundantly attested in classical texts and can be read either *jūn* (\*C.q<sup>w</sup>in) or *yùn* (\*m-q<sup>w</sup>in-s). In the former reading, it means "balanced, equitable"; in the latter, it is a perfect homophone of *yun* 韻 and refers to musical keys and tuning imple-

<sup>46</sup> *Guanzhui bian*, vol. 3, 1353. A good example is the aforementioned comment on Gu Junzhi (*shenyun qili bu dai qianxian* 神韻氣力不逮前賢).

<sup>47</sup> *Songshu* 宋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 66.1731.

<sup>48</sup> *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), 596.6b.

<sup>49</sup> *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 5, T. 2059: 53.352c.

<sup>50</sup> Preserved in *Chu sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集 11, T. 2145: 55.77c. Conspicuously, two of these three examples involve Buddhist monks, but I think this is a coincidence, because *yun* has no particular significance in Buddhist literature or theology.

<sup>51</sup> William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014), 388, n.50.

<sup>52</sup> *Wenxuan* 文選 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), 18.869 ("Chenggong Zi'an 'Xiaofu' 成公子安嘯賦). See also the comment by Xu Xuan 徐鉉 (916-991), quoting Pei Guangyuan 裴光遠 (fl. 868), in *Shuowen jiezi jizhu* 3A.532. (*Shuowen jiezi* originally had no entry for *yun*; it was inserted by Xu Xuan.)

ments. Accordingly, the earliest semantic domain of *yun* 韻 was music,<sup>53</sup> as in the phrase *yayun* 雅韻, “elegant and concordant,” first attested in a fragment from a lost rhapsody on the zither attributed to Cai Yong 蔡邕 (132-192): “Thus when the panoply of strings are depressed, an elegant and concordant sound will be repeatedly sustained” 於是繁絃既抑，雅韻復揚。<sup>54</sup>

Although the musical significance of *yun* 韻 in such contexts is impossible to specify—presumably not harmony in a Western sense, but euphony more generally—the semantic extension from “concordant sound” to “rhyme,” an important later technical sense, is instructive. A euphonious rhyme is analogous to a euphonious chord.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, if *yayun* was originally a musical term, it soon began to be used, just like *fengyun* and *shenyun*, as a prized characteristic of persons as well. Both senses of *yayun*, musical and commendatory, are attested in *Baopuzi* 抱朴子.<sup>56</sup>

In sum:

(1) The graph *yun* 韻 is not attested before the Eastern Han and its earliest connotations were musical.

(2) Compounds with *yun*, such as *yayun*, *fengyun*, *shenyun*, and *qi-yun*, were commonly used to characterize people, and always approba-

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Hu Jiayang, “Jianlun ‘qiyun’ fanchou de jichu lilun yiyi,” 108; Shao Hong, *Yanyi de “qiyun”*: *Zhongguo hualun de guannianshi yanjiu*, 81-83; Li Zehou and Liu Gangji, *Zhongguo meixue shi*, vol. 2, 786; and Xu Fuguan, *Zhongguo yishu jingshen*, 169-79. This is one of the main arguments against the unlikely proposal that *qiyun* is a borrowing for *qiyun* 氣運: the latter has nothing to do with music. See, e.g., Cao Guisheng 曹桂生, “‘Qiyun’ shenmei fanchou bian—Jian ping Zhang Xikun de ‘qiyun’ fanchou guan” “氣韻” 審美範疇辨—兼評張錫坤的“氣韻” 範疇觀, *Shaanxi shifan daxue xuebao* (*Zhexue shehui kexue ban*) 陝西師範大學學報 (哲學社會科學版) 34.2 (2005): 36.

<sup>54</sup> Cited in four sources, most fully in *Yiwen leiju*, 44-783; also *Beitang shuchao* 北堂書鈔 (*Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書), 109.4b-5a; the commentary of Li Shan to *Wenxuan*, 17.768 (“Lu Shiheng ‘Wenfu’” 陸士衡文賦); and *Chuxue ji* 初學記, second ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004), 16.388.

<sup>55</sup> Consider Zhan Ying, *Wenxin diaolong yizheng*, 7.33.1228 (“Shenglü” 聲律), where *yun* can readily mean either “concordant sound” or “rhyme”: “When similar sounds respond to one another—this is called *yun*” 同聲相應謂之韻. This could be read straightforwardly as a comment on music, but as the immediate context has to do with declamation and prosody, commentators have consistently interpreted this *yun* as “rhyme” (and *sheng* 聲 in the technical sense of the tone of each rhyming syllable).

<sup>56</sup> For *yayun* as a musical term, see *Baopuzi neipian* 抱朴子內篇, ed. Wang Ming 王明, rev. ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 2.13 (“Lunxian” 論仙); and *Baopuzi waipian* 抱朴子外篇, ed. Yang Mingzhao 楊明照 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), 40.393 (“Ciyi” 辭義). For *yayun* as a characteristic of people, see *Baopuzi waipian* 33.127 (“Hanguo” 漢過).

tively. Thus they frequently appear in encomiastic epitaphs. There is no apparent difference between Northern and Southern usage.

(3) But such phrases could also be deployed as aesthetic terms, and there is no evidence to support the notion that commendatory usage preceded them. *Qiyun* appeared in roughly coeval essays on literature and painting by Xiao Zixian and Xie He, respectively. *Qiyun* is not solidly attested before this, but it is unlikely that Xie He simply invented it. Rather, he took a newly popular phrase and turned it into one of the most fruitful aesthetic concepts in Chinese history.

To be sure, much more can be said about Xie He's "Six Criteria," especially regarding their later reception, for which a large amount of evidence has survived. The purpose of this short article has been merely to show how digital databases can help to confirm some perceptive judgments of the past while gently correcting others. Little doubt can remain that Acker was right about how to read the Six Criteria, and what is most noteworthy about the commendatory and aesthetic senses of *qiyun* is not that one preceded the other, but that literati freely used both. Judging people and judging their art were regarded as essentially the same exercise.

### Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my colleague Nancy S. Steinhardt, as well as two anonymous referees, for many helpful comments on earlier versions of this study.

### Abstract

This article uses evidence from digital databases to re-examine two controversial issues regarding the "Six Criteria" (*liufa* 六法) of painting listed by Xie He 謝赫 (d. after 532) in the preface to his *Gu huapin lu* 古畫品錄: (1) their syntax and phrasing, and (2) the origin and connotations of *qiyun* 氣韻, the most famous of the six. Despite recent claims to the contrary, the series of six numbered clauses taking the form "X, Y *shi ye* 是也" is unremarkable for the language of the time; moreover, the application of the Six Criteria in the subsequent biographies discloses that they are listed in decreasing order of importance. While the meaning and connotations of *qiyun* are impossible to state succinctly because they vary from one source to



another, it is used (like similar phrases, such as *yayun* 雅韻 and *shenyun* 神韻) both to praise people's character and as an aesthetic quality pertaining to music, literature, and art.

### Résumé

Cet article utilise des bases de données de textes en ligne afin d'examiner à nouveaux frais deux aspects controversés de l'interprétation des « six critères » (*liufa* 六法) de la peinture exposés par Xie He 謝赫 (mort après 532) dans sa préface à son *Gu huapin lu* 古畫品錄: (1) leur syntaxe et formulation, et (2) l'origine et les connotations du terme *qiyun* 氣韻, le plus célèbre des six critères. En dépit d'affirmations récentes suggérant le contraire, cette série de six propositions sous la forme “X, Y *shi ye* 是也” n'est en rien exceptionnelle dans la langue de son époque; de plus, l'application des six critères dans les biographies du *Gu huapin lu* montre qu'elles sont énumérées en ordre décroissant d'importance. Les autres sources textuelles montrent également que le sens et les connotations de *qiyun* sont impossibles à résumer en quelques mots dans la mesure où elles varient d'une source à l'autre, mais le terme est toujours utilisé (de même que des expressions proches, telles que *yayun* 雅韻 and *shenyun* 神韻) à la fois pour faire l'éloge du caractère d'une personne et pour exprimer une qualité esthétique dans les domaines de la musique, de la littérature et de l'art.

### 提要

本文使用來自電子數據庫的證據重新考察了謝赫（卒年晚於532）於其《古畫品錄》序提出的繪畫“六法”中的兩個有爭議的問題：(1) 它們的句法和措辭；(2) 六法中最著名的“氣韻”概念的來源和內涵。與近世相反，“六法”說中連續六個短句所使用的“X, Y是也”句型在當時的語言中並不罕見；此外，“六法”在之後的傳記中的使用表明它們是按照重要性遞減的順序被羅列的。而“氣韻”的意義和內涵則無法被簡單表述，因為它在不同的文獻資料中各有差別。它（與類似的措辭如“雅韻”、“神韻”一樣）既被用以讚美人物的個性，也被用指有關音樂、文學和藝術的美學特質。

### Keywords

Chinese aesthetics, Chinese art criticism, *liufa*, *qiyun*, *şadaŋga*, Xie He