Zhang Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322, attributed)

*Twenty-Four Poems on the Pictures of Tilling and Weaving*

耕織圖詩

*Geng zhi tu shi*

Early 18th-century, imitation

Calligraphy in semi-cursive script

Handscroll, ink on paper, 27.2 cm x 1127.8 cm (scroll sheet); 26.1 cm x 666.8 cm (calligraphy)

The Mactaggart Art Collection. Access #2004.19.18

Gift of Sandy and Cécile Mactaggart

ARTIST’S INSCRIPTION

(2 columns in semi-cursive script)

Pictures of Tilling and Weaving / Composed at Empress Dowager’s Edict

001耕織圖奉/002懿旨撰

ARTIST’S COLOPHON & SIGNATURE

(4 columns in semi-cursive script)

I composed these poems several years ago / and Zizhong read and appreciated them. / At his request, I have written this as a reply to him. / Zhao Mengfu of Wuxing records.[[1]](#footnote-1)

221此余數年前所作，/222子中郎中見而愛之，因/223其索書，遂以此復之也。/224吳興趙孟頫識。

ARTIST’S SEALS

*Zhao shi Ziang* 趙氏/子昂, square relief (suspicious)

POEMS[[2]](#footnote-2)

003耕正月

004田家重元日，置酒會鄰里。小/005大易新衣，相戒未明起。老/006翁年已邁，含咲弄孫子。老嫗/007惠且慈，白髮被兩耳。杯柈/008且羅列，飲食致甘旨。相呼團/009欒坐，聊慰衰莫齒。田磽藉人/010力，糞壤要鉏理。新嵗不敢/011閒，農事自玆始。

012/二月

013/東風吹原野，地凍亦已消。早覺/014農事動，荷鉏過相招。遲遲朝/015日上，炊煙出林梢。土膏脈既/016起，良耜利若刀。高低遍翻墾，/017宿草不待燒。幼婦頗能家，/018井臼常自操。散灰緣舊俗，/019門逕環周遭。所冀嵗有成，/020殷懃在今朝。

021三月

022良農知土性，肥瘠有不同。/023時至萬物生，芽蘗由地中。/024秉耒向畎畝，忽遍西與東。/025舉家往于田，勞瘁在尓農。/026春雨及時降，被野何濛濛。/027乘玆各布種，庶望西成功。/028培根利秋實，仰天望年豐。/029但使陰陽和，自然倉廩充。

030四月

031孟夏土加潤，苗生無近遠。/032澷澷冒淺陂，芃芃被長坂。嘉/033穀雖已植，惡草亦滋蔓。/034君子與小人，並處必為患。/035朝朝荷鉏往，薅耨忘疲倦。旦/036隨鳥雀起，歸與牛羊晚。有/037婦念將飢，過午可無飯。一/038飽不易得，念此獨長歎。

039五月

040仲夏苦雨乾，二麥先後熟。/041南風吹隴畝，惠氣散清淑。/042是為農夫慶，所望實其腹。/043沽酒醉比鄰，語笑聲滿屋。/044紛然收穫罷，高廩起相屬。/045有周成王業，后稷播百穀。/046皇天貽來牟，長世自玆卜。/047願言仍嵗稔，四海盡蒙福。

048六月

049當晝耘水田，農夫亦良苦。/050日赤背欲裂，汗白灑如雨。匍/051匐行水中，泥淖及腰膂。新/052苗抽利劒，割膚何痛楚。夫/053耘婦當饁，奔走及亭午。無/054時暫休息，不得避炎暑。誰憐/055萬民食，粒粒非易取。願陳知/056稼穡，無逸傳自古。

057七月

058大火既西流，凉風日凄厲。/059古人重稼穡，力田在匪懈。郊/060行省農事，禾黍何斾斾。碾/061以他山石，玉粒使人愛。大祀須/062粢盛，一一稽古制。是為五穀/063長，異彼稊與稗。炊之香且美，/064可用享上帝。豈惟足食人，一/065飽有所待。

066八月

067白露下百草，莖葉日紛委。/068是時禾黍登，充積徧都鄙。/069在郊既千庾，入邑復萬軌。人/070言田家樂，此樂誰可比？租賦/071已輸官，所餘足儲峙。不然風/072雪至，凍餒及妻子。優游茅/073簷下，庶可以卒歳。太平元有/074象，治世乃如此。

075九月

076大家饒米麵，何啻百室/077盈。縱復人力多，舂磨常不/078停。激水轉大輪，磑碾亦易/079成。古人有機智，用之可厚生。/080朝出連百車，暮入還滿庭。勾/081稽數多少，必假布算精。/082小人好爭利，晝夜心營營。君/083子貴知足，知足萬慮輕。

084十月

085孟冬農事畢，穀粟既巳藏。/086彌望四野空，藁秸亦在場。/087朝廷政方理，庶事和隂陽。所/088以頻歳登，不憂旱與蝗。置酒/089燕鄉里，尊老列上行。肴羞不/090厭多，炮羔復烹羊。縱飲窮/091日夕，為樂殊未央。禱天祝/092聖人，萬年長夀昌。

093十一月

094農家值豐年，樂事日熙熙。黒/095黍可釀酒，在牢羊豕肥。東/096鄰有一女，西鄰有一兒。兒年十五/097六，女大亦可笄。財禮不求備，/098多少取隨宜。冬前與冬後，昏/099嫁利此時。但願子孫多，門戸可/100扶持。女當力蠶桑，男當力/101耘耔。

102十二月

103一日不力作，一日食不足。慘澹/104歳云暮，風雪入破屋。老農/105氣力衰，傴僂腰背曲。索綯/106民事急，晝夜互相續。飯牛/107欲牛肥，茭藁亦預蓄。蹇驢/108雖劣弱，挽車致百斛。農家/109極勞苦，歳豈恒稔熟。[[3]](#footnote-3)能知/110稼穡艱，天下自蒙福。

111織正月

112正月新獻歳，最先理農器。/113女工並時興，蠶室臨期治。初/114陽力未勝，早春尚寒氣。窗/115户當奥宻，勿使風雨至。田疇/116耕耨動，敢不脩耒耜。經冬牛/117力弱，相戒勤飯飼。萬事非預/118備，倉卒恐不易。田家亦良苦，舍/119此復何計？

120二月

121仲春凍初解，陽氣方滿盈。/122旭日照原野，萬物皆欣榮。是時/123可種桑，插地易抽萌。列樹遍/124阡陌，東西各縱横。豈惟籬落/125間，採葉憚逺行。大哉/126皇元化，四海無交兵。種桑日已/127廣，彌望緑雲平。匪惟錦綺/128謀，祇以厚民生。

129三月

130三月蠶始生，纎細如牛毛。/131婉孌閨中女，[[4]](#footnote-4)素手握金刀。/132切葉以飼之，擁紙散周遭。/133庭樹鳴黄鳥，發聲和且/134嬌。蠶飢當採葉，[[5]](#footnote-5)何暇事遊/135遨。田時人力少，丈夫方種苖。/136相將挽長條，盈筐不終朝。/137數口望無寒，敢辭終歳勞。

138四月

139四月夏氣清，蠶大巳屬眠。/140高首何昂昂，蛾眉復娟娟。不/141憂桑葉少，徧野如緑烟。相/142呼擕筐去，迢逓立逺阡。梯/143空伐條枚，葉上露未乾。蠶/144飢當早歸，秉心靜以専。飭躬/145脩婦事，黽勉當盛年。救/146忙多女伴，笑語方喧然。

147五月

148五月夏巳半，谷鶯先弄晨。老/149蠶成雪繭，吐絲辭紛紜。伐/150葦作薄曲，束縛齊榛榛。黄/151者黄如金，白者白如銀。爛然/152滿筐筥，愛此顔色新。欣欣/153舉家喜，稍慰經時勤。有/154客過相問，笑聲聞四鄰。論功/155何所歸，再拜謝蠶神。

156六月

157釡下燒桑柴，取繭投釡中。/158纎纎女兒手，抽絲疾如風。田/159家五六月，緑樹隂相蒙。但聞/160繰車響，逺接村西東。旬日可/161經絹，弗憂杼軸空。婦人/162能蠶桑，家道當不窮。更望/163時雨足，二麥亦稍豐。沽酒及/164時飲，醉倒嫗與翁。[[6]](#footnote-6)

165七月

166七月暑尚熾，長日弄機杼。/167頭蓬不暇梳，揮手汗如雨。/168嚶嚶時鳥鳴，灼灼紅榴吐。何心/169娛耳目，徃來忘傴僂。織為/170機中素，老㓜要紉補。青燈/171照夜梭，蟋蟀窗外語。辛勤/172亦何有，身體衣幾縷。嫁為田/173家婦，終歳服勤苦。[[7]](#footnote-7)

174八月

175池水何洋洋，漚麻水中央。數/176日麻可取，引過兩手長。織絹/177能幾時，織布巳復忙。依依/178小兒女，歳晚歎無裳。布襦/179不掩脛，念之熱中腸。朝緝/180滿一籃，莫緝滿一筐。行看/181機中布，計日漸可量。我衣/182苟巳成，不憂天早霜。

183九月

184季秋霜露降，凛凛寒氣/185生。是月當授衣，有布織未/186成。天寒催刀尺，機杼可無/187營。教女學紡纑，舉之疾且/188輕。[[8]](#footnote-8)舍南與舍北，嘒嘒聞車/189聲。通都富豪家，華屋/190貯娉婷。被服雜羅綺，五/191色相間明。聽說貧家女，/192惻然當動情。

193十月

194豐年禾黍登，農心稍逸樂。/195小兒漸長大，終歳荷鋤鑊。/196目不識一字，每念心作惡。東/197鄰方迎師，收拾令入學。後/198月日南至，相賀因舊俗。為/199女裁新衣，脩短巧量度。/200龜手事塞向，庶禦北風虐。/201人生真可歎，至老長力作。

202十一月

203冬至陽來復，草木潛滋萌。/204君子重其然，吾道自此亨。/205父母坐堂上，子孫列前榮。再/206拜稱上夀，所願百福并。人生/207屬明時，四海方太平。民無札/208瘥者，厚澤敷羣情。衣食苟/209給足，禮義自此生。願言興/210學校，庶幾教化成。

211十二月

212忽忽歳將盡，人事可稍休。/213寒（林日夕）風吹桑林，[[9]](#footnote-9)日夕聲/214颼飅。牆南地不凍，墾掘為/215坑溝。斫桑埋其中，明年芽/216早抽。是月浴蠶種，自古相/217傳流。蠶出易脫殻，絲纊亦/218倍收。及時不努力，知有來/219歳否。手凍不足惜，冀免號/220寒憂。

COLOPHONS

Saying’a薩迎阿 (1781-1857), dated January 1857

(9 columns in semi-cursive script)

Carefully watching this handscroll, [I found that] all starting, ending and turning radicals were created in a consistent style. This piece was created when [Zhao Mengfu] just changed his style from imitating Li Yong 李邕 (678-747) to modelling after Wang Xizhi 王羲之(303-361) and his son Wang Xianzhi 王獻之(344-386). The running of his brush was humble but spiritual and ingenious, perfectly in accordance with the Wangs’ art. Though not as inscrutably excellent as his later works, it is not an achievement that Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555-1636) and Houshan 後山[[10]](#footnote-10) of the previous Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and Wang Shihong 汪士鋐 (1658-1723) and He Chao 何焯 (1661-1722) of our [Qing] dynasty could obtain.

On the day of winter solstice of the sixth year of the Xianfeng reign, seventy-six *sui* old Xianglin records in the Hall of the Five Fortunes at the Military Commander’s Office in Xi’an.

細觀此卷，起收轉摺，始終/一律，乃是初脫北海，漸入二/王時之作。用筆虛靈，深合晉/法。雖尚未臻神化自然之境，/已非昭代之思翁、後山與/國朝之退谷、義門諸書家/所能及也。/

咸豐六年長至日七十六叟湘林識于長/安帥署五福堂中。

Liu Qiqing 劉其清 (d.1883), dated January 1878

(1 column in regular script)

In the twelfth lunar month of the *ding chou* year of the Guangxu reign (January 1878), Liu Qiqing of Pinghu watches in Shanghai.

光緒丁丑臘月平湖劉其清觀於上海。

COLOPHON WRITERS’ SEALS

Saying’a

*miaoni shenxian* 玅擬/神僊, circular relief

*Saying’a yin* 薩迎/阿印, square intaglio

*Xianglin* 湘/林, square intaglio

Liu Qiqing

*Yunshan cengguan* 蘊山/曾觀, square relief

COLLECTORS’ SEALS

Wang Hongxu 王鴻緒 (1645-1723)

*Yanzhai zhenshang* 儼齋/真賞, square relief (suspicious)

Wu Yun 吳雲 (1811-1883)

*Wu Yun Pingzhai jiancang shuhua yin* 吳雲平/齋鍳藏/書畫印, square relief (suspicious)

Saying’a

*Xianglin guoyan* 湘林/過眼, square intaglio, repeated twice

*Sa weng ceng guan* 薩翁/曾觀, square intaglio, repeated twice

Zhu Pu (Xingzhai) 朱樸 (朱省齋, 1902-1970)

*Zhu Xingzhai shuhua ji* 朱省齋/書畫記, tall rectangle relief

*Xingzhai* 省齋, linked-square relief

Zhang Bihan 張碧寒 (1909-1995)

*ceng cang Zhang shi Jingyin yuan* 曾藏張氏/靜蔭園, tall rectangle relief

Unidentified

*De* □ *siyin* 德□/私印, square relief, repeated twice

*bi mo yuan shen* 筆墨/緣深, square intaglio

*Kairong ceng guan* 開榮/曾觀, square intaglio, repeated twice

*Changhe jianshang* 長龢/鑑賞, square intaglio, repeated three times

*Yibai* 夷白, gourd relief

NOTE

**THIS** handscroll is an early eighteenth-century imitation of Zhao Mengfu’s semi-cursive calligraphy. The text is a set of twenty-four poems that Zhao composed and dedicated to Empress Dowager Targi (d. 1322) in 1318, describing monthly Chinese agricultural and sericultural activities.

The artist’s signature is suspicious, as his and two collectors’ seals are. The character *fu* 頫 in the signature obviously appears different from those highly stylized in his authentic pieces. In his semi-cursive writing, Zhao always transformed the four short radicals (two slashes and two dots) in the left portion of this character into two vertical lines separated by the legs (*er* 儿), while those in the current item remain clear and divided. The artist’s seal was engraved in an unrecorded style. The seals attributed to collectors Wang Hongxu (1645-1723) and Wu Yun (1811-1883) have never been recorded.

The artist’s colophon further divulges its fraudulence. According to the colophon, this handscroll was created and presented to a Zizhong, i.e. Xiao He 蕭和 who lived in Wuxing (today’s Huzhou) as a native for his whole life.[[11]](#footnote-11) The only possible date for this dedication to Xiao is between 1319, when Zhao Mengfu was back with his deceased wife to Wuxing from Beijing, and 1322, when he died.[[12]](#footnote-12) In 1299, Zhao created a long handscroll bearing the *Rhapsody on the Luo River Goddess* (*Luo shen fu* 洛神賦) for Xiao, who in turn presented to their new common friend Yuan Yi 袁易 (1262-1306) in 1301 when the latter visited Hangzhou. Lu Wengui 陸文圭 (1252-1336), another friend of theirs, witnessed the 1299 handscroll and confirmed its circulation in his 1321 colophon. Both Xiao and Yuan, Lu wrote, “died in their early ages so that neither could see Academician Zhao’s more splendid calligraphic style he developed in his late years.”[[13]](#footnote-13) Thus Xiao had been dead for over ten years before Zhao’s return to Wuxing in 1319. The artist’s colophon was evidently fabricated.

Among Zhao’s followers, Yu He俞和 (1307-1382) shares the courtesy name Zizhong with Xiao He. Yu He reportedly in his teenage learned calligraphic skills from Zhao in 1319-1322.[[14]](#footnote-14) Even though he could serve Zhao as an attendant, he was too young to get such a generous present.

The album that Zhao presented in 1318 in regular script to Empress Dowager Targi had remained conserved in court until 1745 when the first survey of calligraphy and paintings in the Forbidden City was completed. In his 1341 colophon to the 1318 piece, Yu Ji (1272-1348), once a colleague of Zhao’s, praised its aesthetic value and described how he rediscovered it in an imperial archive.[[15]](#footnote-15) This piece that should be genuine has disappeared from the academic vision since it was imperially catalogued for the first time in 1745. In addition to the Mactaggart version, three more have been located so far, two in the National Palace Museum in Taibei and one in the Rare Books and Special Collections of the UBC Library. The first Taibei version, a handscroll in regular script (Access #Gu-shu-000411-00000), features a layout different from that of the 1318 version. Instead of aforementioned Yu Ji’s colophon, the calligraphy is followed by a colophon attributed to scholar and collector Wu Kuan 吳寬 (1435-1504) and wrongly dated with a chronological error that Wu could not make at all. The second Taibei version consists of two albums, with the poems on tilling on silk (Access #Gu-shu-000613-00000) and those on weaving on paper (Access #Gu-shu-000612-00000). In spite of their different materials, the two albums share an identical signature, particularly with the “simplified” radical *ye* 页, not the highly stylized traditional *ye* 頁, in the right part of the character *fu*. Zhao never used the “simplified” radical in semi-cursive script. Obviously the two Taibei albums were from the very same hands. The album of the poems on weaving, according to the colophon, was created and presented to Zhao’s close friend and colleague Buqumu (1255-1300), who died eighteen years before Zhao composed them for the Empress Dowager. The UBC version (Call # NK3634.C387 A4 1971) is a rubbing made from an inscription engraved after a handscroll in regular script. Its text is incomplete and the colophons and seals on the original handscroll are missing (or were intentionally removed), and it is hard to be dated and authenticated.

Forgeries of Zhao’s calligraphy of those poems appeared as early as in the third quarter of the sixteenth century. One copy recorded in this period is in semi-cursive script as the Mactaggart copy is, yet the average size (over 3 cm) of the characters in the former is bigger than that (about 2 cm) in the latter.[[16]](#footnote-16) In the early eighteenth century, another forgery was catalogued, though a couple of possibly authentic copies were recorded.[[17]](#footnote-17) One copy was presented in 1713 to the Kangxi emperor (r. 1661-1722) to celebrate his sixtieth *sui* birthday,[[18]](#footnote-18) and it could be one of the two forgeries in Taibei. As for the Mactaggart piece, a suspicious seal on it declares Wang Hongxu (1645-1723) as its earliest owner. Thus the Mactaggart piece perhaps came to being in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries when Wang was politically powerful and culturally influential. Saling’a (1781-1857) actually was its first identified owner. Its circulation in the second half of the nineteenth century remains unclear, but it was definitely kept in Shanghai before Zhu Xingzhai (1902-1970) or Zhang Bihan (1909-1995) brought it to Hong Kong and then to New York. In spite of his once ownership, Zhu did not authenticate or describe this piece in his catalogues as he did with other works by Zhao.[[19]](#footnote-19)

In spite of its physical fraudulence, the twenty-four poems by Zhao reveal the cultural and economic adjustments that the Chinese Confucian society suggested to the Mongol court in the early fourteenth century. Targi in her regency and her son Ayurbarwada, the Renzong emperor (r. 1311-1320), were admirers of Confucianism and Chinese culture.[[20]](#footnote-20) In 1317 or earlier, she initiated an artistic project to express her concern with agriculture and sericulture of her Chinese subjects, following a Chinese tradition of didactic arts on agriculture and sericulture that formed as early as the third century.[[21]](#footnote-21) With her patronage, painter Yang Shuqian 楊叔謙 (n.d.) created an album of twenty-four paintings *Nong sang tu* 農桑圖 (Pictures of Agriculture and Sericulture), and at her request Zhao composed twenty-four poems as a verbal translation of Yang’s work. On May 21, 1318, Zhao presented to Targi his poems in a separate album, and on May 27 those paintings with his poems on were presented to Ayurbarwada, who then asked Zhao to compose a prologue to the album.[[22]](#footnote-22) In his poems and prologue, Zhao describes laboriousness and happiness in Chinese rural life, emphasizes the importance of agricultural and sericultural production for the empire, and suggests modeling the Mongol rulers after the ancient sages in the Confucian Classics to promote Confucian physiocracy rather than a nomadic economy.[[23]](#footnote-23) Zhao experienced the dramatic changes that Mongol rule brought to the sedentary Chinese economy and society in which he was born and lived. In his creation, he carried on the Confucian concept of socio-economic order and tried to fit the alien rule into it.

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## (Lianbin Dai; updated 25 July 25, 2016)

1. Translation modified from the inventory record. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For a printed version, see Zhao Mengfu 1339, 2:16a–21b; Hammers 2011, 232–244 for a complete translation. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The last horizontal line of the character *heng*恒 is missing to avoid a royal Zhao family taboo of the Song dynasty. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The character *luan* 孌 is a variant of *lian* 戀 in the 1339 printed version. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The character *ye* 葉 is a variant of *sang* 桑 in the 1339 printed version. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The compound *jishi* 及時 is a variant of *tianjia* 田家 in the 1339 printed version. The characters *yin* 飲and *zui* 醉 are misplaced in the handscroll. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The compound *qinku* 勤苦 is a variant of *laoku* 勞苦 in the 1339 printed version. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The compound *juzhi* 舉之 is a variant of *juzu* 舉足 in the 1339 printed version. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The three characters *lin ri xi* 林日夕 are marked with dots on the right side, which means they should be removed. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. I could not identify Houshan mentioned here. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Zhao Mengfu, “Song Wu Youqing nan huan xu”送吳幼清南還序, in Zhao 1339, 6:10a. Very little is known about Xiao He's life but his good friendship with Zhao and artistic taste, as mentioned in the local gazetteers of Wuxing. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. McCausland 2011, 368–370. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. For Lu Wengui's colophon, see *Shigu tang shuhua huikao* 式古堂書畫彙考, in Lu Fusheng 1992, 6:381A; for their relationship, see 6:412B. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Xu Yikui 1894, 13:12b; Zhang Guangbin 1979, 89–112. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Zhang Zhao et al. 1745, 3:12b–14a. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Zhan Jingfeng 詹景鳳, Zhen Dongyuan xuan lan bian 詹東園玄覽編, in Lu Fusheng 1992, 4:5A. Zhan thinks this piece “genuine but insipid.” [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Gao Shiqi 高士奇, *Jiangcun shuhua lu* 江村書畫錄, see Lu Fusheng 1992, 7:1070A. For possibly authentic copies, see Gao Shiqi, *Jiangcun xiaoxia lu* 江村書畫錄, in Lu Fusheng 1992, 7/1015B; see also Zhu Yizun 朱彜尊, “Zhao Ziang shier yue zhi tu shi” 趙子昂書十二月織圖後, in Zhu Yizun 1714, 53:3a. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Wang Yuanqi 王原祁 et al. 1715, 58:2b. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Zhu Xingzhai 1952. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Xu Zhenghong 2011; Franke 1994, 513–527. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Watabe Takeshi 1986 provides a survey of this artistic tradition. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Zhao Mengfu, “Nong sang tu xu” 農桑圖敍, in Zhao 1339, waiji:2a–3a. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. For a reading of Zhao's poems in agricultural history of Yuan China, see Hammers 2011, 146–153. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)