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Attributed to: Follower of Yan Hui 顏輝 (late 13th–early 14th century)  
 Trad. attr. to: Liu Songnian 劉松年 (ca. 1150–after 1225)  
 Title: *Discussing the Dao in the Shade of Pines*  
 《松陰論道圖》  
*Songyin lundao tu*  
 Dynasty/Date: Yuan-Ming, 14th century  
 Format: Hanging scroll mounted on panel  
 Media: Ink on silk  
 Dimensions: 142.5 x 77.5 cm (56-1/8 x 30-1/2 in)  
 Credit Line: Gift of Charles Lang Freer  
 Accession no.: F1911.295  
 Provenance: Lee Van Ching (Li Wenqing 李文卿), Shanghai

**Subject:** Deep in a mountain valley, the Daoist immortal Li Tieguai instructs a disciple.<sup>1</sup>

**Artist signature:** Liu Songnian 劉松年 (ca. 1150–after 1225) – spurious

Ink on silk. Painting, lower left corner

Seven characters, standard script

金帶待招劉松年

Expectant Official with Golden Belt, Liu Songnian

Signature: 劉松年

Liu Songnian



Seal: (1) - partially legible

*Ji-X* 『繼□』 (circle intaglio) – painting lower left

**Collector seals:** (1) – illegible

□□ (rectangle relief) – painting, lower right

**Traditional Chinese catalogues:** none

### **Bibliography**

Barnhart, Richard M. “An Imaginary Exhibition of Chinese Paintings from the Freer Gallery.” In *Oriental Art* 24.3 (March 1993): 33.

Toda Teisuke 戸田禎佑 and Ogawa Hiromitsu 小川裕充, eds. *Chūgoku kaiga sōgō zuroku: zokuhen* 中國繪畫總合圖錄：續編 (Comprehensive Illustrated Catalogue of Chinese Paintings: Second Series). 4 vols. Tokyo: University of Tokyo, 1998–2001. Vol. 1, 119 (A21–317).

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### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> The following paragraphs are slightly adapted from the draft entry in an unpublished catalogue on Zhe School paintings in the Freer collection by former curators, Fu Shen



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and Jan Stuart, who focused on the current painting as a precursor to works by later followers of that school. Draft entry dated: 03 May 1988 (adapted and updated by Stephen D. Allee):

This is a fine late Yuan or early Ming painting in the style of the important Buddhist and Daoist figure painter, Yan Hui 顏輝 (late 13th-early 14th cent.). Seated deep in a mountain gorge, the lame immortal Li Tieguaì 李鐵拐 (Iron Crutch Li), whose crutch is visible on the ground behind him, holds a scroll in his right hand and raises the left, while a disciple or supplicant kneels in front of him to receive instruction. Li was not born physically disabled, but ended up with the appearance of a haggard beggar through a mishap. While Li's soul was outside his body on a spiritual journey, the disciple left in charge of caring for it was called away and prematurely cremated his seemingly deceased corpse. When Li's soul returned, he had to inhabit the first cadaver he found, even though it had belonged to a vulgar-looking, lame beggar. This is the source of both Li's dishevelment and his common epithet Tieguaì (iron crutch), which comes from having to use the beggar's crutch.

The stocky figure of Li Tieguaì, whose detailed face with its large nose, heavy cheek-bones, and beard, and his ragged clothing described in lines of fluctuating, uneven width, are consistent with the known style of Yan Hui. Both the figures and landscape features, especially the rocks, closely follow such well-known works by Yan as the pair of hanging scrolls in the Chion-in 知恩院 temple in Kyoto, which depict the immortals Li Tieguaì and Liu Hai 劉海, respectively. But certain stylistic features in the Freer painting anticipate developments of the later Zhe School and may indicate a very early Ming date. Most of the rocks in *Discussing the Dao in the Shade of Pines* are textured with short, dense strokes in a conservative style reminiscent of Southern Song painting (and of Yan Hui). But the longer, thinner texture lines blended with wash, appearing mainly on the distant mountains, foreshadow the techniques of Zhe School painters such



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as Huang Ji 黃濟 (active early 15th century), from Fujian Province, who served the Ming court as a painter in the Renzhidian 仁智殿 (Palace of Humane Wisdom). Best known for his painting *Li Tieguai Whetting a Double-edged Sword* (in the Palace Museum, Beijing), Huang Ji was undoubtedly quite familiar with works by Yan Hui and his early followers.

The Freer painting was once much more vibrant than its current state would suggest. At some point in its history, an inept and misguided cleaning of the work diluted the intensity of the ink, and some of the original tonal gradations were lost. Even so, the integrity of the composition and the boldness and strength of the brushwork remain clear and strong. The landscape surrounding the figures presses close. Rocks and cliffs are outlined with jumpy brushstrokes and their surfaces defined with jagged ax-cut strokes. A hanging pine tree stretches a dragon-clawed branch over the head of each figure. Pine needles cluster stiffly, and perhaps a little flatly, on the branches, but at the tip of each needle, where the brush was pressed down, a gentle swelling lends dimension to the forms. Nearby, the still-rooted trunk of a second pine tree bridges the swiftly rushing mountain cataract. While the imposing landscape, which practically dwarfs the figures, does not make this the easiest place to find, foot traffic has polished a smooth, white path over the tree's rough bark. Despite this well-worn access, the mundane world remains far removed from the temporary wilderness abode of this mendicant immortal.

For the two Yan Hui paintings in the Chion-in, Kyoto, see Stephen Little, *Taoism and the Arts of China* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, in association with University of California Press, 2000), 330–31. For the painting by Huang Ji in the Palace Museum, Beijing, see Shan Guoqiang 單國強 et al., eds., *Yuanti Zhepai huihua* 院體浙派繪畫 (Shanghai: Shanghai kexue jishu chubanshe; Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2007), 29.