In 1924, Leifeng Pagoda 雷鋒塔, which had stood for over a thousand years beside West Lake outside Hangzhou, suddenly collapsed. This news, which one might expect to be regarded as quite insignificant in such a politically unstable era, drew the attention not only of local people but also of the elite from all over the country. Literati found this incident to be a perfect opportunity to lament historical change and to argue in favor of having the tower rebuilt in order to keep the set of the Ten Views of West Lake 西湖十景 intact. The well-known writer Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936), however, used the incident to criticize traditional Chinese culture. He wrote, in his characteristically satirical tone,

Many of us in China ... have a sort of “ten views syndrome” or at least an “eight views syndrome,” which reached epidemic proportions in the Qing dynasty, I should say. Look through any county annals, and you will find the district has ten sights, if not eight, such as “Moonlight on a Distant Village,” “Quiet Monastery and Clear Bell,” “Ancient Pool and Crystal Water.”¹

What bothered Lu Xun was the extremely formulaic practice of assigning eight or ten four-character poetic phrases to epitomize the best local scenic sites. Long before Lu Xun, the Qing Dynasty literatus Zha Qichang 査其昌 (1713-1761) already had noted that local people routinely designated the requisite number of stereotyped titles. Commenting on the excessive use of eight or ten views, Zha complained, “as for the ten scenic views or eight scenic views, it is common to find them even in the gazetteers of remote areas. This is really a bad habit.”²

Though Zha Qichang and Lu Xun were correct that most of the “ten views” produced in late imperial times were clichéd, the Southern Song Ten Views of West Lake—probably the source of this “ten views syndrome”—for a long time had usefully served as a creative discourse that helped shape how people inter-

¹ See Lu’s “More Thoughts on the Collapse of Leifeng Pagoda” in Lu et al., Selected Works of Lu Hsun, 96.
² (Qianlong) Haining xianzhi 3.422.
acted with the natural landscape. The place titles associated with West Lake defined the spots that drew visitors’ eyes, and influenced how these viewers interpreted what they saw. Unlike most of the titles that Lu Xun criticized, the Ten Views of West Lake drew extensively from the actual local scenery. This place-energized visual culture was intricately interconnected with social activities and cultural norms. On the one hand, it was rooted in, and in turn enhanced, local pride. And more broadly, it allowed any visitor to feel more familiar within the landscape. By investigating how the Ten Views of West Lake was envisioned, presented, and circulated during the Song, this chapter explores how visual and material cultures in this case were closely tied to both cultural geography and urban life.

While the tradition of sightseeing around West Lake dates back to the Tang Dynasty, Song visitors undoubtedly were the ones who initiated the process of systematically selecting its iconic spots. When exposed to a new environment, sightseers desire focal points to help them assimilate, and they tend to assign symbolic meanings to these focal locations. Their habits are embedded in culture, in “cultural styles, circulating images and texts of this and other places.”3 This culturally influenced way of viewing surrounding nature helped visitors to connect with the landscape. Yi-fu Tuan labels this affective bond between people and place *topophilia*.4 Once the Ten Views of West Lake were enriched through art and literature, they became a perfect checklist for sightseers who wished to take in what West Lake had to offer. Paintings of the lake also evoked a sense of being there for people who were physically unable to visit. This form of enjoyment was traditionally called “travel while lying at ease” (*臥游* woyou), a term first used by the early landscape painter Zong Bing 宗炳 (375-443).5

Place and time both offer constructive points of departure in studies of Chinese visual and material cultures. As Ronald Egan remarked, depicting the natural landscape involves a complicated process of conceptualizing and abstracting the natural elements.6 Specific places can serve as anchors for organizing cultural memories; they help people to construct their personal identities, and facilitate the joining of meaningful words and images.7 Eugene Wang, in his study of Leifeng Pagoda, approaches it as both a signpost and a literary topic: “In reality, a site is echoed in collective memory by its capacity to

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4 Tuan, *Topophilia*, 4.
5 *Hua shanshui xu*, 583-584.