

# *The Influence of Western Learning Spreading to the East on Figure Painting in Qing Dynasty*

**Xueping Deng**

*Specializing in Art History of Ming and Qing Dynasties, Xinyang Normal University, Henan,  
464000, China*

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**Abstract:** Since the 20th century, the cultural phenomenon of the spread and exchange of Western painting in China has gradually attracted the attention of Chinese and foreign scholars from different perspectives of cultural history and art history. The most typical abridged word “the eastward spread of Western painting” represents the cultural phenomenon at that time. The eastward spread of Western painting can be divided into two stages: first, the eastward spread of Western painting in Ming and Qing Dynasties, mainly represented by missionaries; Second, Western painting spread eastward in the 20th century, mainly represented by foreign students. Among them, the spread of Western painting to the East in the 20th century is the focus of scholars, while the development of Western painting and portrait painting in Qing Dynasty was ignored by the public. The former is a local technology participation, the latter is a large-scale cultural transplantation, and gradually into the local mainstream culture.

## **1. Introduction**

In the Qing Dynasty, the development of Chinese figure painting was closely related to the western culture brought by Western missionaries. They belonged to the communication between Chinese culture and Western culture. During the communication, the European missionaries, represented by Matteo Ricci, came to China in the middle of the Ming Dynasty. Their main purpose of coming to China was for their own interests and in western capitalism. At the beginning, they wanted to expand their territory continuously. For this purpose, they sent missionaries to preach. During the missionary work, they also introduced western civilization into China. This caused great waves in the society at that time. In the ideological and cultural, art, military, mathematics, astronomy and so on, they spread to China. At that time, the royal families of Ming Dynasty were influenced by the Western military and vigorously developed the army. When western missionaries brought western painting into China, the exquisite and realistic ability of Western painting deeply stimulated Chinese figure painters. However, some traditional artists strongly opposed western art, which showed that the two cultures began to collide in art, but it promoted from another aspect. The development of Chinese figure painting is mainly the influence of Western learning on Chinese figure painting under the guidance of missionaries.

## 2. Reasons for the Spread of Western Learning in China

### 2.1 Missionaries Bring Paintings to China

Westerners sent missionaries to China for the purpose of expansion. They believed in Jesus. They brought many religious paintings to China. In 1579, that is, the seventh year of Wanli in the Ming Dynasty, Italian missionary Luo Mingjian came to Guangdong Province, a coastal city of our country. When local officials checked their luggage, they found that the items he was carrying included “the style of writing” His contribution is exactly that he introduced western painting into the mainland of China, and the other is Matteo Ricci. His important significance is to open up an important figure in the introduction of Western painting into China. He preached in Nanjing, Nanchang and other cities for several years, and his works of art influenced the folk painters and bureaucrats in southern China. Matteo Ricci had a profound artistic accomplishment and used western painting as a communication tool, thus promoting the spread of Western painting in China. During the Chinese missionary period, his disciples, you Wenhui and Ni ya, studied oil painting in Japan. After returning to China, they followed Matteo Ricci and engaged in religious communication activities. They drew a large number of murals in churches in Macao, Nanchang, Beijing and other places, and copied many small oil paintings<sup>[1]</sup>. Therefore, these colorful holy portraits are the first oil paintings introduced into China, and officials and nobles like these paintings very much. Matteo Ricci's top-down mode of transmission began to form. In the 28th year of the Wanli calendar, Matteo Ricci rushed from Nanjing to Beijing to present western gifts to the emperor. Among the gifts, there were many paintings, including the statue of the Western virgin, the Son Jesus, and the Savior. During the reign of Emperor Kangxi, Bai Jin, a French missionary who served the Qing Dynasty, sent an envoy to France on the emperor's mission. The king of France sent a print to the Chinese emperor and told him to give it to the Chinese emperor. In 1738, the Pope once presented a portrait of himself to the Tibetan monarch. His painting style is more realistic, which is different from traditional Chinese Oriental painting.

### 2.2 Missionaries Spread Their Teaching and Painting in China

After the missionaries came to China, in order to preach, they built a church to preach. In order to decorate and increase the atmosphere of the church, they drew a large number of western images. They preached everywhere, from Macao to Beijing, and Catholicism spread to all provinces of China. Matteo Ricci arrived in Beijing to communicate with the upper class bureaucrats and famous literati of the Ming Dynasty. In 1594, the 22nd year of fame and fortune, Catholicism established St. Paul's College in Macao, China, also known as Notre Dame of God. It was the first university in China founded in accordance with the European model. For example, school buildings, facilities, conditions, personnel training, curriculum, and structure have the nature of a university. Many missionaries and scholars from the East and the west come here to study. Chinese painter Wu Li also studied here. They brought western art here. Although the University was opened for 168 years, it has deeply influenced many domestic artists. In Beijing in the 32nd year of Ming Dynasty, Jesuit missionary Ni Yagu drew the statue of the Virgin Mary of Saint Luca for the church in Beijing. The figure painting is lifelike, colorful and gorgeous The shock and admiration of Chinese scholars. To the end of Kangxi, Italian missionary Lang sining once painted two paintings for Catholicism, namely, the winning picture of Constantine Lai's Cross emblem and the battle map of Constantine the great. From Kangxi to Qianlong, many European missionaries were engaged in art education and art creation activities in the court<sup>[2]</sup>. In addition to Lang sining, there were Nan Huai ren, AI enlightening, Ma Guoxian, Wang Zhicheng, etc. These missionary painters were ordered to teach students at the court, and ban dalisha, Yongtai, Wang Youxue, sun Weifeng and Wang Confucianism

were Lang's disciples. The spread of Western painting to the East had a great influence on the upper class of China. In addition, Lang's influence also spread Western painting and architecture in the Yuanmingyuan. He also painted for the emperor. The painting of spring letter in peace and the image of Qianlong court clothes, etc. gained the attention of the Royal class with the emperor as the center. Thus, the spread and popularity of Western painting in the specific class made the western painting more prominent in the hearts of the Chinese people. The introduction of Western painting to the East provided a strong guarantee.

### **3. The Influence and Historical Contribution of Western Learning to Portrait Painting in Late Qing Dynasty**

#### **3.1 The Influence on Chinese Portrait Creation in the 19th Century**

The 19th century is the beginning of modern China, internal turbulence, the invasion of external powers, is a dark period in Chinese history. The late Qing government constantly signed unequal treaties with the great powers, but figure painting was growing slowly. Western painting style was constantly introduced into China and influenced Chinese painting. In the 19th century, Chinese figure painters actively promoted the commercialization and marketization of painting, and actively adapted to the cultural environment and aesthetic taste of new citizens<sup>[3]</sup>. On the basis of maintaining their traditional hands, they paid more attention to the realistic feeling of Western painting modeling mode, so as to meet the aesthetic needs of the new citizen class. This is the influence of Western learning on Shanghai at that time. In the influence of Western learning eastward on modern times, Mr. Xue Yongnian thought: "the so-called concretization of painting is to absorb the skills of western realism and enhance the visual expressiveness of works. However, all these are still based on the premise of maintaining the traditional Chinese painting pattern, so it is not Westernization. In this respect, Ren Bonian is the most representative. His large number of portraits have a good grasp of proportion, perspective, light and shade, without losing consciousness, but the form is also lifelike: his figure painting and flower and bird painting, especially the traditional scattered perspective applied to the whole, do not lose the Chinese charm, but the local treatment of images, especially the images of figures and birds, follows the law of focus perspective, and the posture of the front and side is lifelike. We can see Ren Bonian's absorption and study of Western painting. He inherited Chinese traditional painting for thousands of years, and absorbed western painting. In modern art, we can see the influence of Western missionaries on Chinese figure painting<sup>[4]</sup>. We can clearly see that, regardless of whether western painting or Western learning spread eastward, both were the integration of Chinese culture and Western culture. In the late Ming Dynasty, bochen school was the combination of Chinese culture and Western culture. They were influenced by the spread of Western painting to the East. However, they were different in their choice of service objects. Zeng Jing was the representative of figure painting in the late Ming Dynasty, literati painters and elegant scholars in Jiangnan. Among them, Wang Shimin and others were the leaders in the literary world, and the objects he served were the literati class. However, in the middle of Qing Dynasty, the service objects of the figure painters were mainly the officials and nobles of the Qing Dynasty and the royal families. Ren Bonian served the majority of the people, as well as businessmen. At that time, Ren Bonian was representative in Shanghai portraits, which mainly showed that Ren's art was suitable for the taste of the people at that time and the aesthetic taste of the buyers.

#### **3.2 The Influence of Portrait on the Artistic Style of Portrait in the Late Qing Dynasty**

The outstanding achievement of Shanghai style portrait painting is the representative of figure

painting style in the late Qing Dynasty. Their images have obvious Western painting image experience, and can meet the aesthetic taste of both refined and popular tastes<sup>[5]</sup>. In the works, the combination of work and writing conforms to the aesthetic preference of Chinese painting language noumenon. After the influence of the missionaries of Kangxi and Qianlong, Chinese portrait painting absorbed the essence of Western painting It is not a new thing to change into one's own school of painting. We can get a lot of feelings from the works of Shanghai school. We can find that there is any connection between the combination of Shanghai style works and portrait paintings of the KangQian period<sup>[6]</sup>. That is to say, they are all the products of the western learning spreading to the East, but there is no progressive relationship in the face of the change of painting style The reason lies in the historical independence of Shanghai school. As the main body of cultural exchange, we are the cultural subjectivity in cultural exchange, which leads to some differences in the results of integration.

#### 4. Conclusion

In short, the development of “Western learning” in Chinese contemporary figure painting is the driving force to promote the innovation and development of contemporary Chinese figure painting. Influenced by Western painting art ideas, Chinese traditional painting art is also developing with the trend of the times. This enlightens the fine arts education in Colleges and universities, on the basis of respecting students' painting styles, learning and learning from the western art creation styles and techniques, and combining them with their own characteristics and techniques, making bold innovation in painting learning. Only in this way can we find a suitable road for their art development and form a distinctive artistic style suitable for them.

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