

The Influence of Social Background on Painting— Taking the Literati Paintings of the Ming and Qing Dynasties as an Example

Xu Yulian, Yang Dezhong

Art College, Anhui University of Finance and Economics, Bengbu, Anhui, 233000, China

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Abstract: This paper aims to explore the influence of social background on painting, taking literati paintings in the Ming and Qing Dynasties as an example. The Ming and Qing Dynasties were an important period in the history of Chinese painting. As one of the important forms of painting, literati painting was deeply loved by the literati and bureaucrats. This article will analyze the social background, literati's aesthetic concepts, painting traditions and other aspects of the Ming and Qing Dynasties to reveal the influence of social background on painting styles, themes, techniques, etc., and further discuss this influence on the art of literati paintings in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. What impact has the shaping of achievement and cultural connotation had.

Painting is an important art form that carries the connotation of social culture and the spirit of the times. The social context had a profound impact on the development and evolution of painting. The Ming and Qing Dynasties were an important period in the history of Chinese painting. In particular, literati painting flourished during this period and became a unique form of painting. Therefore, studying the relationship between literati painting and social background in the Ming and Qing Dynasties is of great significance for deeply understanding the historical context of the development of Chinese painting and the evolution of social culture.

1. Social background and literati paintings during the Ming and Qing Dynasties

1.1. Social and political background during the Ming and Qing Dynasties

As art critic Danner said: "To understand a work of art, an artist, or a group of artists, one must correctly imagine the spirit and customs of their era. This is the final explanation of the artwork and the basic reason that determines everything. ." [1] In order to more comprehensively and thoroughly understand the characteristics of literati paintings in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, we must understand the social and cultural background and academic trends of the time.

The Ming and Qing Dynasties were an important period in Chinese history. The changes in the social and political background had a profound impact on the development of literati painting. In the late Ming Dynasty, social unrest and frequent internal and external wars had a huge impact on the creative environment and artistic expression of literati paintings. With the fall of the Ming Dynasty

and the establishment of the Qing Dynasty, Chinese society entered a new era. The political system and governance concepts of the Qing Dynasty also had a certain impact on the development of literati paintings. In their spiritual pursuits, literati and officials shifted from spiritual beliefs to focusing on individual survival and feelings, pursuing self-transcendence and freedom and affirming and attaching importance to the consciousness of life and human body. Influenced by Chen Zhu's Neo-Confucianism, literati painting paid more attention to the painter's individual subjective consciousness and life experience, and paid more attention to the expression and publicity of "self", "heart", "nature" and "emotion" in his works.[2]

1.2. The rise and development of literati painting

Literati painting emerged rapidly during the Ming and Qing Dynasties and became the main form of artistic expression for the scholar-bureaucrats at that time. Corresponding to court painting, literati painting emphasizes individual aesthetic pursuit and emotional expression, and is independent and free. This rise and development are closely related to the social background of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, including socio-economic changes, changes in the political landscape, and the awakening and self-identity of the scholar class. The rise of literati painting marked the change of social atmosphere and the rise of intellectuals.

1.3. Aesthetic concepts of literati paintings

The literati paintings of the Ming and Qing Dynasties are famous for their unique aesthetic concepts. These aesthetic concepts are closely connected with the social background and are influenced by social trends, philosophical thoughts, and the lifestyles of literati and officials. Literati paintings pursue natural truth, elegant taste, and profound artistic conception. They focus on expressing personal emotions and will, reflecting the aesthetic pursuit and cultural consciousness of the literati and bureaucrats. With the development of the commodity economy, the prosperity of urban markets and towns, and the expansion of the number of citizens and their influence, the mentality of literati in the Ming and Qing Dynasties has undergone profound changes. They have a secular tendency in terms of lifestyle, attitude towards life, aesthetic taste, etc. They pay more attention to the management of life and profit-making, pay attention to the daily necessities of the people, and pursue the satisfaction of personal emotions and desires. When they engage in cultural activities with this mentality, their literary and artistic creations and literary and artistic theoretical thoughts will inevitably take on many new aspects that are different from the past. [3] Literati painting, as a unique form of artistic expression, carries social and cultural connotations.

2. The influence of social background on painting style

2.1. The evolution of painting styles in the Ming and Qing Dynasties

The social background of the Ming and Qing Dynasties had a profound impact on painting styles, leading to the evolution and changes of literati painting styles. During the Ming Dynasty, social unrest and cultural transformation drove changes in painting styles. In the early Ming Dynasty, the realism painting style represented by Hui School and Zhejiang School was popular, pursuing vivid images and delicate painting techniques. In the middle and late Ming Dynasty, with the intensification of social and political turmoil and the awakening of the scholar-bureaucrat class, literati painting gradually emerged, advocating individual expression and free creation. This change promoted the development of painting style towards lyricism with artistic conception and charm as its core.

During the Qing Dynasty, changes in social background continued to have an impact on painting

style. After the establishment of the Qing Dynasty, court painting came under official influence and inherited some traditions of Ming Dynasty painting. But at the same time, many literati with poetic talents appeared in the society. They focused on personal emotional expression and natural artistic pursuit, and promoted the further development of literati painting style. The literati paintings of the Qing Dynasty focused on artistic conception and emotional sustenance, and pursued elegant brushwork and profound artistic significance, forming a unique literati painting style.

2.2. Comparison between literati paintings and court paintings

There is a clear contrast between literati paintings and court paintings in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. This contrast also reflects the influence of social background on painting styles. Restricted by the official guidance and aesthetic standards of the imperial court, court paintings pursued a gorgeous, majestic, solemn and serious style. Court paintings also emphasized painting techniques and grand scenes, showing the ruler's authority and social order. In contrast, literati painting pays more attention to personal emotions and aesthetic pursuits, emphasizing free creation and expression of inner artistic conception and feelings. This contrast highlights the diversity and plurality of painting styles influenced by social background.

2.3. Social background influences the choice of painting themes

The social changes and the awakening of the scholar-official class during the Ming and Qing Dynasties promoted the transformation of painting themes from traditional themes such as religion and myths and legends to themes closer to daily life, such as real life, natural landscapes, and gatherings of literati. Changes in social background have led to the diversity and individualization of painting themes. More personal emotions, natural scenery, portraits and gatherings of literati have appeared in paintings, enriching the content and expression of paintings.

The social background of the Ming and Qing Dynasties influenced painting styles in many aspects, including the evolution of painting styles, comparison with court paintings, and the choice of painting themes. It Strengthens research on these aspects, in order to understand the artistic style and creative characteristics of Ming and Qing literati painting, and gain a deeper understanding of the development and social and cultural changes of Chinese painting history.

3. The influence of social background on painting techniques

3.1. Technical characteristics of literati paintings

The literati paintings of the Ming and Qing Dynasties had unique expression techniques, which were closely related to the changes in social background. Literati paintings pursue free creation and expression of personal style, and have unique pursuits and preferences for painting techniques. On the one hand, literati paintings focus on the use of ink color, pursuing the changes in the shade, dryness and wetness of ink, and expressing emotions and artistic conception through the expressive power of ink color. The literati painters of the Ming and Qing Dynasties put all their emotions into their pen and ink, giving it the value of life. The images of birds with "white eyes turned to the sky" painted by Zhu Da, one of the "Four Monks of the Early Qing Dynasty", allow us to read the artist's sadness and loneliness at the wrong time, alienation from the world, cold eyes on the world, and isolation [4]

On the other hand, literati paintings pay attention to the freehand brushwork and blank space, emphasizing the condensation of artistic conception and the development of imagination. Freehand brushwork can convey a unique world in one's heart, and blank space can give the audience unlimited reverie, adding a touch of artistic flavor to the picture while also expressing the mountains, rivers and

ravines in the minds of literati. These technical characteristics echo the mentality of Chinese scholars and officials in the social background of the Ming and Qing Dynasties who pursued individual expression and free creation.

3.2. Social background's influence on painting techniques

The social political turmoil and the awakening of the scholar-bureaucrat class during the Ming and Qing Dynasties prompted literati painters to seek personal freedom and ways of emotional expression. In this context, literati painters paid more attention to freehand brushwork and techniques, and expressed their inner emotions and personal aesthetic pursuits through the use of various brush and ink techniques.

The shaping of painting techniques by social background is reflected in the innovation and improvement of traditional techniques by literati painters. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, a series of innovations in painting theories and techniques appeared, such as new techniques to express landscapes such as the chaffing method and the splash-ink method. These innovative techniques allowed literati painters to express their emotions and artistic conception more freely, and to show their unique personal style in the use of techniques.

The social background's shaping of painting techniques is also reflected in the contrast between literati paintings and court paintings. Court painting focused on fine techniques and strict norms, while literati painting placed more emphasis on personal creation and free expression. This contrast promoted the literati painters' reflection and exploration of painting techniques, making them pay more attention to the emotional expression of pen and ink and the skills of free creation.

3.3. Social significance of painting techniques

The shaping of painting techniques by social background is not only a change in the way of artistic expression, but also reflects the influence of social background on the aesthetic pursuit and cultural consciousness of the literati and bureaucrats during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The changes in painting techniques reflect the rise of individual consciousness and the improvement of personality pursuits in the social background. Literati painters integrated personal emotions and aesthetic concepts into paintings through innovative techniques and personal expressions, further enriching the connotation and expression of paintings. From the literati painting techniques of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, we can gain a glimpse of the role of social background in shaping painting, as well as the relationship between the development of Chinese painting history and social and cultural changes.

4. The social background shapes the artistic achievements and cultural connotations of literati paintings

4.1. Artistic achievements of literati paintings

The social background of the Ming and Qing Dynasties had an important impact on the development of literati paintings, which in turn shaped the artistic achievements of literati paintings and gave their works unique artistic charm. Literati paintings pursue the changes in shades of ink, the contrast of wet and dry colors, and the vivid freedom of lines, thereby creating rich visual effects and emotional resonance.

Literati paintings pay attention to the creation of artistic conception and ethereal charm. Literati painters created a profound sense of space and an otherworldly artistic conception through elegant brushwork and white space. They used natural landscapes, literati gatherings and other themes to express their aesthetic tastes and spiritual pursuits through the use of images and symbols, forming a

unique artistic style.

4.2. Social background shapes the cultural connotation of literati paintings

The social background of the Ming and Qing Dynasties profoundly shaped the artistic achievements of literati paintings and their cultural connotations. The political turmoil, cultural transformation and the awakening of the scholar-official class in the social background promoted the ideological liberation and cultural consciousness of literati painters. They are led by free creation and expression of personal emotions, supported by cultural elements such as poetry and literary theory, and integrate rich cultural connotations into literati paintings.

Literati paintings convey rich cultural information and concepts through paintings, reflecting people's aesthetic taste and cultural taste. Literati painters often used daily life scenes such as literati gatherings, reading and writing, and landscape tours as themes to express their concern for nature, humanity, and morality. Through artistic creation, they pursue peace of mind and emotional catharsis, and at the same time convey a cultural concept of pursuing noble taste and spiritual realm.

4.3. The influence and significance of literati paintings on social culture

The artistic achievements and cultural connotations of literati paintings during the Ming and Qing Dynasties had an important impact and significance on social culture. With its unique artistic expression and personal aesthetic pursuit, literati painting promoted the diversified and personalized development of painting art and enriched the connotation and form of the history of Chinese painting. Literati paintings construct a new cultural identity and artistic value system by expressing individual emotions, conveying cultural concepts and aesthetic tastes. With their own creative practices and cultural pursuits, literati painters influenced the literati and bureaucrats at that time as well as later artists and cultural figures, forming the unique status and influence of literati painting in the history of Chinese painting. These influences help reveal the role of social background in shaping painting and provide a deeper understanding of the development of Chinese painting history and social and cultural changes.

5. Conclusion

The social background of the Ming and Qing Dynasties had a series of important influences on the development of literati painting. Political turmoil, cultural transformation and the awakening of the scholar-official class promoted the rise and development of literati painting. Changes in the social background and the ideological emancipation of the scholar-official class prompted literati painters to pursue free creation and personal expression, thus promoting changes in painting themes, styles and techniques. The expansion of the citizen class has promoted the diversified and personalized development of painting art, enriching the connotation and form of Chinese painting history. Literati paintings construct a new cultural identity and artistic value system by expressing individual emotions, conveying cultural concepts and aesthetic tastes.

The influence of social background on painting is fully demonstrated in the literati paintings of the Ming and Qing Dynasties. By studying the relationship between the social background and literati paintings in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, we have a deeper understanding of the artistic characteristics, cultural connotation and influence of literati paintings on social culture. This research not only helps us understand the history of painting in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, but also provides important reference and inspiration for the study of painting history and social and cultural changes. Future research can further explore the development of painting in other periods and regions to fully grasp the impact of social background on painting.

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