

The Evolution of Landscape Painting during the Five Dynasties and Two Song Dynasties

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Abstract: *The Five Dynasties and Two Song Dynasties period was an important stage in the development of Chinese landscape painting, and its evolution process contained rich artistic connotations and cultural values. This article explores in depth the stylistic characteristics, representative painters, and their works of landscape painting in different stages of this period. It analyzes the political, economic, cultural, and other factors that contributed to the evolution of landscape painting styles, aiming to reveal the inherent laws of the evolution of landscape painting in the Five Dynasties and Two Song Dynasties and its profound significance in the history of Chinese painting. This article takes the morphological analysis of landscape painting as the starting point, combined with the changes in social structure and the evolution of philosophical trends, to systematically examine the transformation trajectory of landscape painting from the Five Dynasties to the Southern Song Dynasty in terms of composition paradigm, brush and ink language, and spatial consciousness. Research has found that the evolution of Chinese landscape painting from the 10th to the 13th century presented an aesthetic shift from the "realm of heaven and earth" to the "realm of life". This shift was influenced not only by the rise of the literati class and the reshaping of the geographical space of Jiangnan, but also by the deep intertextuality of the ideological history process of the transformation of the Song Dynasty's Neo Confucianism's "investigating things to gain knowledge" thinking mode into centripetal theory.*

Keywords: *Five Dynasties and Two Song Dynasties, landscape painting, style change, cultural background*

1. Introduction

Chinese landscape painting has undergone long-term development and reached its artistic peak during the Five Dynasties and Two Song Dynasties. During this period, there were diverse styles of landscape painting, ranging from the majestic and simple style of the Five Dynasties period to the panoramic and magnificent style of the Northern Song Dynasty, and then to the poetic scenery of the Southern Song Dynasty, presenting a unique trajectory of evolution [1]. This change not only reflects the continuous innovation of painting techniques, but is also closely related to the social environment and cultural trends of the time. Thoroughly studying the evolution of landscape painting during the Five Dynasties and Two Song dynasties is of great significance for understanding the development and cultural connotations of traditional Chinese painting art [2]. The evolution of landscape painting during the Five Dynasties and Two Song dynasties is essentially a visual history of the spiritual structure of Chinese intellectuals[3]. From Jing Hao's contemplation of the universe, where he captures the essence of objects, to Ma Yuan's poetic contemplation of the remnants of mountains and waters, painters reconstruct not only natural landscapes but also a continuous questioning of ideal personalities and cultural identities through their brushwork. This unique wisdom of transforming philosophical speculation into visual programs has established an eternal model of "art carries the message" for East Asian art, and its legacy continues to release energy in contemporary ink painting experiments.

2. Landscape painting during the Five Dynasties period: laying the foundation and showing the initial style

2.1 Historical background

During the Five Dynasties period, there were frequent changes in political power and social unrest,

but relatively independent regional regimes also provided some space for the development of culture and art. Especially in the Western Shu and Southern Tang dynasties, the rulers' emphasis on culture and art allowed painting art to continue and develop during this period. On the basis of inheriting the tradition of the Tang Dynasty, landscape painting began to form a unique regional style, laying the foundation for the development of landscape painting in later generations.

2.2 Northern landscape painting school

2.2.1 Jing Hao and his "Kuang Lu Tu"

Jing Hao is a representative figure of the Five Dynasties Northern Landscape Painting School. He lived in seclusion in the Taihang Mountains, studied nature, and made important contributions to the development of landscape painting. His representative work, "Kuanglou Tu," presents the majestic northern mountains and rivers in a panoramic composition. In the picture, the main peak towers into the clouds, majestic and imposing, surrounded by mountains and clear layers. In terms of technique, Jing Hao pioneered the "texturing method", using "axe splitting texturing" to express the texture and structure of mountains and rocks, greatly enhancing the expressive power of landscape painting. He emphasized that "the brush has four forces, namely tendons, flesh, bones, and qi", and emphasized the use of brush and ink, laying a theoretical foundation for the brush and ink techniques of later landscape paintings.

2.2.2 Guan Tong and his style

Guan Tong learned from Jing Hao and also innovated, forming his own unique style. His landscape paintings often depict the scenery of mountains and rivers in the Guanshan area, with "simpler strokes but stronger strokes, fewer scenes but longer meanings". In his work 'Journey to Guanshan', he depicts deep valleys, cold forests, and mountain trails, with a simple yet profound artistic conception. Guan Tong was skilled in using vigorous brushwork to depict the steepness of mountains and rocks, using light ink to create an atmosphere that gave the painting a desolate and majestic mood. He was known as the "Guan Family Landscape" and had a profound impact on the development of landscape painting in the Northern Song Dynasty.

2.3 Southern landscape painting school

2.3.1 Dong Yuan and his "Xiaoxiang Map"

Dong Yuan is an outstanding representative of the Southern landscape painting school of the Five Dynasties. His landscape paintings are based on the Jiangnan landscape, showing a plain, innocent, gentle and elegant style. The painting "Xiaoxiang" depicts the beautiful scenery of the water towns in Jiangnan, with undulating peaks, misty clouds, vast rivers, and scattered Tingzhu. Dong Yuan pioneered the use of "hemp tattooing" and "dotted tattooing", using rounded lines and dense ink dots to depict the wetness of the Jiangnan landscape and the lush vegetation, giving the painting a unique texture and rhythm. He emphasizes the use of variations in ink intensity to depict the distant and distant layers of mountains and waters, creating a hazy and subtle aesthetic in the painting.

2.3.2 Giant Ran and Its Artistic Features

Ju Ran learned from Dong Yuan and further developed on his foundation. His landscape paintings are characterized by clean and smooth brushwork, and he is skilled at depicting the profound atmosphere of Jiangnan landscapes. In the painting "Qiu Shan Wen Tu", Ju Ran depicts the reclusive life in the deep mountains with a composition that combines high and deep perspectives. In the picture, the mountains overlap, the trees are dense, and the mountain paths are winding and twisting, leading to the depths of the thatched cottage. In his use of brush and ink, in addition to inheriting Dong Yuan's linen texture, he also strengthened the variation of brush and ink, making the picture more layered and rhythmic. Ju Ran's works reflect the delicate observation and unique aesthetic feelings of the Southern landscape painting party towards natural landscapes.

3. Northern Song Dynasty landscape painting: The prosperity and flourishing of panoramic landscape painting

3.1 Historical background

After the establishment of the Northern Song Dynasty, the division of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms ended, the society remained relatively stable, the economy prospered, and cultural and artistic development also saw great progress. The rulers of the Northern Song Dynasty attached great importance to cultural construction and established the Hanlin Painting Academy, which trained and gathered numerous outstanding painters. In this context, landscape painting has further developed and grown on the basis of inheriting the traditions of the Five Dynasties, presenting a prosperous panoramic landscape.

3.2 Landscape painting in the early Northern Song Dynasty

3.2.1 Li Cheng and his "Reading Stele Nests and Stone Paintings"

Li Cheng was an important representative figure of landscape painting in the early Northern Song Dynasty. His landscape paintings are based on the mountains and waters of the Qilu region, with a clear and sparse style. The painting "Reading Stele Nests and Stones" depicts an ancient stele in the wilderness, with a withered tree standing beside it and a person looking up at the inscription under the tree. The picture creates a desolate and lonely atmosphere with a simple composition and light brushwork. Li Chengshan used light ink to depict the distant and distant layers of mountains and waters, known as "cherishing ink like gold". His unique "crab claw branch" technique vividly depicts the form of withered trees, providing important reference for the tree techniques of later landscape paintings.

3.2.2 Fan Kuan and his "Travel Map of Mountains and Streams"

Fan Kuan and Li Cheng are both known as "Li Fan", and his landscape painting style is majestic and magnificent. Fan Kuan has lived in Zhongnan Mountain and Taihua Mountain for a long time, and has a profound understanding of the majestic landscape of northern China. The "Journey to the Mountains and Streams" is his representative work, in which a towering main peak stands tall and occupies most of the space, giving a strong visual impact. The waterfalls in the mountains are like practice, the huge rocks crisscross the mountains, and the streams are gurgling. A group of travelers slowly move forward on the mountain road, adding a touch of life to the picture. Fan Kuan uses "raindrop texture" and "Douban texture" to express the texture and heaviness of mountains and rocks, with strong and powerful brushstrokes, fully showcasing the grandeur and magnificence of northern landscapes.

3.3 Landscape painting in the middle and late Northern Song Dynasty

3.3.1 Guo Xi and his "Early Spring Picture"

Guo Xi was a representative painter of landscape painting in the mid to late Northern Song Dynasty, with outstanding achievements in both theory and practice of landscape painting. The "Early Spring Picture" depicts the scene of the revival of all things in early spring, with mountains undulating, clouds and mist spreading, trees sprouting, and streams thawing. Guo Xi used the "Three Distances Method" in composition, namely high distance, deep distance, and flat distance, to give the picture a rich sense of hierarchy and space. In terms of brush and ink application, his "rolling cloud texture" expresses the form of mountains and rocks with dynamic lines, like clouds curling and full of variation. Guo Xi also proposed the aesthetic theory of landscape painting, which emphasizes the painter's expression of the seasonal changes and different emotions of natural landscapes, such as "spring mountains are as gentle as a smile, summer mountains are as verdant as drops, autumn mountains are as clear as makeup, and winter mountains are as bleak as sleep". As shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Early Spring Picture

3.3.2 Father and son Mi Fu and Mi Youren and "Mi's Cloud Mountain"

Mi Fu and Mi Youren, father and son, created a new style of landscape painting with their unique "Mi's Cloud Mountain". They use the theme of Jiangnan mountains and waters, and employ the method of ink painting to depict the misty beauty of Jiangnan mountains and waters. Mi Fu's painting "Spring Mountain with Auspicious Pine Trees" depicts the undulating peaks and misty clouds, with pine trees appearing and disappearing in the mist, full of poetry. The father and son of the Mi family mainly use the technique of "falling eggplant texture" (also known as "rice dot texture") to depict mountains and trees, using ink dots of different sizes to create a unique rhythm and sense of rhythm in the painting. The "Mi's Cloud Mountain" broke through the traditional brush and ink techniques of landscape painting, emphasizing the painter's instantaneous feelings and subjective expression of interest in nature, and had an important impact on the development of literati landscape painting in later generations.

4. Landscape painting during the Southern Song Dynasty: Poetic scenes and style changes

4.1 Historical background

During the Southern Song Dynasty, the political center shifted southward, and the relatively peaceful social environment led to a change in people's aesthetic concepts. Landscape painting no longer pursues the panoramic grandeur of the Northern Song Dynasty, but pays more attention to the depiction of local scenery to express delicate emotions and poetic realm. At the same time, the development of the Southern Song Painting Academy remained prosperous, and painters continued to innovate on the basis of inheriting the traditions of the Northern Song Dynasty, forming a unique style of Southern Song landscape painting.

4.2 Li Tang and his influence on Southern Song Dynasty landscape painting

Li Tang was the pioneer of landscape painting in the Southern Song Dynasty. He experienced political changes from the Northern Song Dynasty to the Southern Song Dynasty, and his landscape painting style also underwent a transformation. Early Li Tang's landscape paintings, such as "The Wind of Pine Trees in Ten Thousand Valleys," inherited the majestic style of Northern Song Dynasty landscape paintings. The mountains in the painting are hard and the trees are dense, and the texture and momentum of the rocks are expressed through "axe cutting and carving". After the southward migration, Li Tang's landscape painting style gradually simplified, and the images paid more attention to the creation of artistic conception. His painting "Caiwei Tu" is based on historical stories and depicts the scenes of Boyi and Shuqi Caiwei living in seclusion. The images are concise, the characters are vividly portrayed, and through the rendering of the environment, a noble sense of integrity and spiritual connotation is expressed. Li Tang's style transformation opened up a new path for the development of

landscape painting in the Southern Song Dynasty, and had an important influence on later generations such as Ma Yuan and Xia Gui.

4.3 Ma Yuan, Xia Gui, and the "Scenery of the Corner"

4.3.1 Ma Yuan and his "Treading Song Chart"

Ma Yuan is an outstanding representative of landscape painting in the Southern Song Dynasty. His landscape paintings have simple compositions and often incorporate scenes from the corners, earning him the nickname "Ma Yijiao". The "Treading Song Picture" depicts the joyful scene of several old farmers singing and walking on the field ridge during the spring season. In the picture, the distant mountain peaks are towering, shrouded in clouds and mist. Nearby, there are giant stones and lush bamboo trees, and the stream is gurgling. Several old farmers come in different shapes, singing and laughing happily. Ma Yuan outlined the contours of the scenery with concise brushwork, using a large axe to carve and express the texture and three-dimensional feeling of the rocks, and creating a vast sense of space through leaving white. His works emphasize the contrast between reality and virtuality in the picture, using partial depictions to present the overall artistic conception, allowing viewers to feel a fresh and bright atmosphere.

4.3.2 Xia Gui and his "Clear and Distant Map of Streams and Mountains"

Xia Gui and Ma Yuan are both known as "Ma Xia". His landscape painting style is similar to that of Ma Yuan, and he is also skilled in expressing the artistic conception of mountains and waters through the scenery of corners, known as "Xia Banban". The painting 'Clear and Distant Streams and Mountains' is one of Xia Gui's representative works, which presents the beautiful scenery of Jiangnan mountains and waters in the form of a long scroll. The painter depicted mountains, trees, streams, villages and other scenery through delicate brushwork, with clear layers and profound artistic conception. Xia Gui is more free spirited in his use of brush and ink, often using a bald pen with water as a big axe to carve and crack, known as "dragging mud with water", giving the painting a vivid and lively beauty. His works emphasize the grasp of the rhythm of the picture, creating a unique artistic atmosphere through the density and changes in reality and virtuality of the scenery. As shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Partial View of Clear Mountains and Streams

5. Factors influencing the evolution of landscape painting during the Five Dynasties and Two Song dynasties

5.1 Political factors

The division and separatism during the Five Dynasties period led to the formation of unique styles of landscape paintings in different regions. The unification of the Northern Song Dynasty provided a stable social environment for the prosperity of landscape painting, while the tranquility of the Southern Song Dynasty led to a shift in the style of landscape painting towards a more delicate and lyrical direction. The shift of political center also influenced the creative themes and aesthetic concepts of painters, such as the more in-depth and detailed depictions of Jiangnan landscapes by painters during the Southern Song Dynasty.

5.2 Economic factors

During the Song Dynasty, the economy was prosperous, commerce was developed, cities emerged,

and the urban class grew stronger. This not only provides a material foundation for the development of painting art, but also expands the audience of painting. Painters constantly innovate in the themes and forms of landscape painting to meet the aesthetic needs of different social classes. At the same time, economic development has also promoted cultural exchange, and the painting styles of different regions have influenced each other, driving the evolution of landscape painting.

5.3 Cultural factors

During the Five Dynasties and Two Song Dynasties, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism blended together, exerting a profound influence on the development of landscape painting. The Confucian ideas of "benevolence" and "ritual" make painters pay attention to expressing the moral implications of natural landscapes; The Taoist ideas of "nature" and "non action" encourage painters to pursue the natural and innocent beauty of landscape painting; The Zen philosophy of Buddhism emphasizes inner perception and the grasp of the moment, making landscape painting more focused on creating artistic conception and expressing the painter's subjective emotions. In addition, art forms such as poetry and calligraphy in the Song Dynasty also permeated with landscape painting, and the concept of the same origin of poetry and painting, as well as calligraphy and painting, was fully reflected during this period, further enriching the cultural connotation of landscape painting.

6. Conclusion

The evolution of landscape painting during the Five Dynasties and Two Song Dynasties was a complex and diverse process. From the initial formation of the styles of the Northern and Southern landscape painting schools during the Five Dynasties period, to the flourishing of panoramic landscape painting in the Northern Song Dynasty, and to the unique style transformation of poetic scenery in the Southern Song Dynasty, landscape painting during this period achieved outstanding achievements in artistic style, expressive techniques, and cultural connotations. The interaction of various factors such as politics, economy, and culture has jointly contributed to the evolution of landscape painting. The evolution of landscape painting during the Five Dynasties and Two Song Dynasties not only laid a solid foundation for the development of landscape painting in later generations, but also became a monument in the history of Chinese painting. Its artistic value and cultural spirit still have a profound impact on our artistic creation and aesthetic appreciation today. In depth research on the evolution of landscape painting during this period can help us better understand the profoundness of traditional Chinese painting art, inherit and promote the excellent cultural and artistic traditions of the Chinese nation.

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