A Great Masterpiece: Zhao Mengfu’s "Autumn at Que and Hua Buzhu Hills"

Luo Hongqiang
Art College of Gansu University of Political Science and Law, Lanzhou 730070, China

Keywords: Zhao Mengfu, “Autumn at Que and Hua Buzhu Hills”, appreciation.

Abstract: "Autumn at Que and Hua Buzhu Hills" is the most representative landscape painting by Zhao Mengfu, a famous painter of the Yuan Dynasty. In his works, Zhao Mengfu borrows writing into the painting, using three-stage composition and the combination of ink and green. His works are classical and elegant with profound implication and feelings hidden in the landscape, and his painting theory has had a profound impact on later generations. This article introduces the creative background of Zhao Mengfu and his "Autumn at Que and Hua Buzhu Hills ". On this basis, this article analyses the artistic features and seclusion feelings of this masterpiece.

1. Introduction

Zhao Mengfu is a famous painter of the Yuan Dynasty. He is also one of “the four great calligraphers” – the other three are Ouyang Xun, Yan Zhenqing and Liu Gongquan. He is versatile, and he is good at poetry, especially calligraphy and painting and he also understands economy, antique, appreciating literary and artistic works. He do well in painting landscapes, figures, bamboo, stones, flowers and birds, pommel horses. " Autumn at Que and Hua Buzhu Hills " was painted by Zhao Mengfu in his hometown of Wuxing, Zhejiang Province in 1295 for Zhou Ming, the famous poet and writer of the late Southern Song Dynasty. It is the most representative painting of Zhao Mengfu's landscape painting.

2. Zhao Mengfu and "Qi Huaqiu Color Map"

Zhao Mengfu, also known as Ziang , Songxue , Songxue Daoren and Shuijinggong Daoren. Zhejiang Wuxing people, is the 11th grandson of Song Taizu Zhao Wei, the descendant of Qin Wang Zhao Defang. His father Zhao Yugao was Southern Song Dynasty Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Conciliation officer in Linan Zhexi, good at poetry and collection. Zhao Mengfu was very well influenced by art and culture. At the age of eleven, Zhao Mengfu's father died and at the age of fourteen, he was the student of the Guozijian and then became “Sihucanjun” in ZhenZhou. After the Southern Song Dynasty perished, Zhao Meng went back to his hometown to live. By 1286, the Yuan Dynasty sent messengers to visit the officials left by the Southern Song Dynasty. Zhao Mengfu and other more than ten people were recommended to Kublai Khan. At the age of 32, Zhao Mengfu was at the time of his career, but as a member of the Song Dynasty, when the Yuan Dynasty officials were a betrayal. After considering it for a year, Zhao Meng, who was forced by life, fell into the official of the Yuan Dynasty. This move caused the criticism of the Southern Song Dynasty scholars, and also made Zhao Mengfu a controversy by future generations.

Because of his outstanding talents, Zhao Mengfu was given the first time to go to the capital to get the use of Kublai, and was allowed to enter and exit the court without forbidding. However, the identity of the descendants of the Song Dynasty made him subject to the suspicion and exclusion of the Mongolian powers, but also suffered the embarrassment of immigrants from the Southern Song Dynasty. Zhao Mengfu and other more than ten people were recommended to Kublai Khan. At the age of 32, Zhao Mengfu was at the time of his career, but as a member of the Song Dynasty, when the Yuan Dynasty officials were a betrayal. After considering it for a year, Zhao Meng, who was forced by life, fell into the official of the Yuan Dynasty. This move caused the criticism of the Southern Song Dynasty scholars, and also made Zhao Mengfu a controversy by future generations.

Because of his outstanding talents, Zhao Mengfu was given the first time to go to the capital to get the use of Kublai, and was allowed to enter and exit the court without forbidding. However, the identity of the descendants of the Song Dynasty made him subject to the suspicion and exclusion of the Mongolian powers, but also suffered the embarrassment of immigrants from the Southern Song Dynasty. He has both the loyalty to the Emperor's thoughts and the desire to live in seclusion, so his heart is very painful. He once wrote a poem "Sin": "In the mountains, it is a distant ambition, and the mountain is a small grass.... It is a life-long wish, and mountain is holding it.... I was a water gull once but now I am a cage bird... We are often not full even friends and relatives help me . Sick wife holding a weak child and goes long long away.... What a painful life and nowhere to pour out”-expressing his dilemma.
Zhao Mengfu knew the danger of the court and tried to be an official in the local province. By 1292, he finally became the general manager of Jinan Road. When he first arrived, Zhao Meng was busy with government affairs and did not have time to watch the beauty of Jinan. After the government was on the right track, Zhao Mengfu, who had spare time, often lingered in the mountains and lakes of Jinan. The scenery of Jinan, especially the scenery of Mount Que and HuaBuzhu Mountain, left a beautiful impression on Zhao Mengfu. In 1295, Kublai Khan died, Yuan Chengzong needed to compile the "Shizu Shilu" and therefore called Zhao Meng to return to the capital, but Zhao Mengfu knew that the Yuan Dynasty had many internal contradictions and resigned.

Although Zhao Mengfu was criticized by the recluse of the Southern Song Dynasty, there are also friends who understand his actions. After returning to Wu Xing, he often used his friends to drink and make poems, and Zhou Mi was one of his friends. Zhou Mi was an official at the end of the Southern Song Dynasty. After the Southern Song Dynasty was destroyed, he lived in Zhejiang. He was a friend of Zhao Mengfu and his father Zhao Yugao. Zhao Mengfu was an official for eight years. After returning home, he did not treat Zhao differently, which made Zhao Mengfu greatly moved. The ancestral home of Zhou was in Shandong, and the ancestors lived at the bottom of Mount Huabuzhu, however he had never been to Shandong. Zhao Mengfu told him about Jinan scenery and painted it, namely "Autumn at Que and Hua Buzhu Hills".

"Autumn at Que and Hua Buzhu Hills" is 28.4 cm in length and 90.2 cm in width. This painting depicts the charming autumns of Mount Que and Mount Hubuzhu in the north of Licheng County, Shandong Province, and the surrounding area of Huabei Mountain. The left side of the painting is Lushan Mountain, and the right side is Huabei Mountain. The two mountains echo each other. The mountain is surrounded by wilderness and lakes, endless grass and looming huts - showing an idyllic life scene.

3. Impression of "Autumn at Que and Hua Buzhu Hills"

There are many calligraphy works that Zhao Mengfu circulated in later generations, but there are not many original works. "Autumn at Que and Hua Buzhu Hills" is his most representative painting. With his superb painting skills, he blends his inner desire to retreat and the literati's taste into the natural landscape. His painting techniques and painting theories embodied in the paintings have great and far-reaching significance in the history of painting.

3.1. Artistic features

The "Autumn at Que and Hua Buzhu Hills" adopts a flat composition form, but does not use the high or far-reaching composition commonly used in landscape painting. The two sides and the near lake and trees form a "V"-shaped three-stage composition. The structure is patchy, so that the far and near picture is integrated, giving people a sense of visual extension. The flat composition also gives people the feeling of "dilution" and leads people to the realm of "far-light". Many scholars believe that the style of "Autumn at Que and Hua Buzhu Hills" has been influenced by Nantang painters and Dong Yuan, the originator of Nanpai landscape paintings. Some scholars have analyzed that Zhao Mengfu should have seen Dong Yuan's works in the north and brought them
back to Wu Xing. Dong Yuan is good at painting landscapes and paintings with real mountain views in Jiangnan. He does not need complicated brushwork. The woods are far away, the picture is far and deep, and the expression is true. From this painting, it can be seen that it is a innovative practice inspired by Dong Yuan's style.

In the history of painting, "Autumn at Que and Hua Buzhu Hills" was recognized as a literati painting. The colors of the warm colors such as ink, cyan and red and yellow are very clever in the paintings. Both Mount Que and Hua Buzhu are made of cyanidin and azurite, and the two peaks are pushed to the far side with cold color. At the same time, the two peaks are different from the cyan of the continent and the leaves, forming a change in the same color. In the close-up, the left half of the tree is joined with the ochre trees, which complements the cold color of the right half of the mountain. The right side of the scroll is dyed with red huts and livestock, which corresponds to the deep blue of the Mount Hua Buzhu. The color of the picture is rich, the spirit is natural, the artistic conception is elegant, and there is both the feeling of laziness in autumn and the chill and loneliness of autumn.

Zhao Mengfu has a high level of calligraphy. He is good at running script, regular script, seal script, and cursive script. He is especially known for his scripts and calligraphy. He extensively studied the famous calligraphy masters of the previous generation, and formed his own charming and elegant style. He believes that "calligraphy and painting are the same" and advocates the integration of calligraphy and ink into the artistic conception of painting. In the "Autumn at Que and Hua Buzhu Hills", he uses the lotus leaf to describe the soil of Jiangnan, the double hooks are tree branches, the center is ticked, the leaves are mostly made by point method, and the pen is flexible and free, and the lines are soft and soft, reflecting the characteristics of "citing calligraphy into painting".

Zhao Mengfu advocates "ancient style" in artistic creation. He thinks that the best way to draw is to paint the mood of the ancients, or the "ancient style." If there is no such "ancient style" of Chinese landscape painting, then even if you use expensive paper, pen, ink, it is of no use to the painting itself. If the ancient style of the painting is not complete, then there will be problems with the whole painting. He advocated the transformation of the trivial and glamorous style of the Southern Song Dynasty. He advocated the charm, bones and natural style of the Tang and Five Dynasties. He opposed the casual use of ink in the paintings of the Northern Song Dynasty. The whole painting of "Autumn at Que and Hua Buzhu Hills" is mainly composed of green, and the color of the ink and the green landscape is very skillfully combined. The style of painting is simple and profound.

Looking at the "Autumn at Que and Hua Buzhu Hills", the proportion of the picture is not coordinated. The houses and trees in the painting are large and the hills are small. The geographical orientation of the two mountains is also wrong. It is said that Qianlong visit Mount Que and Mount Hua Buzhu, recalling the paintings of “Autumn at Que and Hua Buzhu Hills” in the palace, so compares the paintings with the scenery and discovers the geography of Mount Que and Mount Hua Buzhu. The orientation is wrong. The two mountains should be in the south of the Yellow River and in the north of the Yellow River. However, the two mountains in the painting are in the same direction. They think that the painting is inaccurate and originally wanted to burn it, but it has been circulating for hundreds of years and it is not easy to get it. Therefore, it is sealed in the palace. The authenticity of this story is still irrelevant, but it can be seen that the painter did not care about the geographical orientation description of the scene and the application of the ready-made technique, but created it casually, paying more attention to the nostalgic feeling in the face of natural beauty.

3.2. Reclusive feelings

Zhao Mengfu’s career was smooth and he was appreciated by the emperors of the Yuan Dynasty. He was famous in the Yanyou period, but his political career was not satisfactory. He was a descendant of the Song royal family but he was an official in the Yuan Dynasty. Although he was valued by the emperor, he was excluded by his peers. Although he enjoys a very good life, he is contradictory. As a master of painting and calligraphy, the evaluation of his later generations is
controversial. Many people devalue their style because of their behavior. Kang Youwei once said: "Don't learn Zhao and Dong". Although this statement is too radical, it can also be seen that the scholars have betrayed the inferiority of Zhao Mengfu's rebellion against the Song Dynasty. This has also created the contradictory mentality that Zhao Mengfu often seeks to retreat when he is an official.

Landscape paintings began in the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, as the background and accompanying of the figure paintings. Due to the political turmoil at that time, the scholars were reluctant to enter the official position, and they sent more sentiments and landscapes to express their feelings with mountains and rivers. When the Northern Song Dynasty scholars landscape paintings rose, Wang Shizhen once said: "The literati painting began in Dongpo", but the literati paintings in the Northern Song Dynasty were amateur paintings, mostly casual works. At the beginning of the Yuan Dynasty, the Southern Song Dynasty was laid down and the new dynasty was established. At that time, the literati were inclined to evade the reality. They were more seclusion in the south of the Yangtze River than in the north, and they tried to use the mountains and rivers to express their indifference. The literati landscape paintings flourished.

In the early years, Zhao Mengfu was not good at mountains and rivers. His life experience has not been enriched by his career. He does not possess the reclusive feelings required by literati painters. In fact, before the advent of "Autumn at Que and Hua Buzhu Hills ", Zhao Mengfu did not have representative landscape paintings. He finally decided to become an official, so that he saw the northern style of painting in the north different from the style of the Southern Painting Institute. On the basis of the comprehensive north-south style, Zhao Mengfu formed his own unique style. On the other hand, as a descendant of the Song Dynasty in Wuxing, Jiangsu and Zhejiang, Zhao Mengfu valued the Jiangnan cultural circle's evaluation of himself. Since then, he has made a lot of landscape paintings to carry his own hidden feelings, and often used Xie An as his idol. At the same time, they are very respectful of the reclusive people in the south of the Yangtze River and are deeply influenced by the standards they have established. He often evoked the resignation of his resignation. In his later years, he repeatedly refused to appeal to the court. He once made a "I am 63 years old, my teeth are gone, my hair is white, and I feel very embarrassed when I remember my life. There is still feeling for the pen and the cockroach, and stay in the world as a joke." The poems are self-awakening and reveal their seductive feelings.

In 1295, Zhao Mengfu returned to Wu Xing. At that time, his 63-year-old friend had no chance to return home. In order to comfort his friend, Zhu Mengfu used his memory to draw Jinan's scenery into the picture. At the same time, he also used this work to express his own reclusive feelings. It tells his longing for the pastoral life.

4. Conclusion

Zhao Mengfu is known as the "Yuan Ren Guan Mian". The painting theory he advocated "citing calligraphy into painting" and "the preciousness of painting lies in the tradition" has greatly influenced the style of the Yuan Dynasty and preliminarily established the landscape painting of the Yuan Dynasty. The natural and elegant aesthetic had the role of inheriting the past and the future in the early Yuan Dynasty, laying the foundation for the literati painting style of the Yuan Dynasty, and reviving and promoting the development of the traditional painting art of the Central Plains. The picture of "Autumn at Que and Hua Buzhu Hills " is clear and subtle, the painting style is simple and natural, and the meaning is flat and elegant. The unique image processing techniques and painting theory embodied in it have a profound influence on the development of Chinese mountain painting and calligraphy. In the history of Chinese painting, it has an important position and can be called a great masterpiece.

References


