

# Self-awareness of Cultural Spirit in a Boundary Situation

## --- On Style and Peculiarity of Yuan-Dynasty Painting Arts

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### Abstract

Yuan Dynasty was an era with austere political reality and thinking reality. As a result of despicement to ruling of different races, a large majority of scholars in Yuan Dynasty chose seclusion without other choice, but the “internal beauty” they pursued was amazingly unanimous, which was, without doubt, owing to the spirit of the mountains and forests. When they tried to find enjoyment in painting, they put their willpower in it, which was a spontaneous awareness of cultural spirit and was, moreover, a peak experience of Chinese traditional culture. Achievement of Yuan Dynasty painting was impressive, and extended the aesthetic space of human beings. Thus, it enriched and development and manifestation connotation of landscape painting to a great extent, and would be engraved forever in the spiritual and cultural history of human beings.

**Keywords:** Seclusion, Landscape painting, Free from vulgarity, Personification

“Unification of a nation has be based on rational ideology to guide the direction of the nation and to gain recognition of its officials and people. However, Yuan Dynasty did not set up a set of ideology that could be generally accepted by all races. Conflicts between ‘Law of Han’ and ‘Law of Mongolia’ were year in and year out.” (Wang, Mingsun, 1992). Rulers of Yuan Dynasty entered and hosted the Central Plains of China with a non-Han identity, and vigorously propogandized the social status of national minorities. They carried out the policy of ethnic discrimination and owners of ruling power artificially classified Mongolian, Se Muren, Han people and Southern people into four social stratums. At the same time, Yuan Mongolian rulers also realized, it could not go without Han scholars in order to establish their feudal dominant position in the Central Plains of China and to get a trip on the vast majority of Han people who were advanced than them. With the help of Confucians, such as Yelv Chucai, Yang Weizhong, Yao Shu, etc, Yuan rulers gradually came to know about the importance of applying Confucianism, which formed the extension of Neo-Confucianism in Yuan Dynasty. Accurately speaking, Neo-Confucianism didn’t complete its combination with the upper political authority in Song Dynasty, but its institutionalization was formed in Yuan Dynasty, and it realized the evolution to speeches of political authority. According to laws and decrees in earlier Yuan Dynasty, there was nothing else but the following four sorts of approaches to being official: firstly, Keshik, secondly, imperial examination, thirdly, acceptance of the favor to be an official and fourthly, to be an official. As a consequence, quite a large number of scholars were hopeless to be an official. The Dominance hierarchy of Yuan Dynasty also deeply realized this fact, and they finally enlisted talents through the old civil service examination system in the Second Year of Yuan Renzong, Yan You (1315). Then, the Neo-Confucianism became the topic of political power and the social position of Confucians changed for good owing to emphasis by Yuan rulers. However, it has to be noticed, altogether sixteen imperial examinations were held from the Second Year of Yan You to the end of Yuan Dynasty, only accepting 1139 scholars. (Xiao Qiqing, 1999). After several setbacks and frustrations, the great ambition and dash of scholars gradually dribbled away, and the wish of the vast majority of Confucian scholars to participate in governance of the nation was still entirely imaginary, “a good scholar will make an official” still not put into practice. However, it should be seen, although this channel was quite narrow and remote, it had certain symbolic significance, since it, after all, brought a ray of hope to these Confucian scholars. This respect and recognition of the Neo-Confucianism also had positive effect on eliminating national conflicts to a certain extent.

As a matter of fact, most scholars became contradictory. On one hand, they had the dream of governing the world and saving the nation, but the imperial examination was not flourishing, so the approach to the official career was not smooth; on the other hand, they felt it beneath their dignity to be engaged in the political

environment of becoming an official in order to become prosperous. Thus, a large number of scholars in Yuan Dynasty chose seclusion without any other choice. Yuan Dynasty was the third era to present the fashion of seclusion in Chinese feudal society after Wei & Jin and the Five Dynasties. "The four Yuan Painters" were no exception. Huang Gongwang led a hermetic life in the mountains as a result of the jail disaster and wandered around Tai Lake; Wang Meng resided in Huangheshan and Bianshan for almost thirty years; Ni Yunlin and Wu Zhen lived in seclusion all their life and stayed across the forest and river with leisure and carefreeness. Although "the four Yuan Painters" had different appearances of landscape paintings and different styles, the thinking of their painting aesthetics had a relatively unanimous tendency, which, without doubt, was due to their internal mountains and forests spirit. It should be especially noticed, in the history of Chinese painting, the fashion of seclusion of scholars and the development of landscape painting was closely bounded up, which was because landscape painting was mostly directly connected with painters who had the characteristics of mountains and forests. Whenever the political situation was in turmoil and affairs of war were in high frequency and scholars and men of letters were at a loose end, landscape painting would necessarily present a brand new appearance.

### 1. Choice of Mongolian Yuan scholars --- seclusion

The spirit of seclusion has had a long history in China. "Chuang-Tzu --- Shan Xing Pian" says, "Tao has no way to spring up in the human world and the human world also has no way to enable Tao be prosperous. Even if a saint does not live in the desolate mountains and forests, his morality and behavior will also necessarily be secluded, unknown by others. Since we talk about seclusion, it is that the times is dark and they themselves seclude without hiding their capacities. The so-called hermit at old times is not one who is reluctant to appear in the human world in order to hide themselves, who is unwilling to reveal the truth in order to be silent, and who is reluctant to bring himself into full play in order to deeply hide his intelligence, but because of the times and the destiny. How ridiculous!" Mencius also gave explanation to the chain of relationship between "Tao" and "seclusion" and "official", "Ancient people would oblige it to the common people when they achieved their ambition; they would train themselves to appear in the world when they failed in their career. When they were in poverty, they would preserve their own purity and integrity, and when they were successful in their career, they would benefit all the people in the world. In order for scholars to barely manage to survive in the troubled times, obtain the yearning freedom and keep independence and dignity of their personality, they had to take the strategy of "seclusion". With its particular cultural quality, value orientation, ethic style, life attitude and social political standard, "seclusion" had deep and direct effects on the cultural process of China, and also became a sort of life sentiment with personification and aestheticization. Although the upper social class of Mongolian Yuan Dynasty attached great importance to Confucianism, most of scholars still took a disoperative attitude in view of the historical fact. Even if Zhao Mengfu (1254-1322) who held an official position in Yuan Dynasty also said, "Bamboo was born with the superior character of despising all and with the style of desolate and lonely scholar, but without the thinking to jump upward, merely mixing itself with basil." As for the ruling class of Mongolian Yuan Dynasty, there was nothing different between Confucianism and other religions, and their emphasis on Confucianism was just out of what was required for political ruling. They did not accept the doctrine of Confucianism at the bottom of their heart, and what they favored in their heart was still Lamaism, so they were, by no means, able to grasp feelings of Confucianism scholars.

Seclusion of Yuan scholars had the following three features with regard to their manifestation forms: (1) long duration of seclusion. During the one hundred years or so from the end of Song Dynasty and the early Yuan Dynasty until extinction of Yuan Dynasty, a lot of scholars chose seclusion because of their hostility towards Mongolian Yuan rulers. When the regime of Yuan Dynasty was consolidated day by day, the politics and economy were developed to a certain extent and the society was stabilized gradually, a number of scholars "preserved their own purity and integrity and paid no attention to the society" as a result of hopelessness in recovering Song Dynasty, such as Zheng Sixiao, Xie Fangde, Gong Kai, Zhao Mengjian and Qian Xuan, etc. They secluded in countries all their life and pledged not to cooperate with Mongolian Yuan rulers. At the same time, a batch of scholars finally also chose seclusion because of unexpected imperial examinations and hopeless official career. Thus, the number of hermits in Yuan Dynasty, the large scale and long duration were unprecedented. (2) Diversification of reasons for seclusion. In addition to adherents of the former dynasty, such as Zheng Sixiao, Xie Fangde and Zhao Mengjian, etc, there was a kind of hermits who had adapted to and gradually accustomed to this political pattern. Just as a result of the loose social cultural policy, they were able to chant poetry and paint pictures, seclude in forest and across the spring with leisure. Besides, owing to gradual consolidation of Mongolian Yuan ruling, hopeless recovery of Song Dynasty and hopelessness in an official career, they had no other choice but to be satisfied with the current situation and put their emotion into mountains and forests. They did not care about reign by a different race, neither currying favor with them, nor

hating them. The friends they made also included refined scholars with blood lineage of Mongolia and Se Muren. Scholars who secluded after they “served Yuan Dynasty” could also accept the fact and treat with courtesy and responsory. It ought to be said, this portion of scholars accounted for a large part of Yuan hermits. The other sort of scholars were those who were hopeless in promotion of an official career, or saw through the vanity of the life after being frustrated in the official career and then lost their heart to Buddhism. (3) Scholars with a life in seclusion had the characteristics of elegance but not vulgarity. Scholars in Yuan Dynasty were not only engaged in “Factionalism” in Tang Dynasty, but also not involved in the literary inquisition of Ming and Qing Dynasty. At leisure and in extreme depression, their spiritual world was in extreme freedom and relief, and they neither need tranquilize the nation and settle the country, nor committed themselves to overturning the regime. Then, they were either mixed in the brothels, engaged in poetic drama, or leisurely wondering about mountains and villages, expressing the spirit of mountains and forests with the pen ink. Combination of elegance and vulgarity in Yuan culture was subtle, and scholars themselves lived in a secular world, not as Jing Hao during the Five Dynasties who lived in remote mountains, with his footprints seldom found in this mortal world. Most of Yuan scholars secluded in cities and towns, mixed together with secular common people. For example, Zhao Mengfu both held an official position and lived in seclusion, Huang Gongwang firstly held an official position and then secluded and Wang Meng sometimes held an official position and sometimes lived in seclusion. Just because they had no means to get apart from the madding crowd, Yuan painters especially emphasized that painting should be free from vulgarity. Assuming that, they really lived in remote mountains and forests, breaking themselves apart from the human world, then we could find no place to discuss the fact of being free from vulgarity. Just as Dai Biaoyuan described in “Xi Zhai Fu”, “There was one person in the southern part of Jiquiu who was neither a hermit or an official, neither a Confucian scholar nor a celestial being, but he held in his hands articles about rotation of stars and brilliant light, with his mouth reading in a leisurely and carefree way. He walked between the heaven and the earth, controlling the cloud, having a good swim in the universe and having a mastery of the magic of balance between the heaven and the earth. It was just that his magic of Tao exceeded the general state, but his footprint did not depart from earthly people.” This is exactly an actual portrayal to the particular group of people.

## 2. Initiation of the artistic fashion of painting in Yuan Dynasty

The particularity of the social pattern in Yuan Dynasty was a breeding ground to foster the painting style of liberalstyle. As far as tendency of landscape painting arts and the basic strength of its development were concerned, freehand brushwork was a necessary trend for development of Chinese painting arts. The liberalstyle landscape painting born in later Northern Song Dynasty was vandalized as a result of “Jingkang Incident”. The bold and sharp line shape in the Southern Song Dynasty and the Axe-Cut-Stroke with strong visual impact were relief of the subjective emotion of painters during this period. Resorting to a small plot of land, and sometimes in danger of losing it, people’s spirit suffered from utmost pains, as a result of which malformed situation appeared and people lost dependence on and affinity to the great nature. They were in extreme love of rivers and mountains, but they did not dare to face up to the stern reality. Thus, the objective landscape spirit could not be integrated into their subjective world. In the Southern Song Dynasty, creation of landscape painting was mainly concentrated in imperial art academy, but it was difficult for painters to have a leisurely and carefree mood to paint. Contrary to the situation in the Southern Song Dynasty, landscape in Yuan Dynasty was mainly created by scholars. Mr. Chen Zhuanxi said, “Most of Chinese scholars were dominated by the spirit of Confucianism and Tao, which both oppose to radical extremes and advocate moderation and softness. Thus, except in particular period, the paintings expressing intense emotion in the Southern Song Dynasty were unlikely to be totally accepted by scholars.” (Chen Zhuanxi, 2001) Painters in Yuan Dynasty skillfully integrated the liberalstyle spirit and the “liberalstyle manifestation” of the objective landscape pattern, and improved the pattern of paintings of men-of-letters with a combination of poetry, book, painting and printing. Due to the particular social pattern, it was unlikely that landscape painting art in Yuan Dynasty could have the lofty beauty of paintings during the Five Dynasties, but its connotational, plain and volatile style can not be achieved by any era.

Spiritually, scholars of Yuan Dynasty were in pursuit of pleasure, and relieved moderately their depressed mood. Although the overall social status of scholars was not high, they were noblemen at a spiritual level. Almost all painters had their own poetry collection, and almost all writers had their own poetic prose with lyric painting and comments. There was no other era than Yuan Dynasty in which relationship between poets and painters was so intimate without any estrangement. After the Song and Yuan Dynasty, the traditional Chinese painting centered with painting of men-of-letters was strengthened in its combination with Humanities, and such non-forming factors as literature, poetry, lyrics and philosophy were gradually integrated, which broke through the spatial tendency of naturalism which constituted the frame of painting and completely accomplished jump from

representation of the objective reality through efforts to independent manifestation. Thus, pursuit of the two extremes of Chinese and western paintings was more obvious. This historical transition led to the result that Chinese traditional painting was no longer pure painting, but became a comprehensive carrier which strived for quality of talents and learning. From the perspective of cultural anthropology, it was without doubt that this was more suitable for spiritual need of human being. Evolution of a culture is necessarily accumulated by its internal components and then gradually made perfect, and it is externalization of the long-term psychological accumulation of the nation. Generation of its cultural context can be traced back, but not accomplished in an action.

Traditional Chinese painting pursued freedom from vulgarity, and it could be said that Yuan Dynasty had advocated this to the extreme and put this exactly into practice, which was made possible by social spirit of scholars in this dynasty. They abandoned the style of the Southern Song Dynasty, advocated the ancient style of the Northern Song Dynasty, the Five Dynasties and Tang & Jin Dynasty, and vigorously pursued the classic beauty, which was the general pursuit of Yuan painters. The landscape painting was famous in the Five Dynasties, and there were Jing Hao, Guan Tong and Li Cheng in the north part during this period. After screening in the Southern Song Dynasty, painting by Li Cheng was especially prestigious. There was the school of Dong Yuan and Ju Ran in the south part during this period, and all of “the four painters” in Yuan Dynasty started from Dong and Ju. Dong Qichang said in his “The Eye of Painting”, “The style of painting in Yuan Dynasty was the most prevailing, and only Dong Yuan and Ju Ran were different, and all others learned from Guo Xi. The famous ones were Cao Yunxi, Tang Zihua, Yao Yanqing and Zhu Zemin, etc, but ten of these people were still inferior to any one of Ni Yuanlu and Huang Daozhou, which was the result of style and fashion. Therefore, the style advocated by Zhao Mengfu for painting was regular and upright.” (Huang Binhong & Deng Shi). This inference was exactly to the point. In a certain sense, Zhao Mengfu had played a decisive role in formation of the painting style of Yuan Dynasty and his aesthetic thinking influenced painting art of Yuan Dynasty to a large extent and spread to his later generations. His ideas were mainly embodied in the following aspects: firstly, his deep excavation into tradition (ancient idea), secondly, his premise was to imitate the nature and, thirdly, his starting to paint with a calligraphic style. With regard to the particular style of making a showy display of the ability and behaving on the verge of breaking out a fight, he definitely proposed the “ancient idea”, “it is highly evaluated to have the ancient idea in painting. Without painting, there is no benefit although one paints. Today, any one who is able to paint in a slender style and paint with a bright colour claims by himself to be an expert. However, he does not know that, without the ancient idea, all kinds of troubles arise, and there is no means to view the painting. It seems that my paintings are simple, but any one who is familiar knows that they are close to the ancient idea. Thus, they are good paintings. I just mention this to those who know, but not to those who don’t.” (Zhao Mengfu). Totally different from the style of painting in the Southern Song Dynasty, Zhao Mengfu advocated a sort of docile and gentle style, which changed the style of imperial-court decorative painting popular in Southern Song Dynasty and directly chased after the “relique style” of the Northern Song Dynasty. He not only earnestly practiced what he advocated in artistic practice, but also gave direction in theory for several times. Huang Zijiu who was termed as “crown of the four great painters” in Yuan Dynasty was a student of Zhao Mengfu. Wang Meng was the grandson of Zhao, and Guan Daosheng, wife of Zhao, Zhao Yong, son of Zhao and some of his descendants were celebrated calligraphers and painters at that time. Ni Yuanlin praised Zhao Mengfu, “Zhao Mengfu was leisurely and highly elegant, with the style of Wei and Jin Dynasties. Thus, his articles and paintings present a dignified and graceful style. Although he had only a small amount of paintings passed down to the world, people also feel as if they have discovered treasure.” His words of praising were out of his writing, and the idea of his praise could be seen. It can be said, the peak position of Yuan painting was actually laid a foundation by Zhao Mengfu. Without Zhao Mengfu, there would not be “the four great painters” of Yuan Dynasty, and there would not be the respected Yuan painting art in Chinese painting history that became the perfect pursuit of painting in the Northern Song Dynasty, which was an inevitable outcome for development of painting in the Northern Song Dynasty.

Painting by men-of-letters had already taken its initial shape in the Northern Song Dynasty. Viewing the progress of development of thinking, it was reflection of men-of-letters of their independent consciousness in terms of art during the cultural transition period, and was finally formed in Yuan Dynasty. Chinese painting had always been pursuit of loftiness, but it would not be attained to really realize this without a heart as the moonlight to be connected with mountains and water in the universe. Firstly, subjectivity was changed to objectivity, objectivity was integrated into subjectivity and they were mutually integrated, and then subjectivity was changed to objectivity, which in turn was integrated into subjectivity. Only with repetition of such smelting and materialization, could the clear state of anything taking its natural course be directly formed. Because the psychological shade of Han people was overall and enduring, the national consciousness in their heart could not

be totally eradicated, so the artistic form of painting became their spiritual handholds during this particular period for them to preserve their own purity and integrity and paid no attention to others and also to find a place for their soul. Besides, development of the painting itself also enabled the aesthetic orientation of “being proper” and “expressing the leisure in the heart” to help landscape painting to finish excavation into leisure of oneself. In such a way, the inherent interest of mountains and forests and natural appearance of landscape painting got reflected perfectly through expression of “leisure”, and the emotion of loftiness of scholars was also vividly and incisively expressed. Totally different from landscape in the Northern Song Dynasty, the subject of “travel” in painting of the Northern Song Dynasty was replaced by the context of “seclusion” in Yuan Dynasty. Since “seclusion” became the overall pursuit of scholars in Yuan Dynasty, pursuit of the spirit of mountains and forests and pursuit of the high leisure style became the spirit of the times for painting of Yuan Dynasty. It was exactly due to admiration of loftiness and the high praise of the taste of forests and rivers, the ultimate destination of Yuan painting was no longer to be enamoured of the overall or local reproduction of reality of an objective target, but to lay particular emphasis on expression of the state of mind and the concept of the subject with “the realistic writing and painting” of the image narrated by oneself by resorting to the pen ink. Thus, Tang Hou in Yuan Dynasty (1222 to 1306) said in his “Comments on Paintings”, “Those who put enjoyment in writing should pay attention not to pursue this by form. They should firstly look at artlessness, and then the idea of writing. Only if they forget trace of the pen ink, can they perceive the interest.” (Tang Hou) More valuable was that, they had put their ideal into practice, and spectators could smile at the bottom of their heart owing to change of the spirit of the times. Thus, resonance between creation and appreciation was achieved.

### 3. Personification and literary flavor of landscape painting in Yuan Dynasty

“Fetter of Chinese feudal society on the basis of patriarchal clan system to freedom of personality further encouraged a batch of scholar-bureaucrats who admired an independent personality to entrust the emotion of leisure to art and recreational activities, such as piano, chess, book and painting, which directly led to production of the aesthetic standard of ‘leisure’”. (Han Linde, 1995) Among the “four Yuan painters”, Wang regarded thickness as the leisure, Ni regarded simplicity as the leisure, and Wu Zhen regarded heavy painting as the leisure. Ancient intellectuals materialized the following quality and pursuit of ideal through painting: the life sentiment and aesthetic orientation of loftiness, broad-mindedness, detachment and elegance which they diligently strove after, and presented perfectness and unification of subjective emotional tendency and manifestation form. When talking about the Six Dynasties of Wei & Jin, Mr. Zong Baihua said, “an extremely free and emancipated era with most wisdom and enthusiasm in the history of spirit was thus one which was most filled with artistic spirit.” (Zong Baihua, 1981) Likewise, Yuan Dynasty was also an era with rich artistic spirit. Wu Zhen said to the point, “Some paintings were just done by some scholars and painters in their spare time, painted out of sudden happiness.” The reason why Yuan Dynasty became an era with rich artistic spirit was that, scholar-bureaucrats in Yuan Dynasty were directly involved in painting creation, and penetrated accomplishment of poetic prose, learning and aesthetic sentiment of scholars into painting with freedom and without any obstacle. “Ink game” by Wu Zhen was almost the same with “The so-called painting for me is simply pen writing, which does not pursue similarity in the shape, but just for self recreation” by Ni Yunlin, which emphasized that writing was out of the heart, unconventional and unrestrained, not stick to the form but beyond the spirit, and which embodied exteriorization of personality of scholars and unification of the content and the form in the essence. In order to pursue the state of “preserving their own purity and integrity and paying no attention to the society”, and seek for returning to native of personality, scholars and Confucianists in Yuan Dynasty followed the example of scholar-bureaucrats of the Six Dynasties of Wei & Jin, either leading a wandering life in mountains and farmhouses or loafing about water villages and rivers, with an aim of “smoothing their spirit” and “clearing their mind to view the world”. Thus, the comfortable landscape painting closely connected with their unconventional and unrestrained life attitude and spiritual shackles got unprecedentedly developed, and their loftiness, extraordinary national moral courage and personality were also materialized, so the particular personification appearance in landscape painting of Yuan Dynasty was formed.

Qian Xuan, the Scholar and Painter of Yuan, held the viewpoint that painting should be with morale, with the intention of being free from vulgarity. In “Rong Tai Ji”, Dong Qichang narrated identification of Qian Xuan and Zhao Mengfu about morale, “Zhao Mengfu ever asked his teacher, Qian Shunju for the problem of what is the principle in painting. Qian answered, it was just the style of Li and it was painting by people who were not within this field and who were not proficient in the skill and had to followers. Their painting should depart from convention, otherwise it would go towards vulgarity. The more its was neat, the more it was away from the nature. However, the key was to have the attitude of holding oneself aloof from the world and not caring about praise or slander from others.” Qian Xuan painted based on calligraphy as the particular artistic quality of

scholars, which emphasized that painting should be endowed with morale of scholars, calm, unflustered and gentle. The reason he attached special importance to calligraphic paint-brushing was that, calligraphic paint-brushing was not merely an issue of skill of pen and ink in painting, but was directly related with whether the mind of painters would be unconventional and whether a painter held painting in check with a lofty and being-for-self quality, but not influenced by external utility and losses and gains. As for the relationship between calligraphy and painting, there had been advocacy prior to Yuan Dynasty, but just currying favor with objects, and the implication unique to calligraphy to express the state of emotion was still not obvious. Until the time when Ni Yunlin expressed “leisure” with “leisurely writing”, calligraphic writing broke away from the demand of limiting to describe an objective object, and its own interest and function of expressing emotion were also brought into prominence.

What embodied specifically the personality of scholar-bureaucrats in landscape painting was “scroll style”. Fang Xun, landscape Painter in Qing Dynasty said, “”. (Fang Xun) According to explanation by Fang Xun, “scroll style” meant the particular “morale” of painting by men-of-letters, and “scroll style” did not lie in calligraphic intention of the pen ink or delicacy, but in elegance and vulgarity. Guo Ruoxu, Painter in the Song Dynasty said, “Once the emotion of elegance is placed in painting, personality of the painter is high and his artistic conception has to be high too. Since his artistic conception is high, then vividness is inevitable.” (Guo Ruoxu) “Scroll style” means scholar-bureaucrats combined their emotional feeling, poetic prose, calligraphic accomplishment and landscape together, and resorted landscape painting to build their own personality returning to the native.

Besides, they also enriched connotation of the picture of their paintings in the form of poetic prose and inscription. Some painted and inscribed by themselves, some asked others to inscribe again after they had inscribed, some inscribed mutually and some inscribed with cluster of poetry and prose. What’s more, inscription for each painting was a quotidian phenomenon for landscape painting of Yuan scholars. On one hand, diversity of the forms of inscription in Yuan Dynasty further connect relationship between poetic prose and calligraphic painting and strengthened the formal aesthetic feeling of the picture of painting, its literal sentiment and poetic and pictorial imagination. What’s more important, this kind of form turned to become the new high of the movement of painting by men-of-letters with the subject of personality returning to the native that was unprecedented in the Chinese history under participation and direction of scholar-bureaucrats. The form of inscription for landscape painting in the middle and late Yuan Dynasty was more active and plentiful compared with that in early Yuan Dynasty, which enabled landscape painting to be filled with intense “scholar’s style”, and personality and willpower of scholar-bureaucrats were also penetrated with their painting. Thus, landscape became the objectification of personality of scholar-bureaucrats and the particular literary style unique to landscape painting in Yuan Dynasty was also generated.

Although ruling of Mongolian Yuan Dynasty was of short duration, as far as painting art is concerned, it has attained tremendous achievements. It has added particular aesthetic temperament and interest for the manifestation form of landscape painting in China, and has greatly enriched the manifestation connotation of landscape painting. Yuan Dynasty was another peak in Chinese landscape painting after the Five Dynasties. “When external resistance and the future of managing the world and saving the nation is bleak, or when people’s ability is not equal to their ambition”, they would switch to pursue internal spirit, freedom and personality perfectness as well as expression of sentiment. Thus, although Yuan painting had no strong external power, it had rich internal content.” (Chen Zhuanxi, 2001)

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