



The Influence of Jiangnan Collectors on Artistic Vitality in the Late Ming Dynasty

Liang Qi

Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing 210046, Jiangsu Province, China

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to analyze the artistic vitality in the late Ming Dynasty from three different perspectives: social function, collector group and collector noumenon. Art in the late Ming Dynasty is in a vigorous development trend. Through a series of collection activities of three representative collectors in Jiangnan area Xiang Yuanbian, Dong Qichang and Li Rihua, the vivid picture of art collection is connected, the historical situation of art creation in the late Ming Dynasty is reproduced, and the influence of collectors in Jiangnan on art vitality in the late Ming Dynasty is elaborated.

Keywords: Late Ming Dynasty; Jiangnan collector; Artistic vitality; Influence

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***Corresponding author:** Liang Qi, 516946414@qq.com

1 Introduction

The late Ming Dynasty (from Wanli to Chongzhen, 1572-1644) was in a period of social change, in which the old and new ideas conflicted. Compared with the early Ming Dynasty and the middle Ming Dynasty, people's living standards improved steadily, and the trend of extravagance gradually rose. "Collection" and "appreciation" became two important social and cultural activities in this period, which penetrated into all walks of life and brought new vitality to the art of the late Ming Dynasty. This paper intends to analyze and study the late Ming Dynasty collector group in Jiangnan, in order to show the various artistic activities and the vigorous artistic vitality in this period.

2 The collector of learning from the perspective of "Jiangnan"

In the late Ming Dynasty, Jiangnan area was rich in products, prosperous in towns, diversified in economic development, and superior natural ecological environment, making it the richest area in China. As a result, a large amount of wealth was accumulated among the people, and the concept of social consumption changed. At this time, the government was corrupt, the parties were in strife, and they were fighting with each other. The literati gradually rejected the officials and respected the Confucian businessmen. The literati tried to balance the lack of "governing life" with "Governing Mind". The merchants hoped to build elegant life and make friends with famous people through "art collection" to improve their social status. Therefore, they turned their eyes to the field of art. Literati painters, antique dealers, cultural relic brokers and other kinds of roles flow in the art market, especially the collector group.

It can be seen from the collection records, calligraphy and painting titles left by many literati that China's collection history has been a long time, private collection is only a minority group, and royal collection has long occupied the dominant position. Until the late Ming Dynasty, the official did not pay attention to the antiquities, which led to a large number of collections of the inner government to be exiled among the people and stimulated by various factors, which made the scale of private collection groups far ahead of the generation and spread all over the society. The literati and Mohists, the famous officials and the famous people all have the merits. This group is mainly concentrated in the cities along the canal. According to the region, Jiangnan area,

as the collection place of calligraphy and painting collection group, has four sub regions: Wuzhong area in Suzhou, Songjiang area in Shanghai, Jiaying area in Zhejiang, and Huizhou area emerging with the rise of Huizhou merchants. Shen Defu, a writer and connoisseur of the Ming Dynasty, compiled the article "haohaojia" in Wanli yehuo Bian, which describes in detail the interaction between Xiang yuanbian, Anguo, Wang Yanzhou brothers (Wang Shizhen, Wang Shimao), Dong Qichang and other collectors^[1-2].

This picture is not only a true visual record of the late Ming Dynasty, but also a reflection of the leisure mentality of the late Ming scholars. Does this phenomenon only mean "antiquity addiction" among literati? Did it promote the art of the late Ming Dynasty? How did it influence the artistic style of the late Ming Dynasty?

The occurrence of all "identification and collection" behaviors depends on one common point "Buying" behavior. Of course, the "purchase" here does not necessarily refer to the exchange of equal value in money, but also includes the exchange of goods or human relations. Here, we generally include them in the act of "purchase". Although the behavior of private collectors "buying" seems to be a simple transaction between consumers and sellers, it needs to involve social factors, cultural factors, individual factors, psychological factors and so on. In the process of transaction, the change of social field, the uncertainty of people and things, and the different effects of their own functions are all worth considering and analyzing.

3 The influence of Jiangnan collectors on artistic vitality

3.1 Social impact

3.1.1 Active art market

According to the statistics of the academic circles, among the existing collections of the Palace Museum, Xiang yuanbian collected more than 2190 pieces of Dharma books and paintings. Wang Shizhen's collection is 500 pieces, and Dong Qichang has identified 600 pieces. Dong Yuan alone has 4 pieces. From these data, we can find the private collectors' purchase strength and purchase tendency of art, and then associate with the prosperity of

calligraphy and painting trade in the art market at that time. In the process of trading, art has become a commodity, with the value of goods and use value. As a result, the broker (the dentist) would take the initiative to sell ancient calligraphy and paintings in private collectors' houses in order to obtain certain benefits. After "selling" and "buying" form a benign and efficient trading chain, it will stimulate the "production" of "goods" - the creation of calligraphy and painting. What needs to be explained here is that the collectors of the late Ming Dynasty not only collect ancient calligraphy and paintings, but also collect all the works recognized and admired by their contemporaries. Sometimes, the price of contemporary works is even much higher than that of the previous dynasties. This is also a major feature of the late Ming Dynasty collection which is different from other times. For example, Chen Jiru's collection of Dong Qichang's works is numerous. Xiang yuanbian bought Qiu Ying's Chunxiao painting of Han Palace for 200 gold (the price is the highest in Xiang's collection). At the same time, when the author "sells" his works, he also gets rich rewards. The "reward" here is not necessarily money. Sometimes the other party gives paper, ink and inkstone to the literati for their creative needs in the future^[3-5].

When calligraphy and painting works become commodities, they contain not only material value, but also spiritual and cultural value. For example, what Xiang yuanbian, a collector, redeems is the past, but it is not the personal past that the European upstarts covet, which may be reflected by the fake ancestor portrait, but a past with universally recognized value. This reflects the idea of advocating "ancient" in the late Ming Dynasty^[6].

3.1.2 The awakening of personality

A period of ideology must be closely related to the social economy, morality, literature and art, religion and so on. For example, in the Northern Song Dynasty, Zhao Kuangyin attached great importance to the collection of calligraphy and painting, removed a small number of paintings and calligraphy awarded to ministers, and most of the other paintings and calligraphy works were hidden in the inner government. The folk mobility was relatively weak, so it was difficult for the common people to access the authentic works. At this time, the artistic aesthetic purport and fashion were almost generated under

the "control" of the imperial power, which greatly weakened the artistic creativity. The artists lacked initiative, and the artistic style of the works generally presented the Royal purport.

In the Ming Dynasty, an important reason for the prosperity of private collection was the decline of royal collection. First of all, in Ming Dynasty, except Yongle and Xuande, they were not very elegant. Secondly, there was no such institution as Kui Zhang Pavilion in Ming Dynasty, which mainly collected calligraphy and paintings. Finally, a large number of paintings and calligraphy flowed to the people because of various reasons. For example, in the early Ming Dynasty, the emperor rewarded the vassal with his paintings and calligraphy, in the middle period, the eunuch stole paintings and calligraphy, and in the late period, the "salary discount event". At this good opportunity, wealthy private collectors, either for their own preferences or for the sake of cherishing works of art, buy a large number of works of art over the years, so as to avoid their damage and loss. This phenomenon indicates that the art works are in a state of "affinity to the people", and also means that the middle and low classes have more opportunities to contact the "elegant" culture, and greatly mobilize the people's interest in learning calligraphy and painting.

3.2 Individual influence

3.2.1 The cultivation of the concept of appreciating Tibet

With the prosperity of Jiangnan art market, the trend of "collection" is fast, almost all over the society, and the group of private collectors is also growing. From the Song Dynasty to the late Ming Dynasty, the knowledge of Tibetan learning has developed quite well, such as the chronicles of the long things written by Wen Zhenheng. The collectors not only have keen eyesight, mature appreciation experience and huge network of contacts, but also gradually form their own view of collection in the long-term "dialogue" with antiquities. Here we will take Wen Zhengming, Xiang yuanbian and Li Rihua as an age gradient to make a specific analysis. Wen Zhengming is 55 years old and Xiang yuanbian is 40 years old. Xiang yuanbian is widely known as a rich man in the south of the Yangtze River and a collector. However, when he first dabbled in this field, he was often cheated because of the lack of heat. As the leader and elder of Wu painting circle, Wen Zhengming was

often consulted by Xiang yuanbian. Wen's family and Xiang yuanbian were gentry and literati, and merchants. In the Ming Dynasty, "gentry" belonged to the highest class in the society, while "Shang" ranked the lowest. The contact between them shows that the class gradient at this time was gradually narrowing. Since then, when Xiang yuanbian met his favorite antiques, he would take them to Wen to have a look.

Li Rihua got to know Xiang yuanbian through his cousin and teacher Zhou Lvjing in 1960. During this period, Xiang yuanbian played an important role in the formation of his view on Tibet. Even after Xiang yuanbian's death, Li Rihua often went to Xiang's home to visit Zijing's collection. According to Professor Wan muchun's statistics, Li Rihua spent eight years in leisure to observe a total of 691 pieces of the collection in Tianlai Pavilion. In Li Rihua's communication with Xiang yuanbian, Xiang transmitted his painting thoughts to him. From his comments, we can find out Li's admiration for Zijing's painting, and gradually form a collection view of elegant training and classic correction. In the case of twins created by the Tibetan style in the late Ming Dynasty, Xiang and Li separately collected the painting of Chibi by Wu Yuanzhi in different time situations, which proves that there are similarities between the two.

3.2.2 The orientation and formation of artistic style

"Learning calligraphy is different from learning painting. There are ancient stickers for learning calligraphy, which are easy to imitate. That is to say, there is no need for stone carvings of song and Tang Dynasties to be handed down from time to time, and their shapes are similar. Zhao Jixian said that in the past, people used to learn ancient stickers and concentrate on learning them, so it's not necessary to talk about this. The painting is different. It needs to brew the ancient method, and each of them has his own experience. If it involves a little fabrication, it is better to have a good painting than to have a good one. If it is good enough, it is not easy to judge the elements, the fragmentary frames and the treasures^[7]."

There is no doubt that the main way to learn calligraphy and painting at this time is still to learn from the ancients by passing it on from master to apprentice or tracing the origin through the copy. Dong believes that the painting is more difficult than

the calligraphy, which is not something that we can do. Therefore, the study of calligraphy and painting is closely related to the appreciation of collections. It can be inferred that the collector's own artistic insight and artistic creativity are accompanied by his appreciation behavior.

First of all, it is the artist who builds the prototype of the classical style. Dong Qichang as a senior linchi, calligraphy and painting collection provides him with a free imitation space. From a large number of inscriptions and postscripts in calligraphy and painting, we can find that the imitation and collection are almost inseparable.

In the whole process of Dong Qichang's calligraphy study, "duobaota stele" is an important calligraphy to lead him to the beginning and the origin of his calligraphy. Even in the future, Yan Pingyuan's way of calligraphy has not been abandoned, and it has been consolidated and refined.

Secondly, the appreciation sequence of the collector can reflect the evolution of his artistic style. Dong Qichang once said that he "first learned from Yan Pingyuan's duobaota, and then changed to Yu Yongxing. He thought that the calligraphy of Tang Dynasty was inferior to that of Wei and Jin Dynasty, so he imitated Huang Ting Jing and Zhong Yuanchang's Xuanshi Biao, liming Biao, Huanshi tie and shebing tie. In three years, he said that he was forced to be ancient When you visit Jiaying, you can see the authentic works of Xiang Zijing's family, and you can see the right army's "guannutie" in Jinling. In the process of Dong's learning, with the improvement of his own understanding, he constantly changed the object of his imitation, and the style of his calligraphy also changed. Among them, Eryu's guannutie is a major turning point of his calligraphy style, which witnessed the important change of Dong's hubris from "learning from Jin people's calligraphy for 18 years, getting its shape, and then having no eyes for Wu Xing" to "not writing for three years". During his absence from the book, Dong devoted himself to thinking about and observing the ancient style of writing, and adjusted his direction and ideas of copying. As a result, his vision gradually broadened. He was not confined by the world, but was able to come out of his own way. Until he saw guannutie again, he had read a large number of ancient treasures, and had created a road to the Wei and Jin Dynasties for himself during his life in

ancient times.

4 The noumenon value of collection

The art market has formed a benign ecological circle. In the Ming Dynasty, the printing industry was relatively prosperous, but in painting and calligraphy, especially in painting, it still could not replace the collection. There are two reasons: First, it has its own value; Second, for the strict copying learners, engraving printing is difficult to achieve today's 1:1 accurate reproduction, unable to "brew the ancient law", but "slightly involved in fabrication, that is inferior". As the printing industry produces a large number of copies (including some disasters), the image overflows the market. For the people, this kind of thing is no longer mysterious in the past. The visual culture quickly becomes too material, and the value of the image continues to depreciate, which can no longer reflect the level of human society and the order of the universe. In addition, another phenomenon in the late Ming Dynasty, the proliferation of counterfeits, led to the spread of fallacies. At this time, due to the existence of collectors, they formed a seesaw relationship with the former, retained the cultural fire, and were not engulfed by the decline of commercial chaos, and had a certain impact on commercial appreciation. On the contrary, in order to confuse the eyes of Jian collectors, the technology of counterfeiters was constantly "forced" to improve. Zhu Xiaohai was a famous counterfeiter expert at that time, which can be described as a reverse stimulation^[8-11].

The commodity value brought by the collection makes the value of calligraphy and painting show to the public with specific figures. For those who don't understand, direct digitization makes people more quickly distinguish which is better, which is worse, which is lighter, which is more important, showing a clear hierarchy. Based on this, it is easy for outsiders to understand the trend of the times and the standard of aesthetic interest, which indirectly reflects the cultural core of the late Ming Dynasty. Due to the death of the original owner or other reasons, many Dharma books, calligraphy and paintings are constantly circulated in the hands of collectors. The items that have been recognized by most people become valuable items in the art market, which attract collectors to buy at a high price. No doubt, buyers not only show their financial resources to the outside

world, but also gain a sense of cultural identity, which is used by buyers to restate their value status.

5 Conclusion

To sum up, with the popularity of the "jianzang" activities, the development of art in the late Ming Dynasty was becoming more and more prosperous. Jianzang artists in Jiangnan region acted as "booster", forming the spread of Wu and song as the center, promoting the vigorous development of all kinds of art. On the whole, the art market in the late Ming Dynasty was the most active in the Ming Dynasty. First of all, the cultural lovers gradually spread from the upper literati to the ordinary people, and the people began to turn from secular pursuit to spiritual enjoyment. Secondly, the communication and appreciation activities among the collectors in Jiangnan promoted the transformation of aesthetic purport, the summary and innovation of art theory, and the creation of new classification methods, which laid a solid foundation for the development of art and collection in Qing Dynasty. Finally, the abundance of the collection knowledge restricted the counterfeiting industry at that time, and provided a reference for the identification of traditional Chinese cultural relics. Jiangnan collectors became an indispensable backbone in the development of art in the late Ming Dynasty, and their historical documents provide valuable information for the future study of art

history.

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