

# *An Investigation into the Causes of the Prevalence of the Chongzhao Style of Calligraphy in the Mid-Qing Period*

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**Abstract:** In recent years, as research on the history of calligraphy has intensified, the Chongzhao calligraphic style of the mid-Qing period has played an increasingly important role in the overall history of Qing calligraphy. In the past, many commentators have attributed the Chongzhao calligraphic style prevalent during this period to the personal preferences of the emperor, ignoring the basic laws of calligraphic development, leading to a biased understanding of this period of calligraphic history. For this reason, this paper will analyze the calligraphic background of the mid-Qing period from the political background of that time, that is, the weak and vulgar Dong Qichang calligraphic style could no longer meet the needs of the Qianlong dynasty, and examine Zhao Mengfu's identity as a second minister in the Yuan Dynasty, his calligraphic achievements, and the Qianlong emperor's own calligraphic concepts, in order to comprehensively explore the causes of the prevalence of the Chongzhao calligraphic style in the mid-Qing period.

## 1. Introduction

In order to stabilize their rule, the rulers of the Qing dynasty pursued a policy of Sinicization since their entry into China, striving to learn about Chinese culture and to eliminate the "yi-xia" divide as much as possible. Calligraphy, as an important part of Chinese culture, was naturally highly valued by the Qing court, and all the early Qing emperors showed their love for calligraphy. The Shunzhi Emperor preferred the European style, and the Kangxi Emperor took Shen Tsuen, who was good at Dong Qichang calligraphy, as his teacher, Ma Zong Huo "Shu Lin Zao Jian" cloud: "The Holy Father loved Dong Qichang book, the real works of the sea, search and visit all, jade ultimatum gold title, convergence of the secret cabinet." [1] All follow suit, to the end of the Kangxi, Dong Qichang book style of weakness and malpractice gradually exposed, for the dissatisfaction of the scholars. In such a situation, it was particularly important to save the current shortcomings, so at the beginning of the Qianlong dynasty, the emperor pushed Zhao Mengfu calligraphy, and officials at the inner court also voted for the emperor's good, so Xiang Guang retired and Zi'ang took over, and Zhao Shu became a great world treasure. The rise of Zhao Mengfu's calligraphic style was superficially related to the growing disgust of Dong Shu, but a closer look at its causes reveals that it was not only this, but also the consideration of Qing court rule, calligraphic development and cultural needs.

## 2. The need for Qing rule

Zhao Mengfu was praised by Emperor Qianlong as a relic of the Southern Song Dynasty who went out to serve the Yuan Dynasty as a second minister. Zhao Mengfu (1254-1322), known as Zi'ang, Songxue, also known as Songxue Daoist, etc., was a native of Wuxing, Zhejiang Province. He was born in the imperial family of the Song Dynasty and was a descendant of King Qin Defang, the fourth son of Emperor Taizu of Song, who was the eleventh grandson of Emperor Taizu Zhao Kuangyin. Although he was a member of the imperial family and served in the Yuan Dynasty, his calligraphy suffered from the criticism of many commentators. However, by the middle of the Qing Dynasty, Emperor Qianlong gave high praise to Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy, saying that "the calligraphic style had changed to Mengfu, and the commentators said that he intended to take Yan and slightly hurt Wan and weakness, but the right army's "Yu Post" was winning by posture, so it was not possible to discuss the skin and hair." [2] This strong praise comes not only from the high attainments of Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy itself, but also from political reasons. The Qianlong emperor wanted to set a benchmark in the peaceful and stable mid-Qing period, to set a benchmark of II, to show the Manchu government's tolerance of Han Chinese, thus easing and eliminating the ethnic contradictions between Manchu and Han, and to strive for a great unification situation in thought. Later, the "Qin Ding State History of the Second Minister", that is, the "Second Minister" is also in this context proposed and compiled. The biography is divided into two parts, A and B, and is appended to the two volumes of Qing Shi Liezhuan, Volume 78 and 79, and includes more than 120 people who served as officials in the Ming and Qing dynasties in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. It can be seen that in the heyday of the Qianlong Dynasty, the emperor still did not slacken in his consolidation of power, rewarding loyalty and setting examples. The highly esteemed calligraphic style of Zhao Mengfu was very directly related to his status as a second minister who surrendered to the Yuan Dynasty.

## 3. The need for calligraphy development

1) Zhao Mengfu was the master of the collection after the Jin and Tang dynasties and was deeply recognized by the Qianlong Emperor. In Ming Dynasty, Zhang Chou's "Qinghe Shuhupaifang" says, "Zi'ang's seal script, real lines, and subversive cursive are the first of his generation, and the small regular script is the first of Zi'ang's books." [3] In Ming's He Liangjun's "Four Friends", there is a cloud: "Before the Tang Dynasty, the greatest calligrapher was Wang Youjun; after the Tang Dynasty, the greatest calligrapher was Zhao Jixian (Mengfu). He was a master of the seal script, clerical script, and real script."

[4] Ma Zong Huo in Shu Lin Zao Jian also said, "Yuan's Zhao Wu Xing is also like Jin's Youjun and Tang's Lu Gong, both of whom are known as the master of the alliance." [5] Hu Jizhong, a Yuan scholar, said, "Five hundred years up and down, ten thousand miles across, there is no such book." [6] From the above comments, it can be seen that Zhao Mengfu was a master of Jin and Tang calligraphy. He mastered Zhingyong in the large regular script, studied Huang Tingjian in the small regular script, studied Li Beihai in the monumental script, and specialized in Erwang in the handwriting and ruled documents, all of which were aggressively true. Zhao Mengfu not only won the recognition of his contemporaries, but also held a pivotal position in the entire history of Chinese calligraphy, as evidenced by the fact that later generations included him among the Four Great Masters of Regular Script. And because Zhao Mengfu served in the Yuan Dynasty, he became a controversial person in the history of calligraphy. Those who admired him, such as Hu Jizhong, praised him as the only one who was good at calligraphy after the Right Honorable Army, which was inferior to those of the Tang and Song dynasties. Dong Qichang, who held the same view, also believed that Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy surpassed that of the Tang Dynasty and was directly related to that of the Jin Dynasty. Those who disparaged it, such as Fu Shan, ridiculed it as sleek and boneless:

"Yu learned the regular method of the Jin and Tang dynasties in his weakness, and was given the ink of Zhao Songxue, and loved its roundness and flow, and was able to disrupt the truth with a little bit of proximity, and has been ashamed of himself, such as learning the righteous gentleman, suffering from the difficulty of being close to his touch and prism, and descending to swim with the apostate bandits ....." [7]Mo Yunqing, a Ming scholar, also said that Zhao Mengfu had more than enough momentum, but not enough backbone. Out of different perspectives, Fu Shan because of the feeling of the times, hated Zhao Mengfu to the Song royal descendants and surrendered to the enemy. The Qianlong emperor shared the same view as He Liangjun and also considered Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy to be "directly Xixian", and once commented that Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy was "perfect in attainment", "sufficient to regulate the two kings", and "the best calligraphy in the world, "Zi'ang's calligraphy is the best in the world". Emperor Qianlong highly praised Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy not only because of his position as a second minister, but also because of his extraordinary achievements in calligraphy.

2) The calligraphic concept of Zhao Mengfu's book, which is based on the two kings, is in line with that of Emperor Qianlong. Zhao Mengfu entered the door of calligraphy when he was young, and first followed Song Gaozong to learn the body of Huang Gu and Mi Nangong, and then went up to Zhi Yong, Chu Suiliang, Zhong Yao, Wang Xizhi and other writers in the right lineage. His monuments, not tired of its fine, each Lin must dozens of hundreds of books, "Lanting", "a thousand documents", "Luo Shen" and so on, are the objects of his study, at the same time, Li Beihai, Liu Gongquan also in the were also studied. Zhao Mengfu studied Shi Gu Wen and Cursed Chu Wen for his seal script, Liang Biao and Zhong Yao for his official script, and Xi and Xian for his cursive script. When Song Lian inscribed "Zhao Zi'ang's four posters of the Great Order", he said that Zhao Mengfu had studied hundreds of posters of Xixian, and the Yuan dynasty's Zhao Visiting recorded in the Dongshan Cunfu's Manuscript that Zhao Mengfu had studied the Lanting Preface and the Thousand-character Text for 500 pages, and the Yuan dynasty's Lu Xiong also said in the Shu and Painting Collection of the Style Gu Hall that Zhao Mengfu's roots were in King Zhong and in the Jin and Tang Dynasties. His concept of respecting the king's calligraphy was consistent with that of the Qianlong emperor and was also respected by him. Emperor Qianlong believed that the calligraphy of the two Kings was called the most through the ages, especially Wang Xizhi's "Fast Snow" was the best, the most ancient brush, like pingsha painting cone iron, and his it in the hall of Mental Cultivation, in his leisure time. Wang Xizhi's cursive "July under the two authentic traces", including the ancient Dan. It can be inferred that in the eyes of Emperor Qianlong, the calligraphy of the Jin people represents the ancient meaning, learning the Jin is the ancient learning, the right way of the books, in the Jin people, the two Kings calligraphy, the most, so the concept of the two Kings of the book dynasty can also be regarded as emperor Qianlong's concept of the ancient learning. In addition, from the ministers to the emperor, emperor Qianlong had a special liking for the calligraphy of the two Kings. Jiang Pu, Wang by Dun, Ji Juan in the trekking "qin-ding three hilight hall method post" also had cloud: "the emperor sex covenant righteousness learning through the warehouse history, every in the leisure of ten thousand opportunities, deep exploration of the eight method of micro, treasure Han draped, cloud chapter Xia Cai, phoenix soar dragon teng, comprehensive hundred and set its into, chase two king and get its essence." [8]Although the minister's complimentary words were mostly pompous to the emperor and not objective, the Qianlong emperor's obsession with and love for the calligraphy of the two kings can be seen in the language of his compliments. According to the collection of "Shiqu Baoji", it can be clearly found that the Qianlong's practice of Wang Xizhi's posters was as high as 146 pieces, while the practice of Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy was not as high as Su Shi and Mi Fu of the Song Dynasty, and not as high as Dong Qichang of the Ming Dynasty. Pro practice Su Shi 86 pieces, Mi Fu 93 pieces, while even Dong Qichang of the Ming Dynasty also has 73 pieces, practice Zhao Mengfu only 33 pieces.

#### 4. The need for royal culture

The Qianlong emperor's admiration for Zhao Mengfu's calligraphic style was also related to his flamboyantly beautiful end-performing, regular and rounded style. Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy has even and rounded lines, with a sunken and thick end condensation, and a very proper arrangement between words and characters. Ancient post font size is quite different, such as the old man with a young grandson line, the length of mixed, and sincere feelings, pain and itch related. Wu Xing book, such as the city into the narrow lane, the fish in the line, and compete for the first color everyone meet, and can make the upper and lower left and right blank word! It is so prevalent for hundreds of years, in vain to make the scriptures of the xugui so ear. However, it cannot be abolished, to its pen although smooth, to go in and out of all the twists and turns stop storage. Its later learning Wu Xing, although extremely similar but zigzag stagnation does not exist, only seeking uniformity and purity, so that a moment although the scripture student Xuxue Shang, not a whirlwind and the smoke and fire also. [9]Zhao Mengfu gorgeous end show, neat and rounded style of calligraphy not only "adjusts" the Dong Qichang style of calligraphy frail and vulgar, under the intentional promotion of the emperor, became a normative official style of calligraphy, as Kang Youwei said: "..... In Kang and Yong's time, they specialized in imitating Xiangguang; in Qianlong's generation, they competed to speak of Zi'ang". [10]While Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy was popular at the inner court, it also had an undeniable influence on the imperial examinations. This was stated in Kang Youwei's *Guang Yi Zhou Shuang Ji* when discussing the influence of Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy during the Qianlong period: "The book was used to obtain scholarship, and it was initiated in the Qianlong era. At that time, Wu Xing was also in full use." [11]It can be seen that during the Qianlong period, Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy was already treated as an official style book, and it presented artistic characteristics of gorgeous end-performance, neatness and roundness. Jin Anqing in his "Water Window Spring Ruminations" made this comment on the style of calligraphy during the Kang-Qian period: "At the beginning of the country, the Holy Father liked Dong Shu, and all the literary officials followed it for a while. Yongzheng, Qianlong are to learn the Yan word as the root and Zhao, rice between, the proverbial so-called ink, round, light, square is also. However, the blessing of the breath, no strong"[12] . The "round beauty" is an important aesthetic trait in traditional calligraphy, the Qing Dynasty Zhu Cuzhen in the "book of the shortcut" has said: "French calligraphy expensive round live, round live, book of attitude fluent. The horizontal painting is light and heavy, and the vertical painting is heavy and light. Ancient people say that the horizontal painting is vertical and the vertical painting is horizontal, which seems difficult to understand and easy to know"[13] . This "round beauty" was precisely in line with the royal temperament of grace and elegance revered by the rulers of the Qing Dynasty, so it can also be regarded as one of the reasons for the prevalence of Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy style.

#### 5. Conclusion

In short, the prevalence of the Chongzhao style of calligraphy in the mid-Qing period was directly related to the Qianlong emperor's esteem, which came from the needs of the Qing court's rule, the development of calligraphy, and the cultural needs of the Qing rulers. As a relic of the Southern Song Dynasty, Zhao Mengfu's move to serve in the Yuan Dynasty carried the image of a second minister, and this became the best candidate for the Qianlong Emperor to manifest his policy of fostering Han. He strove to follow the brushwork of the two kings and sought the rhythm of the Jin dynasty, and his calligraphic concept of taking Xixian as the top was precisely in line with the Qianlong emperor's pursuit of the study of calligraphy that honored the Jin dynasty. His calligraphy, with its flamboyantly endowed, neat and rounded style, is unprecedented and typical of the beauty of Xiu Run, which not only makes up for the weakness of Dong Qichang's calligraphy style, but also conforms to the royal temperament of gracefulness and nobility, warmth and generosity. It can be seen that the reason for

the popularity of Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy in the mid-Qing period did not only originate from the personal affection of the Qianlong Emperor.

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