

A Study on the “Ancient Intent” of Zhao Mengfu’s New Changes in Poetry and Painting

Wang Qin

School of Fine Arts, Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing, 210023, China
13086335926@163.com

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Abstract: The lyrical literati paintings gradually developed by Dong and Ju, influenced by the neat and exquisite style of the Southern Song court during the Song Dynasty’s southward migration, have become increasingly decadent in the art world, but also in need of revival. During the late Song and early Yuan dynasties, Zhao Mengfu (1254-1322 AD), who was renowned for his expertise in calligraphy and painting, was one of the literati painters who learned from the ancients. He was a simple, elegant, and lyrical painter from the Kaiyuan period. This article first starts from the historical background of Zhao Mengfu’s proposal of Ancient Idea, and reflects on the subject matter and changes in brushwork of each image element in the timeless painting *Autumn Colors on the Que and Hua Mountains*. By examining the widespread attention and historical inheritance of the theory of Ancient Idea in the history of Chinese painting, we can further recognize the artistic contributions contained in Zhao Mengfu’s painting practice and theory.

1. Introduction

Zhao Mengfu, as the successor of the artistic style of traditional Chinese landscape painting, is also the pioneer of a new painting style. His pursuit of “Ancient idea” tried to change the bad painting habits in today’s society with the noble quality of ancient painting, so as to convey the painting atmosphere of vivid freehand brushwork, which was called Archaic Transformation in the history of painting. Zhao Mengfu opposed that painters in the Northern Song Dynasty blindly imitated the exquisite and fine painting method of the Southern Song Dynasty, and believed the painting method of the Southern Song Dynasty was a delicate art, which ignored his own emotions and could not express creativity and thoughts and feelings from his own feelings. It is not advisable to only learn the painting methods of the ancients. We should learn the excellent traditional painting ideas, that “ancient idea” which is the primary task of painting and calligraphy creation.

This article focuses on Zhao Mengfu’s “Ancient idea” and finds some related painting works through image comparison and literature search in *Autumn Colors on the Que and Hua Mountains*. Generally speaking, he learned from Dong Yuan, but how did Zhao Mengfu to choose? A series of questions have clear answers in this article. Surrounding Zhao Mengfu’s painting creation and aesthetic ideas, such as Domestic and foreign scholars Li, Chu-tsing, Richard Vinograd, Professor Reinhardt Gross, Xie Zhiliu, Xian Yuqing, Xie Xiaoqing and so on have discussed it. In addition,

the publication of Zhao Mengfu's academic conference and thesis collection in 2007 was also unique. Therefore, in this study, we will combine previous research results to further analyze the artistic value of Zhao Mengfu's "Ancient ideal" and strive to provide reference for the development of painting today.

2. On the origin of Zhao Mengfu's artistic atmosphere

Looking back at the dynastic changes in our country, the Yuan Dynasty, a special period when the Central Plains were ruled by a different ethnic group, was witnessing a strong collision between the nomadic culture of the northern grasslands and the agricultural culture of the Central Plains. In particular, the artistic fields of painting, calligraphy, and opera exhibited unprecedented changes. Kublai Khan (1162-1227 AD), the founder of the Yuan Dynasty, had already appointed the imperial family of the Song Dynasty to serve in the court and sent his courtier Cheng Jufu to Jiangnan several times to recruit talented and famous people. However, the "Four class" distinction of unifying the people of the world as Mongolians, Semu people, Han people, and southerners has led to a huge gap in treatment among people from all walks of life, making it difficult to achieve their desired career^[1]. Since the Wei and Jin dynasties, literati painting has been entertaining themselves, expressing the emotions of the people and showcasing their brush and ink styles, or using calligraphy and painting as entertainment to hide their talents. Literati painting, which expresses the spirit and emphasizes the charm, has begun to show a comprehensive development, with the emergence of literati painters such as Qian Xuan and Zheng Sixiao who do not serve in the new dynasty and paint to express the thoughts of their homeland; and later known as one of the "Eight Gentlemen of Wuxing", two types of painters with poetic and painting qualities and official yuan background, led by literati painter Zhao Mengfu.

As an important painter and politician in the early Yuan Dynasty, Zhao Mengfu born in the second year of Baoyou in the Southern Song Dynasty. If we continue to look back, we can see that Zhao Mengfu is a descendant of Zhao Defang (959-981 AD), the fourth son of emperor Taizu Zhao Kuangyin(927-976 AD) of Song Dynasty. In the second year of Xiangxing (1279), the Song Dynasty was overthrown, and most of the descendants of Emperor Zongshi disappeared from the rivers and lakes, no longer appearing in the Yuan Dynasty ruled by foreign tribes. Lu Xinyuan's *Song Shi Yi* wrote that "the main party seeks the talents of the Zhao family" and specially recommends obtained by the Yuan Dynasty. But the complex identity of the Song family in the era made Zhao Mengfu's emotions conflicted and he politely declined, so he retreated to the outside world. However, Zhao Mengfu received the teachings of AO Junshan when he was young. On the other hand, the enlightened rulers of the Yuan Dynasty can be seen in the history of the Yuan Dynasty that Zhao Mengfu was not the first important imperial family of the Song Dynasty. However, even so, Zhao Mengfu regretted joining the political circles of the Yuan Dynasty. Some of his poems vividly showed Zhao Mengfu's tangled inner activities. These factors have become the premise of his artistic creation, and they have become the embodiment of his personal style in his paintings^[2].

The formation of Zhao Mengtiao's "Ancient idea" is not only around imitating famous scholars, but also closely related to the social aesthetic style. Before the Yuan Dynasty flaunts the literati lyricism, the history of Chinese painting is different from the royal court painting of the Song Dynasty, which advocates neat and rich. There are two types of styles. There were many famous painters in the Academy of the Northern Song Dynasty. Song Huizong Zhao Ji(1082-1135 AD) set up a special painting academy to receive six types of official positions of painters in the world, and there were complete painting classification. With the long-term influence of the Song Dynasty in the southern corner of the Yangtze River, the interior and exterior of the courtyard paintings were

increasingly depressed, and there was a little style tendency that deviated from the traditional Chinese aesthetic, that is, faithful and delicate scene reproduction and vigorous and strong lines, which led to the picture filled with delicate and exquisite traces^[3]. It is the opposite of Zhang Yanyuan of the Tang Dynasty's comment on Gu Kaizhi's(348-409 AD) painting that the highest style of art form is that "the meaning is the first to save the pen, and the painting is intended". In particular, Ma Yuan (1140-1225 AD), a landscape painter in the Southern Song Dynasty, used a big axe to split and paint the corner scenery, and Xia GUI, also known as the "four families of the Southern Song Dynasty", also known as the "Xia Banbian", was good at using the axe to split and color the mountains and rivers, becoming the main object of the later Zhao Mengfu's Refutation of the Academy paintings in the Southern Song Dynasty. In the theme of flowers and birds, compared with the moment of drawing birds and rabbits in the picture of double happiness by Cui Bai, the painter of the Northern Song Dynasty, the viewer fell into imagination. At this time, the ingenious layout of Li Di's(971-1047 AD) picture of chicken chicks waiting for feeding is lack of the painter's main consciousness and the audience's interaction^[4].

Overall, the era in which Zhao Mengfu lived, the emergence of artistic atmosphere, and the evolution of artistic forms were interrelated. Before the Song Dynasty, the main sources of painting themes were mostly centered around the aesthetic tastes of painters, which in turn were influenced by their personal character and cultivation. Since the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern dynasties, especially with the contributions of great literary giants such as Gu Kaizhi and Zong Bing in the Tang Dynasty, and Su Shi in the Song Dynasty to literati painting, the relationship between literati's lyrical expression and painting reproduction was not yet clear. Until the Northern Song Dynasty, two forms of painting emerged: meticulous court-style paintings as the main form, supplemented by ink play literati paintings. Additionally, the political factor of seeking a livelihood in the Yuan Dynasty led him to abandon the painting style of the Song Dynasty, criticize the omissions in techniques, and affirm that literati who "know the times" benefited from ink play, which helped them avoid being rejected by the Yuan Dynasty's clans. Therefore, during the immature literati painting system in the era of Zhao Mengfu, literati scholars who were constrained by the hierarchical system mainly focused on painting. The literati's thoughts of seclusion urgently needed a new painting form. Zhao Mengfu's aesthetic consciousness centered on "Ancient idea" became a driving force to sweep away the bad habits of the "modern" painting style of the Southern Song Dynasty's painting academies, which were meticulous, rich in color, and sluggish. It shifted to a focus on "reviving the ancient style", advocating the orthodox style models of the Jin and Tang dynasties, correcting the prevailing problems, and creating favorable factors for an elegant painting style.

3. An analysis of Zhao Mengfu's Ancient Idea

Zhao Mengfu's "Ancient idea" wrote in his *Self Postscript Picture Scroll*, "painting is expensive with ancient meaning, but if it is not, it will be useless. Today, people know how to use a thin pen and colorful, so they call themselves experts. However, they don't know that the ancient meaning is not good, and there are many diseases. How can it be impressive? The essence of his theory is to oppose the vigorous and strong painting habits of the Southern Song Dynasty, advocate painting back to the Jin, Tang and Northern Song Dynasties, and believe that the painting style of this period is worth learning. It can be confirmed that complex chronological issues did not affect his creation.

From the development process of Chinese painting, it can be seen that the "Lyric literati painting" sprouted in the middle and late Northern Song Dynasty is in a strong development stage. Its intention is to correct the bad style of painting and strive to inherit the excellent tradition since the Tang and Song Dynasties, forming a simple and elegant style in the Yuan Dynasty. How can his

own thoughts be reflected in the painting and conveyed? Meanwhile, the emergence of each idea has a certain background, and Zhao Mengfu's "Ancient idea" is no exception. There has always been a debate about the ancient meaning, but some of them said that lacking creativity in painting due to imitation of the past. However, it was the wrong understanding of "Ancient idea" that enabled contemporary painters to have a further and deeper understanding of "Ancient idea".

Looking back on the word "Ancient idea", we can see that people in the early period have made similar comments. For example, in the *Continuation of Painting*, Yao zui(536-603 AD) said, "Fu Dan is very beautiful, not easy to say, although the quality follows the ancient meaning, the culture changes the present situation." or Zhang Yanyuan(815-907 AD) a said in the *Records of Famous Paintings of Various Dynasties*, "ancient paintings are not only abnormal, but also have their own meaning." Zhao Mengfu's ancient meaning is not a random fantasy, but an inheritance from the predecessors. On the other hand, Su Shi (1037-1101 AD) , before Zhao Mengfu, also had a great influence on later generations with the words of "similarity in shape in painting, seeing the neighborhood with children"and Mi Fu's(1051-1107 AD) a "similarity in meaning without taking fine stones", which to a large extent promoted the formation and development of painting thought represented by "Ancient idea". In addition, in the Song Dynasty, a special period in the history of Chinese painting, painters' inner feelings could not be truly expressed, and their works were full of craftsmanship^[4]. From many works, it can be seen that the reason why they gradually lost their pursuit of inner art was that painters had developed the realism of painting to the peak, attached too much importance to realism, being limited to details repeatedly, resulting in defects.

Therefore, the disjunction between landscape painting and nature in the Southern Song Dynasty appears in the picture that the mountains and rocks painted are all covered with rough and rigid lines and strong and fast axes, and the development of painting tends to be too casual. In order to save such a bad habit, Zhao Mengfu made the banner of "Ancient idea" and intended to inherit the inherent beauty of traditional excellent painting. In this process, he not only advocated learning the painting techniques of the ancients, but also advocated the ideological meaning of painting. It can be seen that his theory of "Ancient idea" is not a copy of the brushwork without thinking, but through taking thought and emotion as the foundation, in the process of painting practice, he is more in pursuit of the emotional expression of nature beyond the general.

Zhao Mengfu advocated Wang Wei(701-761 AD) and Dong Yuan(934-962 AD) in painting^[5]. From the comparison between the painting of *Autumn Colors on he Que and Hua Mountains* and the painting of Wangchuan, it can be seen that the painter tried to learn from the spirit of the Tang Dynasty, draw a more reasonable background and coherent scene with a relaxed brushwork, and try to eliminate the rigid segmentation form in the painting of Wangchuan. The scene in the picture is similar to Wang Wei said "the autumn scenery is as close as the water color, clusters of secluded forests, wild geese are red in the autumn water, and Lutao Shatin" very similar^[6].

As shown in the image analysis of the pair of *Autumn Colors on he Que and Hua Mountains* in the following figure, Zhao Mengfu did not fully reproduce the actual scene of the area. The *Shandong Gazetteer* records that the Huabuzhu Mountain and Que Mountain in the painting are located in the north and northeast of Jinan, Shandong, respectively, and are not in the same temporal and spatial state as the two mountains in the picture. Among them, Huabuzhushan is not connected to other hills by water, and Queshan, located on the northwest bank of the Yellow River without a main peak, is far away from Huabuzhushan. It was not until 1852 that the Yellow River connected the two places. The painter, based on their personal impression and the careful consideration of friends and their own era, uses "near big, far small" and three different shapes of trees to increase space, combined with the flat and far method to guide the viewer's thoughts to the distance, remove the background of the two mountains, and focus the viewer's attention on the foreground. The vertical segmented composition of the Southern Song Dynasty has been eliminated, and a special

design has been made to connect the painted lakes between the two mountains, further beautifying the image of the Magpie and Hua peaks. In addition, with the hope of utilizing the beautiful scenery of their hometown to achieve the original intention of making friends return home carefully, the geographical characteristics of Jinan and Jiangnan also appear reasonably in the arrangement of trees, grass houses, goats, and reeds in the painting. The beautiful scenery of Jiangnan can be seen immediately, further expressing one's own melancholic officialdom and ultimately presenting a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere of literati in autumn, with the ability to evoke the elegant and refined spirit of literati hidden in traditional Chinese painting



Figure 1: Partial Yuan Dynasty Zhao Mengfu's Autumn Colors on the Que and Hua Mountains 28.4*90.2cm at the Taipei Palace Museum.

The artistic realm created by this painting is reflected in the five prefaces and postscripts written by Dong Qichang (1555-1636 AD) of the Ming Dynasty, as well as eight inscriptions by Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty. According to a friend Zhou Mi (1232-1298 AD) in his *cloud passing through the eye*, Zhao Mengfu once took Dong Yuan's *Xia Jing Shan Kou Awaiting Ferry Scroll* from Beijing to Wuxing in 1295. Compared with Dong Yuan's painting of the south of the Yangtze River, it is different. *Autumn Colors on the Que and Hua Mountains* depicts the regional customs of the Yellow River and the south of the Yangtze River in the north, but the selection of scenes in the picture has an inheritance relationship with the study of Dong Yuan's brush and ink. As shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2, drawing inspiration from Dong Yuan's painting techniques, the use of long and subtle strokes with a central style is common, while inheriting Dong Yuan's rich changes in the scenery of Jiangnan, such as streams, bridges, and islands, particularly through ink color variations. The warm and gentle brushwork of "hemp strokes" is employed to depict the northern grasslands^[7].



Figure 2: Partial Five Dynasties Dong Yuan's Xia Jing Shan Kou Awaiting Ferry Scroll 49.8*329.4cm at the Liaoning Provincial Museum

In addition, Zhao Mengfu painted the lines on both sides of the river and the slope bank differently from Dong Yuan through the treatment of pen tip and shadow, the vertical painting method combined with the sharp feeling of Licheng's branches and leaves, and the texturing method of fan Kuan's trunk texture. He saw the hard dry ink and undulating lines in the middle of

the picture drawing the hard soil feeling of the river bank, guiding the viewer to look down in parallel on both sides of the middle. Therefore, on the whole, the painting has resisted the Academy painting of Southern Song Dynasty, and successfully practiced the essential concept of “Ancient idea”: it is the intention of painting by excellent painters since Jin and Tang Dynasties. It is based on the objective and natural beauty of nature as the starting point, integrated with the painter's main idea and transferred to the landscape painting system, striving to reverse the negative trend of sluggishness and gradual decline inside and outside the Academy of Southern Song Dynasty, forming a simple and elegant natural style and ink emotion, and showing a new look of Chinese landscape painting^[8].

Zhao Mengfu advocated “Ancient idea”, which influenced the development of painting aesthetics after the Yuan Dynasty. This standard is not only reflected in painting, but also widely penetrated into poetry, calligraphy and other fields. After summarizing the painting experience of famous painters and theorists such as Zhang Yanyuan of the Tang Dynasty, Zhao mengjian(1190-1264 AD) and Ke Jiusi(1290-1343 AD), Zhao Mengfu’s “painting and calligraphy are the same as each other” in the painting of *Xiu Shi Shu Lin Tu*, which emphasizes the use of writing posture to depict paintings, and makes the painting more colorful and interesting in aesthetic comprehension. The freehand brushwork based on Dong Yuan’s brush is also presented in the painting of *Autumn Colors on the Que and Hua Mountains*. In the painting, he uses calligraphy double hooks and white fly to draw close-up dead leaves, and creates a withered artistic conception in autumn with two peaks and mountains, showing a simple and plain aesthetic tendency.

In this way, the “Ancient idea” in Zhao Mengfu’s eyes is no longer just a “retro” form of copying ancient paintings, reflecting the artist’s pursuit of traditional landscape painting skills. Starting from the perspective of the painter, copying the scenery before them, “Jinan’s scenery is rarely seen in the world, just lean on the railing and see for yourself”, and drawing on the excellent ideas and creative practices of painters since ancient times, expressing their own emotions and creating a new aesthetic realm of artistic conception, also explains the ancient Chinese literati's thoughts of seclusion and detachment expressed through Chinese landscape painting^[9].

4. Zhao Mengfu’s ancient influence on later generations

Before the Song Dynasty, the subjects of painting mostly lingered in the aesthetic taste of painters with moral character and self-cultivation. Since the contributions of literary giants such as Gukaizhi and Zongbing (375-443 AD) in the Wei and Jin Dynasty, southern and Northern Dynasties, especially Wang Wei of the Tang Dynasty and Su Shi(1037-1101 AD) of the Song Dynasty, the association between literati and painting has not been formed until the Northern Song Dynasty, with meticulous painting as the main body and ink opera as the auxiliary. In the Yuan Dynasty, painting almost became a full-time scholar, especially the scholar thought of reclusive mountains and forests. Zhao Mengfu’s “Ancient idea” of ancient Jin and Tang Dynasties and imitating nature made his brush and ink scattered and concise, and paid more attention to expressing the painter’s emotions, which was convenient for guiding the viewer’s aesthetic comprehension and catharsis of the true feelings in the painting. Highly praised by later generations, Zhao inherited the calligraphy and painting spirit of advocating the ancient but not copying the ancient, and all of them further improved the relationship between teachers and painters of Jiangnan painting school by “being close to the teacher and son, but far away from the director and giant”.

Surrounding the lineage of Zhao Mengfu^[10], according to scholar Li Zhujin, there were a total of 19 descendants, including maternal grandchildren and the fourth generation, who excelled in painting. This included his wife Guan Daosheng (1262-1319 AD), who used the “Eight Principles” of regular script to create works such as *Bamboo and Stone Painting* and *Zhao Family Ink Bamboo*

Painting, which bore a striking resemblance to the elegant beauty of Zhao's regular script. His second son, Zhao Yong(1289-1369), inherited the painting techniques of Dong, Ju, and Zi Ang, employing long, linen-like strokes with dense dots for close-ups and light ink and dry brushstrokes for distant mountains. He also painted figures and Pommeled Horses with a calligraphic charm, and his masterpiece *Green Shadow Red Heart Painting* closely resembled Wen Tong's(1018-1079 AD) *Ink Bamboo Painting* in terms of brushwork. Notably, works such as *Imitating Li Gonglin's Horse and Man Painting* exhibited Zhao Mengfu's simple and direct style. His second son, Zhao Yi, whose extant paintings are few, demonstrated a varied structure in Postscript to *Wang Mian's 'Plum Blossom Painting' - Fifty Odes to Plum Blossoms*, capturing the plain yet dynamically free style of Mengfu's calligraphy. Among the grandchildren, Zhao Lin's masterpiece *Three Generations of Zhao Family Horse and Man Painting* closely resembled Zhao Mengfu's *Bathing Horse Painting*, and Ming Dynasty scholar Wang Fu commented that "the paintings of Zi Ang's horses were partly imitated by Yan Zheng", highlighting his artistic achievements. Notably, Wang Meng, one of the "Four Masters of Yuan Dynasty" among the later generations, made the highest artistic contribution. Ming Dynasty scholar Dong Qichang once inscribed Wang Meng's(1308-1385 AD) *Qingbian Hermit Painting* as "the best painting in the world by Wang Shuming", skilled in landscapes, bamboo forests, figures, and calligraphy. His painting style followed Dong and Ju's techniques, drawing inspiration from Zhao Mengfu's calligraphic aesthetic, and he innovated with techniques such as the Jiesuo and Niumao strokes, employing a powerful and moist brushwork with a deep and elegant style.

Looking back on the Southern Song Dynasty, whether it was the exquisite flowers and birds, or the passionate landscape, Zhao Mengfu had a profound understanding of the peak of art in that era and began to decline. Only by learning from the elegant and simple art concepts and feelings of the Jin and Tang Dynasties, can we get rid of the ruthlessness caused by the fine brushwork and delicacy used by the painting academy at that time. Therefore, the simple style of painting in the Yuan Dynasty, supported by the "ancient" background, can show elegant character and rich artistic conception. Especially in landscape painting, we can see that Zhao Mengfu seriously considered the landscape painting in Jin, Tang and Song dynasties, all starting from nature, towards renewal.

Therefore, based on the development of Zhao Mengfu's painting, the "Four Masters of the Yuan Dynasty" in the later period elevated Chinese landscape painting to a new height with their simple painting style and unique painting techniques. This is not only conducive to the expression of artists' subjective emotions, but also allows for breakthroughs in Chinese painting. The family tradition was passed down through numerous disciples of the master, Zhao Mengfu, who excelled in painting with a graceful and elegant style. Among them was Huang Gongwang(1269-1354 AD), who was known as the foremost among the "Four Masters of the Yuan Dynasty". He was also known by his courtesy name of Zijiu and pseudonym of Dachi. His painting style traced back to Dong yuan, Ju ran, Jing Hao and Guan Tong, while his recent learning was influenced by Song Xue's calligraphy and painting style, emphasizing the "value of ancient style". In the sixth year of the Dade reign (1302), Zhao Mengfu painted the *Water Village Scroll* for his friend, which contained a literary atmosphere similar to the simple and distant artistic style of Zijiu's *Dwelling in Fuchun Mountain*. Especially in the *Remaining Mountains* painting, the "isosceles triangle" formed by the two mountains and the trees closest to the foreground is very similar to the treatment of the foreground in the *Autumn Colors on the Que and Hua Mountains* painting. The paintings borrow from Zhao's simple and plain brushwork, combining seal script calligraphy with the use of linen-wrapped strokes to depict the rolling landscapes of Jiangnan. They abandon the excessive depiction of close-ups since the Southern Song Dynasty, using backward and high-angle compositions to extend the image, thus creating a calm and distant atmosphere. Later generations' reference to Huang Gongwang as "my master, my master" becomes very clear.

Ni Zan(1301-1374 AD) is a representative figure of the four great masters in the Yuan Dynasty. He inherited Zhao Mengfu's literati painting theory and focused on "expressing the ease in his chest". The timeless painting *Autumn Mist in Yuzhuang* guides viewers to unlimited imagination with the phrase "two banks of a river, three sections". The side strokes are light and elegant, highlighting the literati's admiration for "Ancient idea" and the idea of simplicity and distance in their paintings. What we should pay attention to is that appreciation of both refined and popular tastes is a kind of temperament and artistic conception expressed in traditional Chinese painting. It can be seen that "Yipin" refers to the lofty and free life interest pursued by the ancient scholar bureaucrats, while the scholar bureaucrats at that time expressed their aesthetic cognition and spiritual implication of "Yipin" with the artistic conception of "Ink". Therefore, Yipin painting is the spiritual food of literati painters. For the purpose of expressing their "ease in the chest", compared with the "Ancient idea" of Tang calligraphy and painting pursued by Zhao Mengfu, it seems to pay more attention to and emphasize the life experience and emotional mood of literati painters, and the expression of both in their works. From the perspective of "Freehand Brushwork", Ni Zan is more prominent than Zhao Mengfu, but his aesthetic view and painting creation are essentially a rational extension of Zhao Mengfu's aesthetic view and painting creation trend, innovators of tradition.

However, it is precisely because of this that many literati choose to retire to the mountains and forests and devote themselves to painting and painting. The tranquility and seclusion of the mountains and forests enable the literati to better play their talents, and the beautiful mountains and rivers that are hidden from the world have brought infinite inspiration to the literati. Zhao Mengfu's theory advocated in the Yuan Dynasty stressed that painting should show the traditional spirit of the "The middle way", which provided an aesthetic path for painters in the Yuan Dynasty. Only by understanding nature can one break through oneself. On the basis of inheriting the excellent painting concepts and mature brush and ink methods in the Tang and Song Dynasties, he tried to avoid the sentimental painting style in the Southern Song Dynasty, absorbed the essence of the Southern Song Dynasty, attached importance to the spirit and style of "simplicity", and created a number of elegant Concise paintings, which is also an important feature of literati painting in the Yuan Dynasty, is also the main reason for the development of literati painting in the Yuan Dynasty.

In fact, this kind of subjective will derived from human beings is that painters release their thoughts into images through the language of painting. The famous literati Song Lian's(1310-1381 AD) reverence for Zhao's calligraphy and painting, his skillful use of cursive script, and innovation from Zhao Mengfu's seal script, inherited Zhao's beautiful and simple artistic style; One of the "Four Talented Scholars of Jiangnan", Wen Zhengming, wrote the postscript *Portrait of Xiang Jun and Xiang Lady* with Zhao's "Ancient idea". He opposed the bright and delicate Southern Song Dynasty courtyard paintings, praised the beauty of the Jin and Tang dynasties' high antiquity and simplicity, and even more strongly pursued the charm of the Jin and Tang dynasties. The *Autumn Sound Ode* reveals the refined atmosphere of literati and painters; Dong Qichang's(1555-1636 AD) questioning of the value of Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy and painting pushed forward the natural evolution of Chinese painting history. Dong Qichang, who inherited the literati painting style, although his paintings were grand and his style was light and true, he also pointed out the artistic drawbacks of Zhao's gradual dispersion. But in his later years, Zhao Mengfu praised Zhao's inheritance of the "Ancient idea" of both rhyme and law since the Jin and Tang dynasties in his postscript *The Record of Guangfu Rebuilding the Pagoda*; Until the flourishing of stele studies in the Qing Dynasty, Kang Youwei(1858-1927) once commented that "during the reign of Emperor Qianlong, there was a competition to talk about Zi'ang", and with the respect of the "Yuan Four Schools" by the "Wu School Painting School", "Six Schools of Early Qing Dynasty", "Four Monks of Qing Dynasty", "Yangzhou Painting School" and modern "Hai School", many painters in later

generations were influenced by Zhao Mengfu's painting theory.

5. Conclusion

Zhao Mengfu's pursuit of perfection and achievements in painting can be regarded as the ultimate. As a key figure connecting the Song and Yuan Dynasties, through the analysis of the painting of autumn scenery of magpies and flowers, we can see that Zhao Mengfu's emphasis on "Ancient idea" and learning from nature, starting with nature and his personal thoughts to get rid of the stagnation of the painting academy at that time, with simple painting style and unique painting style, Chinese landscape painting has been raised to a new level. The theory of "Ancient idea" is not limited to the aesthetic thoughts of a certain school. It combines the advantages of each school into the ancient system and forms its own unique painting style, which has made great contributions to the painting of the Yuan Dynasty. Zhao Mengfu combined tradition with innovation, objectivity with subjectivity, and his understanding of the concept of learning from the ancients and changing from the ancients on the basis of "returning to the ancients".

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