The relationship between Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy and social trend of thought in late Ming Dynasty

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Abstract. The purpose of this paper is to explore the mutual influence and internal relationship between Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy style and the social trend of thought in the late Ming Dynasty. The late Ming Dynasty was an important transition stage in Chinese history, with profound changes in social structure and cultural trends, which not only reflected in the political and economic level, but also profoundly affected the cultural and artistic fields. As an outstanding calligrapher in this period, Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy art not only reflects his personal artistic pursuit, but also reflects the unique features of the late Ming society. This paper first summarizes the social and cultural background of the late Ming Dynasty and its main schools of thought, and then introduces Zhang Ruitu's artistic career and his achievements in calligraphy. Through a detailed analysis of his calligraphy style, the author reveals the personal expression and social values contained in Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy. Then, the paper deeply discusses how the social trend of thought in the late Ming Dynasty can be reflected in his calligraphy, and analyzes the feedback effect of Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy works on the social change at that time. Finally, this paper summarizes the interaction between Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy and the social trend of thought in the late Ming Dynasty, and evaluates the historical status of his calligraphy art. It is hoped that the study of Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy will provide a new perspective for understanding the cultural phenomena in the late Ming Dynasty.

Keywords: Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy, social trend of thought in late Ming Dynasty, psychological influence, personalized expression, art and social interaction.

1. Introduction

The late Ming period was an important turning point in Chinese history, characterized by political upheaval, economic change and cultural prosperity. As an important figure in the calligraphy art of the late Ming Dynasty, Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy works not only carried his personal artistic pursuit, but also reflected the unique social and cultural atmosphere of that era [1]. In the late Ming Dynasty, the development of mind science promoted people's understanding of individual value, and personality liberation became a spirit of The Times [2]. This ideological trend has a profound impact on artistic creation, especially in calligraphy, a highly personalized art form. Living in such a transformative era, Zhang Ruitu was not only an outstanding calligrapher, but also a scholar and official. His calligraphy style is unique, characterized by cursive writing, strong strokes, smooth lines, and a strong personal style [3]. Zhang Ruitu's works are not only artistic achievements, but also historical and cultural testimonies. They record the changes of an era and reflect the artist's response and reflection on the zeitgeist.

The relationship between Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy and the social trend of thought in the late Ming Dynasty is a topic worthy of further discussion. On the one hand, the social trend of thought in the late Ming Dynasty played an important role in the formation of Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy style. On the other hand, Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy works have also become an important carrier to reflect the social culture of the late Ming Dynasty. Therefore, this study is not only of great significance for understanding Zhang Ruitu's personal artistic achievements, but also for exploring the law of interaction between calligraphy art and social culture.

2. Overview of social trends in late Ming Dynasty

The late Ming Dynasty was an important stage in the late Chinese feudal society, which witnessed the drastic social changes from the Ming Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty. With the development of commodity economy and the emergence of capitalism, the late Ming society experienced profound changes in politics, economy, culture and many other levels. Politically, centralization has weakened and local forces have risen. Economically, with the expansion of commodity circulation, commercial capital has been unprecedented development; Culturally, the ideological liberation movement represented by the theory of mind emerged, which promoted the liberation of personality and the change of social atmosphere [4]. Under the social background of the late Ming Dynasty, the theory of mind became an important ideological trend. It advocates "to conscience", that is, people are born with good nature, through inner reflection can achieve moral perfection. This theory encourages people to pay attention to inner experience and pursue individual expression, which is closely related to the pursuit of personality embodied in Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy. The development of mind science has not only produced extensive influence in the field of philosophy, but also spread to the fields of literature and art, and promoted the development of calligraphy art towards a more personalized and emotional direction. In addition to the theory of mind, other important social trends emerged in the late Ming Dynasty, such as Wang Yangming's thought of the unity of knowledge and action, which emphasized the combination of theory and practice, opposed empty talk and advocated practical learning. This thought also influenced the art of calligraphy, making calligraphers pay more attention to the practical effect of calligraphy and the improvement of technical skills [5]. In addition, the late Ming society also appeared to criticize the traditional Confucian ethics, advocating the liberation of personality and the return of humanity. This ideological atmosphere provides artists such as Zhang Ruitu with free play space, enabling them to break away from traditional constraints and create calligraphy works with distinctive characteristics.

3. Zhang Ruitu's life and artistic achievements

3.1. A brief introduction to Zhang Ruitu's life

As an outstanding calligrapher in the late Ming Dynasty, Zhang Ruitu's life experience was closely related to the social changes in the late Ming Dynasty. Born in the Jiangnan area where literary style flourished, Zhang Ruitu received a good education since childhood. He is diligent and studious, not only has profound attainments in calligraphy, but also dabbles in many fields such as literature and painting. Zhang Ruitu became an official in his early years. Although he had ups and downs in his official career, he never gave up his pursuit of calligraphy. In the political turmoil of the late Ming Dynasty, Zhang Ruitu experienced many ups and downs in official circles, but he always maintained his independent personality and noble artistic pursuit.

Zhang Ruitu's achievements in the field of calligraphy are mainly reflected in the following aspects: First, he is unique in calligraphy skills, especially good at calligraphy and cursive. His calligraphic works are famous for their momentum and strong strokes, forming their own unique artistic style. Zhang Ruitu's works not only pursue beauty in form, but more importantly, he integrates his own emotion and perception of life in calligraphy, making each work full of vitality and expression. Secondly, Zhang Ruitu pays attention to the combination of practicality and artistry of calligraphy. He believes that calligraphy is not only a recording tool for words, but also an important way to express personal feelings and aesthetic pursuit. In the process of creation, Zhang Ruitu is good at using various calligraphy techniques, such as shade change, stroke flow, etc., so that the works are practical and artistic charm. Moreover, Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy style was deeply influenced by the social trend of thought in the late Ming Dynasty. He absorbed the individual liberation thought advocated by the mind, and integrated it into his calligraphy creation, so that his works are full of personal emotional color and atmosphere of The Times. Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy is not only a

technical presentation, but also a reflection of his inner world, reflecting his deep perception of the social changes at that time.

3.2. An analysis of Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy style

Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy works are famous for their unique artistic style. In the form of calligraphy, he pursues smooth lines and compact structure, while paying attention to the echo and coordination between strokes. In the use of the pen, Zhang Ruitu pays attention to the importance of the brushwork, and the brushwork is stiff and soft, full of rhythm. His calligraphy works often show a dynamic beauty, giving people a sense of both solemn and smart. In addition, Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy layout is also quite ingenious, with proper white space between characters and the overall layout is dense and cohesive, giving people visual pleasure. Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy is not only a display of skills, but also a reflection of his personal artistic pursuit and social concepts. In his works, we can see the bold breakthrough of traditional calligraphy norms, as well as the persistent pursuit of personal style. This pursuit is closely related to the social trend of thought in the late Ming Dynasty, especially the influence of mind science, which emphasizes the importance of individual inner experience and advocates the liberation of personality. Zhang Ruitu runs through this idea in his calligraphy creation, which makes his works have a strong sense of The Times and personal characteristics.

The individual liberation of Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy is not only reflected in the form, but also reflected in his understanding of the essence of calligraphy art. He stressed that calligraphy should go beyond the simple function of writing, and become an art form to express emotions and show personality. Therefore, in Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy works, we can see that he tries to convey personal emotional experience and social ideals through calligraphy, which makes his calligraphy works have rich connotation and profound thoughts.

4. The influence of social trend of thought on Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy

4.1. The influence of social trend of thought on Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy works in late Ming Dynasty

In the late Ming Dynasty, with the development of commodity economy and the change of social structure, people's ideas also experienced profound changes. During this period, schools of thought such as the mind emerged, advocating individual self-consciousness, self-realization, and re-examination of traditional culture. With the spread of new ideas such as mind science, people begin to pay more attention to individual inner experience and emotional expression. This kind of ideological atmosphere encourages artists to pay more attention to the display of personal style in their creation. These thoughts have an important influence on the formation of Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy style. It is under this background that Zhang Ruitu integrates his personal emotional experience into his calligraphy creation and forms his own unique artistic style. In his calligraphy works, we can not only see his inheritance of traditional techniques, but also feel his pursuit of personal expression. This pursuit coincides with the philosophy of mind that emphasizes individual value in late Ming society. These calligraphy works not only reflect superb skills, but more importantly, they convey the artist's inner emotions and deep perception of life.

Zhang Ruitu's exploration in calligraphy coincided with the individual liberation and cultural innovation advocated by the society in the late Ming Dynasty. He does not adhere to the traditional form of calligraphy, but dares to break through the convention and try new methods of expression. This innovative spirit is not only reflected in his contribution to the art of calligraphy, but also a response to the social trend of thought at that time. Zhang Ruitu's artistic practice shows that the social trend of thought in the late Ming Dynasty has a direct and far-reaching influence on the artist's creation.

4.2. Specific case analysis

In order to better explain the influence of social trends on Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy creation, the following three specific works are analyzed. Work 1: Zhang Ruitu's Cursive Seven-character Epilature. In this work, Zhang Ruitu breaks the regular pattern of traditional cursive, and uses a large number of continuous strokes and flying white, making the whole work appear extremely vivid. The connection between the word and the word is smooth and natural, as if in one go, revealing a kind of unrestrained temperament. The formation of this style is obviously influenced by the thought of mind studies in the late Ming Dynasty, and the individual liberation and inner experience advocated by mind studies are fully reflected in this work.

In another masterpiece, The Preface to the Orchid Pavilion, Zhang Ruitu did not follow the original look of Wang Xizhi's Orchid Pavilion, but added personal understanding and innovation on the basis of copying. His brushstrokes are more free and the font is more varied, showing a unique charm that is different from traditional copying works. This reflects Zhang Ruitu's pursuit of personality liberation in calligraphy creation, he is not satisfied with simply imitating the achievements of predecessors, but strives to innovate and develop on the basis of inheritance.

Work 3: Cursive Du Fu Poems by Zhang Ruitu. In this work, he expresses his understanding of the poems of Tang Dynasty poet Du Fu in cursive form. The fonts in the works are spontaneous, and the thickness of the lines changes imregularly, giving people a strong visual impact. This creative approach was obviously influenced by the social trend of thought in the late Ming Dynasty, which emphasized the expression of personal emotions and the re-examination of traditional culture. Through his calligraphy works, Zhang Ruitu not only conveys his admiration for Du Fu's poetry, but also shows his unique views on calligraphy art.

Through the analysis of Zhang Ruitu's specific works, we can clearly see how the social trend of thought in the late Ming Dynasty profoundly affected his calligraphy creation. Zhang Ruitu's works not only reach a high level of technology, but more importantly, they reflect the artist's grasp of the spirit of The Times and strong expression of personal emotions. These works not only show Zhang Ruitu's artistic talent, but also a microcosm of the social and cultural changes in the late Ming Dynasty, providing us with a precious perspective to understand the spirit of that era.

5. The feedback of Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy to the social trend of thought

5.1. How does Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy reflect and influence the social trend of thought in the late Ming Dynasty

Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy works are not only the embodiment of personal artistic pursuit, but also a mirror of social and cultural changes in the late Ming Dynasty. For example, Zhang Ruitu's Cursive Li Bai Poems is a good example. In this work, he wrote poems by Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai in cursive form. Compared with the traditional cursive script, Zhang Ruitu's writing is more free and easy, and the handwriting is continuous and full of rhythm, as if jumping on the paper. This style not only shows Zhang Ruitu's superb skill in calligraphy art, but more importantly, it reflects the social trend of thought in the late Ming Dynasty's emphasis on individual emotional expression. Li Bai's poetry itself is full of bold and unrestrained atmosphere, and Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy style is just perfect to complement it, and they jointly create a resonance beyond time and space.

5.2. The significance of Zhang Ruitu's artistic practice to the social change at that time

Zhang Ruitu's artistic practice is of great significance to the social reform in the late Ming Dynasty. For example, Zhang Ruitu wrote his poems in the form of running books. Unlike the strict norms of traditional calligraphy, Zhang Ruitu's writing is more casual, with various forms and personalized expressions. This way of creation is not only a challenge to the traditional form of calligraphy, but also a response to the social advocacy of personality liberation in late Ming Dynasty. Through such calligraphy works, Zhang Ruitu conveyed his understanding of life attitude and expression of

personal emotions, which was undoubtedly an encouragement and support for intellectuals who pursued personality liberation in the society at that time.

5.3. The interaction between Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy and social trend of thought in late Ming Dynasty

Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy achievements not only lie in the fact that he left a large number of artistic treasures for posterity, but more importantly, his artistic practice promoted the development of social culture in the late Ming Dynasty. Zhang Ruitu's works reflect the society's recognition of the value of the individual and the re-examination of traditional moral concepts. Through the analysis of these specific works, we can more intuitively understand the feedback effect of Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy on the social trend of thought in the late Ming Dynasty, and his contribution to the social change at that time.

There is a close interaction between Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy art and the social trend of thought in the late Ming Dynasty. On the one hand, the social trend of thought in the late Ming Dynasty gave Zhang Ruitu inspiration and support for his creation, enabling him to explore the expression of personality and emotion in calligraphy art; On the other hand, Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy works also became a medium to spread these trends of thought, passing the ideological trend of the late Ming Dynasty to the audience through artistic means, and promoting cultural exchange and development.

6. Conclusion

Through the in-depth discussion of the relationship between Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy style and the social trend of thought in the late Ming Dynasty, this paper reveals the spirit of The Times and its artistic value contained in Zhang Ruitu's calligraphy works. The social changes in the late Ming Dynasty not only reflected in the political and economic levels, but also profoundly affected the cultural field, especially the development of mind science, personality liberation and other ideological trends for artists to provide a broad space for creation. As a representative calligrapher of this period, Zhang Ruitu's works not only show his personal artistic talent, but also a response to the social and cultural background of the time. Although this study provides some valuable insights, there are many aspects that warrant further exploration. For example, the comparative study between Zhang Ruitu and other calligraphers in the late Ming Dynasty, the dissemination and influence of his works under the background of globalization, and the inheritance and development of his calligraphy art in the contemporary era are all the directions for future research.

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