

The Status and Changes of the Relationship between Ink and Color in Traditional Landscape Painting

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Abstract: Color has always played a key role in the evolution of Chinese painting history. With the rise of ink painting and the development of literati painting, the expression of landscape painting gradually transformed, green and heavy colors gradually lost their dominant position, and ink painting gradually became the dominant style in the Chinese painting world, with the use of color gradually weakening. Especially in the Song and Yuan Dynasties. The change and application of color in landscape painting is in line with the changes in society and aesthetic concepts, reflecting the aesthetic interests and cultural backgrounds of different times.

Keywords: Landscape Painting; Ink; Color.

1. The Five-Color Pioneers from the Eastern Jin Dynasty to the Tang Dynasty

During this period, Chinese green landscapes went through the process of sprouting to maturity. The Luoshen Fu painting (Fig 1), which was attributed to Gu Kaizhi during the Wei, Jin, and Six Dynasties, can be seen as the earliest presentation of

landscape in color. A large portion of the background of the entire picture is landscape, and most of it is painted in green and blue colors. During the Sui dynasty, Zhan Ziqi's landscape paintings were painted in lime green, and during the Tang dynasty, Li Sixun and his son inherited and developed Zhan Ziqi's tradition of landscape painting, applying the technique of using lime green color to a more sophisticated degree.



Fig 1. Gu Kaizhi, Luoshen Fu, color on silk, Collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing, China

The Spring Excursion (Fig 2), a work of art on silk with applied colors, presents an ancient and pure palette, typical of the early days of landscape painting. The two main colors used in the painting are stone green and stone green, reflecting the characteristics of painting in the Wei and Jin dynasties. The overall picture is outlined with ink lines, while the use of color is mainly focused on rendering. The top of the mountain

is mainly depicted in lime green, while the foot part of the mountain is mainly in mud gold color. The detailed depiction of tree leaves and pine needles is rendered and stippled, with accents of dark green. The Ming dynasty painter Zhan Jingfeng commented on the Spring Excursion, saying that it was "the beginning of the source of lime green landscapes" which had a far-reaching influence.



Fig 2. Accompanied by Zhan Ziqi's "Spring Tour" (part of the painting), color on silk, Collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing, China

Li Si Xun and Li Zhaodao, father and son, inherited and developed Zhan Ziqi's tradition of landscape painting, taking it to a new peak. The introduction and application of tonal colors used a variety of pigments in the picture, such as stone green, silver vermilion, cinnabar, ochre, indigo, white earth, gold leaf, and dozens of other colors. The contrast of the various colors creates the noble color of the picture, making the whole work brilliant. Therefore, it is also known as "Jinbi Landscape".

The unique charm and rich connotation of the art of

painting are fully demonstrated. The landscape paintings of this period, with their rich colors and exquisite techniques, have added a brilliant piece to the history of Chinese painting.

Li Sixun's Pavilion with Sails (Fig 3), a landscape painting in large blue and green, is dyed in layers of rich, vivid colors, revealing a magnificent scene of gold and blue. Ink lines dominate the outline of the picture, while the stone base at the foot of the mountain is chapped with ink lines, adding a sense of reality and vividness to the picture.



Fig 3. Tang Dynasty, Li Si-xun, "Pavilion with Sails", color on silk, Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei

Li Zhaodao's Ming Emperor's Fortunate Visit to Shu (Fig 4) is a landscape painting in green and heavy colors, with a panoramic view in shades of green. The details of the peaks, boulders, and flowing water in the painting are clearly delineated with fine lines. In particular, the fine details of the rock textures are portrayed with a fine but not overpowering

effect. In the use of color, although a variety of heavier colors are used, the colors are full and harmonious, achieving the effect that the colors do not affect the ink lines. During the Tang Dynasty, green landscape painting was further developed, and Li Zhaodao, father and son, together established its important position.



Fig 4. Tang Dynasty, Li Zhaodao, "Emperor Ming's Luck in Shu", color on silk, Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei

2. Color and Ink Parallelism in the Song Dynasty

During the Five Dynasties period, people gradually lost their attention to the "Wu landscape", and the painting style and aesthetics of the times gradually shifted, with landscape paintings paying more attention to the use of ink and "ink and five colors". gradually penetrated into people's concepts. It was not until the Northern Song Dynasty, when Cheng Yi advocated for the restoration of ancient styles and studied under the Tang Dynasty's Li Si Xun and Li Zhaodao, that the green landscape was gradually revived.

Wang Ximeng's Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains (Fig 5) from the Northern Song Dynasty can be considered

the pinnacle of Chinese lime green landscape painting. The entire painting is majestic, with mountains and rivers flowing through it, revealing a profound and vast landscape. The skillfully arranged layout and meticulous depiction of the landscape, both horizontally and vertically, show a harmonious and balanced aesthetic. The colors of the picture are romantic and vivid, and even after a thousand years, they are still bright and eye-catching, with the lime green hue remaining bright, and the thick layering of pigments and the use of high-quality mineral pigments have greatly enhanced the brightness and purity of the colors, presenting a rich and beautiful scene. The thick layer of pigment and the use of high quality mineral pigment make the brightness and purity of the color have been greatly improved, presenting a rich and elegant effect.



Fig 5. Wang Ximeng, Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains, color on silk, Collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing, China

On the basis of inheriting the traditional painting methods, Wang Ximeng skillfully integrated new techniques of brush and ink expression. With the help of the detailed depiction of the shady part of the mountain, the colors of the picture are set off in a more brilliant and colorful way. The use of mineral pigments such as stone green and stone green, combined with multi-layered superimposed rendering, gives the work a sense

of depth, and the color and ink harmonize with each other, presenting a natural and smooth effect. In addition, the author skillfully uses heavy ink to color the slopes and banks of the mountains, reasonably combining color and ink and brushwork to appropriately and realistically depict the landscape scene, leaving a deep impression on the viewer.



Fig 6. Wang Ximeng, "Thousands of Miles of Rivers and Mountains" (partially), color on silk, Collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing, China

The Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains (Fig 6) is not only opulent and elegant in its overall appearance, but also in its local details, which are characterized by meticulous attention to detail. The sky is painted with light ink, dyed with flower green, and then overlaid with layers of stone green; the lake is painted with light ink and flower green, followed by stone green on the back of the silk, and then finally dyed with

head green on the front; the mountains are painted with ochre as the green background, with the contrast between warm and cold highlighting the brightness of the colors, and then overlaid with layers of stone green and other greens, making the color changes rich and showing rich variations. Rich, presenting rich changes, and then finally add the rendering of cyan, making the color block is not only colorful, but also

chapped with a richer sense of hierarchy. The depiction of the mountains and rocks is not simply using a single mineral pigment, but first outlining the structure of the mountains and rocks with ink chafing, which makes the mountains present different forms such as center-front, side-front, and lotus leaf chafing. This painting technique of interweaving ink lines, colors and chapped surfaces makes the picture more vivid and three-dimensional. The color expression of the mountain peaks is further enriched by the separation of stone green and the outlining of different greens. The thickness of the stone green is more obvious in the broken stones at the top and foot of the mountain, which complements the stone green, forming a patchwork of colors. The thickness of the stone green is more obvious in the gravel at the top and foot of the mountain, which complements the stone green and creates a harmonious effect of mismatch. For the village houses, the black roofs echo the ochre color at the foot of the mountain, adding to the harmony and rhythm of the picture. As a whole, "A Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains" presents a rich landscape scene through fine color layering and detailed chapping, presenting an integrated painting style.

After the Northern Song Dynasty, green landscape painting was gradually replaced by ink landscape painting, marking a gradual decline in the status of color in painting. Although color was once again valued to a certain extent during this period, ink painting still dominated the development of painting as a whole. With the continuous exploration and enhancement of ink and wash techniques and chapping, the ink painting innovation that began at the end of the Tang Dynasty was further advanced in the Song Dynasty, which led to a shift in the relationship between color and ink in painting, presenting a different style of painting from that of the past. The Song Dynasty was an important turning point in the interchangeable roles of color and ink in landscape painting, and Wang Wei's statement that "ink is the most important thing in the way of painting" really flourished in the Five Dynasties and the Song Dynasty. For example, Dong Yuan's Pima chapped, Guo Xi's rolled clouds chapped, Li Tang's big axe chapped and the Mi's father and son of the "Mi's cloud mountain" and so on the innovation of chapping to the painters to bring more ways of expression.

In Early Spring (Fig 7), Guo Xi's paintings from the Northern Song dynasty demonstrate his unique artistic style and innovative techniques. His use of brush and ink is dynamic and precise, and his ink colors are full and smooth. Through the use of wet strokes and light coloring, he exquisitely expresses the lightness of the mountain light and smoke in early spring. In terms of technique, he uses thick and broad twisted lines to outline rocks and rocks, and uses different layers of wet and dry ink to chafe the texture of the rocks, especially represented by the "Rolling Clouds Chafing". Guo Xi's trees are depicted as thin, hard and upright, with lifelike branches and trunks, showing the bleakness of winter. The expression of the new leaves is characterized by the use of thick brush strokes and fine brush outlines, creating a contrasting effect. While inheriting the tradition, he incorporated the strengths of other famous artists and created the method of ink accumulation. In the use of tools, Guo Xi experimented a great deal and made innovations in the use of brush and ink.



Fig 7. Song Guo Xi, Early Spring, color on silk, Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei



Fig 8. Song Xia Gui, "Qingyuan painting of streams and mountains" (partially), ink and wash on paper, Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei

Xia Gui, a painter of the Southern Song Dynasty, whose works pay more attention to the expression of the interest of ink and brushwork, has written the painting "Clear and Faraway Picture of Streams and Mountains" (Fig 8), which vividly depicts the scenery along the lakes in the South of the Yangtze River, with ink as the base color. The depiction of the rocks and mountains is based on outlining the contours with a bald brush, while combining side-blade chapping, axe-chopping and other techniques, making the work heavy and crisp with ink and brushwork, presenting a rich and varied effect. Xia Gui is good at using the ink accumulation method, ink dipping method, broken ink method, and so on, through

adjusting the intensity and wetness of the ink, to realize the vivid and rich effect of the picture, and to show the beauty of the ink color variation. The entire painting is a simple and empty composition, with elegant brushwork, showing the serenity and vastness of the lake and mountains.

3. Yuan, Ming, and Qing Periods Ink and Shallow Red

During this period, on the one hand, ink and wash still dominated, on the other hand, lime green landscape gradually evolved into light-red landscape, marking the integration of lime green landscape painting and literati painting. The diminishing status of green and colorful landscapes and the focus on ink and wash became the mainstream, reflecting the

overall trend of the relationship between color and ink and brushwork in landscape painting at that time. The use of color was cautious, avoiding the use of stone colors to avoid destroying the ink, and gradually reducing the use of stone colors in favor of plant colors. Although plant colors have unique advantages in expressing the variations of ink painting, it is difficult to present the thick and intense effect of stone colors. With the continuous development of material technology, such as the introduction of scroll mounting forms and the widespread use of paper books were widely used; this began to change. The use of these new materials has helped to preserve the colors of the plants while better integrating the ink and water, opening up more possibilities for artistic creation.



Fig 9. Yuan Zhao Mengfu, The Magpie's Autumn Colors, color on paper, Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei

Zhao Mengfu can be regarded as a leading figure in the prevalence of literati painting in the Yuan dynasty. Although Zhao Mengfu's Magpie Hua Autumn Colors (Fig 9) is based on the method of the Tang masters, it embodies the morale of the scholarly spirit in the green and green landscapes, which have changed from the opulence of the green and green landscapes to become clear and natural. This landscape handscroll painting is dominated by an overall pale blue-green color, with the slopes of the mountains dyed in separate colors of flower green and light ink, and the trees partly dyed in miscellaneous ink-green and vermilion fat, with the ink framework outlined by the pima-chopping method, and then rendered in a variety of colors, including juicy green, ochre,

red, and pale blue-green. Zhao Mengfu's paintings were far-reaching, shaping the ink and light vermilion styles of Yuan Dynasty landscape painting and having a profound impact on the development of landscape painting. During the Ming Dynasty, Wen Zhengming studied under Zhao Mengfu and inherited it well. In the Huishan Tea Party Scroll (Fig 10), the picture is richly layered with colors, and through the clever combination of different shades of green and cyan, as well as light ochre, a clear visual hierarchy is formed, giving the picture both depth and clarity. By expressing the life of the literati, the small green landscape works enrich the thematic content and aesthetic connotation of the landscape paintings, showing the characteristics of elegance and beauty.



Fig 10. Ming Wen Zhengming, Huishan Tea Party Scroll, color on paper, Collection of the Palace Museum

Under the influence of literati painting, painters were restricted in their use of color, which stemmed from the artistic concepts and aesthetic preferences they had accepted. Dong Qichang's advocacy of the concept of restoration and his "North and South Sect Theory" had a great impact on landscape painting in the late Ming and even the Qing dynasties. The light ink and simple brushwork he advocated

emphasized the expression of moisture and airiness, providing a broader space for color expression for the literati painters who were adept at ink and wash landscapes. In Dong Qichang's Album of Imitation of Ancient Landscapes (Fig 11), he fully studied and developed the small green and blue styles of Zhao Mengfu and Wen Zhengming, presenting a unique aesthetic and artistic expression.



Fig 11. Ming Dynasty, Dong Qichang, Album of Imitation of Ancient Landscapes, color on paper, Collection of the Forbidden City Museum

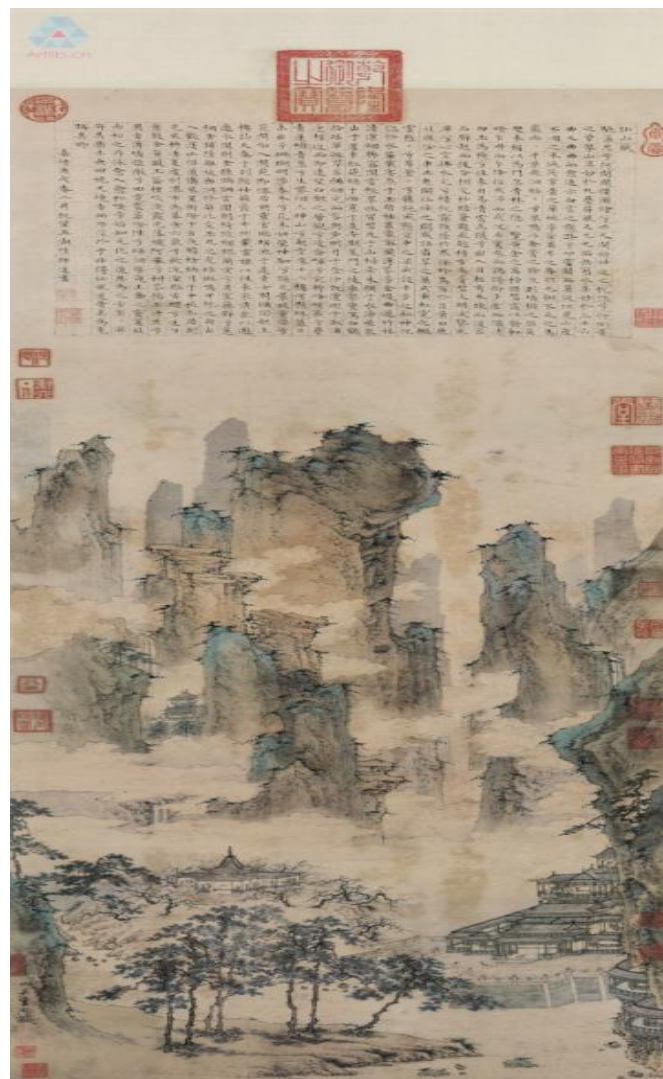


Fig 12. Chou Ying, "Pavilion on Immortal Mountain," color on silk, Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei, China

At this stage, ink and light vermilion had become the mainstream, and it was not until Qiu Ying's emergence that blue and green landscape painting gradually returned to people's view. Qiu Ying can be regarded as one of the most outstanding of the blue-green landscape paintings after the Northern Song Dynasty. His works are colorful and delicate, while maintaining a literati temperament. His works broke away from the traditional styles of Wen Zhengming and Dong Qichang, and he became one of the Four Great Masters of the Ming Dynasty.

Pavilion on Immortal Mountain (Fig 12) Qiu Ying's works typify the combination of blue-green landscapes and literati painting. Influenced by the style of the Wu school of painting, his brushwork is full of writing. In his paintings, the brushwork of the rocks and mountains is flexible, using the small axe-chopping method to depict the structure of the mountains, while the trees are outlined with double hooks, and then chapped, with vivid forms. In the treatment of clouds, he first outlines the form, and then dyed layer by layer, creating a sense of hierarchy. Qiu Ying, who is good at boundary painting, is meticulous and neat when depicting palaces and pavilions. The colors used are ink, ochre, stone green, stone green, flower green and other colors, and according to the veins of the mountains and rocks and the relationship between the front and back of the repeated multiple times of light coloring. The final color of the picture is not as brilliant as the Tang and Song green landscapes, but more literati.

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