

Textual Research and Explanation of Related Issues in Zhang Ruocheng's "Twenty-eight Scenes of Jingyi Garden"

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Abstract. "Twenty-eight Scenes of Jingyi Garden" is a long scroll of ancient Chinese garden paintings depicting the scenery of Jingyi Garden in Xiangshan during the Qianlong period. This paper examines the circulation process and current situation of the painting, and analyzes the historical situation of the author Zhang Ruocheng's creation in various aspects. In the process of analyzing the painting in detail, the author also interprets the causes of the style of the painting from multiple dimensions.

Keywords: Zhang Ruocheng; Jingyi Garden; Royal Garden; Chinese Landscape Painting; Garden Painting.

1. Introduction

"Twenty-eight Scenes of Jingyi Garden" is a long scroll of Royal Garden painting in the Qing Dynasty. The author is Zhang Ruocheng, a court painter in the Qing Dynasty. In the process of sorting out Zhang Ruocheng's materials, we find that there are a lot of gaps in the case study of 28 scenes of Jingyi garden by contemporary scholars, and there is very little research on the painting author Zhang Ruocheng. However, whether from the creative background, painting appearance, or from the relationship between painting and garden, this painting is worthy of our in-depth study. Thus, on the basis of consulting and sorting out all kinds of documents and materials in many aspects, we give a detailed textual research and explanation on a large number of problems in the Twenty-eight scenes of Jingyi garden [1].



Fig 1. Part of Zhang Ruocheng's "Twenty-eight Scenes of Jingyi Garden"

1.1 The Recent Status of the Work "Twenty-eight Scenes of Jingyi Garden" and the Issue of the Historical Collection of the Work

From April to December 2012, Beijing's Xiangshan Park held a cultural exhibition of 28 Jingyi Gardens. Among them is Zhang Ruocheng's "Twenty-eight Scenes of Jingyi Garden". It is made of silk paper, in the form of a long roll, and the picture is colored. The painting is 427.3cm long and 28.7cm wide, and is now in the Palace Museum in Beijing. This painting depicts in detail the scenery of Jingyi Garden in Xiangshan Park observed by painter Zhang Ruocheng. At the end of the scroll is an inscription Zhang Ruocheng excerpted from Emperor Qianlong's "Twenty-eight Scenery Poems

of Imperial Jingyi Garden". Zhang Ruocheng's painting has been silent for a long time since he finished it, and it is finally released in this exhibition for people to watch. The information and meaning contained in this painting not only allow people to appreciate the style of Jingyi Garden when it was just built, but also provide convenience for garden researchers and Chinese art historians [2].

The painting "Twenty-eight Scenes of Jingyi Garden" was created around the eleventh year of Qianlong's reign (1746) in the Qing Dynasty, and Zhang Ruocheng dedicated it to Emperor Qianlong after painting. Emperor Qianlong included it in the Yanchun Pavilion in the west garden of the imperial palace [3], and ordered officials of the Hanlin Academy to compile it into the "Shiqu Baoji III". According to historical records, Yanchun Pavilion was built in the fifth year of Qianlong. At first, it was a place for the empress and concubines to rest and entertain. Later, Emperor Qianlong used it as a storage room for various cultural relics and treasures. Since the Jiaqing Year, the cultural relics stored in Yanchun Pavilion have gradually increased, including "Twenty-eight Scenes of Jingyi Garden". In 1923, a fire suddenly broke out in the Jianfu Palace of the Forbidden City, and Yanchun Pavilion also suffered a fire. In terms of the common sense, the cultural relics in Yanchun Pavilion were also destroyed in the fire [6]. But according to records, many cultural relics in Yanchun Pavilion were taken out of the palace before the fire. Thus, we can speculate that the cultural relics that have been lost to the people should include the painting scroll of "Twenty-eight Scenes of Jingyi Garden" created by Zhang Ruocheng, because we have seen its authentic work today.

2. The Historical Background of the Painting "Twenty-eight Scenes of Jingyi Garden"

2.1 Zhang Ruocheng's Life and Family Background

In the current historical documents, it is difficult for us to obtain detailed biographical information on the painter Zhang Ruocheng. Because according to the standards of painting criticism at that time, the court painter Zhang Ruocheng did not receive much attention and praise from scholars at that time. Moreover, because this work has been kept in the palace for a long time, there is no relevant record of this painting in the Chinese folk painting history documents [1]. But according to the current situation, we must make inferences from the catalogue of paintings and calligraphy in the imperial palace [7], Shiqu Baoji and other bibliographic documents, as well as the author's information. We found relevant records about Zhang Ruocheng himself and his family background in the local chronicles of his hometown, and we can extract some useful information.

According to the County Chronicle of Tongcheng in Daoguang (Volume 13), Zhang Ruocheng (1721-1770), with the word Jinghe, the word Lianxue and the name mogeng, was born in Tongcheng, Anhui Province. At the age of 24, he was selected as a scholar in the second clown department in the tenth year of Qianlong (1745), and was awarded the position of writing articles by Emperor Qianlong. The highest position he ever held was the Chamberlain of the Ministry of rites, He also compiled three collections of Shiqu Baoji, collection of imperial poems, imperial Tongwen Yuntong and other books for the imperial palace.

The Zhang family is a famous scholarly family in Tongcheng. Their ancestors have been officials in the Imperial Academy of the imperial palace for six generations. Zhang Ruocheng's grandfather, Zhang Ying (1637-1708), was a famous official in the Qing Dynasty. He was named Dunfu and was called Lepu. He has held many positions, such as the Minister of works, the Bachelor of the Imperial Academy, the Bachelor of wenhuadian, the Minister of rites, etc. Zhang Ruocheng's father's name was Zhang Tingyu (1672-1755), with the word hengchen and the number of Yanzhai. He served as the left chamberlain of the Ministry of punishment during the Kangxi period, as well as the Minister of the Ministry of household, the Minister of rites, the Minister of officials, the grand Bachelor of Baohe Hall and the chief minister of military aircraft during the Yongzheng period (Yang, 2021). He was the only Han minister in the Qing Dynasty who could worship the throne in the emperor's ancestral temple. His brother's name was Zhang ruoai (1713-1746), who was also named Jingcai. He

was the eldest son of Zhang Tingyu. At the age of 21, Zhang ruoai won the Jinshi examination. Finally, in the palace, he reached the highest cabinet degree in his life. Following Emperor Qianlong's order, Zhang ruoai wrote two books, the Pearl forest in the secret hall and the collection of Shiqu treasures. During his writing, he read a lot of calligraphy and paintings of all dynasties. As a result, his painting skills have been greatly improved. Emperor Qianlong loved paintings very much. Thus, in order to get the favor of the emperor, Zhang Ruoei presented many of his paintings to Emperor Qianlong during the compilation of the Pearl forest in the secret hall. His brother Zhang Ruocheng also won the favor of the emperor by presenting his own paintings. Many paintings by brothers Zhang Ruoai and Zhang Ruocheng are recorded in the Shiqu Baoji and the third edition of Shiqu Baoji.

2.2 The Real Relationship between the Author Zhang Ruocheng and Qing Gaozong

Qing Gaozong was the Qianlong Emperor of the Qing Dynasty. We can infer the true relationship between Zhang Ruocheng and Qing Gaozong from the Zhang family's actions in the court and Qing Gaozong's attitude towards the Zhang family. And we can infer the motivation of Zhang Ruocheng's dedication to Emperor Qianlong's "Twenty-eight Scenes of Jingyi Garden". From the book "Chronicles Customized by Master Chenghuai", we can know that Zhang Tingyu did not receive the same preference during the Qianlong period as he did during the Yongzheng period. On the contrary, Emperor Qianlong reduced the power of minister Zhang Tingyu, which may be related to Emperor Qianlong's order to ease the contradiction between the ministers of Manchu and Han nationality at that time [5].

It is important to note that Zhang Ruocheng only had the opportunity to be appreciated by the emperor and paint for the royal family after his brother Zhang Ruoai died of illness. In the eleventh year of Qianlong's reign (1746), Zhang Ruoai died of illness during an emperor's western tour, at the age of thirty or four. In order to comfort Zhang Ruoai's father Zhang Tingyu's pain of losing his eldest son, Emperor Qianlong allowed Zhang Tingyu's second son Zhang Ruocheng to enter and leave the South Study in December of the same year as a show of favor. In the spring of the thirteenth year of Qianlong's reign (1748), Emperor Qianlong wrote a poem for Zhang Ruocheng's "Autumn Forest Stacked Mountains". "Lianxuezhai" in this poem is Zhang Ruoai's usual reading room, and "brother and stepbrother" refers to Zhang Ruocheng's succession to his brother's position in charge of painting for the royal family, and also that he inherited his brother's official position in the Hanlin Academy.

Actually, Zhang Ruocheng and Emperor Qianlong had a close relationship in painting, a large part of the reason was that Emperor Qianlong was very fond of his eldest brother Zhang Ruoai and his painting skills. After Zhang Ruocheng's painting "Zhenhai Temple Snow Scenery", there is a poem by Emperor Qianlong: "Tell Zhang Ruoai's younger brother a sentence, saying that his paintings are similar to those of the great painter Zhao Mengfu." His younger brother Zhang Ruocheng's painting skills are appreciated and expected. In the eleventh year of Qianlong (1746), Emperor Qianlong once ordered Zhang Ruoai to paint a "Snow Wave Stone". Emperor Qianlong spoke highly of this painting, and he wrote poems three times to express his love for this painting. After Zhang Ruoai's death, Emperor Qianlong asked Zhang Ruocheng to repaint the "Snow Wave Stone Picture" that his eldest brother once painted, and Emperor Qianlong signed a poem at the back of the painting, expressing his condolences again: " Zhang Ruoai's paintings before his death were already perfect, but there is no shortage of excellent painters in the palace, so his younger brother inherited his painting skills, and his younger brother's paintings are very similar to his paintings." We can infer from this poem, Emperor Qianlong has already expressed his affirmation of Zhang Ruocheng's painting skills, and he has reached a level that can be compared with Zhang Ruoai's works.

Additionally, Zhang Ruocheng's appointment in the palace was smooth and unimpeded, not only because of his superb painting skills, but also because his father Zhang Tingyu was an important minister, and his brother Zhang Ruoai was also favored by the emperor. From another point of view, Emperor Qianlong's love for Zhang Ruocheng was a comfort after reducing Zhang Tingyu's power. Zhang Ruocheng's father Zhang Tingyu said in "The Chronology of the Master of Chenghuai": "Zhang Ruocheng is a new official. He has painting skills, so he has been gifted by the emperor, and

the emperor recalled the deceased painter Zhang Ruoai, so the emperor felt very sad and shed a lot of tears." This indicates that Emperor Qianlong's appreciation of Zhang Ruocheng's painting skills achieved the purpose of comforting Zhang Tingyu.

3. Textual Research and Interpretation of the Painting Contents of "Twenty-eight Scenes of Jingyi Garden"

3.1 Factors Forming Zhang Ruocheng's Painting Style

During the Sui and Tang Dynasties, boundary painting gradually formed an independent painting department. In the Ming Dynasty, the construction of gardens became popular among the people, and garden-themed paintings developed rapidly. In the Kangxi and Qianlong periods of the Qing Dynasty, many imperial gardens were built in the palace, and the painters who worked in the palace specially painted a large number of recording royal garden paintings for the imperial gardens. During the Kangxi period, Tang Dai, Leng Mei and other painters from the Academy of Painting were good at painting rigorous, meticulous and gorgeous landscape paintings. In the Qianlong period, Emperor Qianlong loved calligraphy and painting. He preferred the elegant, simple and fresh painting style of the painters of the Hanlin Academy, rather than the luxurious and rich painting style of the previous court painters. Therefore, the painting style of the royal garden theme at that time was influenced by Emperor Qianlong's preference, and gradually transformed into a simple and fresh style. During this period, in addition to Zhang Ruocheng, there were Dong Bangda, Qian Weicheng, Zhang Ruoai and others among the Hanlin Academy painters who were proficient in landscapes. They all painted a lot of palace garden scenery for the court, and these events are recorded in "Shiqu Baoji" and some other writings.



Fig 2. Part of Zhang Ruocheng's "Twenty-eight Scenes of Jingyi Garden"

After Zhang Ruocheng took office in the internal court, his painting ability gradually developed. Emperor Gaozong of the Qing Dynasty often asked him to copy ancient paintings and allowed him to enter and leave Maoqin Hall freely. Maoqin Hall is the place where the emperor studies and studies in the palace. For ministers, it is a gift of the emperor to be able to go in and out freely. This reward gave him the opportunity to watch a large number of famous works of ancient calligraphy and painting collected by the royal family in the imperial palace. Through a lot of observation and practice, he learned the painting skills and ideas of excellent ancient painters. His painting style inherited Wang Shimin, a landscape painter, and learned the painting techniques of painters in the Yuan Dynasty. In

the painting of Twenty-eight scenes of Jingyi garden, Zhang Ruocheng outlined the mountain with a brush with less ink, then painted the structure of the mountain in lighter ink [4], and finally painted the color with elegant traditional Chinese painting pigments. This is the method of learning from the painter Wang Meng of the Yuan Dynasty. Why does Zhang Ruocheng learn Wang Meng's painting method? This is because the picture of clouds across the autumn ridge by Zhang Ruocheng, collected in the palace of the Qing Dynasty, contains the words of Emperor Qianlong: he used Wang Meng's method of depicting the mountain structure to express the poetic mood of poet Du Fu, that is "the beautiful autumn scenery makes people forget the troubles of the world."



Fig 3. Left: Part of Zhang Ruocheng's Twenty-eight Scenes of Jingyi Garden

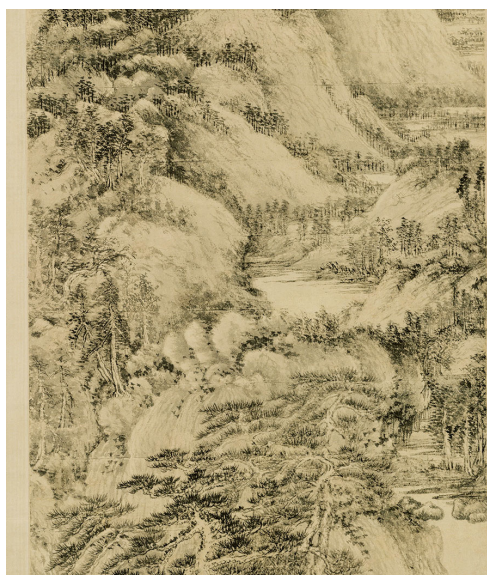


Fig 4. Right: Part of Wang Meng's "Summer Mountain Residence"

Twenty eight scenes of Jingyi garden is a realistic landscape painting, but it has a light, beautiful and fresh literati painting style. Compared with the rigorous and meticulous court painting in the same period, his pen is more free and casual. This free and casual painting style is reflected not only in the depiction of landscape scenery, but also in the depiction of buildings in the painting [8]. In ancient Chinese paintings, free and easy painting techniques are generally expressed in paintings focusing on natural scenery or local garden buildings, but Zhang Ruocheng shows it in his works depicting

panoramic royal architecture. This is a bold attempt. This way of painting can not only show the specific orientation of each building in the Royal Garden in detail, but also show the literati painting style with cultural heritage and fresh and elegant artistic conception [2], and finally make the audience feel "roaming in the landscape." This painting style is very special in the rich and bright royal garden paintings. Besides, the reason for the formation of Zhang Ruocheng's painting style is not only to cater to the aesthetic taste of Emperor Gaozong of the Qing Dynasty, but also from Zhang Ruocheng's own profound cultural heritage.

4. Conclusion

Zhang Ruocheng's "Twenty-eight Scenes of Jingyi Garden" has been in the works for more than 200 years, and Jingyi Garden has also undergone vicissitudes and changes in the past 200 years. Today's Jingyi Garden is trying to restore the old scenery on the damaged site. This map also has a very important reference value. The author hopes that this excavation and study of "Twenty-eight Scenes of Jingyi Garden" can provide some help for art theorists and garden researchers.

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