

# Three Treasures of Chinese Culture: Chinese Painting. Chinese Opera. Chinese Medicine.

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# Traditional Chinese painting

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- Painting and calligraphy are of the same origin and are regarded as two treasured arts in China.
  - They are both liked with free movement and distribution of lines in expression .
  - Together with music and chess, they formed the four skills for a learned scholar to pursue in ancient China.
  - They have also been held as a good exercise to temper one's character and cultivate one's personality.
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# HISTORY OF CHINESE PAINTING

Chinese painting has a long history and excellent tradition.

Through thousands of years, it has developed its own style, its own techniques, and a complete system of art which expresses the aesthetics of the nation.

Through its unique style and features, it has established supremacy in the world of art. Chinese painting emphasizes the point that “Inspiration comes from close observation and understanding of Nature.”

Traditional Chinese painting is the art of painting on a piece of Xuan paper or silk with a Chinese brush that was soaked with black ink or colored pigments. It is regarded as one of the three “quintessence of Chinese culture”





# THE CHARACTER OF CHINESE PAINTING



- The character of Chinese painting is closely bound up with the nature of the medium. The basic material is ink, but Chinese ink is a wonderful substance capable of an immense range and an extraordinary beauty of tone.
- The painter uses a pointed-tipped brush made of hair of goats, deer, or wolves set in a shaft of bamboo. He paints on a length of silk or a sheet of paper, the surface of which is absorbent, allowing no erasure or correction.
- Color is sometimes added to make the effect more true to life, but the ink-drawing remains almost always the foundation of the design. Color is not formal element in the design as in Western art.



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# STRUCTURE OF CHINESE PAINTING

- Chinese paintings are usually in the form of hanging pictures or of horizontal scrolls, in both cases they are normally kept rolled up.
  - The latter paintings, often of great length, are unrolled bit by bit and enjoyed as a reader enjoys reading a manuscript. There is no fixed or standard viewpoint or perspective. Chinese painting is far less concerned with notions of symmetry, balance and proportion than its European counterpart.
  - Because it lacks a single focal point, Chinese artists are free to paint on long strips of paper (or silk) and can compose pieces of amazing complexity in a rather comic book-like manner. Artists could paint a whole chain of pictures to depict continuous scenery.
  - Many pictures include objects that are both far away and near, but they are depicted as being of the same size. It is more likely that the artists were trying to paint life exactly as they saw it.
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# CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY TECHNIQUE

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- Chinese technique admits of no correction, and the artist must, therefore, know beforehand what he intends to do. He closely observes and stores his observations in his memory.
  - He conceives his design, and having completed the mental image of what he intends to paint, he transfers it swiftly and with sure strokes to the silk. It is said that in master's work the idea is present even where the brush has not passed.
  - This, however, demands confidence, speed, and a mastery of technique acquired only by long practice.
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# SUBJECT THEMES IN PAINTING

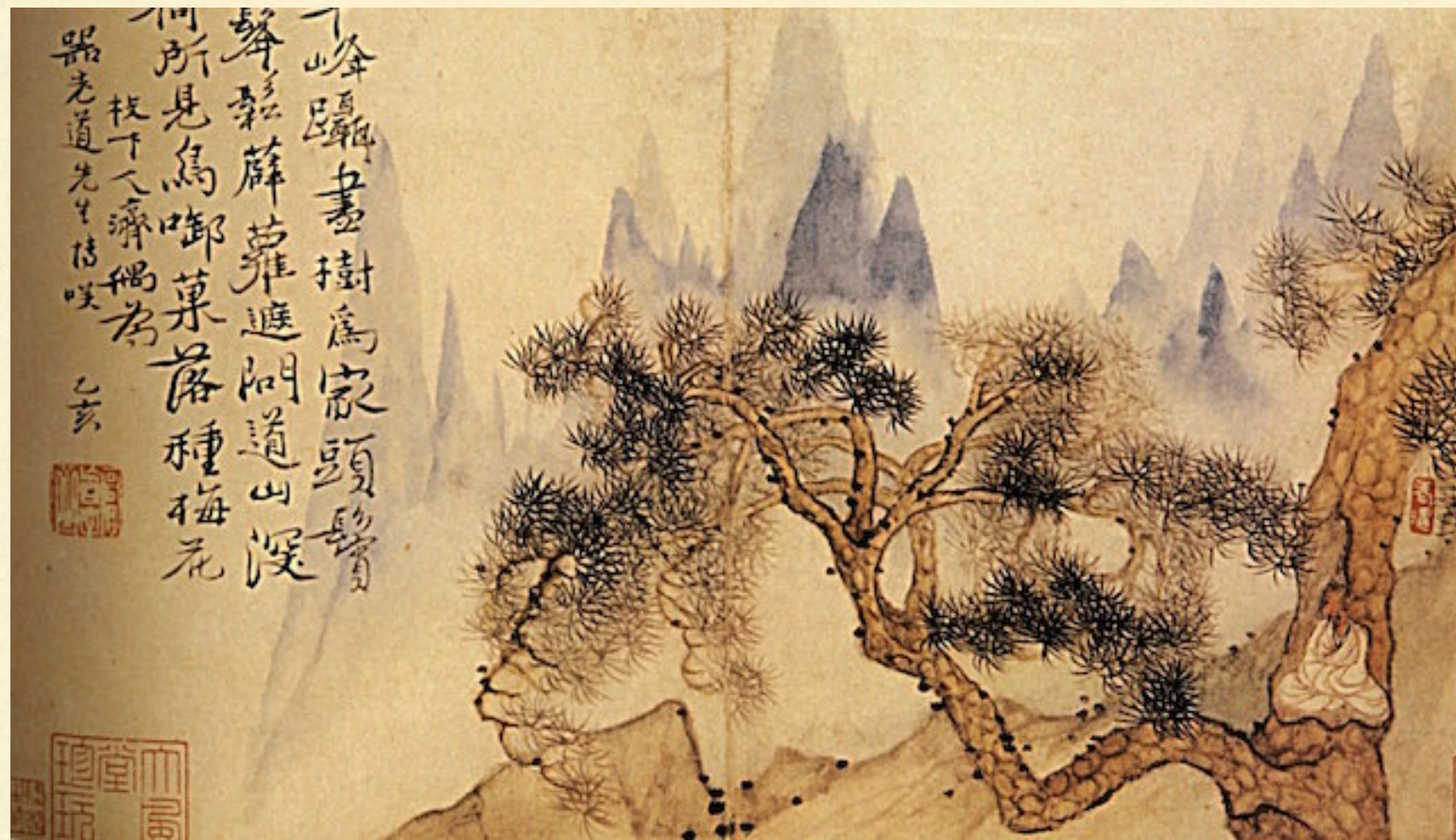
- The most popular topics have been human figures, landscapes, animals, fishes, birds and flowers—the last two being frequently combined as “flower and bird painting”.
- Figure painting, landscape painting, birds and flowers painting are the three major classifications according to subject matter.
- Figure painting, which reached maturity during the Warring States Period, flourished against a Confucian background, illustrating moralistic themes.
- From the Han Dynasty to the end of the Tang Dynasty, the human figure occupied the dominant position in Chinese painting, as it did in pre-modern European art.





# LANDSCAPE PAINTING (山水 画)

- “山水” means mountains and rivers, which stand for nature. Landscape painting is thus called because mountain and water occupy the most important place in a piece of landscape painting, while non-essential elements of landscape and people are omitted or painted as embellishment.
- Nature is predominant, and human beings are only part of it.
- This concept of man's relationship with nature was especially executed in the paintings of the Song Dynasty, which greatly influenced later landscape painters up to the present.





Just some more examples  
of the landscape painting  
with rivers, bridges,  
mountains, trees...





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# SYMBOLISM IN CHINESE PAINTING

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- Symbolism used in Chinese landscape painting often puzzles the Western eyes. Mountains, rivers, plants, animals, birds, flowers, etc., can all be chosen for their traditional association as much as for their inherent beauty.
  - The pine, for example, represents uprightness and immortality. It is one of the three plants which are generally called the “Three Friends of Winter”, the other two being bamboo bamboo and plums.
  - The orchid, a modest flower, is often identified with the high principles of the unassertive scholar or artist.
  - Another much depicted group of flowers are the “Flowers of the Four Seasons”. They are the peony, standing for riches and honors; the lotus, coming out of the mire without being smeared, for purity; the chrysanthemum, for elegance, righteousness and longevity; and the prunes, for bravery. The prunes are also regarded as the messenger of spring. The bird crane is believed to live a long life. The fish, pronounced 鱼 in Chinese, stands for surplus and plentifulness.
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- Last but not least, Chinese painting is inseparably associated with literature and other arts, such as poetry and calligraphy. The painter's carefully placed signature, inscription (often a poem) and seals are an integral part of the composition.
  - Many of the painters were poets; some, like Wang Wei, were equally distinguished in both arts. Consequently a painter means more to the Chinese than to the Westerners.
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**Thank you for attention !**





# Chinese Opera

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# Traditional Chinese Opera

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- Traditional Chinese opera, is a popular form of drama and musical theatre in China with roots going back to the early periods in China.
  - It is a composite performance art that is a mix of various art forms that existed in ancient China.
  - It evolved gradually over more than a thousand years, reaching its mature form in the 13th century during the Song Dynasty.
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# PERIOD FROM SIX DYNASTIES TO TANG

An early form of Chinese drama is the Canjun Opera (參軍戲, or Adjutant Play) which originated from the Later Zhao Dynasty (319–351).

In its early form it was a simple comic drama involving only two performers, where a corrupt officer, Canjun (adjutant), was ridiculed by a jester named Grey Hawk (蒼鵲).

These two characters in Canjun Opera are the forerunners of the fixed role categories of later Chinese opera.

Various song and dance dramas developed during the Six Dynasties period.

These forms of early drama were popular in the Tang Dynasty where they further developed. For example, by the end of the Tang Dynasty the Canjun Opera had evolved into a performance with more complex plot and dramatic twists, and it involved at least four performers





# PERIOD FROM SONG TO QING DYNASTY

- By the Song Dynasty, Canjun Opera had become a performance that involved singing and dancing.
- During Song Dynasty actors strictly adhered to speaking in Classical Chinese onstage, while during the Yuan Dynasty actors speaking or performing lyrics.
- In the Yuan poetic drama, one person sang for the all four acts, but in the poetic dramas that developed from Nanxi during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), all the characters were able to sing and perform.
- A playwright Gao Ming late in the Yuan Dynasty wrote an opera called **Tale of the Pipa** which became highly popular, and became a model for Ming Dynasty drama as it was the favorite opera of the first Ming emperor Zhu Yuanzhang



Print illustration of zaju plays by Yuan playwrights, a book of the Wanli period (1572–1620).



# “TALE OF THE PIPA”

- Tale of the Pipa is the story of a loyal wife named Zhao Wuniang (赵五娘)
- Zhao, left destitute when her husband Cai Yong is forced to marry another woman, undertakes a 12-year search for him. During her journey, she plays the pipa of the play's title in order to make a living.
- The original story sees Zhao killed by a horse and Cai struck by lightning, however in Gao Ming's version the two are eventually reconciled and live out their lives happily.





# STRUCTURE OF BEIJING OPERA

- In Beijing opera, traditional Chinese string and percussion instruments provide a strong rhythmic accompaniment to the acting.
- The acting is based on allusion: gestures, footwork, and other body movements express such actions as riding a horse, rowing a boat, or opening a door.
- Spoken dialogue is divided into recitative and Beijing colloquial speech, the former employed by serious characters and the latter by young females and clowns.
- Character roles are strictly defined. Elaborate make-up designs portray which character is acting.
- The traditional repertoire of Beijing opera includes more than 1,000 works, mostly taken from historical novels about political and military struggles.





# PERIOD OF 1912–1949

- At the turn of the 20th century, Chinese students returning from abroad began to experiment with Western plays.
- In 1919 a number of Western plays were staged in China, and Chinese playwrights began to imitate this form.
- The most notable of the new-style playwrights was Cao Yu (b. 1910). His major works—*Thunderstorm*, *Sunrise*, *Wilderness*, and *Peking Man*—written between 1934 and 1940, have been widely read in China.
- In the 1930s, theatrical productions performed by traveling Red Army cultural troupes were consciously used to promote party goals and political philosophy. By the 1940s, theater was already well established.





# PERIOD OF 1949–1985

- In the early years of the People's Republic of China, the development of Beijing opera was encouraged; many new operas on historical and modern themes were written, and earlier operas continued to be performed.
- As a popular art form, opera has usually been the first of the arts to reflect changes in Chinese policy.



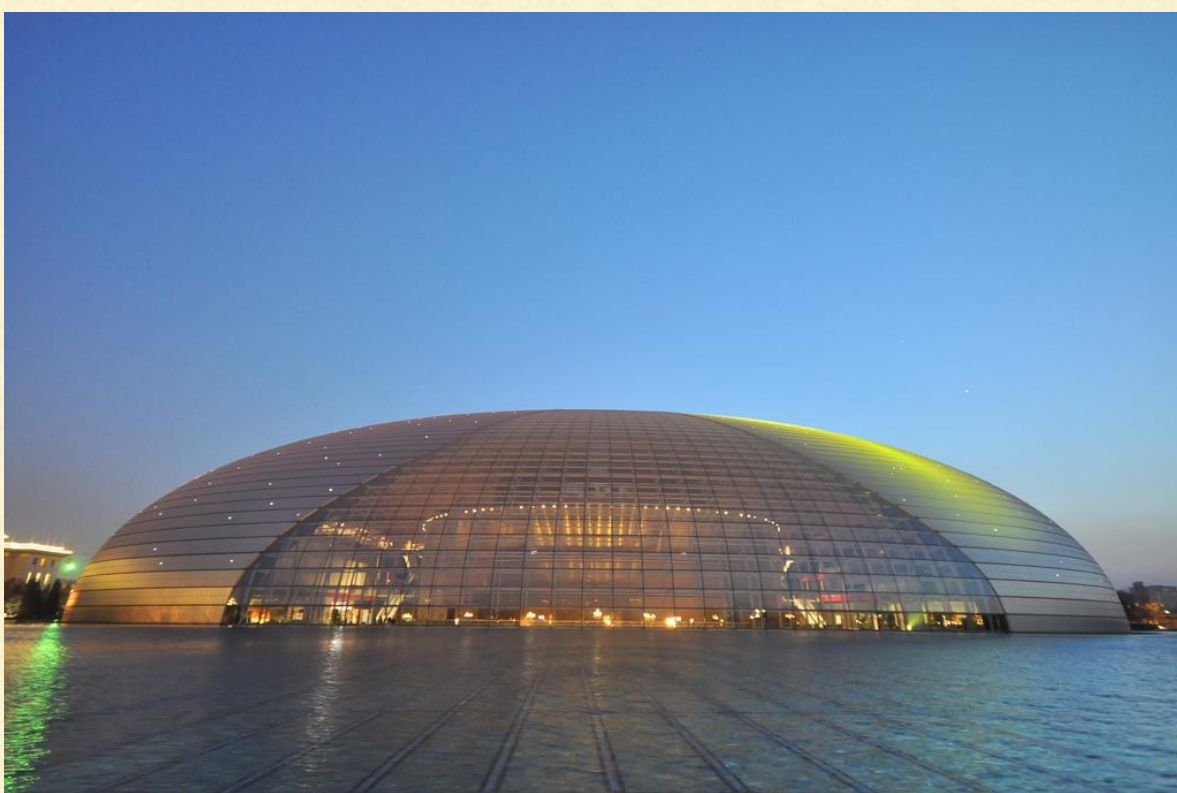


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# SYMBOLISM IN CHINESE OPERA

- Exaggerated paints on opera performer's face which ancient warriors decorated themselves to scare the enemy are used in the opera; each color has a different meaning.
  - They are used to symbolize a character's role, fate, and illustrate the character's emotional state and character. **White** symbolizes sinister, evil, crafty, treacherous, and suspicious.
  - Any performer with white painted face usually takes the part of a villain of the show. The larger the white area, the crueler the role.
  - **Green** symbolizes impulsive behavior, violence, no self-restraint or self-control. Red stands for bravery or loyalty.
  - **Black** symbolizes boldness, fierceness, impartiality, rough.
  - **Yellow** symbolizes ambition, fierceness, or intelligence. Blue stands for steadfastness ( someone who is loyal and sticks to one side no matter what ).
  - **Pink** symbolizes sophistication, and cool-headedness. Moreover, paint figures have different types.
  - For instance, overall painted face, and only painted in the center of the face, connecting eyes and nose.
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# PRESENT SITUATION OF CHINESE OPERA

In the 21st century, Chinese opera is publicly staged in formal Chinese opera houses.

It may also be presented during the lunar seventh month Chinese Ghost Festival in Asia as a form of entertainment to the spirits and audience.

More than thirty famous forms of Chinese opera continue to be performed today are came from Kunqu, including Journey of the West, Romance of Three Kingdom, the Peony Pavilion, and the Peach Blossom Fan.

These masks were based on the ancient face painting tradition where warriors decorated themselves to scare the enemy.

In 2001, Kunqu was recognized as Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.





Thank you for attention !

