

Culture and arts of the Yuan Empire in XIII-XIV centuries

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Abstract. In XIII-XIV centuries, Emperor Kublai Khan of the Yuan Empire provided special attention to artists, about whose work their enlightened contemporaries talk as about a "revolution" in the art of the time. In this period, culture including pictorial skill as such had not disappeared; it rather turned into a different quality, as it happened with the culture of Yuan period as a whole. The time of Mongol domination was not accompanied by a weakening of the high spiritual tension in Chinese culture: when else, as not in a period of unrest, wars and external pressure a culture suffers not only a shock, but the ultimate spiritual tension? It's more accurate to say that the Mongol time a new system of priorities turned up. For example, the Yuan period easel painting undergoing changes in the level of concentration is often really inferior to its predecessor – Sung painting, as she sometimes is inferior in this respect to its contemporary – Buddhist bronze plastic, that perhaps more adequately expressed the aspirations of the Mongol era with their qualitative novelty.

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Introduction

In XIII-XIV centuries, Emperor Kublai Khan of the Yuan Empire, as all the descents of Genghis Khan, provided special attention to poets and writers, artists and calligraphers, architects, about whose work their enlightened contemporaries talk as about a "revolution" in the figurative arts of the time. Some researchers of the Yuan culture usually note with regret that yielded by the Mongols simplification of attitudes and tastes caused the loss of the former depth, based on connection of, for example, classical painting with Chinese philosophy and poetry. However, the spiritual potential of the Yuan culture was still very significant. This fact eliminates the right to assert that culture, including the art of painting as such, disappeared, rather it turned into a different quality, as it happened with the art of the Yuan period as a whole. Therefore, we can only speak about the other adopted in this art system homogeneity and internal connection. The time of Mongol domination was not accompanied by a weakening of the high spiritual tension in Chinese culture: when else, as not in a period of unrest, wars and external pressure a culture suffers not only a shock, but the ultimate spiritual tension? It's more accurate to say that the Mongol time a new system of priorities turned up. The Yuan period easel painting undergoing changes in the level of concentration is often really inferior to its predecessor – Sung

painting, as she sometimes is inferior in this respect to its contemporary – Buddhist bronze plastic, that perhaps more adequately expressed the aspirations of the Mongol era with their qualitative novelty.

As for the figurative arts of the Yuan Empire, paintings, sculptures and architecture that have survived into our times provide an idea of the aesthetic and stylistic features of the Mongolian state time in XIII-XIV centuries. Talking about the art of John Joseph Saunders argues that, thanks to the Franciscans, who had extensive contacts in the Mongol court, Mongolian art affected for example Giotto di Bondone and his apprentices. So much so that St. Francis on their painting was depicted in Mongolian clothes – "literally wrapped in silk" [1]. Jack Weatherford also tells about the positive impact of Genghis Khan and his successors on European culture and civilization [2].

Painting in the Yuan Era

Many works of the Yuan era were created by masters of countries conquered by the Mongols. Among them are portraits of the Yuan khans and Hansch found in 20-ies of XX century in the old imperial palace in Beijing. The images of Genghis Khan, Ugadei, Kublai Khan and others feel the influence of the Khitan aristocratic portrait. The look of Genghis Khan is simple and in the same time majestic, he has thoughtful face, tightly compressed

mouth framed by a mustache and beard. He is wearing a yellowish suede deli - Mongolian robe with an oblique collar - and a white fur hat [3: 300]. In these portraits is no gold and precious stones that adorn hats, no clothes made of brocade and silk, which is typical for the front image of the Chinese emperors, generals of the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Artistic value of these portraits consisted in accurate transmission of characteristic external features of the depicted people and tries to send a person's character. This can be seen to outline a realistic direction in painting, a longing for something more simple, even more rough and primitive, a protest against the sophisticated refinement of Chinese painting of the Sung era.

Although some Chinese historians estimate negatively the impact of Kublai Khan and the Yuan court, noting that it applied only to the protection of portrait painters and architects, nevertheless, many Chinese artists were employed and collaborated with the Yuan court. It is confirmed by the writings of some European researchers [4; 5: 99-103]. We also know about the exhibitions of works of Chinese painters that were held. In the era of Yuan created such artists as Cheng Sysyao, Kung Kai, Qian Xuan, although they were critical to the conquerors. Kublai Khan invited artists to the court, and even in the government provided them with everything necessary for creativity. Such famous Chinese artists of the Yuan as Zhao Mengfu (1254-1322), who served in the Military Department as well, and who had a residence in Khanbalik, who later became president of the Yuan Hanlin Academy enjoyed the sympathy and help of Kublai Khan. Zhao Mengfu earned fame as a painter masterfully depicting horses and Mongolian soldiers in battle armor, on horseback. His paintings are bright, juicy, drawn with great clarity, and enjoyed popularity distinguished by simplicity, affordability and great truthfulness of images. In his paintings, Zhao Mengfu mostly uses the landscape as a background on which he portrays with an endless variety of horses from different angles, floating in the water, jumping in a meadow, fighting, etc. [6: 190-202].

Writer, musician and refined aristocrat, who came from the royal family of the Song Dynasty, Zhao Mengfu was the greatest master of polychrome painting in the manner of "a thorough brush" (gung-bi). The images of hunting scenes created by him and other works of genre character (reng-u hua, "painting figures"), seemingly answered moods and tastes of the era more than monochrome landscapes or images of plants, inspired by the classic lyric poetry and philosophy. Nevertheless, he painted landscapes, trees and stones, flowers and bamboo. Chinese experts usually estimate his works in monochrome

ink higher than polychrome work. This creative versatility as a result of personal talent and, at the same time, evidence of nature sensitivity and education - the direct consequences of aristocratic descent, allowed Zhao Mengfu to act as mastermind and partly teacher already for many of his contemporaries. They include to his followers "four (great) artists of the Yuan" (Yuan sy (da) jia): Ni Jian (1301-1374), Wan Meng (1308-1385), Huang Gungwan (1269-1354) и U Zhen (1280-1354) – the best of nearly a thousand painters and calligraphers who worked in this period [7: 620-627].

Another Chinese artist – Wan Zhen-peng (ca. 1312-1321) who worked at the court of the Yuan, aristocracy impressed creativity of Mongolian tastes. His works are characterized by narrative stories that unfold on the multimeter horizontal scrolls. They are characterized by graphic quality which manifests itself in the careful elaboration of persons, clothing, architectural details and the surrounding landscape, as well as bright color decorative solutions [7: 620-627].

The paintings created in the west of the Mongolian possessions in the conquered cities of the Western and middle Asia, are of great interest. A significant number of thumbnails of XIII-XV centuries remained in which manifested itself a very peculiar Persian-Mongolian style. For early thumbnails of this period, primarily stories drawn up from the daily environment of human life and nature are characterized. Such are, for example, the thumbnails "Varka and Gulshak" [8: 83-87], created in the first half of the XIII century and now kept in the Topkapı Palace Museum in Istanbul. In these people of Mongolian type are depicted very lively and dynamically saddling or breaking horses. People and animals are presented very really in opposite to the background of the thumbnail which is made in the abstract conditional manner.

Very large spread in the time of the Yuan gets the so-called "scientist painting" – an aestheticism direction, which had developed even in the Song time. The "scientist painting" cultivated the image of the individual elements of nature, bamboo, etc., and limited the desire of creativity to reach a very narrow and deeply symbolic of phenomena. Lee Kang refers to such artists. Lee Kang is a painter and art theorist who developed an aesthetic painting of bamboo and is the author of a treatise "Zhu pu xianlu" ("Book about the bamboo with detailed descriptions").

The Yuan painting is one of the most advanced in the history of Chinese art. Paintings and Calligraphy of this era have revealed extraordinary subtlety, clarity and harmony perception of the world, embodied in unparalleled landscapes and the

"bamboo painting" (*hua zhu*) of Ni Jan, U Zhen, Huang Gunwang and Zhao Mengfu. These "four great masters of the Yuan" managed to combine in their creations the Tang clarity, the Song individual significance and technical virtuosity [9: 285-289].

Position of religion and development of writing

Paul Ratchnevsky in his writings describing the famous ancestor of Kublai Khan Genghis Khan draws less glorious, but much more realistic and human side of the man who changed the world [10]. So while descents of Genghis Khan except art the Mongolian nobility patronized different religions: Buddhism, Confucianism, Islam, Christianity and so on. The tolerance of the Mongols, including Kublai Khan, is noted also by other researchers [11: 46-50; 12: 178-198].

In this era, at the court of Kublai, Pagba Tibetan Lama Lodoydzhaltsan (1234-1279) is advanced, who bore the title "king of faith in the three countries" – Tibet, Mongolia, China. His work had not only religious, but also educational character. He formed the Mongolian alphabet – "square letters", which used elements of Tibetan script. While in this time the Mongols used Uighur, Tibetan and Chinese script, in 1269 the "square letters" were announced an official public script in the Mongol Empire. The written history of the Mongols starts to be created, which, unfortunately, has not survived to the present day, but has been widely used in the subsequent medieval historical writings of Chinese and Persian authors. For example, while creating the "Collection of Histories" ("Dzhami'at-tavarikh"), the biggest historian Rashid al-Din of the XIV century, in addition to Persian sources, used the parts preserved in the Ilkhans' archives of the "Golden Book" ("Altan devter") – the official history of Genghis Khan, his ancestors and successors, written in Mongolian. In addition, he drew information communicated to him by the representative of the Great Khan at the Persian court – Bolot Chang-sang [13: 25- 26].

Since the XIV century works of the Indian, Chinese, Tibetan, Uighur and Persian literature were translated into Mongolian. There are among them "Bodicharya-avatara", "Banzragch" translated by the famous writer-monk Choydzh-Osor (XIV), "Altan gerel" translated by the Lama Sharav-senge (XIV), "Subashid" of Sakia-pan-Dita Gungadzhaltsan translated by Sonom-Gar, "Alchalalt-nom", enunciating the teachings of Confucius, and others.

Along with the manuscript tradition, in the Yuan Empire it was organized publishing woodblock method and established an ad hoc committee, which carried out the literary translations and editions of books.

Cultural centers of the Empire

With the development of the Mongolian state and the addition of social and administrative system, conquered cities, or new, recently appeared on the site of the khan's headquarters and build up according to the tastes of the Mongolian nobility became the political, economic and cultural centers of the empire. Karakorum - the capital of the Mongol state in XIII-XIV centuries was one of the most famous cities.

According to written sources, subsequently confirmed and archaeological evidence, Karakorum was founded by Genghis Khan in 1220 as a large military center. However, only fifteen years later it turns into administrative and cultural capital of the empire [14: 135].

According to V. Rubrouck who visited Karakorum in the period in question, the city made an unforgettable impression. In addition to the magnificent Khan's palace, where was the famous silver tree – masterpiece of the captive metal working master William the Parisian [15: 138-139], and the palaces of the Mongol nobility, in the city there were two quarters: one of craft and another of trade. Outside of these blocks were "... twelve joss-houses of different peoples, two mosques ... and one Christian church on the edge of town. The city is surrounded by a clay wall and has four gates. In the eastern sold millet and other grains ... at the western gates they sell sheep and goats; at the southern gates they sell bulls and carts; at the northern gates they sell horses" [15: 146].

V. Rubrouck left a description of not only the city, but Khan's palace, called Tumen-Amgalan (Ten Thousand Years of Peace). "This palace resembled a church, having the ship in the middle, and its two sides are separated by two rows of columns; there are three doors in the palace, facing to the south". In front of the middle door was the famous silver tree. Near its "... roots were four silver lions having inside a pipe, and all of them spewing white mare's milk. Inside a tree four pipes were held up to its apex; openings of these tubes were turned down, and each of them was made in the form of gilded snake's mouth whose tail wrapped around a tree trunk. From one of these tubes rained wine from another ... refined mare's milk ... from the third ... a drink of honey, rice beer from the fourth... At the top, Wilhelm made an angel holding a pipe ... And on the tree branches, leaves and pears were silver... Khan himself sits on an elevated site on the north side, so that all can see him. Two staircases lead to his throne: the man giving him a cup rises on one and descends on another. On the right side of him, that is from the west, men are placed, with the left - women. The palace stretches from north to south" [15: 138-140].

Excavations conducted in the Karakoram, partially confirmed partially complemented messages of written sources. Buildings were constructed from well molded and baked bricks. They were equipped with heating systems in which the smoke channels were under floors or premises under the bench.

During excavations on the site of the Khan's palace was discovered that it had built on an artificial platform erected. Its area reached at least 2,475 sq.m. The internal space is divided into seven naves of 72 post-columns. The Karakorum palace complex testifies the appearance and development by architects of the architectural composition of "Hun" type in the XIII century [16: 76-100].

Karakorum existed for about 300 years, 32 of which it was the capital of the Empire. After the fall of the Yuan Empire in 1368 the city was destroyed by Chinese troops. Subsequently, attempts were made to revive him, but never more Karakoram reached former greatness.

Besides Karakorum there were a number of other cities, in which there were palaces, administrative and church buildings. Among them there was the city on the Hir-hira in Transbaikalia.

On an example of the Hir-hira settlement one can see that not only Kokhan headquarters turned into city centers of economic and cultural life of the Mongol Empire. Representatives of the nobility, no longer satisfied with the construction of temporary semi-nomad headquarters, erected magnificent palace manors. A striking example of the Mongol nobility residence of the Yuan era is the so-called Konduy town located in the Trans-Baikal region between the Konduy River and Barun-Conde rivers – tributaries of the Uru-Lyung (about 50 km north of the Hir-hira hill) [17].

The Konduy town was significantly different by the nature of their buildings from the Hir-hira settlement, where there were fortified citadel, artisan quarters and so on. In the Konduy town, the basis of the architectural complex was a palace with pavilions and a swimming pool. The Konduy palace had a great resemblance to the Ugadei's palace in Karakorum.

Comparing the palace in Konduy and the Ugadei's one in Karakoram, it should be noted a more developed architectural style of the first, and hence its more recent origin compared with the complex of Karakoram. However, the downfall of both, probably took place at the same time – at the end of the XIV century, when with the fall of the Yuan Empire in flames bloody unrest perished not only palaces, but the whole cities on the territory of the Empire [17: 369].

Regarding the construction and architecture of Mongolia in XIII-XIV centuries, it should mention

the urban settlements arose in the lands included in the Mongolian State. L.R. Kyzlasov convincingly spoke about the reasons for their appearance: "In order to gain a foothold in the troubled northern rears of the emerging Mongol Empire, the conquerors not only destroyed and expelled unruly residents, but at the beginning of the XIII century began to conduct a policy of forced colonization of these territories. This policy had two main objectives: to neutralize the locals and create a base for supplying the Mongol armies bread and handicrafts ... So towns, villages and hamlets of farmers appeared here under the Mongols at the very beginning of the XIII century" [18: 72-80].

Many similar settlements were founded on the territory of modern Tuva. Among the most interesting is the city of Den-Terek that in Tuva means "poplar on the Mount". This city is situated on three ancient islands of the Elegest River. The city existed a relatively short time, in the first half of the XIII century. Its monuments have preserved fine examples of architectural decoration and high skill sculptures. It was a commercial center, as evidenced found imported Chinese ceramics, porcelain and celadon of the XI-XII centuries.

Besides agriculture and crafts, local residents were engaged in mining operations and building material. Coke burnt out from Elegest coal is found at residues of metallurgical workshops; metallurgists used ore extracted in mines of Tuva [18: 38].

On the territory of Tuva, in addition to the city of Den-Terek, a number of such cities was found: Mogoy, Mezhegey, Elegest settlements and others. One thing is common for them – i.e. the lack of fortifications. This strange at first sight for medieval architecture feature is explained in the report of Marco Polo: "In all areas of China and the rest of the manga and his (Kublai Khan's) domains there are many traitors and infidels, ready to rebel, for which reason it is necessary in any area where there are large cities and a lot of people, to keep troops; they are placed outside the city, in four or five miles; and the city is not allowed to have walls and gates, so as not to hinder the entry of troops... So bridled people remain calm and undisturbed" [14: 280].

During the reign of the Mongol Yuan dynasty, not only cities, headquarters, khans' palaces were built, but also temples. For example, Kublai Khan erected in Dadu (Beijing), a number of temples dedicated to the memory of ancestors: Yisugei, Chinggis and Ugadei.

To meet the demand for construction materials near Dadu worked stone-cutting and

woodworking shops were laid ceramic kilns, where craftsmen of different ethnic origin worked.

Conclusion

Besides the cities and villages, in the Empire in this era many other constructions were built: roads, bridges, defensive walls and so on. Ramparts had preserved stretching about 600 km from Bayan-Adarga Aimag Somon of the Hentey aymak to the Gan River. Local arats still call him Genghis fortress. The same shaft is in Southern Mongolia. Unfortunately, the monuments of architecture and urban planning of the XIII-XIV centuries remained very small, most were destroyed after the fall of the Yuan dynasty in 1368.

Summing up we can say that a very distinctive style of painting of the XIII-XIV centuries perished along with the collapsed Chenghis Khan's descents Empire. He continued to develop and is reflected in the works of the actually Mongolian art of later times. But in general, the further development of culture and art of the Mongols was slowed down in connection with the medieval unrest and strife which are characteristic for the second half of the empire of the XIV-XV centuries, the period of the so-called "small khans".

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