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THE INTERPRETATION OF SEAL CARVING NI ZAN AND WANG MENG PAINTINGS

MIAO YING FAN



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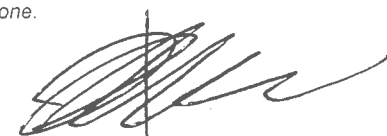
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ABSTRACT

The seal is a form of special artistic expression in Chinese painting, and it is an inheritance as a representation of Chinese ancient traditional arts in the modern days. Seal is the final step in completing a Chinese painting. This research aimed to interpret the seal carvings in the ancient Chinese paintings. This research employed a qualitative research design. An interview was conducted to gather qualitative data from four experts, two art teachers and two artists from China. The participants of the study were asked to evaluate and interpret the five paintings of Ni Zan and five paintings of Wang Meng. The findings showed that the seal carvings on ancient Chinese paintings were presented through the art elements such as size, shape, meaning, reading style, and color. The findings differences despite both artists came from the same dynasty. Both seals in Ni Zan and Wang Meng's paintings were found to have the balance, color and appearance of their paintings. Furthermore, when searching on Ni Zan seal paintings, the researcher found four aspects. The first aspect was the perspective of aesthetic art styles in landscape painting. The second perspective was the method of appraisal of calligraphy and painting works. The third aspect was the reasons of the formation through Chinese landscape painting, and the last aspect was the perspective of spatial construction in the ancient Chinese landscape painting. On the other hand, when examining on Wang Meng's paintings, there were five perspectives emerged. The first was the use of brush and ink techniques, the second was the process of Chinese landscape painting in the creative practice, and the third was Wang Meng's landscape paintings based on other people's inspirational perspectives. The fourth aspect was the introduction of painting style, and the last aspect was the Wang Meng's landscape painting space. In conclusion, the study found that there were similarities and differences between Ni Zan and Wang Meng paintings. The study implicates that Ni Zan and Wang Meng's paintings manifested that the seal carvings in paintings were crucial in the history of China and they might serve as a guide and reference to future painters in traditional painting genre.





THE INTERPRETASI UKIRAN COP MOHOR LUKISAN NI ZAN DAN WANG MENG

ABSTRAK

Cop Mohor adalah bentuk ekspresi seni khas dalam lukisan Cina dan ia merupakan warisan mewakili seni tradisional kuno Cina pada zaman moden. Cop mohor adalah langkah terakhir dalam menyelesaikan sesebuah lukisan Cina. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menafsirkan ukiran cop mohor pada lukisan Cina kuno. Kajian ini menggunakan reka bentuk penyelidikan kualitatif. Temu bual dilakukan untuk mengumpulkan data kualitatif dari empat pakar seni, dua guru seni dan dua seniman dari China. Peserta kajian diminta untuk menilai dan menafsirkan lima buah lukisan Ni Zan dan lima buah lukisan Wang Meng. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa ukiran cop mohor pada lukisan Cina kuno disampaikan melalui unsur-unsur seperti ukuran, bentuk, makna, gaya membaca, dan warna. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa kedua-dua cop mohor di lukisan Ni Zan dan Wang Meng menunjukkan sedikit perbezaan walaupun kedua-dua seniman itu berasal daripada dinasti yang sama. Kedua-dua cop mohor di lukisan Ni Zan dan Wang Meng didapati memiliki keseimbangan, warna dan penampilan lukisan mereka. Selanjutnya, Ketika menyelidik lukisan Ni Zan, penyelidik menemui empat aspek. Aspek pertama adalah perspektif gaya seni estetik dalam lukisan lanskap. Perspektif kedua adalah kaedah penilaian karya kaligrafi dan lukisan. Aspek ketiga adalah sebab-sebab pembentukan melalui lukisan landskap Cina, dan aspek terakhir adalah perspektif pembinaan ruangan dalam lukisan landskap kuno Cina. Sebaliknya, Ketika menganalisis lukisan Wang Meng, terdapat lima perspektif yang muncul. Yang pertama adalah Teknik menggunakan berus dan dakwat, yang kedua adalah proses lukisan landskap Cina dalam Latihan kreatif, dan yang ketiga adalah lukisan landskap Wang Meng berdasarkan perspektif inspirasi orang lain. Aspek keempat adalah induksi gaya lukisan, dan aspek terakhir adalah ruang lukisan serta pemandangan. Kesimpulannya, kajian ini mendapati terdapat persamaan dan perbezaan antara lukisan Ni Zan dan Wang Meng. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa lukisan Ni Zan dan Wang Meng menunjukkan bahawa cop mohor dalam lukisan sangat penting dalam sejarah China dan dapatan kajian ini mungkin dapat menjadi panduan dan rujukan kepada pelukis masa hadapan dalam lukisan genre kuno.



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



1.0 Overview

This research emphasizes on a seal carving which focus on the Ni Zan and Wang Meng's painting. The main purpose of this research is to identify, to analyze and to evaluate the seal carving of ancient Chinese painting of Ni Zan and Wang Meng.





The seal carving originates from the practical mark, which was born in the early stages of human civilization and adapted to the needs of social material production. Today, with the continuous enrichment of material production, the human beings have created a concept of belonging, thus inventing the use of tokens to mark the ownership of material products. That is by using a hard object similar to a graphic to press a fixed-shaped mark on a product that manufactured by itself that called seal.

In the early times, calligraphy written in Chinese painting, that are inscriptions. The inscription is a unique form of artistic expression in Chinese painting, and an artistic means to bring up poetry and calligraphy into the painting. The Chinese traditional painting, called *Danqing* in during the ancient times, it is one of the four calligraphy and painting art.

The traditional landscape Chinese painting refers to the prominence of green and blue colors ink painting. While today, the general Chinese painting is the traditional Chinese style of mural, brocade, embroidery, heavy color, stone carving and even the painting on ceramics, as well as modern Chinese oil painting and watercolor painting. Traditional Chinese painting was fundamentally an abstract art form. Although there were no absolute abstract ancient Chinese paintings in its original meaning, objects in a painting were not a direct copy of the nature world following the principle of





perspective. It was rather a combination or harmony between the nature world and human emotion, a product of “heaven (nature) and human” (Lin Ci, 2019).

To get to know more, the concept of seal refers both to Chinese *Xiyin* seals and *Zhuanke* engraved seals. It includes both concept in the broad sense and thus is different from merely the concept of *Xiyin* seal. The reason for this lies in the existence, within the Chinese seal system, of the unique phenomenon of the seal engraving as an art form. The inscription is the process of painting and calligraphy creation or after the appreciation of calligraphy and painting.



2.0 Problem Statement

Today, fewer peoples have used seal carving, but in ancient China, from the royal family to the civilians, most people used seal carving. Seal carving was not only practical at that time, but also in Chinese painting, seal carving still has aesthetic value. The reason for this situation, because the shape of the character and the fonts (ancient words) according to the needs of the painting contexts have changed in the seal.





Furthermore, it is very difficult to understand the meaning of the seal for us and to relate the contents of the painting with the inscription showed by the artists. Furthermore, it is also difficult to find any information and the knowledge of seal inscription related to the paintings. According to the teachers in school, they have problems and without experience to teach student about the seal inscription and there is no books that we can refer too. Today's high school teachers only teach students about human culture, mathematics, sciences and English. At the end, there is no study for Chinese painting especially the seal carving as well.



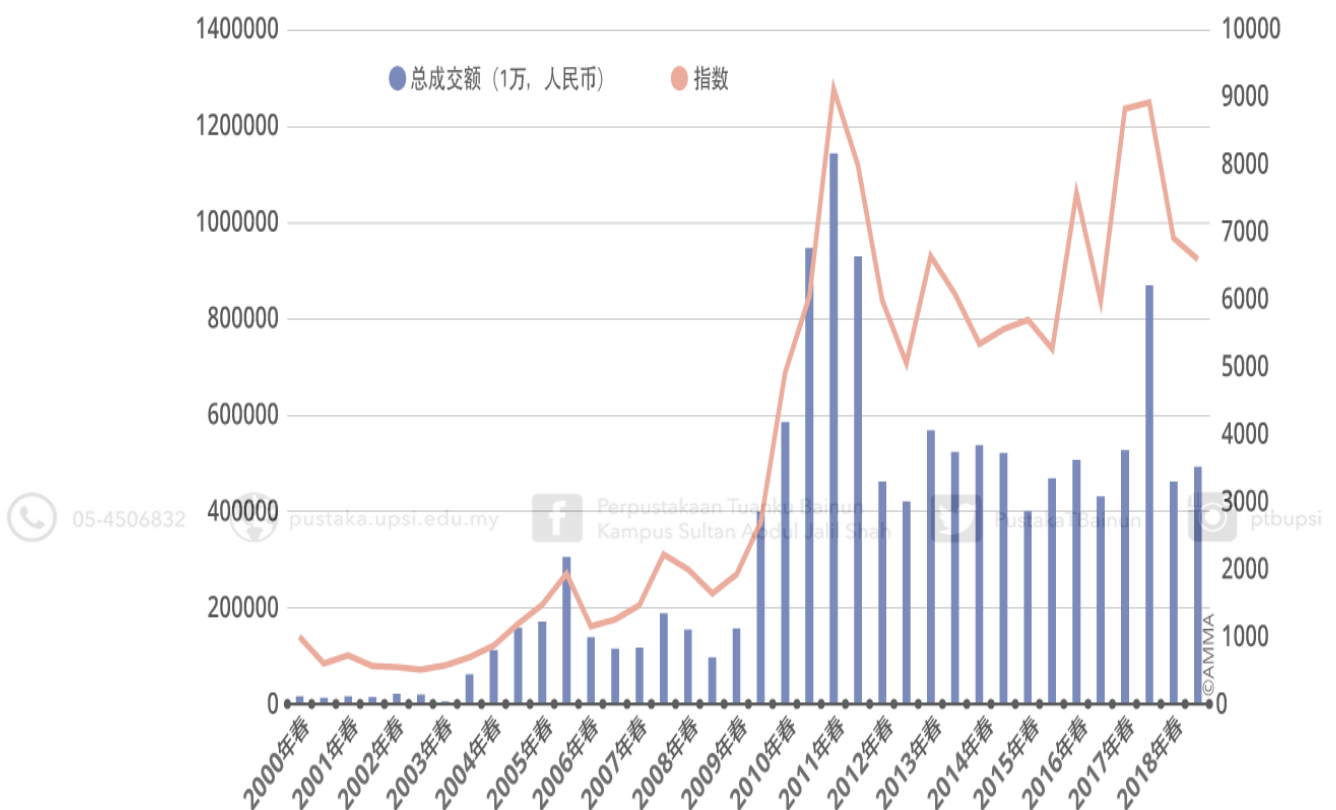
Young people know less about Chinese painting and seal carving. The new young generations like fashions, music, computer social-networks, games application under the influence of the world, and they are not interested in traditional learning, especially Chinese ancient painting which leads to the reason that there are not so many people studying seal carving in China.

So far there has been none or little study on the subject matter of seal carving on Ni Zan and Wang Meng paintings. However, up to now, there are few formal studies on the history of Chinese ancient painting and the characteristics of seals. A study is needed to understand how important of the seal carving to the new generation nowadays and the academic scholars.





Table 1.0

Calligraphy and Painting Artworks Volume of Transaction

From Table 1.0 above, vertical blue line represents the total turnover of painting and calligraphy from the year of 2004 until 2018, while the red line curve represents the growth rate of painting from 2000 until 2018.

From this table, it can be saw that in the spring of 2000-2009, the total number turnover did not increase significantly. During this period, it reached peak in 2005-2006.





The total turnover reached nearly RMB400, 000. The total turnover has increased significantly since 2009, until the spring of 2018. In 2010-2012, the total turnover reached its peak, and the total turnover was close to 1.2 million RMB. Although there was a small drop after 2011, the overall market trend is stable. A third peak time between 2017 until 2018, the turnover market reached nearly 1 million RMB. At the end from, it conclude that the collected painting is the third biggest investment in the world.



3.0 Research Objectives

The research objective is to identify analysis and evaluate of seal carving inscription of Ni Zan and Wang Meng paintings.

- i. To identify the seal carving of ancient Chinese painting.
- ii. To analyze the seal carving of ancient Chinese painting of Ni Zan and Wang Meng
- iii. To evaluate the different between Ni Zan and Wang Meng paintings seal carving.





4.0 Research Questions

To achieve this set of research objectives, some research questions are as follows:

- i. How to identify seal carvings of Ancient Chinese Painting from Ni Zan and Wang Meng paintings?
- ii. How to analyze the seal carvings of ancient Chinese painting by Ni Zan and Wang Meng?
- iii. How to evaluate the different between Ni Zan and Wang Meng paintings of seal carving?



5.0 Definition of Terms

The researcher used some words of the key in the research: seal carving and ancient Chinese painting, require an explanation in terms of its operation. The terms and definitions of their operations are as follows: *Zhuan ke*, *Gu Xiyin*, *Yinmu*, *Confucianism*.





5.1 Seal Carving

The seal in the long society of China has two shaped by seal: The first elements is *xi yin* (玺印, here in after referred to as ‘seal’). The concept of seal started from pre-Qin Dynasty (generally referring to the periods of the spring and Autumn-770-476 B.C) and the Warring States Period (475-221B.C) Before the Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C) to the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) in China, both official seals and private seals as a kind of identity verification, also referred to ‘*gu xi yin*’ (古玺印, ancient xi seal).



The second element is *zhuan ke* (篆刻, engravings) which is closer in nature to *yinmu* (印模, die), and *zhuan ke* also have authentication functions. Nevertheless, after Ming (1368-1644) and Qing Dynasties, *zhuan ke* evolved away from being purely of authentication became an art form in their own artworks. Therefore, the concept of *zhuan ke* in China is different form of seal in the west.

It includes two aspects and is far beyond the concept of seal in the west. The concept of seal as a fixed to mark specific words, graphics for display and examination of objects, it was regard as an artist’s signature, and is a way for identification.





In this research of the seal carving only, refer to the painting of two artists: Ni Zan, and Wang Meng. Researcher try to find the meaning of each seal carving of the artist. Seal carving at that time being use as a signature for the artist.

While, the word colophon is a statement at the end of a book, typically with a printer's emblem, giving information about its authorship and printing.

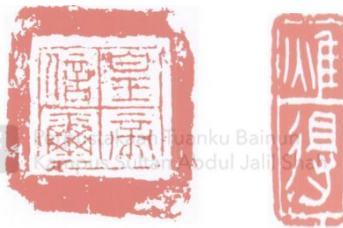


Figure 1.1. Example of seal carving during Han Dynasty and Qin Dynasty. Source: Chinese Seals: Carving Authority and Creating History (2004).





The name of the “Tai Shang Huang Di Zhi Bao”.The large imperial seal (Treasure of the Most Exalted Emperor' of the Qian Long emperor (1736-95) one of several inscriptions and colophons on the handscroll.

Figure 1.2. Example of seal carving during Qianlong emperor (1736-95). Source: Jessica Rawson (2007).



Figure 1.3. Jade Seal ‘Chun An Jun’ (King Chun’an) Warring State period. Source:http://blog.sina.cn/dpool/blog/s/blog_6c0e1acc0102e6e9.html.





Figure 1.4 ‘Shuai Jia Ji’ (Lead and Fetch) Warring States period..
Source:http://blog.sina.cn/dpool/blog/s/blog_6c0e1acc0102e6e9.html.



5.2 Ancient Chinese Painting

The ancient Chinese traditional painting has a long history. Human figures, landscapes, flowers and birds are most important of traditional Chinese painting. These forms become a unique art genre.

Ancient Chinese painting is the painter use brush dip in water, ink and pigment on silk or paper of Chinese painting. Painters drawing the lines in some deep, some light, some heavy, because the painter have to skillfully use these lines, so they are not only regarded as a tool of painting, but also be regarded as collective symbol of artists pursuit.





For a long time before the 13th century, paintings of the world depicted human images with China's Confucianism ideological unity. In these paintings, whether gods, goddesses, immortals or ordinary people in real life, their images were always polite and elegant. However, in the 11th century, Chinese painters broke the stereotype of human images by focusing on ordinary people in real life, urban or rural.

At the end of the 13th century, figure painting began to decline and landscape painting and flower-bird-school painting began to flourish. Landscape painting constitutes the most important and the most famous branch of traditional Chinese painting. The "painting in poetry" principle proposed by painters in the 11th century has been guiding the creation of landscape painters, so that landscape painters spare no effort to create a poetic atmosphere in their paintings.

Today, Chinese painting, one of China most noteworthy traditional art forms, has long been admired by collector's and connoisseurs in China and around world. Over thousands of years, three major genres-landscapes, figures, and bird-and-flowers, paintings-have developed in Chinese painting (Kunfeng, 2019).



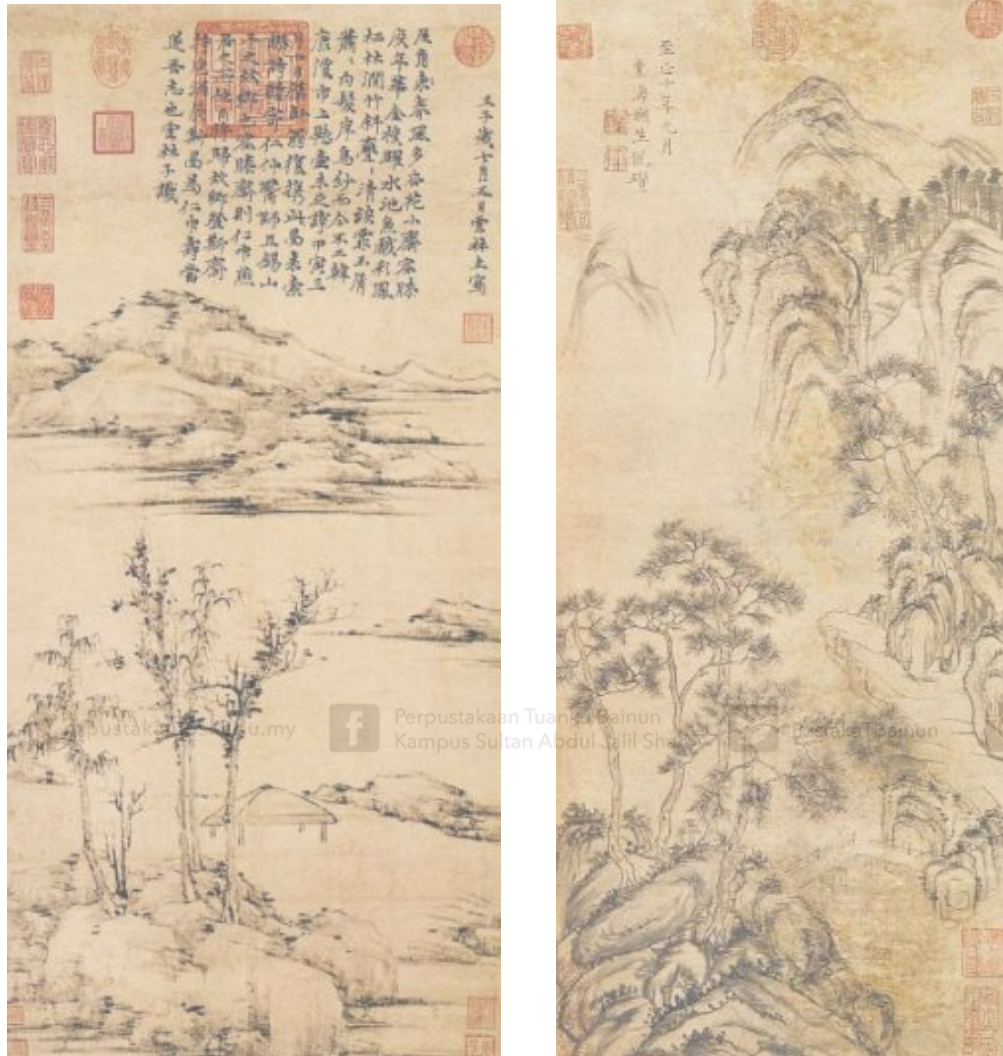


Figure 1.5. Example of Ni Zan painting during Yuan Dynasty. Source: Mary Tregear (1997).

Yu Wen (2012) said that, the ancient or traditional Chinese painting has a long history. The painting using a writing brush dipped in water, ink and color pigments on paper of silk material. Chinese painting focuses on the figures, landscapes, flowers and birds of the work. While, Carol Michaelson & Jane Portal (2006) also mention that the words ‘Chinese art’ conjure up vision of willow pattern landscape on porcelain plates



and teapots and Chinese wallpaper decorated with flowers, birds and pagoda. In this study the work of the ancient Chinese painting only focused on the works produced by two famous painters during the Yuan Dynasty by Ni Zan and Wang Meng .

5.3 Interpretation

In this research, seal carving is the main subject. As for its interpretation, in ancient China, there were two names for seal carving:



First, one was *Xi Yin* and the other was *Zhuan Ke*. For the classification of seals, divided into three species types, one is based on the age. The seal is divide into ancient, medieval, and ancient three categories. The second one type is bases on function, the seal carving is divide into official and private two, this article is baseds on the official seals and private seals are used for research, which will make the discussion of this article clearer and more organized.

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Ni Zan and Wang Meng are two objects of this research. They were two famous painters of the Yuan Dynasty. Both of them have made great achievements in painting, with their own unique painting methods and styles, and their works have many seals, it is more valuable for research.

Seal is very important for Chinese painting, because it is the last step to complete Chinese paintings. Chinese paintings cannot have inscriptions and seals.

Researchers have found that from 2019 until 2010, 5938 research on seals. Have 17017 research on Chinese painting, 751 research on Ni Zan, 37 research on Wang Meng, and 0 research on the seals of Ni Zan and Wang Meng's Chinese paintings. The researchers found the seals on the Ni Zan and Wang Meng painting is a blank area, because no researcher study seal on the Ni Zan and Wang Meng painting. Ni Zan and Wang Meng paintings are very famous. The research focuses on the origin of seal and





the role of Chinese paintings. Finally, the seal types on the artworks of two painters are study to reach the conclusion.

6.0 Limitations of the Study

Samsiah (2018) defines the limitations are shortcoming, conditions, weaknesses, or influences that may put restrictions on the research methodology and conclusions. This research limitation will give a specific information regarding to the subject matter of seal carving. Limitations of a study will be on the sample, which are the artworks by two artists, Ni Zan and Wang Meng during the Yuan Dynasty.

This study of using purposive sampling does not represent the entire artist population in China. The findings of the study represent only the selected group of artists with specific characteristics only (seal carving). This means that not all elements in the population of Chinese artists will be selected as respondents.

This research has two indication and selected of Ni Zan and Wang Meng paintings, the sample size of seal, and the other limitation will be the information from the experts.





Qualitative approach in research methodology will be use with historical design method of collecting data. The researcher will collectings information and analyzing data from the documents, manuscript, and observation of painting. To encounter a perception or study researcher must be able to know the characteristics of the seal carving on the paintings. This will take about 3 to 6 months to collect the information and data.

7.0 Delimitations of the Study



The delimitation are boundaries in the researcher's own process of research. It is the researcher wishes to limit the scope of study. Referring to the new young generation that they are not interested especially in the seal carving. Beside that to fulfill the research objectives and questions. The interest of the study will be focus to the painting of Ni Zan and Wang Meng only.

8.0 The Significance of the study

As the calligraphy and painting of Chinese immaterial culture, "seal, poetry and





calligraphy” has become the stable model of Chinese painting. However, in contemporary painting, seal art in painting is easy to be ignore. There are two reasons for lead to seal neglected, the first point is due to the traditional Chinese painting affected by the western painting, the second point is about weak support of seal on the drawing theoretical.

The purpose of this research was to summarize the origin and development of ancient seal of art and the two artists of the seal on his landscapes. Hope from the beginning of the tradition, combined with the change of modern aesthetics, the turning point in the contemporary painting and seal can better development and innovation art, make people don not forget to use seal in the painting.

Under the background that the government advocates people to learn Chinese traditional culture, the calligraphy and painting in Chinese traditional culture has attracted people’s wide attention. Since Chinese painting art not only combines traditional Chinese calligraphy, printmaking, seal, but also poetry, it is of great value to study seal art in traditional culture painting with the attention of all lifestyles.





9.0 Conclusion

Jin Bo (2009) said that, compared with arts in other countries such as Europe, America and Asia. Chinese traditional arts, including calligraphy, painting, music, dance architecture and others, have a unique style and technique featuring colorful Chinese culture. This chapter show that, the seal-carving inscription is one of the important elements in the ancient Chinese painting. In addition, the research focus to seal inscription of the ancient Chinese painting based on two painters: Ni Zan and Wang

Meng.

