Global: Ming Dynasty Essay

China’s dynasties have all had noteworthy legacies that made them very well known in the course of history as well as in modern times. One of these dynasties, the Ming Dynasty (1368 CE - 1644 CE), was a dynasty that began when Zhu Yuanzhang forced the Mongols out of power and ended the Yuan Dynasty. During the rule of the Ming emperors, many achievements were made in the humanities such as the improvement of the arts and new types of literature. New techniques used to make porcelain, the addition of landscape paintings and new art themes, as well as the creation of detective novels and new poetry all contributed to the growth of the Ming Dynasty’s humanities.

During the Ming Dynasty, the craft of creating porcelain was heavily refined upon. There were new ways to create new porcelain. The blue and white color scheme was heavily emphasized on much of the Ming Dynasty pottery. The method in which the clay pot was initially made was also changed so that new shapes and forms could be made. Slim vessels, wide vases, and many unique shapes previously unseen were made due to the influence of the Islamic pottery that entered the empire. An improved glaze on the pots also helped the quality of the works a lot. 1 Jiangxi Province potters mastered the craft. They shaped, designed, and glazed the pots just once in the kiln and then sent them off for sale. Each vessel had the mark of the current reigning emperor and the credit for creating the vessels was never only in one person. Each pot was designed specifically for the target audience, and thus, the products created directly for the emperor are flawless in execution. Those samples had imperial dragon designs and had a thick, perfectly smooth glaze. Some other common designs were flowers and phoenixes. 2 These porcelain works of art left their legacy in China as one of the greatest

---

advancement in the humanities, as the classic blue and white vases were created after the Ming Dynasty fell.

Paintings also had a huge change in the Ming Dynasty. Many new ideas were adopted after the fall of the Yuan Dynasty. New styles of landscape paintings emerged. One example of this is Chen Chun, a painter who created many landscape paintings showcasing various flowers. He used new techniques to make the flowers look realistic. Also during the Ming Dynasty, the merchant class began to rise in importance and thus, consumption grew large. Many middle-class people could afford to purchase art. Because of the rapidly increasing customer base, the themes of art that was sold began to diversify. The literati were scholar-officials and scholar-painters who thought that art should be philosophical and elegantly made. This group had the strongest influence on the social tastes of the people. Many Confucianist and Taoist ideas merged in the Late Ming, allowing for wild new themes, as the paintings would then have “Confucian morality with Taoist natural spontaneity.” Harmony between these two was in much of the new paintings. An example of this balance would be the paintings combining traditional art styles with the modernized art styles of the Ming. The new outlooks on art and various techniques used for new styles shows the large growth of the Ming’s humanities.

The Ming created many new novels, such as *The Water Margin* which is about an outlaw gang attempting to end injustice. The Ming also created a new genre of novel - detective stories. The poetry


of the Ming flourished as well, in many ways. Confucian scholars mainly focused on creating classical poetry.⁶ A poet named Shen Zhou wrote poems about falling blossoms, simply trying to record his own life and the natural passage of time. However, once he shared his poems with well-known figures, many others began to write rhyming poems on falling blossoms, and Shen Zhou wrote more poems as a response.⁷ Poets like Yuan Hongdao believed honest, truthful writings about what one felt at that time to be the best form of poetry and prose.⁸ New forms of writing also emerged from the Ming Dynasty to help the achievements the Ming made in the humanities.

There were many achievements the Ming made during its dynastic lifetime. Three of the most important legacies it made to China’s humanities were its improved porcelain creation, birth of new themes for art, and many new styles of writing. The pottery lived on even until today; the classic blue and white porcelain vases are a masterpiece of their time. The new art helped foster the expanding tastes of the Chinese empire, and the literature helped to write the future novels, because if the detective genre was never made, the stories would not exist for a long time. The Ming Dynasty was a dynasty that have had many important advancements in the humanities.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


⁶ Ellis, Esler, 381


