

Study on the Artistic Feature of Ten Beautiful Ladies in Fengxiang Wood-Engraving New Year Pictures*

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Abstract—Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures began in the Tang and Song Dynasties and flourished in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. They have a history of more than 500 years. Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures are rooted in the farming culture, and are closely related to the traditional festival convention. The strong folk customs have created its unique artistic language. The picture of ten beautiful ladies is a distinctive New Year painting among Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures. It is a beauty painting created based on the perfection spreading in the folk. It has bright and transparent colors, vivid shapes, and rich plant patterns, which represent women's pursuit of life style in different periods during the agricultural period for hundreds of years. Therefore, it is of high artistic research value.

Keywords: *Fengxiang, New Year pictures, traditional Chinese painting of beautiful women, ten beautiful ladies, artistic features*

I. INTRODUCTION

The painting of beautiful ladies is an important part of traditional Chinese figure painting. It can be traced back to the "Silk Paintings of the Figures and the Phoenix" unearthed from Mawangdui Han Tombs in Changsha during the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period. Through the shaping of female images, people's living conditions and aesthetic concepts at that time were expressed, which had the childish characteristics common to the painting art of the same period. From the Wei and Jin dynasties to the Ming and Qing dynasties, the painting of beautiful ladies has always been throughout. As women's social status gradually weakened during the Ming and Qing dynasties, women as special aesthetic objects received much attention, and the painting of beautiful ladies prospered for a time [1]. Fengxiang wood-engraving painting of ten beautiful ladies was created during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. It is a type of Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures that specifically depict the growth of women. It was created according to the feudal women's lifestyle, perfected by the folk craftsmen of all ages, and recorded in the form of

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woodblock color registration. Fengxiang wood-engraving paintings of ten beautiful ladies create a beautiful and romantic mood through the expression of colors, and reflect the female attitude to life in the context of small-scale peasant economy in feudal society. These New Year pictures are mainly on female characters, which are posted on the window or in the boudoirs during the Chinese New Year. They imply multiple children, happiness and longevity. There are ten New Year pictures such as "Painting of Fish Happiness", "Beauties loving the chrysanthemum, and seeking the plum", "Fairy and Man", and "Laurel in moon palace, Beads on an official hat", and "Number One Scholar reporting success, sending peach for celebrating longevity", etc. [2]

II. COLOR CHARACTERISTICS OF TEN BEAUTIFUL LADIES IN FENGXIANG WOOD-ENGRAVING NEW YEAR PICTURES

The color of Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures contains strong local emotions and spiritual beliefs. Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures use high-purity and high-luminance colors, and pursue the color relationship between red and purple. The visual effect is strong. The whole picture is festive and peaceful, with fresh vitality. The original and simple color concept of Fengxiang wood-engraving paintings of ten beautiful ladies conveys the characteristics of rural people's preferences. The coloring method is full of romantic flavor and adds a lot of life interest to the daily life of local people. This article analyzes the color configuration, local characteristics, and production process of the painting of ten beautiful ladies, and summarizes the artistic characteristics of ten beautiful ladies in Fengxiang wood-engraving paintings.

A. Color configuration of ten beautiful ladies in Fengxiang wood-engraving paintings

The color configuration of ten beautiful ladies in Fengxiang wood-engraving paintings is a way of carrying folk art. It is not only a sensory phenomenon, but also a social group consciousness and ideology. It is highly decorative and functional, reflecting the social structure, folk ideal and emotional pursuit in the agricultural period [3]. The color matching of ten beautiful ladies in Fengxiang wood-

engraving paintings is quite particular. The large areas of warm colors and the small areas of cold colors match with each other. The colors are simple and strong, bright and

transparent, which are in line with the local people's appreciation habits.



Fig. 1. Fengxiang wood-engraving paintings of ten beautiful ladies and their color spectrum.

In "Fig. 1", by analyzing the color distribution area of the New Year painting, the color spectrum of the painting of ten beautiful ladies is obtained. The painting of ten beautiful ladies mainly use four colors. It uses the contrasting colors such as yellow-peach, orange-blue-green in large area. Color matching is eye-catching and lively. The visual impact of the picture is strong. This painting uses the adjacent colors such as yellow-orange, peach-blue-green in the small area.

The cold and warm colors of Fengxiang wood-engraving paintings of ten beautiful ladies are properly contrasted. The warm colors are dominant in the picture. The cold colors have the role of coordinating the color configuration of the picture. The large areas of warm colors are decorated with small areas of cold colors, making color layers in the picture richer. The color configuration in the painting of ten beautiful ladies is mainly warm color. No complementary colors are used, and the contrast of color brightness is weak. The picture is warm and harmonious, and it expresses the romantic and warm atmosphere of the New Year, full of humanistic tones.

B. Color features of ten beautiful ladies in Fengxiang wood-engraving paintings



Fig. 2. The God of Door and heaven officer in Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures.



Fig. 3. The children in Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures.



Fig. 4. Zhang Taoist master in Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures.

The paintings of the God of Door and heaven officer, the children and Zhang Taoist master belong to one kind of Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures. They all have their main color schemes. The color characteristics of the painting of ten beautiful ladies are obtained by analyzing the color analogy of these three types of New Year pictures. "Fig. 2", "Fig. 3" and "Fig. 4" mainly use three colors. These three paintings use contrasting color in larger area. The brightness contrast is strong, the color is eye-catching, the contrast is strong, and the visual impact is strong. It is in line

with the rough northwestern folk customs. The color matching style shows a desire for active life. The colors of ten beautiful ladies in Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures carry the spiritual world of female beauty in the thoughts of folk craftsman. Subjective views and common understandings of common things are blended into these colors, and New Year pictures that focus on freehand brushwork in traditional Chinese painting and expression are created, which resonates with people's hearts [4]. The painting of ten beautiful ladies mainly use four colors, namely yellow, pink, orange, blue-green. It uses contrasting colors in a large area and adjacent areas in small areas. The brightness contrast is weak. This color matching method gives people warm and intimate visual experience.

C. The production process of ten beautiful ladies in Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures

The painting of ten beautiful ladies in Fengxiang grew up in the countryside and served the countryside. It is located in the inland, influenced by local temple murals and the fires of the central Shaanxi plain. It has always maintained a simple painting style. This kind of paintings is created by the local farmers who have painting talent in the folk engraving and printing, and sold to farmers. This self-produced and self-sold business model has been used to this day. The painting of ten beautiful ladies in Fengxiang are composed of four sets of colors, such as ink version, yellow version, orange version, blue-green version, and peach version. The colors are calibrated and aligned before the registration. The ink version is printed first, and then the version is printed from light to dark. After printing one color at a time, it needs to hang it on the shelf until it is 80% dry. Then, it needs to take it down and print the second color. After printing the four




colors, it will print the ink line again to make the picture harmonious and unified. The painting of ten beautiful ladies in Fengxiang is mainly based on color registration, hand-painted coloring is less, the color is bright and strong, and the painting style is naive and simple, which reflects the local people's praise for women and longing for perfect life.

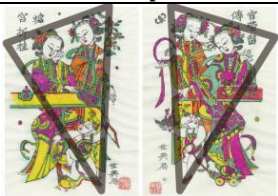

III. THE COMPOSITION OF TEN BEAUTIFUL LADIES IN FENGXIANG WOOD-ENGRAVING NEW YEAR PICTURES

A. Composition beauty of ten beautiful ladies in Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures

The compositional beauty of ten beautiful ladies in Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures is reflected in the symmetry of the composition of the picture. It is mainly composed of characters in the middle, and appears in the form of pairs. In the traditional Chinese concept, "shuang" has the meaning of harmony, auspiciousness and completeness, which symbolizes the pursuit of good things and the desire for double happiness. Starting from the needs of the theme, Fengxiang painting of ten beautiful ladies mainly depict female characters, emphasizes the integrity and balance of the picture, and adopts the principle of scattered perspective and flat layout. The picture is dense in the composition and clear in the layer, and the image characteristics of the characters are depicted in turn. Fengxiang painting of ten beautiful ladies is completely natural reconstruction and manifestation of the heart in the composition form, which deeply reflects the local people's spiritual longing, and is a concentrated reflection of the working people's aesthetic consciousness of feudal society women. This simple picture contains a kind of emotional resonance.

TABLE I. FORMAL BEAUTY OF TEN BEAUTIFUL LADIES IN FENGXIANG WOOD-ENGRAVING NEW YEAR PICTURES

Title	Creation time	Composition form	New Year pictures
"Painting of Fish Happiness"	Ming Dynasty	The character's shape is an "S" curve, with strong dynamics and smooth lines, showing the innocence and joy of two wonderful young girls.	
"Beauties loving the chrysanthemum, and seeking the plum"	Qing Dynasty	The figure of the character is in the shape of "H". The two young girls in the painting are gentle and subtle. One girl picks the flower basket with a wooden pole, and the other girl carries the flower basket. The picture layout is proper and complete.	
"Fairy and Man"	Qing Dynasty	The human face and the head of Kylin are in a triangle composition, the characters are vivid, the body is leaning forward, and the Kylin walks forward. The picture adopts the integration of motion and quietness. The composition is great.	











Title	Creation time	Composition form	New Year pictures
"Laurel in moon palace, Beads on an official hat"	Ming Dynasty	The three characters in the picture are in a triangle composition, and the boy is in the golden section of the picture. The composition is rigorous and the decoration is strong.	
"Number One Scholar reporting success, sending peach for celebrating longevity"	Ming Dynasty	The three figures in the picture are in a diagonal form, with distinct layers of virtual and real space, flexible lines and balanced pictures.	

B. Plant patterns in the Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures of ten beautiful ladies

In China's decorative arts, the number of plant patterns in the early days was small, and it was a combination of geometric patterns and animal patterns. Plant patterns began to be popular during the Wei, Jin, Northern and Southern Dynasties, and plant patterns became the mainstream of decorative arts from the late Tang Dynasty [5]. The development, dissemination and use of plant patterns

embody the working people's generalization of plants and flowers in nature, directly or indirectly. The plant patterns of Fengxiang painting of ten beautiful ladies mainly use peony, peach, gourd, chrysanthemum, lotus, laurel, plum, orchid, etc. It uses plant patterns to spread auspicious meaning, and uses a variety of techniques such as homophony, borrowing, symbolization, etc. According to the voice and metaphor, the inner connection and good wishes of Fengxiang painting of ten beautiful ladies are strengthened.

TABLE II. COMPARISON OF "FIG. 5" AND "FIG. 6"

							
							
"Painting of Fish Happiness"				"Beauties loving the chrysanthemum, and seeking the plum"			
calabash circus and fish				Plum, orchid and chrysanthemum			
Fig. 5				Fig. 6			

In the first part of "Table II" (Fig. 5), the clothes of ladies with bamboo poles are decorated with gourd vines. Another lady carries bamboo baskets full of fish. The fish is a symbol of many sons in the folk. This pair of New Year paintings expresses the vision of mellowness, multiplication of seeds, and prosperity of life. In the second part of "Table II" (Fig. 6), the dress of lady with hand-held flower basket uses butterfly and cymbidium pattern. A lady picks a flower basket full of plum flowers and chrysanthemums. The plum blossom pattern foils the female's integrity beauty. Orchid pattern foils the feminine beauty. The blooming chrysanthemums bring out the beauty of women. The figures

in the paintings are elegant and casual, gentle and subtle. This pair of New Year paintings shows the feminine women's implicit expression of love.

TABLE III. COMPARISON OF "FIG. 7", "FIG. 8" AND "FIG. 9"

"Fairy and Man"				"Laurel in moon palace, Beads on an official hat"				"Number One Scholar reporting success, sending peach for celebrating longevity"			
Peony and lotus				Osmanthus twigs and pomegranates				Peach			
Fig. 7				Fig. 8				Fig. 9			

In the first part of "Table III" (Fig. 7), the goddess' hair ornament uses the pattern of peony, and the boy in her arms holds a lotus. In Chinese decorative arts, peony is one of the important forms of traditional Chinese art. Peony is a spiritual symbol of the Chinese nation and has a special status in the eyes of Chinese people, showing wealth and affection. At first, the ancestors' love of lotus originated from reproductive worship. As a metaphorical decoration symbolizing reproductive worship and love between men and women, lotus has become popular in the folk. With the introduction of Buddhism, the lotus pattern sublimates from the secular concept and is endowed with the symbol of vitality. Due to the different structure of the lotus, it has unlimited reproduction ability, which is in line with the beautiful desire of human beings to have multiple children and grandchildren [6]. Auspicious beast unicorn Kylin is the mount of the heavenly goddess [7]. The majestic and distinguished Kylin pattern is the core content of the New Year paintings. In this pair of New Year paintings, the goddess came to the world and sent the children [8]. In the second part of "Table III" (Fig. 8), the dress of the lady uses the pattern of pomegranate. Another lady holds a sweet-scented osmanthus branch. Osmanthus (homophonous sound — gui) implies riches and honour, and pomegranate has many seed, with the cultural implication of passing civil examinations and the auspicious connotation with many children. This pair of New Year paintings implies that children pass the imperial examination, succeed in the imperial office, and pass on from generation to generation, expressing the yearning and longing of the local people for a better life.

In the third part of "Table III" (Fig. 9), with the peach blooming on a branch, one lady holds a (peach-shaped) birthday cake and shares it with another lady. The magpie lingers on the branch, the peach blossom is gorgeous and charming, and the flower blooms in the spring, which is the symbol of spring [9]. The appearance of peach and peach-

shaped birthday cake expresses the beautiful blessings of health and longevity. This pair of New Year paintings vividly depicts the daily life of local people. The peach blossoms in the traditional auspicious concept have the meaning of prosperity. Also, it implies people's yearning and hope for health and longevity.

For centuries, the place where Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures settled was in the countryside. The plant patterns in the New Year pictures come from daily life. They are continuously innovated and perfected by historical artisans, forming a universal identity. And they are fixed and inherited with auspicious meaning. A large number of auspicious plant patterns are used to decorate the picture in Fengxiang picture of ten beautiful ladies. They convey the message that people pray for happiness. Also, they are symbols with auspicious meaning. It carries the beautiful wish and spiritual pursuit that continue to this day.

IV. CONCLUSION

Through an in-depth study of ten beautiful ladies in Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures, Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures of ten beautiful ladies are found to be of great significance. The growth process of women depicted in the New Year paintings is continuous and complete, meaning the peak of perfection. Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures of ten beautiful ladies are mostly posted in the girl's room or in the home of the newlyweds. It deeply reflects the elegant beauty of women and the beautiful desire for reproduction and prosperity of their children. When people come to understand Fengxiang wood-engraving New Year pictures, there is also an expression of female tenderness in the rough folk customs, which expresses the people's life mood in the background of the farming era. It is a tribute to female beauty and a true expression of folk art forms.

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