Research on Traditional Handicraft: The Painting Art of Beijing-style Inside Painting Snuff Bottles

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ABSTRACT
With high-end materials, charming shapes, wide themes, vivid painting charm and a perfect embodiment of poetry, calligraphy, painting and seal, Beijing-style inside painting snuff bottles are a concentration of traditional and modern inside painting bottles. This paper explores the art features and inheritance of Beijing-style inside painting snuff bottles, hoping to draw wider attention from theorists and scholars through a phased study, so as to protect and pass on excellent culture and traditional arts.

Keywords: Inside painting snuff bottles, Art features, Inheritance protection.

1. INTRODUCTION
Inside painting snuff bottles are a very unique kind of handicraft that only appeared after nearly 200 years of development of snuff bottles, and the history is only about 130 years long. One of the features of Beijing-style inside painting snuff bottles is the vigorous strokes and the profound artistic conception. The painting methods of inside painting can be simply divided into three types: meticulous painting, freehand painting, and realistic painting. The meticulous painting method can be used for such themes as landscape, people, animals, flowers and birds. It is mainly painted with the technique of line drawing and coloring. It achieves detailed artistic effects through techniques such as dot, chafing, tearing, and dyeing, making it the most commonly used painting method in inside painting art.

2. SNUFF AND SNUFF BOTTLES
Snuff is an imported product, whose main ingredient is tobacco. Snuff is another form of tobacco after being processed. According to records in such books as Lu Shu by Yao Lv in the Ming Dynasty, tobacco was called "Dan Ba Gu" in ancient times, which was originally from Luzon (known now as the Philippines). Since sniffing too much of it could be intoxicating, and since it's golden in color, it was also called dry wine and drunken golden thread. At the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, Luzon used tobacco as tribute to the Ming Dynasty. Tobacco was spread to Zhangzhou, Fujian, China for cultivation during the reign of Emperor Wanli of the Ming Dynasty. [1] Leipzig the German writer wrote in his article The Craving of the Nasal Desire: "A ridiculous and absurd custom has arisen all over the world: snuffing. People of all classes in all countries are sniffing snuff... No matter men or women, people are sniffing snuff... yet they ridiculously call it a fashionable decoration." [1] According to Xi Chao Ding An, "In the 23rd year of the reign of Emperor Kangxi (1684), the emperor went on a tour to the south, Wang Ruwang and Bi Ji offered local products. The emperor ordered to keep the Xila and gave them blue cloth and platinum. (Xila means snuff bottle). In the third year of the reign of Emperor Yongzheng (1725), Bernardier (Pope of Italy) paid tribute with local products, including agate snuff bottles and snuff, Gaschoron snuff bottles, glass snuff bottles with various colors and plain snuff bottles, a total of 60 kinds. Later (in the fifth year of the reign of Emperor Yongzheng), Joseph the king of Portugal sent Alexandre Metelo to pay tribute with 41 kinds of local products, including snuff. Years later, Joseph the king of Portugal paid tribute again with 28 local products, including 6 kinds of snuff bottles and snuff, as estimated.

Snuff began to have a Chinese name during the reign of Emperor Yongzheng, who named "Shi Na
Fu" (transliteration of the English word "Snuff") "nose tobacco" according to their feature of being sniffed. As the emperor rewarded the ministers with snuff and snuff bottles, snuff began to flow into the upper class, and sniffing became increasingly popular. Snuff bottles were invented in China and are specially used to store snuff. Since snuff was also regarded as a medicine, and imported snuff was expensive, some merchants used small bottles of traditional medicine to pack and sell them separately. This was the original form of snuff bottles. Because the mouth of the bottle was small and easy to carry, and most importantly, the smell was not easy to lose, at first, people called them "flasks". Later, Emperor Kangxi first called them "bottles", so later they began to be called "snuff bottles". [2]

3. THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF INSIDE PAINTING IN BEIJING

The emergence of the inside painting snuff bottles turned the snuff bottles from a common utility tool into a work of art that could be played and appreciated, and they were quickly collected worldwide. As early as the 19th century, there were already descriptions of inside painting snuff bottles in Western documents recording Chinese customs. The earliest record has appeared in China: An Overview of the Empire and His People by John Francis Davis, which was published in the early 19th century. The book recorded the "behaviors and customs" of the Chinese at that time, saying that "all Chinese people carry snuff bottles. Snuff bottles are mostly round... They are either made of porcelain, or made of various colored glass with embossed effect, or painted and written on the inside. The method is not easy to figure out." "Being painted and written on the inside" undoubtedly refers to inside painting snuff bottles. Richthofen, a German geographer, mentioned in The Achievements of Personal Travel in China and Research Based on It that he had seen inside painting snuff bottles in Shandong. Since no clear records can be found in historical documents, there have been various speculations about the origin of the inside painting snuff bottles for more than 100 years.

Based on an inside painting snuff bottle with the mark of Jiaqing Bingzi Year (1816) and the mark of Gan Xuanwen (see "Figure 1") in the collection of the Princeton University Art Museum, Hugh Moss, a foreign snuff bottle collector made an inference. He believed that Gan Xuanwen was the originator of inside painting snuff bottles in China, and concluded that Gan Xuanwen was created during the reign of Emperor Jiaqing of the Qing Dynasty and was the earliest inside painting snuff bottle discovered so far. However, this inference is only one of the most widespread inferences and speculations, and there is not enough direct evidence to prove its correctness.

Figure 1 Inside painting snuff bottle with the mark "Gan Xuanwen".

In December 2009, Sun Yat-sen University Press's published Research on Art History (11th Volume), which contained an article with a named author: The Fracture of the Craft Tradition of Inside Painting Snuff Bottles and the Establishment of Their Art Orientation. According to this article, "The theory that the inside painting snuff bottles originated from Gan Xuanwen was first put forward by Moss, a foreign snuff bottle collector. According to his collection of early inside painting snuff bottles, he regarded Lingnan school painters as the source of inside painting, including inside painting painters of the Lingnan school such as 'Gan Xuanwen', 'Chen Quan' and 'Lay Buddhist Yiru'. None of the painters mentioned in this theory have appeared in historical documents. But because there are facts that can be cited, this theory is persuasive to some extent."

Figure 2 Inside painting snuff bottle with the mark of "Chen Quan".
Gan Xuanwen is the side painter of the Lingnan School with the clearest style. Judging from several "Gan Xuanwen" snuff bottles (see "Figure 2") that can be seen nowadays, Gan Xuanwen may have been active around the 1820s. Gan Xuanwen was a landscape painter of the Lingnan School. The quarterly journal of the International Snuff Bottle Association published two of his landscape paintings more than ten years ago. The snuff bottle blanks used by Gan Xuanwen were mainly crystal, mostly square and thick. The themes of the paintings include landscapes, flowers and birds, painting on one side and writing on the other side, and the font he used was official script. Although the paintings are rough, they are full of literary features. These snuff bottles are very valuable for inferring the active age of Gan Xuanwen, especially those with marks of years.

The crystal inside painting snuff bottle with Qinyuanchun written in regular script ("Figure 3") is with the year mark "chrysanthemum month of year Xinyou". Because China records years with the system of Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches, which cycle every 60 years, "Year Xinyou" can be 1741, or 1801 or 1861. According to such collectors as Moss, if this inside painting snuff bottle was indeed made in 1801, then "Lay Buddhist Yiru" might be Aisin Gioro Hongwu (Aisin Gioro Yinni's second son, the grandson of Emperor Kangxi, Aisin Gioro Xuanye), and the beginning of inside painting was 15 years earlier than 1816, the year of Gan Xuanwen's work. The data currently consulted (including research by foreign collectors and scholars) show that although there is no direct evidence to prove that "Lay Buddhist Yiru" was Aisin Gioro Hongwu, there is a large amount of indirect evidence to prove this.

From this point of view, the debate on the origin of inside painting will continue. Although there is still a lack of direct evidence on the origin, based on the existing inside painting snuff bottles, we can at least infer that the origin of the inside painting snuff bottles can be traced back to the end of the 18th century or earlier times, and two schools with different styles, namely Lingnan and Beijing Palace, were formed in the first half of the 19th century.

4. INHERITANCE OF BEIJING-STYLE INSIDE PAINTING SNUFF BOTTLES

The name Beijing-style Inside Painting Bottles is mainly distinguished by region relative to Shandong, Hebei, Guangdong, Shaanxi and other places. Beijing-style inside painting bottles were formed in the ending of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republic of China Period. While other styles of snuff bottles had declined, the Beijing-style inside painting snuff bottles were thriving. The output and artistry reached a peak, and many famous artists appeared.

Lit of inheritors of Beijing-style inside painting snuff bottles:

- The first generation: Ye Zhongsan;
- The second generation: Ye Bengzhen, Ye Bengxi, Ye Bengqi, Ye Shuying, Wang Xisan, Liu Shouben, Ding Guiling;
- The third generation: Zhang Yuhua, Jia Yuqin, Zheng Xuye, Chu Xiuying, Tie Hua, Chen Xueyan, Zhang Yuyan, Xi Jia, Liu Dasheng, Wang Simin, Cao Miao, Yao


- The fifth generation: Jiang Weisheng, Wang Wenli. [3]

All the skills of the Ye family were inherited by the two sons of Ye Zhongsan, Ye Bengxi (Ye Xiaofeng) and Ye Bengqi (Ye Xiaosan). Ye Zhongsan had another son, Ye Yuzhen, the eldest son. It is said that his skills were the most exquisite among the three sons of the Ye family, but because he died young, no work with his signature can be seen in the world. Ye Zhongsan passed on all the skills to Ye Xiaofeng and Ye Changqi, who then passed on these skills to the third generation of successors outside the family, laying the foundation for the formation and development of the Beijing and Hebei schools of inside painting art.

The snuff bottle shown in "Figure 4" is with the internal script of "For respectable Brother Xingwu" and "written by Ye Zhongsan in Beijing in winter of Year Guizi", indicating that it's bottle painted by Ye Zhongsan in 1893 for Sun Xingwu, another artists living in the same period.

Ye Xiaofeng, also known as Ye Bengxi, was transferred to the Beijing Institute of Arts and Crafts in 1956. Ye Xiaofeng has mastered the techniques of firing "Gu Yuexuan" and adding color to ivory (but he does not paint "Gu Yuexuan"), and has relatively fully inherited all the inside painting skills of the Ye family. The style and content of his works are similar to Ye Zhongsan's, and Ye Zhongsan's signature is sometimes used, but in terms of lines and aura, especially in terms of inscriptions, there is still a certain gap between him and his father. The subjects of painting are mainly characters, but also landscapes, flowers and birds, grasses and insects, and historical themes. Ye Bengqi paints "Gu Yuexuan" and Ye Xiaofeng fires "Gu Yuexuan", making indispensable. With such a combination, no one can do without the other, so that the family will always maintain a connection.

Figure 5 shows the glass inside painting snuff bottle drawn by Ye Bengxi (Ye Xiaofeng) at the Beijing Institute of Arts and Crafts in 1955.

Ye Bengqi's inside painting snuff bottles are mainly with such themes as flowers and birds, and the inside painting style is mainly influenced by "Gu Yuexuan". His inside painting snuff bottles with flowers and birds completely follow the patterns of "Gu Yuexuan", without any trace of the style of Ye Zhongsan. Ye Bengqi only used unprocessed bamboo brushes for paintings in all his life, with thicker lines, heavier colors, and double hooks for coloring. After he was 60 years old, Ye Bengqi painted some landscape paintings. He used a bald willow brush to dip it in a very strong green, and drew the hollow leaves and grass in the bottle little by little. For works that he is satisfied with, the signature must be Ye Bengqi. For works that he thinks are not good enough, the signature must be Ye Xiaosan. Most of the works in his later years are with the signature of "Ye Xiaosan". In fact, Ye Bengqi's greatest achievement should be in painting the base of "Gu Yuexuan". At that time, some of the enamel glaze for painting "Gu Yuexuan" was imported from Britain, France and Germany. Before the 20th century, Western metal painting enamel was very advanced, mainly used for decorating with clocks, pocket watches, jewelry boxes, etc. The Ye family selflessly dedicated their family-renowned snuff bottle and the skill of
painting "Guyuexuan" to the society, and Ye Bengqi contributed a lot to it. In the 1950s, Ye Bengqi was awarded the title of old artist. In 1974, Ye Changqi suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and died in the workplace. "Figure 6" shows a glass snuff bottle with inside painting painted by Ye Bengqi in 1973: a tourmaline cover with emerald support.

Figure 6 A tourmaline cover with emerald support painted by Ye Bengqi.

5. THE PAINTING ART OF BEIJING-STYLE INSIDE PAINTING SNUFF BOTTLES

5.1 Materials Used for Beijing-style Inside Painting Snuff Bottles

The materials used in internal painting snuff bottles in Beijing are very particular, mainly including the following kinds: the first kind is artificial crystal bottles, which have become the main kind of bottles used for inside painting; the second kind is glassware bottles, which are inside painting bottles made of ordinary glass heated and blown, and their hardness and transparency are not as good as artificial crystal bottles; the third kind is bottles made of natural crystal; the fourth kind of bottles are jade bottles, which are made of transparent jade, agate, amber and other materials, looking translucent and suitable for creating a hazy, looming effect; the fifth kind of bottles are made of resin and other modern materials. Bottles made of resin or other modern materials are modern breakthroughs and experiments. The artists paint in an ingenious way, and the works produced can obtain unexpected visual effects. [4]

For inside painting snuff bottles, the bottles are the carriers, and there is a big difference between high-end materials and ordinary materials. Snuff bottles made of high-grade materials such as crystal stones, citrine stones, and hair crystal stones are very different in value from those made of artificial glass. A snuff bottle with high quality is a work of art even if it is not painted. Snuff bottles have a history of hundreds of years in China, and their shapes are the condensation of Chinese utensils in the past dynasties, which are condensed in a tiny space. Beijing-style inside painting snuff bottles emphasize the quality of the materials and the shapes, because the value of inside painting can only be reflected when painted in a sophisticated snuff bottle (as shown in "Figure 7", "Figure 8", and "Figure 9").

Figure 7 Snuff bottle with the painting of a hundred children, painted by Liu Shouben on a plain tea-color base.

Figure 8 Snuff bottle with the painting of ladies painted by Wang Xisan on the inside of a citrine bottle.
Figure 9 Snuff bottle painted by Wang Xisan on an agate bottle.

5.2 Tools Used for Painting Beijing-style Inside Painting Snuff Bottles

The process of painting inside painting is very complicated. The body of a snuff bottle is usually flat, with two inner surfaces for painting. Before painting, the inner walls of the bottle need to be rubbed with iron sand to make the inner surfaces of the bottle gain a frosted effect, so that the paint can adhere to the glass. A special small bamboo pen is inserted through the neck of the bottle, and then the content is drawn in reverse, so that the real painting can be drawn in the bottle. The inside painting snuff bottles are a kind of snuff bottles. The craft is to use a slender pen with a small hook at the front end, stuck or wrapped with wolf hairs on the small hook, dip it in ink or paint, and then extend it through the neck of the snuff bottle, and then paint on the inner wall of the transparent snuff bottle. The painting themes include figures, flowers and birds, grasses and insects, ancient things, calligraphy, etc. Early interior paintings were drawn with bamboo sticks. [5] Later, the artists invented a kind of curved brushes, which were more advanced than bamboo sticks. The tool used for the painting of Beijing style snuff bottles is bamboo brush. Ye Zhongsan, Ye Xiaofeng, and Ye Bengqi all used bamboo brushes. Their brush is made with old bamboo. The bamboo is shaved into long thin bamboo sticks, one end of which is shaved like a needle tip and bent into a hook. The size of the hook can be determined according to the size of the snuff bottle. But the outer skin of bamboo must be kept, because the outer skin of bamboo is very hard and does not absorb ink. Due to the hardness of the hook, it can be used for a long time and the lines are very thin, but the drawn lines are very short. In Beijing, Xue Shaofu and his son Xue Chengcai, contemporaneous painters of Ye Zhongsan, used bamboo brushes basically the same as those used by the Ye family. However, Xue's bamboo brushes use the internal part of bamboo instead of bamboo skins, and they are always soaked in water. In this way, the tip of the bamboo brush is very soft and can absorb some ink. The strokes drawn are very long and full of water, but the lines are very thick and can not draw particularly delicate and detailed patterns. This is also the main problem restricting the progress of inside painting techniques. In the 1960s, several artists of the Beijing-style inside painting tried to improve and made some tools, but the results were not satisfactory. In 1966, Li Kechang, an inside painting artist from Shandong Zibo Art Glass Factory, visited Beijing. When he saw that his peers in Beijing were still drawing with bamboo brushes, he made a brush on the spot. Since then, painters of Beijing-style inside painting adopted brushes and completely abandoned bamboo brushes, but Ye Xiaofeng and Ye Bengqi, two old artists, have been using bamboo brushes all their lives (see "Figure 10"). [6]

Figure 10 Bamboo hook brush.

Since brushes began to be used for inside painting snuff bottles, the Beijing-style painting method made great progress, and such patterns as "Riverside Scene at Qingming Festival", "One Hundred and Eight Generals" and "A Hundred Fair Ladies" can all be drawn. Without brushes, it would be impossible to paint many figures and grand scenes in the bottle. The Beijing-style inside painting snuff bottles accepted some innovative methods of the Lu School and the Hebei School in terms of tool reform. In addition, the paints used in inside paintings are mainly Chinese paints and inks. After the 1980s, some oil colors are often used.

5.3 Art Features of Beijing-style Inside Painting Snuff Bottles

One of the features of Beijing-style inside painting snuff bottles is the vigorous strokes and the profound artistic conception. The painting methods of inside painting can be simply divided into three types: meticulous painting, freehand painting, and realistic painting. Freehand painting emphasizes the meaning of the painting (the artistic conception precedes the brushstroke), the strength of the brushwork (proficient strength), the rhythm (coordinated charm and rhythm), and interest (the beauty that touches the soul). If painters only pursue proficient brushwork performance, it is inevitable to produce rigid works. Realistic paintings mostly use oil paint. When painting inside painting, oil paint with fine particles and special for
photo dyeing is suitable, so as to paint the objects concretely and meticulously, and pursue the effect of light, shadow and color, accurate modeling, and lifelike image. This method is mostly used in portrait paintings.

"Marriage of Zhong Kui's Sister" ("Figure 11") is a traditional theme in the paintings of the Ye Family in Beijing. Zhong Kui's evil-hating image is in sharp contrast with his sister's elegant and dignified appearance. The painter painted the little ghosts carrying the sedan chair, holding the lamp, and holding the umbrella as ordinary people. In Liu Shouben's understanding of this subject, there are only distinction between good and evil between humans and ghosts, so he does not deliberately pursue the distinction of appearances. Liu Shouben began to learn from Ye Xiaofeng in 1960. He fully inherited the Ye family's skills of inside painting snuff bottles, so his works have the style of the Ye Family in terms of subject matter, composition, and colors. [7] At the same time, Liu Shouben summarized the artistic features of famous Beijing artists such as Zhou Leyuan, Ma Shaoxuan, Ding Erzhong, and formed the current style of "Beijing-style inside painting snuff bottles". Liu Shouben is currently a master of Chinese arts and crafts, and the representative inheritor of the national intangible cultural heritage "Beijing-style Inside Painting Snuff Bottles".

Figure 11: A snuff bottle with flora thread and coral cap painted by Liu Shouben in 1988.

Beijing culture has provided countless ideas and themes for Beijing-style inside painting. From subject matter to painting style, color and lustre, snuff bottles are never separated from Beijing culture. This is the second feature of Beijing-style inside painting snuff bottles.

Under the influence of the imperial culture, Beijing has formed a unique cultural atmosphere, which makes the Beijing-style inside painting snuff bottles have the artistic style combining poetry, calligraphy, painting, and seal. Beijing culture provides countless ideas and themes for the Beijing-style inside painting. Examples include "Qianlong Appreciating a Bottle", "Spring Dawn in the Summer Palace", and "Imperial Garden" reflecting the imperial life; "Tea House", "Reminiscences of the Capital" (see "Figure 12"), "Lingering Charm of Beijing", "Fun in the Cage", etc., reflecting the life of ordinary people living in the old Beijing. There are also paintings about iconic buildings in Beijing, such as Temple of Heaven, Summer Palace, White Tower Temple, Drum Tower, Yinding Bridge, etc. These inside painting snuff bottles with the atmosphere of old Beijing life are favored by collectors and artists. Beijing-style inside painting snuff bottles are exquisite in materials, rigorous in shape, meticulous in painting, with vivid and interesting characters, and a wide range of subjects. In addition, they use light and elegant colors, which are in line with the charm of Chinese literati paintings and are of great value of collection.

Figure 12: Old Days in Beijing, painted by Liu Shouben in 2009 (organic jade cap).

The content of Beijing-style inside paintings has the charm of Chinese literature, focusing on literary and artistic cultivation. The shape of the snuff bottles is small and exquisite, graceful and elegant. They embody the beauty of traditional Chinese shapes and are more suitable for traditional Chinese themes. Traditional Chinese classics, poems, and folklore are inexhaustible themes for inside painting snuff bottles, such as "Three Visits to Thatched Cottage", "Marriage of Zhong Kui's Sister", "Three Heroes Fighting Lv Bu", "Outsmarting the Birthday Gifts", "Eighteen Arhats", "Seven Sages in the Bamboo Grove", "Spring Night Banquet in the Peach and Plum Garden", and "Blessings of the Fairy". The vivid images of the characters have made them subject matters that both refined and popular and are appreciated and liked by the masses. Other themes such as "Lone Fisher in the Cold River", "Ma Gu Presents Blessing of Longevity" and so on, are with
simple pictures, but if we add some poems, there are poems in the paintings, and pictures in the poems, it can better reflect the cultural value of the inside painting snuff bottles.

If we choose suitable subject matters according to the shape of the snuff bottles, the subject matters can complement the material and shape to bring more amazing effects. For example, Zhou Leyuan's landscapes and ancient things embody the elegant literary charm, while the figure paintings of Ma Shaoxuan and Ye Zhongsan have a style suited both refined and popular tastes. Nowadays, Beijing-style inside painting mainly adopts the themes of traditional figures, combined with landscape, flowers and birds, animals, portraits, and calligraphy.

With high-end materials, charming shapes, wide themes, vivid painting charm and a perfect embodiment of poetry, calligraphy, painting and seal, Beijing-style inside painting snuff bottles are a concentration of traditional and modern inside painting bottles.

6. CONCLUSION

Beijing-style inside painting snuff bottles condense the traditional culture and art of the Chinese nation, and are widely collected worldwide. In November 1968, with the support of the Asia Society of New York, Edward Choate O'Dell (1901-1982), an American snuff bottle connoisseur, founded the International Chinese Snuff Bottle Society (ICSBS). Members and researchers from all over the world gather in this society to study the art of inside painting snuff bottles in China. Due to the accelerated pace of modern life, many magnificent traditional Chinese arts are on the verge of disappearing. How to bring folk art back to life, what policies and measures should be introduced as a guarantee, how to protect, how to pass on the traditional arts, and what methods should be used to protect them and pass them on... these are all things that we should pay attention to and study on. [8] In the process of writing the paper and collecting information, the author found that this paper inevitably has shortcomings. And the author sincerely hopes to draw wider attention from theorists and scholars through a phased study, so as to protect and inherit excellent culture and traditional arts.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Min Ma is responsible for writing the paper and Wei Wang is responsible for revising and proofreading.

REFERENCES


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