



A Study on Lam-qua's Medical Image (1836-1855) Based on the Chinese and Western Visual Interaction Mode

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Abstract. This study focuses on the images of tumor patients drawn by Lam-qua for Dr. Peter Parker from 1836 to 1855, which is the largest provable volume of art works of Lam, a commercial painter active at Guangzhou port. These images were not only placed in the corridor of Boji Hospital as displayed cases, but also copied into the image materials that Dr. Peter Parker applied for funding from the western world. This paper attempts to reconstruct Lam-qua's intention to understand these images, analyze the specific problems that Lam needed to solve and the situation he faced when tackling the issues, explore how these images show the unique mode of visual interaction between China and the west in the field of port culture, as well as how do these images affect European and American audiences through corresponding communication strategies under the special trade language environment of Guangzhou port in the mid-19th century.

Keywords: China trade painting, visual culture, Canton

1 Introduction

1.1 Lam-qua's mission

From 1836 to 1855, Lam-qua's studio had created at least 114 oil paintings about cancer patients from Dr. Peter Parker, an early American missionary, doctor and diplomat who came to China. Among these paintings, around 84 of them are collected in the Cushing / Whitney medical library at Yale, the Gordon Museum of pathology in London, the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University, the Countway Library in Boston, the Peabody Essex Museum in the United States, and other institutions. In addition, watercolor albums copied from Lam-qua's oil paintings are also collected at Harvard University and the Wellcome Institute in London. These works are likely to be directly from Lam-qua's studio. At the same time, the writer has also found several similar works in the illustration paintings commissioned by the American training doctors in the same period. Why did these similar works depicting tumor patients suddenly become popular images in the medical community? What measures did Lam-qua's studio at Guangzhou port take to deal with the "self-correction" of the characters in his paintings? What kind of artistic production context do these images

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embody? And what kind of transmission strategy did the reproduction of Lam-qua's case images reflect?

1.2 Which "Lam-qua"?

At Guangzhou port in the 19th century, "Lam-qua" could be used as a symbol of an excellent artist. According to Li(2014), there were more than one "Lam-qua" being active at Guangzhou port in the 19th century. Earlier records came from Philadelphia businessman Robert Wan Jr. and French officer Felix Renouard de Sainte Croix. "Lam-qua", who was active before 1810, was good at glass painting and mini portrait painting^[1]. He was one of the five most powerful painters at Guangzhou port at that time. The second "Lam-qua" who was active after the 1830s, was a port painter responsible for the portraits of Dr. Peter Parker's patients. Based on the inscription of his Self-Portrait collected in the Hong Kong Museum of art, saying "this picture was written in the mirror when Lam-qua was 52 in the fourth year of Xianfeng", it can be understood that this artist should have been born in the early 19th century. In the records of foreign traders, he was an apprentice of George Chinnery, a British academic painter who came to China. But Lam later became an unwilling character in Channery's notes because of their rival relationship. The Chinese name of the second "Lam-qua" has long been regarded as "Guan Qiaochang", which comes from the description written by Robin Hutcheon, an early export painting scholar. John Warner, the former curator of the Hong Kong Museum of Art, believes that this is an imaginary name based on Lam-qua's brother Guan Lianchang ("Tingqua") recorded in the Chinese Repository^[2]. In addition, the image of the second Lam-qua has also been described in the Annals of Nanhai County for a long time. Being written as "traveled all over Europe and the United States", "was famous for his vivid oil image" and "was realistic and lifelike" in the Annals, Guan Zuolin, an artist, became another identity of "Lam-qua". This is because in the biography written by calendar painter Guan Huinong, Lam-qua was his great grandfather Guan Zuolin. "My great grandfather was called Zuolin, he was famous for painting at his time. My great grandfather was deeply impressed when British painter George Chinnery sailed to Canton, so they traveled to Europe and the United States together to learn from each other, which is the reason why my great grandfather, as the first Chinese, fully mastered the western painting style. Zuolin passed his skills to my great uncle Shiran, Shiran passed to his third father Shunan, and Shunan passed to his brother Jianqing who is also the second son of Mr. Jingbo, while I am the third son of Mr. Jingbo." This material was also cited in Gao Jianfu's article Tracing the Origin and Recent Developments of the Art of Macau.

1.3 Orders for drawing patients' portraits

In 1834, Dr. Peter Parker received his medical doctor's degree from Yale. In the same year, he accepted the dispatch of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to Guangzhou, China, and became the first American medical missionary in China. At the end of 1835, Dr. Peter Parker set up the "Xindoulan Medical Clinic" in

Xindoulan Street in the Thirteen-Hong of Canton to treat patients free of charge. At first, he mainly treated ophthalmic patients, but later the clinic became a general hospital. In the stage of practicing, Dr. Peter Parker received thousands of patients suffering from cancer. He entrusted Lam-qua, a painter with western and Chinese styles, to draw pictures which showed the situation of some patients. Lam-qua's busy studio was very close to Dr. Peter Parker's hospital. Before the popularity of cameras, he was a master of image production in this area. The drawing time of this order can be divided into two stages. Before Dr. Peter Parker returned to the United States in 1840, Lam-qua painted the portraits of the first batch of patients. These paintings were used to seek financial assistance from foundations in the United States and Europe. After his success, Lam painted the second batch of paintings after 1842. In addition, Lam-qua had a closer relationship with Dr. Peter Parker than the ordinary one between artists and sponsors. Kwan A-to, Lam-qua's nephew, had become Dr. Peter Parker's right-hand assistant in the hospital. Lam-qua probably drew the first batch of portraits for free in order to appreciate Dr. Peter Parker's free medical practice at Guangzhou port and his help to his family^[3]. This is because in the medical records of Dr. Peter Parker, we can see his gratitude for Lam-qua's kindness. He wrote: "I want to thank Lam-qua (a Chinese artist) for drawing a very admirable and realistic portrait of the little girl, and he also has a good performance in the depiction of tumor." For the more interesting cases in the hospital, Lam-qua painted very successfully as usual. His attitude remained unchanged, just as the hospital that did not charge for treatment, he could not charge for paintings. (...there is no charge for 'cutting', he can make none for painting).^[4] In terms of commission, Dr. Peter Parker's only record is that he paid Lam-qua \$25 for tumor painting. In terms of the price standard of Lam-qua's ordinary portrait's painting, the American businessman Latimer mentioned in the 1832 account book that "paid Lam-qua's portrait's painting \$26.50"^[5], while the Canton Register made it clear in an advertisement published in 1835 that the price of Lam-qua's portrait's painting was \$15. It can be seen that the amount paid by Dr. Peter Parker was far less than the artist's work of such a large volume, but there is no other record to prove whether it is the price of one painting or multiple paintings. From the perspective of commission, it is still unknown whether Lam-qua painted those portraits because of Dr. Peter Parker's moral character of helping the world and saving people, but the painter was obviously very interested in western medicine. In Dr. Peter Parker's records, Lam-qua believed that he "is a great lover in the medical field, and is regretful that he is too old to become a doctor."

2 Lam-qua's problem: a specific differentiated view of "tradition"

Although Lam-qua had already been a painter with "realistic" ability under the evaluation of the western audiences, it is still very difficult for him to depict tumor images at that time. The difficulties Lam-qua faced were very clear: he needed to solve the most basic image problem. From the perspective of his sponsors, Dr. Peter Parker hoped to win the continuous investment from the foundation committee through the

most attractive disease features. As a result, he tried to use images to illustrate the Chinese people's urgent need for western new technology as well as their ability to regain health under the influence of Christian Protestantism. This is because the technology that can remove large tumors, the most prominent feature of skin diseases, is considered to be a great advantage in the development of western medicine. The traditional Chinese concept of ethics, on the contrary, stands on the opposite side. Dr. Peter Parker had written in the hospital records more than once that the Chinese people were stubborn about the concept of "physical, hair and skin are endowed by parents". For western audiences, these paintings well-showed the image of Chinese patients in a western vision, while for China's own painting style, these characters were still foreign realistic features. This is not only a distinction in the concept of painting, but also represents an context of exclusiveness. Besides, Lam-qua's portrait is also different from the popular pathological map in the west at that time. These characters in the painting are specific but not the patterned embodiment of a certain symptom.

2.1 Possible template

Because of the particularity of medical images, Lam-qua needed to get relevant information from Dr. Peter Parker whom carried many medical manuals in the early 19th century when he went to China. For example, in the record of the hospital schedule in 1851, Dr. Peter Parker wrote: "I take this opportunity to thank Mr. H. Rutter for his careful skill in drawing a series of lithographic paintings of stones, which are practical in terms of form and size."^[6] Therefore, Lam-qua, who had no experience in diagnosis and treatment, was likely to refer to the depiction of these western medical images produced in the early 19th century. For example, a notes called "the tumor after its removed weighted 44½ lbs" is attached to the existing early 19th century tumor medical image from the Wellcome Library in London. It can be seen that if such images were brought into China through missionaries, they would become a very accurate template for Lam-qua's reference.

In fact, Lam-qua often practiced his painting skills with the help of images from the west. He collected a lot of prints from western traders. When describing Lam-qua's studio, Tiffany recorded that "(this studio) is decorated with copies of his British paintings. He has many prints from British artists, of which Thomas Lawrence is his favorite."^[7] The reproduction of western paintings was a major theme in the export paintings of Guangzhou port in the 19th century, and it was obviously that Lam-qua learned the corresponding painting skills from it. The work that still preserved today is his reproduction of Ingres's masterpiece *La Grande Odalisque*, which is preserved in the Peabody Museum in the United States. Lam signed his name in the lower right corner of the picture.

3 Code words: Dr. Peter Parker's mission and image transmission

As for the picture, we regard it as something beyond the material object, and we implicitly make it something that includes the artist's image making history and the viewer's acceptance of reality. Ari Larissa Heinrich believes that the background space set in Lam-qua's patients' portraits of Dr. Peter Parker may have another meaning, i.e., the landscape elements in the painting reflect the patients' desire for recovery as well as a vision that Dr. Parker expected the western technology could "save" them.^[8] The premise of this conclusion is related to the difficult problem that Dr. Parker himself wanted to overcome. By treating the patients, his purpose was to make the patients at Guangzhou port accept western therapy. On the other hand, he must persuade the funders around the world to believe that these patients must be inspired by the religion. The attitude of the American Medical Missionary Committee in its letter to Dr. Peter Parker was very clear:

"You will be hired and you will have the opportunity to gain medical and surgical knowledge to relieve people's physical pain. You will also do your best to help them learn our art and science. But never forget that only by making them the handmaids to the gospel will you be noticed. As a doctor or a scientist, you can only be respected by preaching in China. As a teacher of religion (a preacher), you will never be replaced or disturbed."^[9]

The first Opium War in 1840 tensioned the Sino-British relations. It is conceivable that how hostile the people in Guangzhou port would be to the westerners, which may be the direct reason for Dr. Peter Parker's temporary escape from Guangzhou. In April 1841, Dr. Peter Parker returned to the United States with the first portraits of Lam-qua's patients. He delivered a speech to an enthusiastic audience at a special meeting of the Boston Medical Association, with the theme of "the condition and prospects of the hospitals of China". In his speech, he described the environment of the Thirteen-Hong of Canton, the establishment of the western hospital, and his provision of free treatment for the local people. He responded: "It can be expected that (I) will continue to stay in the hearts of these people by trying to healing their body and mind and gaining them a beneficial impact. We can't expect these Chinese people to quickly accept our improvements, however, the cure of the diseases is the key. Such experience must be able to promote the intervention of our knowledge and more humanely transform their culture. This way will not only help them obtain temporary happiness, but also allow them to embrace their future happiness through the spread of the Bible."^[10]

In order to better bring direct feelings to the viewers, one way is to compare Chinese and western medical technologies. In his speech, Dr. Peter Parker described how the use of plaster by Chinese doctors differentiated with that in the western medical methods, so that it could attempt to reveal the differences between ancient traditional Chinese medicine and the modern technology. In the portraits of the patients, Lam-qua also painted the treatment methods of ancient Chinese medicine. In the description of the patient Wang Kexing, he painted several pieces of white circular

plaster on the patient's huge hip lipoma. Dr. William Henry Cumming, a colleague of Dr. Peter Parker, noted here that "Chinese lumps (plaster) are pasted on this mountain (tumor) to prevent it from erupting, just like installing a metal mesh cover on the top of Mount Vesuvius to prevent the discharge of volcanic ash."^[11] This phenomenon was used by missionary doctors such as Peter Parker and William. Through Lam-qua's portrait, it became the corresponding visual confirmation of missionary's ideology. At this level, Lam's paintings became an important narrative means of Dr. Peter Parker. Here, "accept - not accept" and "transform - not transform" have become the dual symbols of body and spirit, because the transformation of body and the acceptance of Christianity in mind are one.^[12] In Dr. Peter Parker's case narrative, he always started with the symptoms that the patient's disease was incurable or difficult to cure, but he believed that these patients had tenacious character and tolerance. Therefore, after the successful treatment, they would express their strong gratitude to the doctors, which were the "Signal bleeding of God". Combined with Dr. Peter Parker's cases, the painting of the patient Po Ashing is the only one of Lam-qua's portraits that compares the image of the patient before and after the operation. After recovery, Po stands on the shore and looks into the distance of the coastline, with a trace of light from the upper right. Another painting that places the characters under the natural landscape depicts the Tanka woman Akae. In Dr. Peter Parker's record, she actively received treatment. Her bare feet and the boat in the water on the right shows her a Tanka identity. Akae's expression is very indifferent, and the light still comes from the right side of the background, which makes the Tanka woman seem to be inspired by God. The successful images of Po and Akae after their "transformations" have become the prove of image to Dr. Peter Parker's practical skills. He had a strong vision that medicine could successfully "transform" the people at Guangzhou port, because some patients who had successfully received treatment were very willing to recommend western treatment methods to other patients. The gentle nature of Chinese patients had also become a feature mentioned many times by western doctors in their medical practice records. Therefore, these books and images had gradually influenced the continuous definition of "self" and "the other" in the process of mutual observation between China and the west.

4 Conclusion

Art historian Michael Sullivan believed that Lam-qua's landscape painting adopted western technology and views, which were unlikely to be realized through the skills of traditional Chinese painting. In the portraits of the patients drawn by Lam-qua for Dr. Peter Parker, it is obvious to find out the same complex painting language means that were reflected in the mixed language environment of China and the west. In the tension of investigating the similarity of objects and images and depicting expressiveness, the painter had completed this task. In terms of the painting style, Lam-qua cannot be separated from the influence of his teacher, i.e., British academic painter Chinnery. He was more or less included in the evaluation system of British gorgeous style. In this evaluation system, Lam-qua was always in the position of "apprentice"

or even “replicator”, which inevitably reminds people of his initial identity as the “housekeeper” of rich businessmen in Macao. Such a view will lead to mechanical and lack of innovative associations with the painter. For example, de la Voilee, a French critic who came to China in 1850, believed that “(Lam-qua) had been out of his element before an [sic] European countenance”. However, summarizing all of these as how Chinnery had influenced Lam-qua cancelled the positive factors in Lam's behaviors towards his master. He made Chinnery a more important historical fact than Chinnery himself, thus rewriting the history of art.

From the perspective of the patients' portraits drawn by Lam-qua for Dr. Peter Parker, they embody at least two meanings. The first layer is the “harmony” between the artist's own physical judgment of the object and visual experience, which is the result of Lam-qua's painting skills training in the commercial and trade environment of Guangzhou port area in the 19th century. The second layer is the matching between the image and the purpose of the sponsor as well as its impact. These patients' portraits retain a certain medical value, also publicize the moral perception of missionaries saving people in foreign countries, and promote the self and other's cognition which were gradually formed among Europe, Asia, and America in the 19th century through the dissemination of images. However, it is significantly noticeable that the connotation of Lam-qua's patients' portraits is very complex. His cognition cannot be based on the perspective of racial opposition, and the characteristics of these patients should not be simply classified as national or ethnic characteristics. They more reflect how the visual art images as a medical means became recognized by Chinese and the western viewers through a series of social practices in the 19th century, and became a part of racial communication.

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