

The Allocation of Images and Texts: Tracing to the Source of Early Preface and Postscript in Ancient China

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Abstract

When preface and postscript in ancient China was at a nascent stage, the coexistent form of images and text appeared. The unique visual contrast form between image and text was produced in the allocation process of coexisting image and text. A sense of rhythm and space is derived, extending from the two-dimensional visual image to more levels of aesthetic synaesthesia. The dynamic image features gradually integrate with the static textual expressions, conveying a mood of space-time dialogue.

Keywords

Preface and postscript; Allocation; Integration.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the nascent stage of prefaces and postscripts in Chinese ancient painting, entered into the coexistent process of various images and texts about from the 5th century B.C. (Warring States) to the 10th century A.D. (Tang Dynasty), which can be called the mode of image and text allocation. During this period, the preface and postscript is not sure whether it actually appeared and survived. However, in addition to the materials limited by the preface and postscript, there have been many intuitive similar forms in materials such as silk and stone relief. Furthermore, the presentation of text information and image tends to be consistent or circumstantial evidence, etc. Therefore, the form of a certain number of images and texts that appeared during this period is called the image and text allocation mode. Teasing out this context is helpful for attributing and tracing the source of early preface and postscript.

2. PAINTING ON SILK AND IMAGE BRICK



Figure 1. Warring States/Zeng Book/38.7x47cm/U.S. Collection

The image and text allocation mode, from the data that can be collected so far, it shows that the Changsha Warring States Zeng book (Figure 1) is a very representative physical work. This Zeng book is also called as silk book, which was unearthed in the Chu Tomb in Changsha Zidangku in the 1930s.

The whole breadth of Zen book consists of three parts, the middle is the text, one paragraph is thirteen lines and one paragraph is eight lines; the corners of the four sides are separated trees with red, green, white, black four-color; there are 12 weird divinities painted around the text. "Chu Silk is the only piece of treasure that combines calligraphy and painting during the Warring States Period." From this point of view, this form of image-text allocation has already originated here. The author writes the text, and then adds images around it as figure for identification. I have to say that there are similar forms in the prefaces and postscripts of later generations. There is not only the appearance of this kind of image-text allocation mode on the materials of the Zeng silk, in the Han Dynasty, a large number of stone reliefs also confirmed this point. For example, the stone reliefs of Wuliang Temple in Jiaxiang, Shandong in the late Eastern Han Dynasty are undoubtedly representative works of stone relief. There are a large number of portraits and titles among these stone reliefs. Obviously, this can be seen as one of the early examples which produce form of the preface and postscript.

The "Five Emperors Stone Relief" (Figure2) in Wuliang Temple is the same. The upper and lower borders are thick, and the five emperors are separated by five columns. The Five Emperors stand in frame in the form of silhouettes, with different postures. The five lines are engraved with words to indicate their identity. The first is the Yellow Emperor, his right head rises, wearing a crown, wearing a robe, looking to the left, raising his left hand to guide the right, as if leading the four emperors on the left, as if he was the first ancestor of humanities. The second is Zhuan Xu, his face turns to the right, gathers up his sleeves with two hands, wears crown, his body leans to the right, follow the Yellow Emperor's momentum. The third is the Emperor Ku, his face turn to the right, his hands placed on his chest, he wears a crown, and he has a rightward gesture. The fourth is Yao; his face turns to the right, his left hand raises and points to the right, wearing the crown. The fifth is Shun, and his gesture and costumes are similar to Yao.

It is easy to see from this "Five Emperors' Stone Reliefs" that this is a form where images complements texts, the form where the text is outside the image (frame) has appeared and is widely used. This is one.



Figure 2. Eastern Han Dynasty/Five Emperors Painting/ Wuliang Temple Stone Relief, Jiaxiang, Shandong

Another example is the "Jing Ke Assassinates King of Qin" (Figure 3) stone relief on the west wall of the Wuliang Temple, the title is in the image (frame), the "Jing Ke Assassinates King of Qin" stone relief not only makes the title to be involved in the image, and also makes the image of stone portraits lively and vivid.



Figure 3. Eastern Han Dynasty/Jingke Assassinate King of Qin/ Wuliang Temple Portrait Stone of Jiaxiang, Shandong

The image can be divided into two parts, the pillar on the left about one-third as the boundary. The one on the left is the King of Qin, who leans behind (left) to avoid Jing Ke's assassination; there is a title on the left of the pillar: "King of Qin". On the upper right side, there is a person kneeling on the ground, and there is a square title on the person: "Qin Wuyang". There is a dagger under the person, sticking straight into the column, the tip of the dagger passes through the column, and the tail of the dagger is flying, it shows the speed and strength. There is a box under the dagger, the lid is open, there is a human head, the face is facing upward, and the title on the right: "Fan Yuqi's Head". At the far right of the image, Jing Ke's hair fly behind him, his hands spread out, his feet are off the ground, and he is embraced by a guard behind him, his hands clasped his waist tightly. There is a small title on the right frame of the image: "Jing Ke".

The title of this stone is particularly exciting and ingenious. There are four list titles, among which the title of "King of Qin" leans on the pillar, "Qin Wuyang" and "Jing Ke" lean on the upper frame, and all three are placed by the side. And "Fan Yuqi's Head" is placed in a blank part of the image. There is the gathering and dispersion in titles around, this is not just simple representation to supplement and narrate the characters in the images, but incorporate the consciousness of decorating white in the image composition. This is equivalent to the similarities between the function of preface and postscript of later generations and artistic expression.

3. PICTURE BOOKS OF JIN AND TANG DYNASTIES

During the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties, the flames of war raged across the land, and secular life became more difficult. The people yearn for a stable life and have a more simple pursuit of life. At the same time, Buddhism gradually flourished, during this period, a large number of Buddhist statues, prefaces and steles, and temple murals appeared.

The "Guanyin Book Image Scroll" (Figure 4) found in Dunhuang is a series of stories picture which presented in horizontal scroll. The content of the story is "Guanyin Pumenpin". It tells the story where Guanyin rescue the sufferings in the world with divine power, travels through the land and save living things with thirty-three identities. This form where images and texts go up

and down side by side most appears on horizontal scrolls. The viewer gradually unfolds from the right side of the scroll to the left side and sees it slowly, showing the story portraits of the Guanyin and the secular world, the different character and scenes in the images are exaggerated and distorted, with different colors and varying heights. In the lower part, a black line is used to draw a vertical column of words and lines, with the appearance of religious texts, also solemn and harmonious; the Guanyin Book Image Scroll has the figure and text.

This form also appears in "Rui Ying Image Scroll" of cave of Buddhist texts in the Dunhuang Grottoes, there are twenty-two auspicious images painted in scroll above, the name and meaning are written in ink text below. Wu Hong expounded in the book "Wuliang Temple-The Ideological Nature of Ancient Chinese Portrait Art": "this form of expression is clearly developed from the narrow and long silk painting."



Figure 4. Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties / Guanyin Classics Scroll (partial) / Collection of the National Library of France

The above two works were in the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties at the same time, it can be seen that the materials they rely on are not limited to the stone material of the Han Dynasty as the carrier, but come to the silk picture book. The form of expression of the title gradually moves from the solid spatial expression to the plane spatial expression.

A number of painted books appeared during the Jin and Tang dynasties, mostly painted on silk. And the painting on silk has been continuous to this day, which brings a material similarity. Then from these picture books came down from the Jin and Tang dynasties to the present, it is also possible to find some paintings that have already shown preface and postscript. The scrolls have lasted for thousands of years from right to left, and there are many connoisseurs and collectors in later ages. If we look at the heart of the painting, the same pattern of image-text allocation similar to the form preface and postscript in later ages appears in the picture. So, did later generations of connoisseurs and collectors learn this pattern of image-text allocation from viewing copies of the painting, and the extension is before and the introduction as title, and the trailing postscript at the end?

Gu Kaizhi's "The Goddess of the Luo Painting" (Figure 5) is a story painting based on the contents of "The Goddess of the Luo" written by Cao Zhi of the Wei Dynasty during the Three Kingdoms period. Gu Kaizhi imagined the contents of "The Goddess of the Luo" and created various elements such as people, mountains, trees, fish and dragons, boats, etc., they are placed on the same horizontal silk book, and the storyline is told. There are nine copies of the "The Goddess of the Luo Painting" has been passed so far, and the Song Dynasty copy in the Liaoning Museum retains the composition image and times feeling of the Six Dynasties period.

In chapter 5 of "The Goddess of the Luo Painting and Ancient Chinese Story Paintings", Chen Baozhen concluded: "the problem of the division of history between the fu text and calligraphy in the Liaoning version of the "The Goddess of the Luo Painting" and the mode of expression of the interaction between the picture and the text during the Six Dynasties", its copying process consists of two steps.

First, the original painting was carefully copied by Gaozong's court painter, then the fu text was transcribed by the writer (probably one of the concubines of Gaozong who could write), these fu texts were not added during the Southern Song Dynasty when copying, but already existed in the original composition of the Six Dynasties. This is because the method integrating images and texts was created during the Six Dynasties, its purpose is to make the image and the text produces a lively interactive effect on the picture.

The Liaoning version of "The Goddess of the Luo Painting" configures the image and text in silk, arranges the fu sentences with varying lengths based on the posture of the images, and creates a dynamic interactive effect between the image and the text in the picture.

The image-text allocation method prevalent in the Six Dynasties shows that these texts have already existed in the Six Dynasties composition, and were unnecessary action of later copies, otherwise the whole scroll would not be ancient, but would appear miscellaneous and confused. This pattern of image-text allocation is continued, there are also Gu Kaizhi's "Women's History and Maxim Painting" and "The Story of Brave Woman". For the relationship between images and text, it is obvious to see such an expressive approach consistent with the Han dynasty's title, moreover, the carrier medium use fu words and phrases, painted images, ink calligraphy, so that these three gradually breed the soil for the growth of later preface and postscript.



Figure 5. Eastern Jin Dynasty / Gu Kaizhi / The Goddess of the Luo Painting (Copy of Southern Song Dynasty) / Color on Silk / 27.1x572.8 cm / Collection of Liaoning Museum

In the Tang dynasty, the pattern of image-text allocation of the Six Dynasties period was still continued. For example, Liang Lingzan's "Five Stars and Twenty-Eight Stars" (copy of the Song Dynasty) (Figure 6), this scroll is said to have been made by Liang Lingzan, but it is actually a copy of the Song Dynasty. This scroll has a seal script description in front of each picture. Looking at the whole scroll carefully, the lines of the seal script are different, and the spacing of the stars is also different. It can be inferred that although this book is a copy of the Song Dynasty, the original work is drawn from the right side of the scroll to the left in writing one by one. It is not first painting all the images, uniformly write text, or first write text after the unified painting image. If the various types of ink writing described earlier are only used for narrating stories and writing titles, then it is clear that the seal script used in this scroll is not a highly recognizable everyday text, but appears in the picture. What is the reason for this?



Figure 6. Tang Dynasty/Liang Lingzhan/Five Stars and Twenty-Eight Gods Scroll (Copy of Song Dynasty) (partial)/ Color on Silk/27.5x489.7cm/Collection of Osaka Museum of Art, Japan

After Qin Shi Huang unified the six states, he ordered his Prime Minister Li Si to abolish the texts of the six states, and unified them to seal script "book with the same text". After nearly a thousand years, the evolution of calligraphic style has been enriched. In the Tang Dynasty, the most flourishing style was the regular script. Li Yangbing is the one who can be called the successor of Li Si in seal script of Tang Dynasty. At this time, the seal script was already used as an official style of writing on important official occasions, such as the sacrificial tablets and official documents, Tang Yan Zhenqing's "Stele of the Yan Family Temple" tablet was written by Li Yangbing, "The Stele of the Yan Family Temple", rather than everyday words. So, the appearance on this scroll can undoubtedly be said to be appreciated as calligraphy, the lines are mellow and beautiful, well-proportioned and regular, and the wind rules distant, and there are signs of Li Yangbing's seal script. Calligraphy and painting can be said to be well combined in this scroll.

The same is true of "Step Carriage Painting" of Yan Liben in the Tang Dynasty (Figure 7). There are "Step Carriage Painting" three characters in regular script in the center of the painting, which are in 14 lines of seal script, and there are four characters "Zhang Boyi Write" at the end. The regular script and seal script appear in calligraphic style, and the 14 lines of seal script are at the back (left) side of the image, not interweaved among the images. In fact, there are prefaces and postscripts similar to end of the hand scroll. Significantly, Zhang Boyi, as recorded in the history books, was especially good at seal script. The author of this scroll, Yan Liben, did not personally write the text, but eventually by Zhang Boyi write to record the text.



Figure 7. Tang Dynasty/Yan Liben/Step Carriage Painting (Copy of Song Dynasty)/Color on Silk/Painting Size 38.5x129.6 cm/Collection of Beijing Palace Museum

It is true that at this point, the form of the preface and postscript can be seen to gradually emerging.

4. CONCLUSION

Wang Bomin mentioned that there were fewer inscriptions on paintings of the Five Dynasties in the "General History of Chinese Painting", and gradually became more but not common in the Song Dynasty, while inscriptions on paintings of the Yuan Dynasty became more common and popular. Before the Five Dynasties (10th century A.D.), formal preface and postscript had not yet appeared. "The combination of poetry and painting is precisely characterized by freedom, in the process of moving from language to picture or from picture to language, there is new something, there is the free soaring of imagination. Therefore, the combination of language and picture after the Song and Yuan dynasties manifests the dialogue relationship between language and image." The "poetry" and "painting", "language" and "image" here are the categories that can be referred to text and image in this paper.

This is the tracing of the source of the prefaces and postscripts in the early ancient China, and image and text allocation mode in the embryonic stage. It is precisely because of the guidance of the text beside the image that people can understand the storyline and relationship of the entire image. As a state of mutual complement and interpretation, it brought primitive gravity to the formal appearance and prosperity of the preface and postscript of later generations. Furthermore, the visual contrast between the image and the text has a musical rhythm and a sense of space in the overall expression of the picture and image, which extends the two-dimensional visual image to more levels of aesthetic synaesthesia, with primitive meaning. Combining dynamic image features with static textual expressions conveys an artistic conception of space-time dialogue.

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