

Grace and Elegance Appreciations of Floral Arrangement and Flower Vessels in the Song Dynasty

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Abstract: During the Song Dynasty, the art of vases flourished due to the popularity of high sitting furniture and became the core of the literati's desktop curiosity. The pairing of flowers and vases gave rise to unique aesthetics, reflecting seasonality and emotion. This paper explores the connotations of Song people's flower affairs and vase appreciation culture from three aspects: the flower industry, flower arrangement practice, and the shape of flower vessels.

1. Introduction

The history of the Chinese people to plant flowers, flower appreciation has a long history, and the flowers in the bottle in the storage, is with the high seated lifestyle, in the Song Dynasty to be popularized from top to bottom [1]. When flowers and bottles meet, in the eyes of the literati there is the beauty of the flower type and bottle type complement each other, and derive the aesthetics and rituals of bottled flowers. Flowers in bottles became a symbol of human emotion and seasonal, and gradually combined with the literati study furnishings, became a composition of the desktop play [2][3]. To store flowers in a vase, the most important thing is to choose the flower material and the flower vessel. The so-called good flowers must be a good bottle, both are indispensable.

2. Flower Life in the Song Dynasty

The scale of flower cultivation and the trend of commercialization is an important prerequisite for the development of vases in the Song Dynasty. This is closely related to the city life, civic culture at the time, the city was born in a number of flower planting and trading places[3]. Such as the Southern Song Dynasty “Xianchun Lin'an Zhi” Volume 30, “Carcheng ridge”: “East and West Macheng, in Yuhang outside the door, the soil is suitable for fine flowers, gardeners in the planting connection, the city of flowers are taken.” The strong demand for flowers, naturally led to the flourishing of the art of flower arrangement [4][5]. “Ikebana” has become a commonplace of the Song people ‘four things’ one. According to the “Metropolitan Chronicle” “four divisions and six

bureaus”: even the emergence of this and other “leisure” as a means of livelihood of the “leisure” class[2].

Flowers were so in tune with the everyday life of the Song people. As the flavor of the season, flowers were constantly chanted, depicted, and recorded. The flower most celebrated in Song poetry is the plum blossom. According to Cheng Jie's statistics[6]: “All Song Poems” contains more than 254,000 poems, and more than 4,700 plum blossoms, accounting for 1.85%; “All Song Lyrics” contains more than 20,000 lyrics, and more than 1,120 plum blossom lyrics, accounting for 5.6%; far more than other flower poems and literary works of the same period.

As for paintings on the subject of flowers and flower arrangements, there are countless others[7]. Among them, there are small album pages specializing in depicting folded flowers, such as (biography) Northern Song Dynasty Zhao Chang painted “flowers four sections of the volume” (Figure 1), in the form of folded flowers to depict the four seasons of spring, summer, autumn and winter representative of the flowers: peach blossoms, gardenia, wood hibiscus, plum blossoms. The traces of the flower branches being broken and hacked are clearly visible in the painting.



Figure 1: Zhao Chang, Northern Song Dynasty, Flower Scroll (Spring Peach, Summer Gardenia), Collection of the Palace Museum



Figure 2: Southern Song Dynasty, Li Song, Basket of Flowers, Taipei National Palace Museum Collection

The basket contains red single-petal camellia (the main flower), green calyx plum, Rui Xiang,

narcissus, wax plum and other winter flowers.

The picking and folding of flowers is an important step in the process of flower arranging. This includes the technique of folding the flowers and the art of composing the selection of the flowers and branches. The process of choosing flowers in Song flower arrangement is just like the conception of the painter when sketching flowers, which is the concept of choosing localization from the whole[7]. The Basket of Flowers album (Figure 2) painted by Li Song, a painter at the Southern Song Painting Academy, has been hailed by Taiwan China scholar Huang Yongchuan as a representative of the court's "typical four-sided courtyard style" of flower arranging, and although only three panels of spring, summer, and winter exist, there is no doubt that the object of the depiction is the theme of the four seasons of flowers, which, like the previous group of Four Sections of Flowers, demonstrates the Song people's As with the previous group of Four Sections of Flowers, it demonstrates the Song's view of the "four seasons" and the concept of "one year's view"[3, 5].

Song Huizong painted "Wenhui Tu" (Figure 3) shows the scene of the palace banquet. On a large rectangular lacquer table placed outdoors, there are plates, butterflies, bowls, marigold holders and food containers of various kinds of wine or food containers in a well-organized manner. Between them are also displayed six pieces of flower arrangement works, with the tray of seasonal fresh fruits between them. Flower arrangement equipment used on the table for the composite combination of flower, that is, the first small bouquet of flowers in a small vase, the whole bouquet of flowers in the shape of a triangle, and then the vase is placed in a flat support device. This support device body hollow can be inserted into the bottle, a week outside the wide edge, the mouth turned up, forming a sink, can prevent watering water overflow. According to the feast of fresh peaches, lotus, etc., the season depicted when in the summer and autumn, the climate is warm; the flowers inserted, according to the season and the characteristics of the plant analysis when for the vegetative flowers[7].



Figure 3: Song Huizong "Wen Hui Tu" axle (partial) Taipei National Palace, National Palace Museum collection

3. Flower Vessels of the Song Dynasty

The main instrument of the Song Dynasty flowers is the bottle. Bottle, the ancient character "Fou", "Shuowen" this from Fou, tile, that is, pottery vessels. According to the modern archaeological artifacts named, archaeological excavations of various types can be used as a vase common Song and Yuan porcelain vases are: conventionally known as the plum vase, jade pot spring vase, according to the styling and decorative features of the gallbladder vase, mallet vase, folded along the long-necked vase, gooseneck vase, through the ears of the vase, the long necked vase, the bottle, the bottle, the bottle, the bottle of the mouth of the flower, melon prism vase and so

on[8].

3.1. Gall bladder

It is one of the most common vases of the Song Dynasty. Literally, it is a vase with a sharp top and rounded bottom, shaped like a hanging gall bladder[5]. The description in the History of Chinese Ceramics, edited by the China Silicate Society, is “a gall bladder vase, with a straight mouth, a long slender neck, a sloping shoulder, gradually becoming more and more voluminous below the shoulder, and the lower half of the belly is full, and the shape of the vase is like a gall bladder, with a rounded foot.” (Figure. 4) The gall bladder vases of the Song period also had small flared mouths, and one type of vase had relatively broad shoulders connecting the neck to the abdomen, and the bottoms of the vases generally had shorter, flat, rounded footrims or slightly convex rounded designs to provide stability and support[7].



Figure 4: Southern Song Official Kiln Celadon Gallus Bottle Unearthed in Hangzhou Tiger Cave Site, Collection of Hangzhou Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology

3.2. Mallet Vase

Paper mallet bottle for the shape of the mallet like papermaking pulp and named, for the common name. Shape for the straight neck folded shoulder flat bottom, there is also a class of folding along the long neck folded shoulder bottle shape, also belongs to this category. This name was first seen in the Ming dynasty Gao Lian's “Zunsheng eight paper”. The two Song dynasty Ding kilns, Ru kilns, kilns, Longquan kilns, Jingdezhen kilns and other kilns have been burned such shape of the bottle. The folding line on the shoulder of the mallet vase from the Southern Song official kilns is relatively flat and straight, (Figure.5) [9] while the folding line on the shoulder of the Longquan kiln celadon vase is relatively slanted. From the current heirloom and unearthed objects, the Song dynasty porcelain mallet vase in celadon and white porcelain, the height of the small only 11 centimeters, the big one is only 30 centimeters.



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Figure 5: Southern Song official kiln celadon paper let down bottle unearthed in Hangzhou Tiger Cave Southern Song official kiln site

3.3. Guan'er Vase

Guan'er vase, named for the vertical tubular guan'er symmetrically affixed to both sides of the neck, is one of the most common vases of the Song dynasty (Figure.6)[5]. Two basic forms can be seen: one with a straight mouth, a long neck, symmetrical double lugs, a rounded belly, and a rounded foot.



Figure 6: South Song Longquan kiln celadon straight-necked vase, Zhejiang Museum, China

3.4. Melon Ribbed Vase



Figure 7: Sichuan Anbing Family Tomb M1 Stone Carved Vase Flower Figure



Figure 8: Jingdezhen Kiln Blue and White Glazed Melon Ribbed Vase Unearthed in Hangzhou West Lake Avenue, Collection of Hangzhou Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology

In the Song dynasty tomb stone carvings and murals, often seen in the melon prism vase flower pattern (Figure 7), is more typical of the Song dynasty vases[8]. Generally for the flower mouth, but also the mouth edge turned out, the mouth is especially thin, long neck, the abdomen is melon prismatic, the bottom is also often seen trumpet mouth melon prismatic. This type of vase can be seen at the northern and southern kilns of the Song dynasty, including Yaozhou kilns, Ding kilns, and Jingdezhen kilns (Figure 8)[7].

3.5. Quadruple vase

Square vases unearthed in Hangzhou during the Song and Yuan dynasties are dominated by blue and white porcelain and celadon. (Fig. 9) With a square lip and small square mouth, the long neck is slightly retracted, and the vase has a beautifully curved body, with smooth lines from the shoulder to the abdomen, and a pendulous gall-shaped abdomen, the largest diameter of which is located below the belly of the vase, and a short square foot. The four sides of the bottle are molded with floral motifs. This type of bottle appeared in the late Southern Song and Yuan dynasties, and is still seen in the Ming dynasty[7]. The shape is elegant and elegant, a typical vase for the literati.



Figure 9: Yuan-Ming Longquan kiln celadon four-square vase unearthed in Hangzhou West Lake Avenue Collection of Hangzhou Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology

4. Conclusions

The bottle of flowers in the morning and the bottle of flowers in the evening[10]. The beautiful purples and reds of the world, the light and sparse shadows of the branches, are all transformed into one or two horizontal branches, three or four oblique branches in the bottle. There is still a lot to be said about the flower arrangement and floral artifacts of the Song Dynasty. Through the microcosm of “flowers” and “bottles”, we realize not only the Song people's elegant way of living, enjoying flowers and trees, and appreciating bottles in several cases, but more importantly, their attitude towards nature and life can still influence and guide us in our present life[5].

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