

The Changes and Characteristics of Art Textbooks before the Founding of New China

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Abstract: Art textbooks are an important carrier for the aesthetic education of young people, and typefaces, typographies and illustrations are important components of art textbooks. This study focuses on elements such as typefaces, typography, and illustrations in art textbooks. Through the study of the changes in typeface, typography and illustration of art textbooks, the background of the preparation of art textbooks from 1912 to 1949 and the design characteristics behind them are analyzed. This study selects the background of the preparation of art textbooks in accordance with the periods from the late Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China (1840-1912) and the Republic of China period to the founding of New China (1912-1949) before the founding of New China, and analyzes the historical development and cultural changes of these two periods, and their influence on typefaces and typographies in art textbooks. The study of the changes in typefaces, typographies and illustrations in art textbooks can also be seen in the historical changes and characteristics of art textbooks.

Keywords: art textbook; typeface; typography; changes; characteristics

1. Introduction

1.1. Research background and purpose

Aesthetic education is an important part of the "5-dimension education", and is an important content of cultivating socialist builders and successors who can develop morally, intellectually, physically, aesthetically, and labor in an all-round way. The art class carries the sacred mission of aesthetic education and is the main form of education for students. Art textbooks are the direct basis for schools to carry out art education teaching activities. In recent years, aesthetic education teaching activities have received unprecedented attention, and in 2013, the Third Plenary Session of the Eighteenth Central Committee made a resolution calling for "(schools) to improve aesthetic education teaching and improve students' aesthetic and humanistic qualities." In 2015, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving Aesthetic Education in Schools, proposing to establish a modern aesthetic education system with Chinese characteristics.^[1] In 2021, the National Education Work Conference further pointed out that "it is necessary to explore the construction of an aesthetic education system with organic connection of school segments and deep integration of inside and outside the classroom." "To build a scientific aesthetic education system, the art discipline has an unshirkable responsibility, and the role of art textbooks as an important starting point for carrying out art teaching activities cannot be ignored." How to choose the content of art textbooks, how to design layouts, how to arrange illustrations (paintings), how to set typefaces, etc., will have an important impact on the preparation of art textbooks and even on art teaching activities.

1.2. The scope and methodology of the study

This paper attempts to sort out the evolution process of art textbooks since the founding of New China from the two directions of content and form, analyze the characteristics of art textbooks in terms of typeface, layout and illustration from the late Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China, excavate the causes of the reform of art textbooks from the late Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China, and summarize the experience of art textbook writing on this basis.

The methodology is as follows. First, the development and reform of art textbooks has gone through a long process, in order to better grasp the development of art textbooks, from the perspective of art, sociology and history, we will examine the research materials, network content and professional books

related to art textbooks at home and abroad. Second, taking the typefaces, layouts and illustrations in textbooks from the late Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China as examples, data collection and analysis characteristics were carried out through the full-text image library of Chinese century-old primary and secondary school textbooks.

2. The background of the preparation of art textbooks before the founding of New China

2.1. *Background of art textbook writing from the late Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China period (1840-1912)*

According to research, before the end of the Qing Dynasty, the term "fine art" was no earlier than that of the late Qing Dynasty, and was previously named after "drawing" and "cartography". The name is also largely related to the Practical and Technical Cartographic Courses of the Westerners. In the middle of the 19th century, under the advocacy of the slogan of the Western Affairs Movement, "Secondary School as the Body, Western Studies as the Use", in order to cultivate professional and practical talents in the fields of drawing and surveying required by the Western Affairs Movement, courses such as drawing were successively opened. [2] Judging from the background and main purpose of the times they were offered, these courses have a strong attribute of practicality and tools. In other words, the curriculum at this stage emphasizes the cultivation of students to master the basic skills of drawing, and the cultivation of skills is put first, while the artistic attributes closely related to the fine arts are not mentioned. Later, during the New Deal at the end of the Qing Dynasty, under the influence of the Meiji Restoration in Japan, a number of newly established modern schools modeled on the Japanese education system, opened drawing courses, and began to learn the knowledge and skills of Western painting in the course.

During this period, several documents promulgated by the Qing government were of great significance to the establishment of the status of the art discipline. In 1904, the Qing government promulgated the Statute of the Songding Academy, which for the first time proposed the establishment of handicraft courses in elementary and higher primary schools, and stipulated the establishment of drawing courses in ordinary primary and secondary schools, thus establishing the status of the art discipline. In 1906, the Qing Government Academy published the "First Examination and Approval of Primary School Textbooks". These two documents are designed from the top for art textbooks. On this basis, from 1909 to 1910, the Faculty successively compiled 3 volumes of "Primary School Picture Textbook" and 4 volumes of "Picture Textbook of Higher Primary School", which became the earliest two sets of "ministry fixed text" unified picture textbooks in the history of art education in modern primary and secondary schools in China.

2.2. *Background of the preparation of art textbooks in the Republic of China period*

During the Republic of China period, with the introduction of Western educational ideas into China, under the influence of this, the functional positioning of the art discipline changed greatly, and its function gradually changed from emphasizing the "practicality" of the curriculum to emphasizing the aesthetic literacy of the curriculum to cultivate students. The discipline of fine arts has gradually become a curriculum that goes hand in hand with the cultivation of students' moral and intellectual abilities and literacy. In 1912, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China promulgated the "Primary School Teaching Rules and Curriculum", proposing that the purpose of the primary school drawing class is to "cultivate its beauty" and "cultivate its beauty". Cai Yuanpei, who served as the chief of education, fully affirmed the importance of aesthetic education, saying: "Pay attention to moral education, supplement it with practical education, military and national education, and even more with aesthetic education to complete its morality." This fully reflects the importance of aesthetic education to the realization of moral education goals. The compilation of art textbooks at this stage was still influenced by the trend of art education during the Meiji Restoration in Japan. [3] In the decade from 1912 to 1922, the writing of art textbooks was relatively free, and various publishing houses successively wrote a number of sets of art textbooks, but the quality of the compilation was also uneven.

In 1912, the Zhonghua Textbook series compiled and published by the Zhonghua Book Company became the first set of textbooks in the Republic of China period. At this stage, a large number of new art textbooks with the main text mainly on pictures were published and distributed one after another. [4] Among them, the more representative picture textbooks such as the "Elementary Primary School Brush SketchEs" published in 1912, the "Brush SketchEs for Higher Primary Schools" published in 1913, the "New Illustrated Picture Textbook" published in 1920, the "Elementary Picture Textbook" published

in 1924, the "New Chinese Industrial Art Textbook" published in 1927, and so on. The series of textbooks published from 1923 to 1927, the "New Academic System Textbook", was regarded as a classic because it brought together many academic elites. [5] At this stage, there is also a set of art textbooks that deserve special attention, that is, the "Revival Textbook: Fine Arts" published in 1934, which clearly names the textbook "fine arts", and from the perspective of discipline development, the practice of naming textbooks with "fine arts" is established.

3. Analysis of the formal evolution of art textbooks

3.1. Characteristics of textbook design forms from the late Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China

Western art knowledge and creative techniques have been introduced into the textbooks, paying attention to the fun of the textbooks. For example, in the "Textbook of Drawings for Higher Primary Schools" compiled by the Qing Government Academy, more than 20 pictures were arranged in each volume. Since the main tool for students to write and draw at that time was the brush, this book was also a brush drawing book for use in the higher elementary school. It reflects the multiple functions of the budding art textbooks in addition to teaching students to draw.

At this stage, art textbooks, in addition to being compiled by the educational authorities themselves, were translated and introduced from the West. Teaching materials are also an important feature of the development of art textbooks. In 1906, Shanghai Shizhong Bookstore published "Handmade Textbooks for Primary School Teachers", which is the earliest primary school handmade textbooks translated and introduced in China. [6] The picture textbooks published by the Shanghai Commercial Press and the picture textbooks compiled by the Civilization Bookstore became the two sets of textbooks that were popular and common on the market at that time.

In general, whether it is art textbooks written in China or art textbooks imported from foreign translations, they all show great similarities: First, handmade textbooks mostly use italics and Song characters as the cover and text of the text, and they are traditional. Secondly, there are relatively few pictures in art textbooks at this stage, adhering to the concept of "text-based, picture-supplemented", and the description of the knowledge content in the book is mainly in the form of words, with a small number of realistic pictures, and the two present a pattern of text wrapping in the arrangement, and the layout layout is clear. In addition, from the perspective of the arrangement of pictures and texts, affected by the printing technology at that time, the manual textbooks at this time adopt the vertical layout arrangement, and the reading order is from top to bottom, from right to left. In the arrangement of text and pictures, basic typographic rules such as text winding appeared, and the layout layout was clear. As far as the typeface size is concerned, the choice of typeface size on the title word and the body typeface has been different, the typeface size level is determined according to the content, the typeface size of the title word is the largest and has been bolded, followed by the typeface size of the main text and the explanatory text, which has shown that the level of arrangement and the layout have produced a significant sense of hierarchy.

In addition, the art textbook at this time also fully considers the differences in the physical and mental health of students' ages. For example, the typeface in textbooks in primary schools from the lower grades to the upper grades will be relatively reduced, and the text spacing will also be reduced. In textbooks, the cover pattern decoration style is more abundant. (Figure 1)



Figure 1: Primary School Handmade Textbook

3.2. Characteristics of textbook design forms in the early Republic of China

Looking at the entire period of the Republic of China, due to the era of great changes in Chinese society from tradition to modern society, the "new" and "old" cultures were blended. The influence of art textbooks in this period is also inevitably reflected in many aspects such as typography and typefaces. First of all, under the influence of Western design, art textbooks at this time reflected the characteristics of diversification in typography, not only inheriting the top-down, right-to-left vertical layout from the mainstream of the late Qing Dynasty, but also from top to bottom, left to right horizontal layout. Secondly, before the cover teaching of the early art textbooks of the Republic of China, it reflected more of a simplicity and simplicity, and the cover presented was mostly text, not seeking the "luxury" of the decorative style. The arrangement of the text used in the cover is still the traditional vertical layout, from right to left, from top to bottom. Calligraphic typefaces have become the mainstream of most textbook cover typefaces. (Figure 2& Figure 3)



Figure 2: New educational system Art Textbook



Figure 3: New Picture Textbook

3.3. Evolution of textbook design in the middle and late Republic of China

By the middle and late period of the Republic of China, the typesetting methods of art textbooks Chinese characters gradually transitioned from two parallels to a stage dominated by the horizontal layout method from left to right and from top to bottom, and the two typesetting methods were still parallel and had their own advantages. At this time, the typeface on the cover of art textbooks also evolved from calligraphic typefaces to fine art typefaces. From the perspective of design and aesthetics, fine art typefaces pay more attention to decoration than calligraphy typefaces and printed typefaces, fully embody the characteristics of freedom and personalization, and are more aesthetic. In the late Republic of China, the typefaces in art textbooks, especially the cover typefaces, are particularly characteristic, and the typefaces are not limited to the previously existing examples, but improve the aesthetics and decoration of the typefaces through changes in geometric shapes or shapes or stroke reorganization, and effectively enhance the visual beauty brought about by typeface changes in art textbooks. Taking the "Advanced Primary School Art Textbook" published by Zhonghua Bookstore as an example, the words "Primary School Art Textbook" on the cover of the textbook use art typefaces, which are obviously different in typography, and the typeface style shows the characteristics of freedom and full of personality. (Figure 4)



Figure 4: Primary School Art Textbook

4. Conclusions

Typefaces, typographies and illustrations are important "witnesses" to the changes in the aesthetic value of art textbooks, and also an important basis for the changes in the principles of art textbook writing. This study takes the three important elements of typeface, typography and illustration in art textbooks as the research objects, and analyzes the historical changes, cultural changes and aesthetics of different eras of typefaces, typographies and illustrations in art textbooks.

From the late Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China, it paid attention to skills rather than art, so the design of art textbooks was mainly based on words and supplemented by pictures. Influenced by printing at that time, the text typesetting method was mostly vertical. The Republic of China period is divided into early and late periods, the early art textbooks were affected by a variety of cultures, reflecting the characteristics of diversification in typography design, and using calligraphy typefaces as the mainstream typeface in the typeface; In the middle and late art textbooks, the typefaces are mostly fine art typefaces, and the fine art typefaces pay attention to decoration, reflecting the freedom and personalized beauty.

The changes of the times are an important factor affecting the typefaces, typography and illustrations of art textbooks. The choice of typefaces, layouts and illustrations that are both practical and artistic is related to the effectiveness of educating people with beauty, and is also a major principle in the selection of typefaces, layouts and illustrations in art textbooks in the future.

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