

# INVESTIGATION INTO AESTHETIC ORIENTATION AND AESTHETIC PRESENTATION TECHNIQUE OF EMPEROR QIN'S TERRA COTTA WARRIORS OF CHINESE CIVILIZATION

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## ABSTRACT

*Chinese culture has a long history. Civilization developed along Yellow River basin and Yangtze River basin or East Asian continent is called Chinese civilization. Chinese civilization originated very early, and is still developing nowadays. In Chinese civilization, the most world-famous and widely-talked one is Emperor Qin's underground dynasty "Terra Cotta Warriors", which is known as "the eighth wonder of the world" and "the most spectacular archaeological discovery of the twentieth century". Terra Cotta Warriors was included in World Heritage List by UNESCO in December, 1987, becoming an important cultural asset for people all over the world. Through referring to discussion about Chinese design aesthetics and combining with the author's own aesthetic experiences, this paper attempts to propose viewpoints of design aesthetics of Terra Cotta Warriors.*

## INTRODUCTION

An accident discovery re-presents Emperor Qin's cavalries and soldiers. Neither being mentioned in Intrigues of the Warring States nor discussed by Sima Qian, the soldiers buried underground for two thousand years shock the whole world and all people at the moment they were unearthed. This great discovery fills the blank of Qin dynasty archaeology and becomes the best evidence of Chinese impressive ancient civilization. Relics unearthed from Terra Cotta Warriors pits include thousands of pieces of pottery people, horses and weapons. Later generations are shocked by their amazing quantities and exquisite crafts. Creators of these unearthed relics cannot be traced and are never recorded in literatures. Therefore, this paper tries to analyze the design aesthetics viewpoints of Terra Cotta Warriors from perspectives of aesthetic considerations reflected in Xie He's Six Principles of Chinese Painting and design aesthetics put forward by scholar Yang Yufu (2011) [1].

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Discovery of Terra Cotta Warriors pit offers precious data on military organization, tactical deployment of troops, as well as types and allocation of weapons of Qin dynasty. Furthermore, archaeologists find Qin dynasty reaches an unprecedented period in terms of pottery firing and metallurgical process [2].

Terra Cotta Warriors pit is not only a brilliant, gorgeous military treasury but also a splendid palace of art. Regarding culture, First Emperor Qin instructed Li Si to develop Xiao Zhuan based on characters commonly used in Qin State and promoted use of Xiao Zhuan throughout the country, which signified beginning of "standard characters". With respect to thoughts, First Emperor Qin followed Theory of the Cyclic Revolution of Five Virtues proposed by the Yin-Yang School of Warring State: Qin was based on water virtue, water was black and six symbolized the end. Therefore, he stipulated that clothes and flags should be black, and that systems such as fu chuan [3], cap and carriage should be based on figure of six.

## AESTHETIC RESEARCH METHOD

Xie He's Six Principles of Chinese Painting, compiled in Liang of the Southern Dynasties, is a catalogue of palace paintings for review by emperors. It has huge influence on trend of aesthetic thoughts, and can be considered as important theoretical construction. Three dimensions of aesthetics are: nature, form and implication. Its aesthetic presentation techniques are as below:

1. The principal and the subordinate principle of position and order: this concept lies in combination relation of design objects; position and order of elements is decided by symbolic implication of components.
2. Yin-yang harmony: this technique is originated from Taoist school and especially values conformity to natural environment and addition of natural components.
3. Rhythmic vitality: originated from the first quality of Xie He's six principles, rhythmic vitality is aimed to achieve a monolithic, marvelous and extremely-skillful technique, which conforms to material characteristics to exert its features.
4. Overall arrangement and outcome: overall arrangement refers to technique. Outcome means desired effect. This aesthetic feeling is formed through mixing multiple aesthetic feelings. Techniques included: principle of home field: design focus position of the leading role, and create spatial atmosphere of home field; principle of position and order (principal-subordinate relation of position and order) [1]; principal of contrast: leading role stands out by contrast with supporting role, and supporting role doesn't grab leading role's brilliance to achieve the effect of complementing each

other; principle of correspondence: supporting role corresponds to leading role and subsidiary tone corresponds to principal tone like harmonious rhythm of western aesthetic principle; principle of antithesis: is mostly transformed from literature, such as character antithesis or image antithesis converted from character (left Green dragon versus right white tiger), an aesthetic principle peculiar to Chinese literature and art; principle of true or false: a technique under principle of yin-yang harmony; aesthetic expression of “hidden or evident”, “tangible or intangible”, “specific or abstract” and “restrained or free”.

5. Cultural code: specific culture is formed through accumulation of lifestyles of different nations. By means of

fairy tale, national memory and even daily life, shaping culture codes formed via cultural characteristics are not only iconic but also have symbolic implications. Symbolic code of nation: material objects or imaginary objects in Chinese culture or fairy story (e.g. dragon and phoenix symbolize luck; three stars represent happiness, high rank, and longevity); shaping codes converted from Chinese language, e.g. five bats pasted on door or window symbolize five blessings; typical auspicious words and figures, for example, decorative patterns of auspicious words composed of shapes (such as peony stands for wealth and high rank [4].



Fig.1 Qin's Terra Cotta Modeling

### CONCLUSION

Based on literature context and image contrast, and the author's observation, this study attempts to propose following aesthetic orientation and representation technique of Qin-dynasty design aesthetics through referring to two ancient and modern scholars' insightful viewpoints of Chinese design aesthetics.

1. Realistic simulation [5]: archaeologists infer that sizes, clothes and accessories of human, horses, etc. are made following real objects except for vitality.
2. Honoring the dead as the living: this is a Chinese traditional concept. Therefore, soldiers guarding ghost of the first emperor of Qin may be modeled on actual Qin of that time. Other relics might be other living supplies copied underground.
3. Rhythmic vitality: both warriors and their horses have vivid and natural faces and expressions. There is similarity in both appearance and spirit.
4. Differences between different ranks: dresses of different levels, ranks and position classes have different characteristics and follow certain laws.
5. Being precise: pay attention to details; shaping is rigorous; all details including hair are considered thoroughly.
6. Shape in compliance with function: from copper carriages and horses we can see that carriages or horses

with different functions are shaped differently.

7. Being robust: warriors look robust; horses are made according to criteria for top class (square head, bright eyes, strong spine, wide abdomen, long leg and pointed ear) to scare away enemies without war.
8. Spirit animal symbolizing power and prestige: birds described in ancestor's legends are totems for Qin people. Tiger, curled-up dragon, dragon-phoenix pattern and beast have aesthetic orientation of power and prestige.
9. Care and precision: exquisite metallurgical technology, complex components, as well as delicate casted patterns, colored drawing and chasing are stunning.

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