

A comparative analysis of the design of the Eastern and Western Nautilus cups

Jia Qi, Meihui Yu

Qingdao University of Technology, Qingdao 266000, China

Abstract: The Nautilus cup was first discovered in the Jin Dynasty of China. With the development of new navigation, it was introduced into Europe and became a witness of Eastern and Western civilization. It is an example of the integration of Eastern and Western cultures. Because of the different aesthetic concepts and value orientation at home and abroad, there are different degrees of differences in the shape and decoration of the Nautilus cup. This paper aims to explore the differences between Chinese and Western Nautilus cups through the analysis of their cultural backgrounds and artistic characteristics. The results show that Chinese Nautilus cups pay more attention to practicality, while western ones pay more attention to decoration. This difference can be attributed to the difference in the social background of “the prevalence of drinking” and “the Age of Great voyages” between the East and the West at that time, as well as the difference in the philosophical thoughts of “both writing and quality” and advocating “individual freedom”.

Key words: design comparison; Nautilus cup; East and West; Styling

Nautilus is an ancient and rare creature that lives in tropical waters all the year round. Its appearance is smooth, the overall shape is like a disk, shaped like a parrot’s mouth, so it is named Nautilus (Figure 1). The nautilus cup has its own characteristics in different cultures, showing great differences between the east and the west. The use of nautilus shell made of nautilus cup, in China is a push cup to change the cup to persuade drinking toy, can be used as a wine vessel. Nautilus has a unique layer structure, when pouring wine wine will flow into each layer through the small hole, drinking can not be drunk at a time, very interesting. The cost of the nautilus cup is expensive, mostly for collections and gifts between officials and nobles, and it has become a popular shelf decoration in foreign countries. Through comparative analysis of the differences between Chinese and western Nautilus cups, this paper tries to find out the cultural roots behind the Chinese and Western Nautilus cups.

1. The origin and use of Nautilus cup in China and the West

1.1 Origin and use of Nautilus cup in China

Nautilus cup has been recorded in ancient books, it was mentioned in Wan Zhen’s “Foreign Body in the South China Sea” : “There are large snails in the South China Sea, such as ou, cut from the side straight, because of cup shape, or used in combination, spiral snake bent, wine in the self injection, overturning the end, to be punished by mistake.....” . Until 1965, a gilt bronze nautilus cup was unearthed in the M1 tomb of Xiangshan Wang Cemetery in Nanjing (Figure 2). Xiangshan Wang family tomb, is the family tomb group of Wang Bin in the Eastern Jin Dynasty, the tomb of the Eastern Jin Dynasty. Therefore, the Nautilus cup in China can be traced back to the period of The Three Kingdoms, the Jin and the Southern and Northern Dynasties. According to its small shape and simple decoration, it should be used as a wine vessel at that time and has strong practicability.

Lu Zhaolin, one of the “four heroes of the early Tang Dynasty”, wrote in the Ancient Ideas of Chang ‘an: “The Han Dynasty Jin Wuqian rode to the jade turquoise parrot cup.” . In addition to serving as a wine vessel, the Nautilus cups of this period also used the cavities in the nautilus to make Musical Instruments. Although it was used as a practical instrument, it was only used by dignitaries in ancient China due to the constraints of traffic conditions.

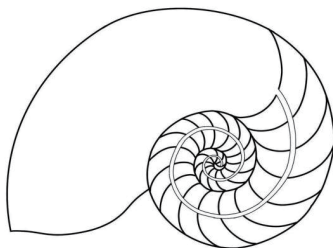


Figure 1. The internal structure of the nautilus is self-drawn

1.2 Origin and use of the European Nautilus Cup

After the opening of the new navigation, European countries gradually have the figure of the Nautilus cup. The early nautilus cups were very Oriental. For example, the gilded and silver pot of the nautilus in the middle of the 16th century, the painted part of which depicts the scene of the Story of the West Chamber - Long Pavilion Farewell; In the way of decoration, metal strips were used around the edges of the



Figure 2. The Nautilus cup unearthed from the M1 tomb of Xiangshan Wang’s Cemetery in Nanjing -- collected by Nanjing Museum

objects, similar to the Chinese gilding craft. It can be inferred that the European Nautilus cup should be introduced from China. This nautilus gilt silver pot with complicated patterns and gold and silver base, its decorative role is far more than practical value, was regarded as a symbol of wealth by European aristocrat, and as a rare collection and decoration for people to appreciate.

2. Comparison of the design language of Chinese and Western Nautilus cups

2.1 Comparison of the shape of Chinese and Western Nautilus cups

2.1.1 Modeling characteristics of Chinese Nautilus cup

Two Nautilus cups were unearthed from M1 in the West Jin Dynasty of Tianximiao in Pizhou, which were small in size in terms of overall shape. And retained the original pattern and color of the nautilus, and added the eyes of the parrot with copper material, while imitating the shape of the ancient wine vessel Yuling for its embellishment of the ears, in the imitation of the parrot, has reached a very high level, the smooth curve of the cup body natural transition, giving people a dynamic aesthetic feeling, with the nature of release (Figure 3).

In the Tang and Song dynasties, when maritime trade was in a prosperous period, the scope of application of the Nautilus cup expanded, gradually evolving from practical to life luxury goods. The decoration of the Nautilus cup began to become complicated, and began to be inset with gems, jadeite, and supplemented with gold and silver materials. This was more obvious in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, which may be related to the introduction of foreign technologies. As Cao Zhao recorded in "Ge Ancient Main Theory": "The parrot cup is the conch, out of Guangnan, native carving grinding. Parrots, or with silver phase, make wine glasses, so called "parrot cup". The nautilus cups of Ming and Qing Dynasties were very different from those of Jin and Qing Dynasties. Most of them were the products of the integration of Chinese and foreign exchanges, but they were still used as wine vessels despite the complicated decoration (see Figure 4).

2.1.2 The styling characteristics of the European Nautilus Cup

In the 16th century, due to the opening of new navigation, the Nautilus cup was introduced into Europe from China. During this period, the Nautilus cup in Europe had obvious Oriental characteristics. Because of the different social environment and economic conditions, European countries also have their own characteristics on the Nautilus cup. The Dutch are mainly shaped by tall cups, while the Germans and Belgians are mainly shaped by ships, birds and snails. From the 17th century to the 18th century, the maritime industry further developed, and the production of the Nautilus cup reached a prosperous period, especially the Netherlands, which was known as the "sea coachman". The Nautilus cups of this period, in the shape of the sea god worship as the theme (see figure 5). After the 18th century, the civic era was further developed, with more diverse shapes, more friendly designs, and human-centered design.

To sum up, the European Nautilus cup is roughly divided into three stages, each period has its own characteristics, but in these three stages, the European Nautilus Cup is not practical, as a collection and decoration, is a means for the European aristocratic bourgeoisie to show wealth and humanistic atmosphere.



FIG. 3 The Nautilus cup unearthed from M1 of the Western Jin Dynasty in Tianximiao, Pizhou



FIG. 4 Nautilus cup engraved with Double dragon image in 1592

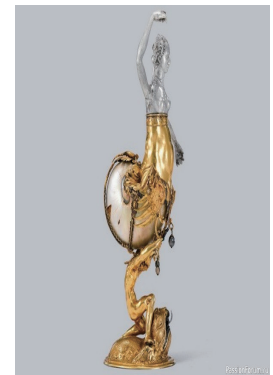


Figure 5 The Nautilus cup with a bust of a goddess at the top

2.2 Differences in the making process of Nautilus cup between China and the West

2.2.1 The manufacturing process of Chinese Nautilus Cup

Judging from the Nautilus cups that have been found in China, most of the Nautilus cups in China are made with a unified decoration process, and the shell is habitually divided into two parts at the middle line, mostly with buckles. According to "Shuowen Jiezi" recorded: "buckle, gold jewelry mouth." Where the metal reinforcement or decorative objects along the mouth, to make it more solid, beautiful, called buckle. The nautilus cup unearthed from the tomb of Wang Xingzhi couple in the Eastern Jin Dynasty. It should belong to a gilt-copper clasp. Gilt-copper edges are inlaid on the mouth edge, ears and edges of the shell, so that the smooth parts of the cup can be placed flat and stable. It is not only for the sake of beauty, but also to strengthen the anti-beating of the shell.

2.2.2 The production process of European Nautilus Cup

The making process of the Nautilus cup in Europe is very different from that in China, there is a special making process. In the Strange House of Ambon Island published by Langfuanse, the process of making the shell is recorded in detail, which requires various steps such as material selection, shell surface treatment, cleaning and carving. The production is relatively complicated, and basically are made in two

places. A nautilus silver pot in the Silverware Museum of the Pitti Palace in Florence features a metal-encrusted part of a typical Western style, the bottom holder also carries a French artisan's logo, and the painted part shows an ancient Chinese life, presumed to be in the Jiajing period. The ammoniac-lau silver kettle is a perfect example of the combination of Asian art and European craftsmanship.

3. Summary of differences between Chinese and Western Nautilus cups

3.1 The philosophical thought of "both writing and quality" is different from that of advocating "personality freedom"

As a practical appliance, the Nautilus cup in ancient China is a perfect integration of functionality and aesthetics. As mentioned above, the Chinese Nautilus cup mostly adopts the method of imitation in modeling, which is a concrete manifestation of decoration. At the same time as the use of wine, the volume is also small, the production process adopts two division method, encrusting gilt copper edge and double ears, not only for the sake of beauty, but also for the sake of anti-wrestling, increasing the stability and decoration of the appliance. This point and Confucius advocated the "both quality and text" fit in, the pursuit of the unity of content and form.

Unlike China, European Nautilus cups are mainly decorative. The shape of the European Nautilus Cup, influenced by Renaissance humanism, regarded man as the standard to measure all things, replacing the traditional description of God, which was reflected in the shape of the sea God in the later period, which tended to be humanized, and the image of the citizens in social life increased. There are also differences in the production process, in order to make it have a better viewing effect, the use of complete and smooth shell, divided into two production. This also reflects the humanistic thought advocated by the Renaissance period at that time -- "advocating individual freedom, opposing religious shackles and the rule of the church", reflected in the shape and decoration of the Nautilus cup is the pursuit of luxury and grandiose surface effect.

3.2 The difference between the social background of "the prevalence of drinking wind" and "the Age of Great Voyages"

China's Nautilus cup originated in the two Jin Dynasties, prospered in the Tang and Song dynasties, the prevailing "drinking wind", the Nautilus cup is practical, more used for drinking. As we know above, the western Nautilus cup was introduced from China, when it was in the great age of navigation in Europe, and influenced by the Renaissance's pursuit of art, it was often shown as a more delicate and complicated pattern, mostly ornaments and collections, which is also a major reason for the difference between Chinese and Western Nautilus cups.

4. Epilogue

By combing the origin, use, shape and production process of Chinese and Western Nautilus cups, and making analysis and comparison, it is concluded that Chinese Nautilus cups carry out the view of practicality and decoration, which is closely related to the social background of the drinking trend at that time; The western nautilus cup is mainly used as a collection and decoration, in fact, it is a way for the aristocratic bourgeoisie to show private wealth and humanistic atmosphere. However, with the further development of the Silk Road, there appeared a trend of integration of Chinese and Western culture, which was more obvious in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Throughout the design language of the Chinese and Western Nautilus cups, it contains not only material civilization, but also spiritual civilization, with distinct characteristics of The Times. Whether it is Chinese or Western Nautilus cups, it is worth studying.

Reference documents:

- [1] Kang He. The Nautilus Cup from the perspective of Maritime exchange History [J]. Research on Maritime Exchange History,2020(03):62-73.
- [2] Kunyi Ma,Lei Chang. Looking at Things -- A visual interpretation of the Eastern and Western images of "Nautilus Cup" from a cross-cultural perspective [J]. Art of China,2022(01):74-85.
- [3] Yu Bai. A Preliminary study on the Nautilus Cup unearthed from the Xijin Cemetery of Tianxiao Temple in Pizhou [J]. Cultural Relics Identification and Appreciation,2020(19):20-21.
- [4] Mingyue Pan,Zhenli Lv,Chuanming Liu,Yongqiang Ma,Wei Cheng. Brief report on the excavation of M1 in the West Jin Cemetery of Tianyang Temple in Pizhou, Jiangsu [J]. Southeast Culture,2018(02):20-32+65-68+127-128+130.
- [5] Qian Cheng. A Preliminary study on the flow of ancient design art thoughts between China and the West [D]. Wuhan University of Technology,2002(02).