

Arts of Asia Lecture Series Spring 2015
Masterpieces and Iconic Artworks of the Asian Art Museum
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Study Guide:
**Kangxi Rouleau Vase with
Women Warriors of the Yang Family**

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Rouleau Vase with Women Warriors of the Yang Family

Chinese; Qing dynasty (1644-1911), Kangxi period (1662-1722), late 17th century

Wucai ware (famille verte): porcelain with decoration painted in overglaze polychrome enamels

H. 74.9 cm, Diam. 23.5 cm

Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, The Avery Brundage Collection

B60P1237

Gallery Label Text

This monumental piece illustrates fifty warriors and six mythological figures in fantastic color hues in more than ten tonalities. The story about the women warriors of the Yang family depicted here was legendary. The Emperor Shenzong (r. 1068-1085) kneels to ask the general Yang to offer his official seal, while the women, led by Grandmother She, Taijun, are ready to receive the seal of command. The gods of longevity with a deer and a peach, the god of wealth holding the tianguan cifu (“the official of the Heaven grants happiness”), and the god of happiness with two boys, are depicted on the neck. The four elements of the gentlemen and some of eight treasures appear in four panels on the shoulder. The fresh human intensity and the engaging interaction between characters with different attitudes towards this female general mark this piece as among the best of Kangxi *wucai* ware.”

Subject Matter

楊門虎將 (Yangmen Hujiang: Warriors of the Yang Clan;
literally, “Tiger Generals of the Yang Clan”)

楊門女將 (Yangmen Nüjiang: Female Warriors of the Yang Clan
literally, “Female Generals of the Yang Clan”)

The Shape

Rouleau Vase 棒槌瓶 *Bangchui ping*. *Bangchui ping* literally means a “wooden club vase”. The Chinese name derives from the cylindrical body, flat shoulders, and high neck, which suggest the form of a club with a handle. French scholars termed this vase *rouleau*, which emphasizes its tall, roll-form body. (*Rouleau* can be translated as roll, roller, or even cylindrical.)

The shape is one of several new porcelain shapes introduced in the Kangxi period. Others include

Liuyeping 柳葉瓶 (Willow-leaf vase; sometimes also called Guanyinping 觀音瓶)

Fengweizun 鳳尾瓶 (Phoenix-tail vase; sometimes also called Yenyen vase)

Decorative Development

Ornament: Song and earlier
Pictorial: Begins in Song and Jin
Narrative: Begins in Yuan

Development of Porcelain

Invented during the Tang dynasty, in the eighth or ninth century at the Xing kilns
Developed during the Song with Ding 定窯 and Qingbai 青白窯 wares (Note that Qingbai ware sometimes is called Yingqing ware 影青窯)
Came to the fore as the most important ware in the Yuan with Shufu 樞府窯 and blue-and-white ware 青花
Most important ceramic ware in the Yuan, Ming, and Qing

Produced in the kilns at Jingdezhen

Jingdezhen 景德鎮 is located in northeastern Jiangxi province 江西省
Ancient kiln site that began production of humble wares for local consumption in the Han dynasty
Began to produce porcelain 白瓷 during the Song dynasty (i.e., Qingbai ware 青白窯)
The best porcelain, including blue-and-white ware and enameled porcelain were produced at Jingdezhen during the Yuan, Ming, and Qing periods

Development of Decorative Techniques

Incising, carving, and molding in the Song and pre-Song eras
Underglaze slip painting, particularly with Cizhou ware 磁州窯, beginning in the Jin
Underglaze painting in cobalt blue on porcelain perfected in the Yuan
Overglaze enamel decoration began in the Jin, with Cizhou ware 磁州窯, but came to the fore in the fifteenth century, during the Chenghua reign (1465-1487)
Use of overglaze polychrome enamels alone (as opposed to a combination of underglaze cobalt blue and overglaze enamels) began in the Kangxi period, in the late seventeenth century

Sancai 三彩, or three-color, ware

Wucan 五彩, or five-color, ware

Suggestions for Further Reading

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