



## RESEARCH ON HAINING ELEMENTS IN ZHIYING STUDIO

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### ABSTRACT

*Zhiying was a painter at Moon School who was born in Haining and was active in Shanghai. The Zhiying studio she founded had many Haining apprentices. On the basis of the analysis of Hang Zhiying's early schooling process and the founding process of Zhiying Studio, combined with the letters from her father, the Haining culture and Haining members in Zhiying Studio were identified, and the positive role of the Zhejiang merchants' operation model in Hang Zhiying's entrepreneurship was explored.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In Zhiying (1901--1947), also known as Hang Changying, the relationship between “穉” and “稚” has traditional and simplified characteristics; contemporary research has focused mostly on “稚英”[1]. According to the literature available thus far, in the studies conducted since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, Hang Zhiying and Zhiying Studio have been listed by many researchers as important figures and representative stages in the development of month plate development. Researchers of the older generation, such as Zhang Manru, Bo Songnian, and Wu Burnai, made a fair academic evaluation of Hang Zhiying and the studio he founded and affirmed the leading role of Zhang Ying studio in the development of commercial art during the Republic of China. For example, the article “Historical Materials on the New Year’s Cards before Liberation” suggested that Zhangying Studio had the “nature of a design company” and considered Hangzhiying and Zhiying Studio as important stages in the development of monthly signage.[2]

In the 1990s, led by Hong Kong and Taiwan, academia in mainland China was mobilized, and the study of the calendar gradually increased. The Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan regions have held several exhibitions of monthly card paintings, which have printed exquisite picture albums, leading to the emergence of several academic achievements; however, no case study of Zhiying Studio has been conducted.

2001 was the 100th anniversary of the birth of Mr. Hang Zhiying, many retrospective articles appeared one after another, and the study of Hang Zhiying gradually became a hot topic. The researchers covered mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and some overseas regions. For example, “A Brief Discussion on the Monthly Advertising Paintings” written in 2003 discussed Zhiying Studio more; in the same year, “The Decorative Artist: Hang Zhiying (1901-1947)” was a breakthrough. It included not only more published articles but also a long essay written by Mr. Hang Mingshi, which provided very valuable primary materials for the study of Zhiying Studio.[3]

At the same time, numerous master’s and doctoral theses began to focus on Hang Zhiying and Zhiying Studio, and research on Zhiying Studio began to enrich. For example, Qiao Jiansong’s “Studies on Zhangying Studio”, “Review of the Studies on Zhiying Studio”, and “Study on the Personnel Composition of Zhangying Studio” focused on the background, personnel composition, development process and modernity of Zhiying Studio.[4]

“Hang Zhiying, Coach of Commercial Art in the Republic of China”, compiled by Lin Jiazhi in 2012, vividly displayed the life of Hang Zhiying and provided more specific supporting materials for the study of Zhiying studio.[5] In 2017, Fumei Zhang conducted research on Zhiying Studio as an independent design agency, analyzing the interaction between commercial needs and commercial art institutions[6].

In summary, the studies on Hang Zhiying herself have gradually become rational and mature, but the

Haining elements implied in Zhiying studio are seldom involved; in particular, the extraction of the Zhejiang merchant elements in the operation model of Zhiying studio is lacking. The tasks are designed to complement it.

## 1. HANG ZHIYING'S STUDY IN HAINING

### (1) Family origins

Hang Zhiying was born in the scholarly family in Yanguan, Haining, in 1901. According to the brief history of Mr. Hang Zhiying, “a descendant of the grand master of Renhe Hang Dazong, the great-grandson of Mr. Lanting, the grandson of Mr. Jiyan, and the eldest son of Mr. Zhuoying.”[7] The Hang family flourished in the Qing Dynasty, and the generation of Hang Zhuoying was already in the late Qing Dynasty. Hang Zhuo has a solid foundation in English studies. In his early years, he planned to pass the imperial examination and enter his official career, but because his father died and he maintained filial piety for three years, he could work only as an official document writer in the local yamen. It was also during this period that Chinese society experienced major changes. With the establishment of the Republic of China government, Hang Zhuoying's imperial examination path was cut off. However, Hang Zhuoying did not sink there. At that time, the Shanghai Commercial Press was recruiting for the Chinese secretary of the factory director, and he went to Shanghai to apply for the job and won the job with his profound knowledge of ancient prose. Making such a choice after experiencing enormous changes shows that Hang Zhuoying was a literati with a broad vision, an innovative spirit and high ambitions. This spirit is not uncommon in the Hang family.

The cousin of Hang Zhuoying, Hang Xinzhai, was admitted to Imperial College in the 15th year of the reign of Emperor Guangxu in the Qing Dynasty and was later admitted to Tongwenguan University. Later, to publicize the reformation, he and Yan Fu et al. founded the first private newspaper in China: “Later, he followed Sun Yat-sen to participate in the 1911 Revolution. After Yuan Shikai was imprisoned, he became acquainted with a stranger to study Yi Xue and became a master of Yi Xue in the 20th century. He later returned to Hangzhou and founded "Baihua Xin Bao". Hang Xinzhai once presented many comic books to the young Hang Zhiying, which opened the door to painting art for Hang Zhiying[5].

According to the information obtained after Yang Wenjun's visit, among Hang Zhiying's brothers of the same generation, there were also many patriots. His cousin, Hang Yi, was influenced by Hang Xinzhai, participated in the 1911 Revolution and was a former instructor in the Whampoa Army; his cousin Meng Shulian was a former secretary in Shanghai. The Secretary of the underground Communist Party branch of the Bank of China had close contact with Hang Zhiying[1]. These people all had more or less positive influences on Hang Zhiying's growth, making Hang Zhiying run the study "not stingy with sex, make

friends with friends, be strict with what you get, and keep your promise", not tempted, and showing strong patriotism.

## (2) Dacai Middle School

In her early years, Hang Zhiying studied in a private school and was given systematic and comprehensive instruction by private schoolteachers. She achieved excellent grades in all the subjects, the most prominent of which were her scores in ancient prose and ancient poetry. Under the influence of her father, Hang Zhuoying, Hang Zhiying had already developed the habit of reciting poems and ancient prose. She can paint for self-entertainment in her spare time. Hang Zhiying learned basic painting techniques from comic books and began to depict people and scenery in daily life, sometimes drawing private schoolteachers and sometimes drawing classmates. Hang Zhiying's mother, Huang, was also very supportive of her son's hobby and often encouraged him to devote himself to painting through words and actions.

In 1911, after the founding of the Republic of China, the government carried out reforms in the education system. Hang Zhiying, 10, was transferred from a private school to Dacai Middle School, the largest county-level middle school in Haining. Drawing class. Hang Zhiying's love for painting is also reflected in the class performance of the drawing class. Whether it is the theoretical class or the technical class, he finds it interesting and vivid. In the process of studying the history and theory of traditional Chinese painting, Hang Zhiying copied the works of Dong Yuan and Ju Ran, followed the example of Shen Shitian and Tang Yin, and constantly absorbed nutrition in the process of borrowing picture albums. In addition, Hang Zhiying also learned the owners of several mounting picture shops on the way to school, helped the art shop owners with some groceries, and was able to view and copy the calligraphy and paintings of celebrities in the art shops. It was here that Hang Zhiying was fortunate to witness Tang Bohu's authentic work "The Picture of Lady with Flowers in the Hairpin." The depiction of women in the painting directly influenced Hang Zhiying's subsequent creation of the month cards.

This period of study and life was unforgettable for Hang Zhiying. According to the Chronicle of Yanguan Town, in 1929, Hang Zhiying personally drew the "Picture of the Gathering of Dacai Alumni" and recorded his teacher and classmates in the form of a graduation photo.[8]

## (3) Letter correspondence

After the Hang Zhuoying family moved to Shanghai, they did not cut off contact with their relatives and friends in Haining. Hang Zhiying's cousin and studio member, Meng Mui's father, and Hang Zhuoying were close friends, and the two often corresponded by letter. Meng Mui's daughter still has letters. In his letters to Shanghai, Meng Renfu often described the customs and folk customs of Haining in poems. The children came to argue with each other with the baskets in their hands, and the breakfast at the neighbor's house was delicious. When the silkworm baskets started to look thin, the leaves were already

scarce, and the lamps were turned on to get out the firewood leaves... The business is hard and bitter for a month, and the sound of the crickets can be heard reeling.[9]” Meng Renfu vividly described the local sericulture and silk weaving process in Haining, and Hang Zhuoying would also write poems about prosperity and turmoil in Shanghai.

Specifically, because Hang Zhuoying always maintained his friendship with his old friend in Haining, most of the apprentices recruited by Zhiying Studio were relatives of the Hang family and fellow villagers in Haining.

## 2. A FELLOW FROM HAINING IN ZHIYING’S STUDY

### (1) Core members

In 1928, with the purpose of contributing to his hometown and solving employment problems for young people, Hang Zhiying recruited a group of trainees from his hometown, Haining Yanguan, including Li Mubai, Wang Songtang, and Wang Wenyan. Owing to the limitations of educational resources in small cities at that time, most of them had a weak cultural foundation and lacked basic painting skills, so they needed much time for study and training. Unlike others, Li Mubai was fond of painting since he was a child, and he showed excellent talent when he first entered the studio. To broaden the horizons of the students, Hang Zhiying bought and subscribed to many pictorial magazines in the studio. Sixteen-year-old Li Mubai often copied the characters and costumes in the images during the break time and learned the expression techniques of the figures in the brush and water color, which quickly aroused the attention of Hang Zhiying. and begin to guide him carefully.

With the increase in the number of studies, Zhiying discovered that outstanding studio students needed more comprehensive professional education and thus sent Li Mubai to the White Goose Studio run by Mr. Chen Qiucao to learn sketch and color. Owing to the guidance of his two teachers, Hang Zhiying and Chen Qiucao, Li Mubai’s modeling ability and color aesthetics have reached very high levels, and he is especially good at describing characters. The images of the women and children they draw have smooth skin, vivid bodies and strong bodies. The color is skilfully used to present the structure and movement of the human body. In response to the recollection of Hang Mingshi, the son of Hang Zhiying, the creation of the month cards in the studio was completed with the cooperation of Hang Zhiying, Jin Xuechen and Li Mubai. In the creative process, three of them first conceived the layout of the screen, then Li Mubai drafted the characters, Jin Xuechen provided the background, and finally, Zhiying polished the colors. The clear division of labor allowed Zhiying studio to take the embryonic form of modern production. The three of them cooperated very well, which helped the studio form a very good reputation and brand image. Qiao Jiansong believes that the success of Li Mubai in his studies and his participation in the creation of monthly card paintings are important signs that Zhiying Studio

has entered a prosperous period[4].

## (2) Supporting personnel

In addition to the three core personnel, the normal operation of Zhiying Studio also depends on other supporting personnel. According to Hang Mingshi's recollection, "there were more than forty people who studied art in the studio, and the vast majority of them were fellow villagers from Haining[10]." To allow these studio members to study with peace of mind, Zhiying Studio implements a "supply system": first, tuition is free; second, board and lodging are provided; and third, learning materials are waived. After successful study, students can participate in the business practices of the studio and be paid according to their work.

In the studio, there are apprentices with outstanding painting talents, as well as students who are not good at painting. Wang Songtang is also a fellow townman in Haining. He went to Shanghai to follow Hang Zhiying for his future. However, owing to the lack of qualifications to learn painting, Hang Zhiying funded him to return to his hometown to make a living, and he later became the owner of a famous dim sum shop in Haining.

Under the guidance of Hang Zhiying and Jin Xuechen, most of the trainees were able to undertake part of the creation of the month cards and advertising paintings. Among the first batch of Haining fellows to enter Zhiying's studio, except for Li Mubai and Wang Songtang, Wang Wenyan, Song Yunzhong and Li Zhongqing have all achieved success in their studies. Among them, Wang Wenyan is Hang Zhiying's wife and brother and can also undertake the creative work of the studio; Song Yunzhong is in charge of drawing on the gift coupons in the business undertaken by the studio, and Li Zhongqing is in charge of drawing the lace in the painting[10]. Later, these people became famous in Shanghai and became the long-term collaborators of the studio. After that, fellow villagers from Haining went to hang Zhiying one after another. Among them, those who have successfully graduated from the school include Wu Zhefu, Hu Xinfu, Tang Shifang, Shan Yuanlu, Zhang Yuqing, Wang Weide, Meng Muyi, Yang Wanli, etc. Meng Muyi was Hang Zhiying's cousin mentioned above. In accordance with the recollection of his daughter Meng Sihui, Meng Muyi entered Zhiying Studio in 1936. Because of her assiduous learning attitude and rapid progress in painting techniques, she successively entered White Goose Studio and then Chongren Studio to receive Western art education. After the Southern Anhui Incident, Meng Muyi left the studio and joined the New Fourth Army, which was engaged in wartime propaganda work[9].

## 3. ZHEJIANG MERCHANTS' SPIRIT OF ZHIYING STUDIO

### (1) C courage to "dare to be the first"

As successful businessmen who came out of Zhejiang, the operation processes of Hang Zhuoying, Hang

Zhiying and Zhiying Studio all embody the Zhejiang merchants' spirit of giving me the opportunity to do whatever I want, to be the first in the world, and to be the first in the world.[11] . The Yanguan Hang family's entrepreneurial path began when Hang Zhuoying joined the Shanghai Commercial Press. It was during the establishment of the Picture Department of the Commercial Press that he understood the limitations of the propaganda posters at the time and discovered the business opportunities in the creation of month card paintings. With the encouragement of Hang Zhuoying, Hang Zhiying embarked on the ship bound for Shanghai and entered the picture department to learn the painting techniques of month cards. After finishing her studies, she worked in the sales department of the Commercial Press and the advertising department of Huacheng Tobacco Company. After working for four years, Hang Zhiying resolutely gave up. After obtaining a stable position at the Commercial Press, he decided to start his own business. It is precisely because of this decision that Hang Zhiying founded Zhiying Studio, the first modern design firm in China, and has become one of the leading figures in monthly card painting. When Shanghai's market economy was just in its infancy, by virtue of its wisdom and courage, the father and son, Hang Zhuoying and Hang Zhiying, precisely seized the business opportunities in turbulent times and truly practiced the principle of "where there is a market, there will be Zhejiang merchants."

## **(2) The innovative spirit of “daily innovation is the way”**

Zhejiang businessmen who never follow the rules have the courage and goodness to carry out technological innovation, abandon the traditional development model and continuously carry out industrial restructuring. During her service in Commercial Press, Hang Zhiying creatively used Western techniques to draw paintings of ladies in ancient costumes, which were widely acclaimed once they were published, and laid the word-of-mouth foundation for Hang Zhiying to start her own business later. In the process of founding Zhiying studio, Hang Zhiying never stopped innovating in technique. He absorbed the color elements from the American Disney animation and Western advertising paintings and used the airbrush imported from Germany to achieve a delicate presentation of colors, insisting on the combination of Chinese and Western styles. road[1]. The female characters are based on movie stars and are then constantly adjusted to form the most ideal image. The use of exterior locations as the background of the characters is another characteristic of Hang Zhiying's month card. In addition, Hang Zhiying continues to incorporate popular science content into monthly cards to spread fresh things to people in remote areas. Through reform and innovation at the levels of color, characters, background and subject matter, Zhiying's month card paintings gradually differed from the works of other month card painters. At the institutional level, Hang Zhiying broke the stereotypes of the sect and had her peers come to her door for advice, and she never had any reservations in demonstrating her techniques while also training her disciples to further their studies in the studios of other peers.

Because of Hang Zhiying's continuous innovation, Zhiying Studio has been able to gain a firm foothold in the fiercely competitive Shanghai Bund. Hang Zhiying herself has the two identities of a traditional painter and a modern designer and has become a modern Chinese artist that can be compared with Western design masters.[1]

### **(3) The cooperative spirit of “cohesion and cooperation”**

At the beginning of establishment, private enterprises in Zhejiang were often aggregated by family, blood, and friendships.[11] In the early days, the operation of Zhiying Studio was focused mostly on Hang Zhiying. With the increase in the number of studio businesses, it began to recruit fellow Haining fellows and relatives extensively. In the process of training these students, a complete and stable cooperation system was established to achieve the efficient operation of the studio. Hang Zhuoying also undertook part of the work in the studio. According to Hang Mingshi, the receipts for the studio were all issued by Hang Zhuoying. Hang Zhiying's wife Wang Luosui was in charge of logistics for a family of 30 people, meeting their various needs in their daily life. After the death of Hang Zhiying, the operation of the studio fell into a slump. At this time, Hang Zhuoying devoted himself to the management of the studio and was also responsible for the business negotiations of the studio on the basis of the original ticketing business. In addition, none of the core and supporting members of the studio left, and they all performed their duties to maintain the normal operation of the studio. It was not until Hang Zhiying's children grew up that the studio could no longer take up business.

The spiritual core of Zhejiang merchants in supporting each other and helping each other in the same boat has greatly enhanced their ability to withstand risks[11]. Therefore, after the death of Hang Zhiying, Zhiying Studio still maintained its operation for six years until the completion of socialist industrial and commercial transformation.

## **CONCLUSION**

The support atmosphere and family operation model of Zhiying Studio in the early stage were obviously influenced by Haining's local ideology, which provided a favorable personnel reserve for the initial studio construction. The Haining fellows in Zhiying Studio have their own strengths. Specifically, because the modern division of labor appeared earlier in Zhiying Studio, production efficiency improved, and the transformation from the traditional operation model to the modern business model was smoothly realized. The spirit of Zhejiang merchants, which is deeply rooted in the hearts of Haining members, is the core factor for the long-term operation of Zhiying Studio.



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