The Embroidered *Welcoming Spring* in the National Palace Museum Collection and Research on Related Works

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Abstract

Images of "Welcoming Spring" represent an auspicious subject associated with the season of winter and involve a child of wealthy background riding on a sheep with other sheep or goats in the scene. In the past, scholars focused mostly on the play of words to elucidate the meaning of the imagery and on connotations with folk culture, thereby often overlooking its artistic qualities. The present study is centered on the embroidered *Welcoming Spring* in the collection of the National Palace Museum, connecting it with other works and analyzing it from various angles, including materials, production, and patronage, to determine its value in cultural history.

First of all, examination of features related to the weaving techniques testifies to the relationship between the National Palace Museum *Welcoming Spring* and an embroidery of the same title in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Furthermore, analysis of the style and structure of these two works allows for a tentative dating of the two. Then, after organizing various related works based on how the space therein is treated, it appears that *Welcoming Spring* represents a transformation of traditional schema associated with this theme, the historical significance of which is explained in the study. Finally, the details in Qing dynasty imitations of this theme verify what researchers had postulated, that court painters were basically under the direction of the Qianlong emperor (1711-1799; reigned 1735–1796). Thus, by concentrating on the technical expression and visual structure of related *Welcoming Spring* works, it is hoped that a more accurate assessment of transformations in this subject in the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties can be made.

Keywords: *Welcoming Spring*, auspicious images, embroidery, schema, Qianlong emperor