China -Thailand Buddhist mural research: to create the visual art work of the "Three worlds"

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Abstract. A study of Sino-Thai Buddhist murals: research for the creation of a visual art work on the theme of The Three Realms The purpose of the study was to examine the development and artistic characteristics of Sino-Thai Buddhist murals as well as the content of the Thai Buddhist classic The Three Realms of Phra Luang and the Buddhist spirituality and worldview. The study summarizes the characteristics of Chinese and Thai mural paintings in terms of modeling and color composition through literature research, fieldwork, and data combing. The final result of the research is the symbiotic use of mural symbols and colors shared by China and Thailand, and the creation of visual art works with the characteristics of cultural symbiosis by combining the new design spirit with the cultural themes of the three worlds.

1 Introduction

Buddhism was founded in India in the 6th-5th centuries B.C. and became one of the third largest religions in the world, spreading across Asia and Europe and entering China along two routes, the Eastern and Southern. The Buddhist art that accompanied the development of Buddhism has always occupied an important part of the art of both China and Thailand, mainly in the form of caves, murals, architecture, etc., and has developed its own characteristics. With the frequent cultural exchanges between China and Thailand, Thai Buddhist art has also entered the vision of Chinese people, and Thai Buddhist art classics have left a deep impression on Chinese people. Due to the homology of Buddhist culture between the two countries Buddhist art exchanges have also become an important hub of exchanges between the two countries, and Buddhist art murals are an indispensable type of art in art exchanges.

Although the development of Buddhism in China and Thailand belongs to different schools, the worldview is the same. Trai Phum Pra Ruang, a classic of Thai Buddhist culture and art, is a representative of Thai Buddhist culture and art. The concepts of reincarnation, cultivation, good deeds, the three realms, and the six paths advocated in this work are the same as the values advocated by the Chinese Buddhist culture and have been recognized by the Chinese society. This will provide a good social base for the creation and display of works on the theme of Trai Phum Pra Ruang [1].

This topic combines the comparative study of Chinese and Thai Buddhist art to analyze the similarities and differences between the two countries in Buddhist culture and art, especially in the creation of murals, to explore the common formal language of the two countries in Buddhist culture to extract the elements of creation, and Dunhuang mural art creation techniques, the Thai mural and Dunhuang brushstrokes to integrate the design, and to carry out the world documented in the Trai Phum Pra Ruang as the creation of a mural artwork. The creation of mural artwork based on the world recorded in Trai Phum Pra Ruang allows Chinese viewers to understand the worldview of the Thai Buddhist classic Trai Phum Pra Ruang and the spirit of Thai Buddhist culture, and provides a contribution to Sino-Thai cultural and artistic exchanges [2].

3 Research on Sino-Thai Buddhist Art and Mural Painting

3.1 Dunhuang art

The Tang Dynasty was the peak of Chinese art due to the strength of the country Dunhuang mural art form by the Tang Dynasty culture and art influence modeling has produced great changes, and became the most important representative of Dunhuang mural painting. Traces of Mahayana Buddhism are evident in the Buddhist art of this period changing the content of the frescoes and the appearance of sutra change map frescoes. Buddha styling than the previous era of Buddha movement expression more diversified, appeared sitting, standing, walking and flying a variety of postures, especially the image of the Tang Dynasty bodhisattva for the ancient art of the successful combination of the ideal and the reality of the important paradigm, the most important thing is that these statues are not wearing Gandharva style clothing, clothing
and Tang Dynasty clothing style is closer to. Mural color is also more rich in the emergence of the green jade color, five color and other different color plates, the lines of exquisite image vivid and beautiful. The development of Dunhuang murals after the Tang Dynasty entered a period of maintenance and continued under the influence of the Tang style. The new artistic characteristics of Tang Dynasty murals have influenced the creation of Buddhist murals in modern China [3].

3.2 Thai Buddhist Art

Thai period is a mature period of Thai art, but in this period of time mural art was replaced by the art of stone carving, now available Sukhothai mural paintings are fewer in number, in the outskirts of Sukhothai Wat Si Chum Buddhist temple preserved a relatively intact stone carving mural paintings, paintings residual red pigment, according to Chi Shengzhong analysis of these mural paintings in the shape of the Buddha by the Sri Lankan, Indian, Cambodian multi-country art shadow. In addition to this, the Sukhothai period is more often represented by stone frescoes like Wat Chet Yot. This type of frescoes appeared in the form of 2.5-dimensional carvings, cloth decorated with strong colors, so it was once classified as sculpture art in the classification of art [4]. After the annexation of the Sukhothai dynasty in 1438, Ajantaye became intertwined with the Sukhothai culture and was clearly influenced by Sukhothai. Buddha's head appeared in a flame-like chignon Indian jeweler's hat hairstyle, the shape of the face into a goose egg made only the monk's robe to maintain the shape of the Udon. This era's and Uton's like them look like a return to the traditional stylistic traits of earlier times but with the introduction of new age traits [5]. As show in figure 1.

As show in figure 2, The mural art of the Ayutthaya period is the most important part of surviving Thai murals. This period of mural art absorbed the characteristics of Sukhothai, Lopburi, Angkor, and Burmese art and eventually became the foundation of modern Thai mural art. Its characteristics are:

1. The content of the mural is based on the Buddha's original scriptures and myths.
2. The frescoes are mainly warm in tone, and use a lot of gold leaf.
3. Composition form special, often with mountain-shaped jagged as a division to form different time picture and story content. This form of division played a significant influence on the later murals [6].
4. The presence of a large number of exotic faces reflects the reality that foreign cultures had already begun to enter Thailand at that time and that these outsiders were not welcome by the Thai people at that time.

The mural art of the Bangkok Dynasty period is known as the Golden Age of Thai mural art. The Bangkok dynasty inherited the essence of mural art from the Ayutthaya period and incorporated features of Chinese art and Western art [7]. The main features of the murals in this period are:

1. Maintaining the framework of the Buddha's sutra and historical stories.
2. Continuing the dominant color palette of the murals of the Aridya period, darker tones, such as deep blues and dark greens, are incorporated into the warmer base.
3. Traces of both Chinese and Western art are evident in the painting techniques, such as the use of Chinese brushstrokes for plants, rocks and mountains, etc., and the realistic techniques of Western art, such as chiaroscuro and realism, are used for the scenes and figures.
4. The scene painting is more delicate and vivid.
5. Decoration with gold-based materials is the main feature of frescoes of this era.

However, in a study by American scholar Pichai Thutongkinanon, it is argued that Western culture has changed the nature of Thai murals, which used to serve as a propaganda and educational tool for Buddhism, and that the focus should be on preserving the uniqueness of Thai murals of the past. The author also recognizes this point of view, in the development of Thai mural paintings by folk craftsmen, although not as brilliant as the degree of the royal mural paintings, but can make people feel a strong sense of life and vitality [8]. As show in figure 3.
As show in figure 4. In general, it seems that Chinese and Thai Buddhist murals have very different ways of expression. Chinese Buddhist art originates from history and tradition, and abides by the requirements of technique and traditional aesthetics in the form of composition in artistic expression. The early Buddhist murals of Thai Buddha were religiously oriented, emphasizing devotion rather than skill. [9].

4 Creative achievements

Visual artwork creation based on the study of the content and spiritual world of the Three Realms combined with the study of the stylistic, compositional, and color aspects of Chinese and Thai mural art. According to the previous research, the current mural paintings targeting the three realms in Thailand are mostly representations of scenes and stories, conveying the stories of the Buddha told in the three realms through the images as a way to publicize the spirit of Buddhism. According to the comprehensive opinion of experts after interviews in the work should be in-depth exploration of the spiritual meaning behind the story of the three worlds, and as the theme of the three worlds around the Buddhist content related to artistic creation [10]. Combining the characteristics of murals in Chinese and Thai Buddhist art in the creation of the mural, there are ways to replace the elements and common elements of cultural symbiosis in order to achieve the purpose of the fusion of the two styles of art. Based on the spiritual meanings conveyed by the three realms, the theme of creation was thus narrowed down to three spiritual themes: wisdom, cultivation, and harmony, with elemental symbols such as the lotus flower and the bodhi tree stripped away based on preliminary mural research.

4.1 Three Realms - Brahma (Tree of Wisdom)

As show in figure 5. The core shape of the work is Brahma, the Brahma culture entered mainland China in the 1980s with the development of Hong Kong movies, and then with the deepening of Sino-Thai tourism exchanges the Four-Faced Buddha became the most influential image of the Buddha in Chinese references to Thai Buddhism, and its influence even exceeded that of the Sukhothai Buddha statue. The Bodhi tree is not defined as a specific tree in Buddhism; the tree where each Buddha attains enlightenment is different. The linden tree is a symbol of wisdom. The linden tree created by incorporating the laws of points, lines and surfaces of compositional art and decorative arts techniques into the design has a straight line at the top representing yang and growth, and a curved line at the bottom representing yin and softness, which is the balance of yin and yang emphasized in Chinese art [11].

4.2 Three Worlds - Buddha (Flower of Transitional Suffering)

As show in figure 6. The core shape of the work is Brahma, the Brahma culture entered mainland China in the 1980s with the development of Hong Kong movies, and then with the deepening of Sino-Thai tourism exchanges the Four-Faced Buddha became the most influential image of the Buddha in Chinese references to Thai Buddhism, and its influence even exceeded that of the Sukhothai Buddha statue. The Bodhi tree is not defined as a specific tree in Buddhism; the tree where each Buddha attains enlightenment is different. The linden tree is a symbol of wisdom. The linden tree created by incorporating the laws of points, lines and surfaces of compositional art and decorative arts techniques into the design has a straight line at the top representing yang and growth, and a curved line at the bottom representing yin and softness, which is the balance of yin and yang emphasized in Chinese art [11].
As show in figure 6. The elemental theme of this work on the spirit of the three realms is - Transitioning Suffering. Transitioning Suffering is a Buddhist term for getting rid of desires, and the description of the Desire Realm in the Three Realms explains that the 8 sufferings of life come from all kinds of desires, and that only by practicing karma to get rid of desires can one reach the colorful realm and even the colorless realm. In the description of The Three Realms, Mount Sumeru and the Sevenfold Mountain and even the earth are surrounded by the sea, and hell is in the middle of the sea, which is why there is a Buddhist saying in Chinese Buddhism: The sea of bitterness has no boundaries, and turning back is the shore. It means that only Buddhism can carry people out of hell to Mount Sumeru like a boat. The lotus flower grows in silt, which is equivalent to hell in the story, and its flower floats on the surface of the water like a boat, thus isolating the elemental symbol of this work, the lotus flower. The lotus flower is a sacred Buddhist flower that can ferry people, and the work uses the lotus flower to symbolize Buddhism and the practice of karma, which carries people out of the world's 8 sufferings after they have realized their desires. The lotus flower under the seat of the Lord Buddha also has eight petals for detailing, the water pattern represents the world's troubles, and the boat and dharma weapon take people through the world's sufferings and ultimately get rid of the realm of desire.

5 Conclude

The creation of "Three Worlds" visual art is based on the basic research of Chinese and Thai Buddhist culture and mural art, with the aim of creating mural artworks that illustrate the worldview of the "Three Worlds" and are acceptable to Chinese viewers, which is a "cross-cultural" and "symbiotic" issue.

Through literature research to sort out the development of Buddhism in China and Thailand, the characteristics of Buddhist art, especially the similarities and differences of the mural art; to do a comparative analysis of the similarities and differences of the art symbols and the aesthetic characteristics, and the Buddha, the lotus flower, the Bodhi tree, and other elements into the work to carry out the design, to select the values of the two countries in the Buddhist mural art symbols related to the two countries through the comparison of the symbols of the two countries mural paintings and in the creation of fusion between the two countries characteristics of the formation of the new art symbols, to ensure that the symbols are able to be accepted by Chinese viewers and recognition of the symbols. Symbiotic creation of the color system, the Dunhuang colors and the red and gold color scheme in Thai mural paintings are practically matched to achieve a good visual effect.

Researching the content and worldview of the Three Realms, we elevated the work from a single thematic expression to a high spiritual level, exploring the connection between the artistic symbols and the spirit of the Three Realms from the aspects of "wisdom", "cultivation", and "harmony and goodness", and conveying the Buddhist spirit of the Three Realms. The main shape of the work must be separated around the elements of the spirit of the three worlds, which are positive elements can play a positive role in society, such as wisdom, affinity, kindness, etc., are positive values.

By adding contemporary art modeling techniques to the works, we break the traditional compositional patterns of Dunhuang murals and Thai murals, giving the works a sense of graphic design under the mural materials. The visual work is not a traditional mural, but a new two-dimensional visual work based on mural techniques, in which the concepts and techniques of contemporary compositional design are added to give the work a new visual character.

The simultaneous dissemination of the story and spirit of the Thai literary work "Three Worlds" through research and production of the work is formally an indispensable part of international artistic and cultural exchange and bridging. The visual nature of artworks is more valuable than mere verbal communication, and this will probably be one of the indispensable means of cultural exchange in the future.

References