

Research on Aesthetic Orientation of painting themes of Lingnan Temple Monks in Ming and Qing Dynasties

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Abstract

Monk painting is an important part of Chinese painting art and a unique cultural phenomenon in Chinese art history. Monks in successive dynasties have made great achievements in landscape painting, figures, flowers and animals. These eminent monks who have entered the Buddhist gate often have a deep understanding of traditional Chinese culture, a more thorough insight, understanding and interpretation of human and nature, and a more lofty perspective. Their works are obviously different from other kinds of paintings. The selection of painting themes is not random, but careful consideration based on life experience and emotional expression. They not only contain the artist's clever conception of objective objects, but also embody rich emotion and aesthetic consciousness. In the study of the aesthetic orientation of the painting themes of Lingnan monks in the Ming and Qing dynasties, the elements and means commonly used in the paintings of monks can be regarded as a form of the use of image symbols. This paper will try to use the research method of image semiotics to analyze its theme orientation from the perspective of painting specialty, trying to clarify the unique artistic features of the paintings of Lingnan monks in the Ming and Qing dynasties, and then reveal the uniqueness of the theme orientation of the paintings of Lingnan monks in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Key words: theme, symbol, monk painting.

Introduction

Lingnan culture has a long history and has been an important place where Chinese and foreign cultures gather and exchange since ancient times. There are rich historical and cultural resources of Buddhism here, and Buddhist cultural phenomena with Lingnan characteristics have

been formed in the long-term development process. Since the Tang Dynasty, there have been some people who are good at painting in Lingnan Buddhist Gate. Especially in the Changeover period of Ming and Qing Dynasties, the monks in Lingnan Temple rose rapidly to form a unique group of Zen gate painters. They are good at painting, feel the red green in Buddhism and understand the Zen principle in painting, combine the inner movement with the solitude of empty gate, and form the interest of cold, cold and wild. Or a painting style that is ornamental, secular and pyrotechnic. Since the early Qing Dynasty, the social background that produced this unique art has ceased to exist. Most of the Buddhist monks became monks for religious belief rather than escaping from Zen. At that time, the Zen flavor was hardly seen in the works, let alone the cold and quiet, but more in combination with the secular aesthetic, forming a painting style with both appreciation, secularity and fireworks. Subject matter is also popular with the public painting motifs. Through the investigation of the paintings of monks in this period, it is found that the paintings of Lingnan monks in the Ming and Qing dynasties have a wide range of subjects, and have a lot of development and creation. The production of a work must have its cultural and political context. These unique regional cultural characteristics and typical painting traditions play a positive role in promoting the improvement of Lingnan religious culture and the enrichment and development of Lingnan painting art.

Research objective

1. Clarify the unique artistic features of the paintings of Lingnan Temple monks in the Ming and Qing Dynasties
2. Reveal the particularity of theme orientation of painting by Lingnan monks in the Ming and Qing Dynasties

Literature review

With the increasing emphasis of modern society on traditional Chinese culture, the attitude towards religious culture gradually changed from oppression and marginalization in the late Qing Dynasty to tolerance and openness, and the writings on Buddhist monk paintings gradually increased. There are both review studies and analysis of one element. There are both regional studies for a certain area and case studies about individual painters. This paper uses a systematic literature review, from books, texts, past studies and statistical data, according to the relationship between the information and the topic, the information is divided into multiple parts for analysis and summary. Hope to have a systematic combing of the paintings of Lingnan Temple monks in Ming and Qing dynasties.

Related literature writing

At present, the known research results include the publication of the Guangdong painting exhibition and its series of books sponsored by the Guangdong Provincial CPPCC, which pushed the study of Guangdong art to a climax. In this batch of books, the academic catalogs include inheritance and development: the exhibition catalogs of Guangdong paintings in the past dynasties. These catalogs and anthologies show the development process of Guangdong art in different periods in front of readers. The large-scale art series "Lingnan Painting Library" compiled by Guangdong Humanities and Art Research Institute has been published one after another, becoming a new milestone in the study of Guangdong fine arts. "Lingnan Painting Gallery" invited all the authoritative experts and scholars in the study of Guangdong art, covering Beijing, Hong Kong, Macao, Guangdong and other places, reflecting the latest academic achievements in the study of the history of Guangdong art. Among them are Atlas of Guangdong Painting History (edited by Lin Yajie and Zhu Wanzhang), Collection of Guangdong Painting Studies (edited by Lin Yajie and Zhu Wanzhang), Records of Guangdong Painting Circles (written by Liang Jiang), Studies of Guangdong Painting History in the Ming and Qing Dynasties (written by Zhu Wanzhang), etc. This set of books systematically introduces the major painters of Lingnan dynasties and their representative works by taking the historical development as the clue and individual or school as the unit. All the paintings we have received are excellent works in both domestic and overseas public and private collections.

The literatures specially edited by Wang Zhaoyong were compiled and added by Wang Zongyan. Two Kinds of Lingnan Painting, a collection of 602 Lingnan painters from the Tang Dynasty to the 1930s, is rich in information and complete in collection. It is a precious document for the study of Lingnan painters of all dynasties, among which 42 Lingnan painting monks are recorded. Yu Jianhua and Yu Jin's book Atlas of Chinese Buddhists, Calligraphists and Painters includes more than 1,200 monks, nuns, calligraphists and painters from the introduction of Buddhism in the Han Dynasty to the Republic of China. The Dictionary of the Names of Chinese Artists edited by Yu Jianhua, The Record of Guangdong Painters by Xie Wenyong, the History of Guangdong Art by Li Gongming, and the Visit to the Ancient of Guangdong Painting by Zhu Wanzhang also contain information about many Lingnan painting monks. Master Miaoxu and Sun Enyang co-authored Zen Painting Research (2015), a monograph mainly written by Sun Enyang, who is a researcher dedicated to Zen Buddhism practice and Zen painting creation. Master Miaoxu is the forty-sixth generation Zen master of Linji Zong and the dean of Jiuhuashan Zen Calligraphy and Painting Research Institute. With the cooperation of the two, the content of this book is concise and orderly, and the origin, form and influence of the whole Zen painting are summarized.

There are many praises related to painting circulating in the sayings and poems of painting monks in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, which contain a large amount of painting information. The sayings of major Zen masters containing painting information of monks in the Ming and Qing Dynasties are as follows: Haiyun Chan Zao, Yousi Zhai Bi, Hamzhi Tang Collection, Dushu Tang Poetry Collection, Lianxiang Collection, Liliutang Collection, Qin Yin Yuan Collection, Xiangsu Shanguan Shichuan, Songge Essay, etc.

Domestic and foreign related research status, level and development trend

In addition to the above several important works, since 2000 years ago, many scholars have carried out further discussion and in-depth research on falsification on this basis, and the analysis angles, levels and methods have become more and more diversified and technical. Below, the author classifies these researches into regional researches and epochal researches.

Regional studies

Regional studies account for about one tenth of the total research. Huang Guole of Guangxi Normal University's doctoral thesis Research on Lingnan Painting Group comprehensively examines the characteristics and significance of the Lingnan Painting Group in the 18th and 19th centuries (a group composed of painters and social people who love painting, including literators, officials, wealthy businessmen and Taoism) in the context of Lingnan culture. In the last chapter 11, temples and others, the community was divided into three sections, the first section was Haizhu Temple, the second section was Haizun Temple, and the third section was others (Sansong Pinus in Yongsheng Temple, Community Temple, and Anshi Temple), the community activities around the above temples were discussed. Their outings were mainly cited from literature materials, historical materials, official history, local records and notes, and they were classified as painting friends group. Like-minded colleagues and friends gathered together because of the common painting hobby, and sorted out various connections between characters and between characters and society. Sum up these connections to promote the artist's artistic level and improve the artistic accomplishment of the role. The number of painting monks discussed in this chapter is small, and there is no analysis of their specific art theory, art works and art style from the aspect of painting works.

Zhu Wanzhang's Lingnan Painting Monks in the late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties (top) and Lingnan Painting monks in the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties (top) only have a few short papers on the special research on the painting of Lingnan Temple monks in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, lacking in-depth demonstration and case analysis.

Period studies

The period studies account for about one tenth of the total studies, mainly focusing on the Southern Song Dynasty (the Southern Song Dynasty is the flourishing and mature period of Zen painting. In the first period, Zen painting had a wide range of themes, various subjects and many development and creation beyond other painting categories, which had an important influence on literati painting, courtyard painting and Japanese ink painting). In the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, several important time nodes of Buddhism in Chinese history. A Study of Zen Painting in the Southern Song Dynasty by Li Jing, a doctor's thesis of Shandong University, made an in-depth investigation of the painting style causes, development background, religious thoughts and artistic style of Zen painting in the Southern Song Dynasty. The research results showed that many important creative patterns prevalent in later literati painting were created by Zen monks, which could provide a more comprehensive and objective theoretical basis for the further development of contemporary ink painting.

catalogue

The catalogue is mostly collected in local museum collections, research institutions collections, private collections, or only as a part of the entire history of painting. There are mainly: Guangdong Museum editor. Guangdong Museum Collection of paintings, Guangdong Painting Exhibition Committee compiled. Guangdong painting exhibition catalogue, Guangdong Provincial Museum, etc., edited: "Selected cultural relics donated by Mr. Shang Chengzuo", Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts edited "Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts Collection", Lingnan Fine Arts Publishing House edited inheritance and development: Guangdong painting exhibition catalogue, ancient Chinese calligraphy and painting appraisal group: "Essential Items of ancient Chinese calligraphy and painting · 6", etc. To sum up, although more and more scholars pay attention to the study of monk painting in China, there is a lack of long-term and sustained special research and systematic and comprehensive research results.

Research method

In order to achieve the research objectives, this paper adopts qualitative research methods according to the characteristics of the research object, and mainly focuses on the analysis and demonstration through literature analysis and semiotic analysis. In this paper, various original historical documents are searched and widely used, and various research results related to modern people are collected rationally, such as focus, papers, journals and network data. In particular, data related to the historical period and cases of this paper are collected, unified sorting and classification, as the basis of this study. An in-depth field survey was

conducted on the existing typical temple cases in the study, first-hand information was collected, and classified interviews were conducted with relevant researchers, administrators and surrounding residents. Statistics were used to sort out and analyze all kinds of information and data collected, classify the subject matter and theme of his paintings by means of a list, and make a table to make the research object and content clear and clear, and sort out the basic problems of subject matter orientation of paintings of Lingnan monks in the Ming and Qing Dynasties by means of a table. Finally, I will try to use the semiotic research method to analyze his painting language from the perspective of painting profession, trying to clarify the unique artistic features of the paintings of Lingnan monks in the Ming and Qing dynasties, and then reveal the unique aesthetic orientation of the themes of paintings of Lingnan monks in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Research results

Classification table of paintings of Lingnan Temple monks in Ming and Qing Dynasties

Subject classification table	
type	content
landscape painting	Pine ravines, Twilight mountain, Qiushan, Xiaoxiang eight scenery, Yunshan, cold mountain, barren mountain, barren mountain, snow landscape, dead wood and rocks, Zen forest, lake view, river view, Taoyuan map, alone fishing, summer mountain, moon night map, Luofu Mountain view, Dinghu mountain view
Flower and Bird Painting	flowers and plants Pine, bamboo, plum blossom, orchid, tree peony, plantain, Lotus (lotus pond, defeated lotus, lotus room), bamboo and stone, lotus, peach blossom, chrysanthemum, ganoderma lucidum, camellia, calamus
	Birds and birds Eagles, tits, and herons
	beast Sheep, cattle
Figure painting	Gao shi, patriarch, Bodhisattva, Zen master (Shi Lian Dashan, longevity temple monk), eminent monk, historical allusions (literati Li Bai, hero Su Wu), arhat (18 arhat, arhat sitting statue, arhat crossing the sea), waterfall view, strategy map, boat fisherman, fu qin figure, Fishing sou

Source: The author self-draws

Zen and the mountains

The ancients said: the wise man happy water, benevolent Leshan. Since ancient times, hermits or those who have learned Zen and Taoism often like to retreat into mountains and forests, indulge in mountains and rivers, and try their best to separate themselves from the ordinary life. They sit, read and play chess on delicate Bridges, beside flying waterfalls, gurgling streams, under curious trees and in small houses and cottages far away from the bustle of the world. In the cleaning of mountains and rivers, the conflicts between man and the world are removed. Transform the link between human and nature, regard oneself as a molecule of nature, the annoyance caused by interpersonal relationship can be reduced, longing and assimilation of nature, so as to achieve the state of forgetting things. The understanding of the inner world gradually deepened, and gradually reached a real beyond the material world, beyond the self realm of life. As a result, the practitioners like to look for a good environment of the forest habit, so there is "turmoil ups and downs not by themselves, between the mountains and the earth", "deep mountain hide the ancient temple, the forest listen to the Brahma." ", "the world's famous mountain monks account for more" and so on. The Shi family's seclusion in the mountains and forests has its Buddhist tradition. The Zen school grew up in the mountains and rivers. The Dharma patriarch came to the east and sat facing the wall in the Wurufeng Mountain in Henan Province. Three ancestors Sang-chan and his disciples to avoid the destruction of the Buddha Dharma later Zhou, seclusion in Anhui Wangong mountain for more than 10 years, his later four ancestors Daoxin, five ancestors Hongjian ashram, are built in the mountains, six ancestors is a single person, in the deep mountains and wild forests after 15 years of seclusion, then out of the mountains to preach Dharma. So far mountain Buddhism has formed a scale, and to the Mazu Road a built jungle, Baizhang Huaihai set rules, more have a Zen farmer combination of the complete system. After that, the Zen disciples were all in the mountains with "quiet and clear springs, high peaks and white moons", "living in the mountains" or "opening the mountains". The term "the originator of the mountain" originated from Zen Buddhism. Since most of the Zen temples were in the mountains, there were many dharma difficulties in history. In the city of Dayi, almost all other schools of Buddhism were destroyed, but Zen Buddhism was not affected much.

Zen theme

As monks practicing in the temple, the paintings of Lingnan Temple monks in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, for a large part, were good at integrating the daily practice of Zen doctrine and Buddhism into the picture, to understand the painting with Zen doctrine, and to understand the Zen meaning with painting. The main themes are mountains, rivers, flowers, birds and animals in nature, as well as the life

stories of eminent monks, patriarch and sansheng (including the process of realizing the Tao or adjusting the heart), and the koan stories of Zen Buddhism, all under the guise of things, to imply the Zen machine. There are also Buddha Bodhisattvas or arhat statues, most of which are characterized by showing the ease and variety of the divine power. This is the realm pursued by Zen Buddhism, which is "green and green bamboo, showing the Dharma body" and "lush yellow flowers, nothing more than Prajna".

Taking Guangzhou Art Museum's "Poppy Bowl" as an example, the theme of "Poppy Bowl" is a very famous representation of Zen machinery in Buddhist paintings. The origin of this theme can be traced back to Wang Wei, who honored Buddha as a medalist. The painter painted a plantain in the snow, placing the snow and the plantain together in the same picture, such a scene is unlikely to appear in real life. Because snow only occurs in the northern winter, and plantain is a tropical plant that grows in the south, how can a plantain survive snow? The contradictory arrangement between snow and plantain seems to be unreasonable. In the past dynasties, there were also arguments that plantain in snow lost cold and heat, and they were criticized as not knowing that cold and heat were not suitable for the season, and that they were works against the common sense of vision and life. However, painting is not natural, nature is not art, and nature should be transformed. Plantain is soft and perishable, and can be regarded as a symbol of fragility or instability. However, when plantain is placed in the boundless snow, it can still overcome its fragility and show its strong green posture. At this time, it has broken through the cage of the bitter and cold nature. What is placed in the Plano should be the spiritual sublimation of the mind through breaking through the cage of the surrounding noisy environment. It expresses the field of "the intention to write first, the intention to become", emphasizing the "human heart" rather than nature, namely the ancient "the source of the heart". Jin Nong of the Qing Dynasty wrote in his book of Miscellaneous Paintings: "Wang Youcheng made plantain in the snow a peculiar construction in the painting garden. The plantain is a thing of rapid decay, how can it survive the winter without dying? The right cheng is deep in Zen philosophy, so there is painting to symbolize the Samana's unbroken body and to keep it strong at all times." Qian Zhongshu once expressed in Chinese Poetry and Chinese Painting, "If the banana in snow contains any 'Zen', it is nothing more than the dust under the sea, the lunar month or the lotus in the fire, which implies' rare 'or' inconceivable'." . Ge Xiaoyin, in his book *The Evolution of Han and Tang Literature*, believes that it is "a symbolic expression of Buddhism... Praise him (Yuan An) the spirit of peace and happiness." Zhang Yuying thinks in the fourth chapter of *Zen and Art* that "don't ask the four seasons" is the manifestation of the Zen theory of mind. Chen Yunji believes in *A Study of the Implied meaning of Wang Wei's "Plantain in Snow"* that "Plantain

in Snow" is "the Buddhist theological thought that sustenses' personal emptiness ". Huang Hetao expressed in Zen and the Evolution of Chinese Artistic Spirit that "Plantain in the snow" implied the passion for Zen and the persistence in pursuing a suitable life. He even thought that "the allusion of Wang Wei giving himself up to Yuan An" was a "further embellishing" of this implied meaning.

Therefore, Basho in Snow can be said to be a way for Zen practitioners to show the Zen meaning that is difficult to be described in words in a non-logical way, in the way of painting. This is because Zen Buddhism does not advocate logical thinking and reasoning in daily life, but advocates getting rid of the logical, rigid and paranoid limitations of the world through the way of insight, and expresses the freedom and liberation of the mind in the simplest language. Therefore, Banana in the Snow is to highlight the "meaning" that the author wants to express by this contradictory artistic treatment. This "meaning" is the Zen meaning that cannot be expressed by logical language. That is to say, "intending to write first" is actually a painting formed by referring directly to one's own nature, first seeking the mind, then from the heart, and finally from the mind.

Secular themes

During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Lingnan painting monks had formed a very typical painting tradition, which was not comparable to those in other places. For example, the painting monks at that time, such as Da Shan, Cheng Vulture, Ren Ren and Ba Ren, all understood the "red green" in Buddhism and understood the Zen principles in their paintings. Since the early Qing Dynasty, this mainstream situation has changed. In the works of many painting monks in the middle and late Qing Dynasty, the Zen flavor can hardly be seen, let alone cold and quiet. Instead, the unusual character of Lingnan culture in the big culture of China is not attached importance to tradition, not afraid of authority, and married with the secular aesthetic, forming a painting style that is both ornamental, secular and lively. Lingnan region is a famous place of merchants. As an important place where Chinese and foreign cultures gather and exchange, it has a high degree of commercialization and an active art market. In addition, Lingnan is far away from the cultural center of Central China and the mainstream art circle of Central China. For the cultural center of Jiangsu and Zhejiang, the cultural heritage is not as profound as that of Central China. Although obviously influenced by the style of literator painting, it may be because Lingnan painters can have access to few paintings of the previous generation, and they bear a light historical burden. They are less bound by established ideas and family opinions, and more open to free thinking and innovative ideas. Many of his painting themes were derived from folk art forms such as brick carving and murals, and popular folk art images could be seen everywhere, which became the most intuitive way to absorb them.

Under this background, many excellent works with Lingnan characteristics were created. It shows the artistic characteristics of Lingnan painting, which inherits tradition and has the courage to innovate, pays attention to reality, combines form and spirit, and appreciates both elegance and custom.

In the works of Sangdekun painted in this period, most of his works had a high head and large axis, which was easy to hang and look at. His paintings were a combination of light ink and light color, with simple and generalized expression techniques and plain and simple ink language. In terms of color relations, they were processed with thin, rich and harmonious color relations. In addition to a small number of landscape figures (such as "Iron Pestle grinding needle"), are not any background, subject matter is also popular folk painting motifs (such as peace and riches Ma Gu, three acid, Su Wu shepherding sheep, etc.).

Conclusion

Different painters have different times, different experiences, different education, different personalities and different values. All kinds of differences, so that their performance in the painting of the scenery, the level of uneven. Compared with other types of paintings in the history of Chinese art, the paintings of monks in Lingnan Temple go beyond the conventions and paradigms, and have a more thorough insight, understanding and interpretation of people and nature with a higher perspective. The society we are living in today, It is experiencing a period of rapid development of material life and rapid expansion of desire. For the current painters, how to consciously resist the erosion of material desire and not let aesthetic taste degenerate is a great challenge.

Therefore, it is a new attempt and practice to sort out, study and deeply understand the essence of the aesthetic orientation of the painting themes of Lingnan monks in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, to inject more Buddhist Zen heart and spiritual power into the works, and to combine the essence of Buddhist thought with life, study and practice.

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