

New Exploration on the Artistic Value of Frescoes at Qinglong Temple in Jishan, Shanxi Province

Lei Ye¹

¹ Department of Fine Arts and Craft Design, Yuncheng University, Yuncheng, Shanxi 044000, China

ABSTRACT

The frescoes of Qinglong Temple in Jishan, Shanxi are one of the most well preserved Buddhist water and land paintings in China, with high research value. The frescoes of Qinglong Temple reproduce the content of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, as well as folk religious beliefs and a portion of social life. They have a wide range of themes, a wide coverage, and diverse forms of expression. They are a religious painting style that emerged after Buddhism and its images were introduced to China and absorbed local Chinese culture, and underwent long-term transformation and integration. The lines of Qinglong Temple frescoes are flying and the colors are gorgeous, which fully shows the artistic essence of the Buddhist frescoes of the Yuan Dynasty. This article analyzes their unique artistic value from a new artistic perspective.

Keywords: Shanxi Qinglong Temple, Buddhist frescoes, Artistic value.

1. INTRODUCTION

China's fresco art has a long history and numerous works, making it a treasure in Chinese painting art. The Yuan Dynasty frescoes are an important part of it. In order to use religion to maintain its dominant position, the Yuan Dynasty adopted a policy of religious protection and extensively built Buddhist temples throughout the country. Buddhist temple frescoes also emerged, with Shanxi Buddhist temple frescoes ranking first in the country.

The frescoes of Qinglong Temple in Jishan, Shanxi can be regarded as representative works of the Yuan Dynasty Buddhist temple frescoes. Its grand scale depicts numerous characters, rich content, and exquisite skills, which have also undergone changes based on inheriting the traditional performance of the Tang and Song dynasties. In its research process, it can be found that its frescoes have unique themes and attractive content. They are not solely Buddhist paintings that express Buddhist content, but rather water and land paintings that integrate Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, with high artistic value. The frescoes in the waist hall of Qinglong Temple are its essence. The murals are composed of many figures in a grand scene. The figures are accurate in shape,

vivid in posture, full in image, rich in changes, and extremely vivid. Ink lines are the backbone of the entire painting, inheriting the tradition of "bone technique using a pen". The lines are strong and powerful, graceful and free, not only smooth and free, but also rigorous and implicit. The color is mainly based on the traditional heavy color filling method. The overall picture is rich in color, solemn and profound, and highly decorative. It can be a meticulous and colorful painting with exquisite artistic techniques.

2. ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER IMAGES IN THE FRESCOES

Buddhism was introduced to China from the Western Han Dynasty, and Buddhist painting was also introduced accordingly. The introduction of painting to China has had a certain impact on Chinese painting, promoting the development of temple frescoes. In the process of development, Buddhist painting art has merged with traditional Chinese painting, forming a form of expression with Chinese characteristics. The expression language of Buddhist painting schools represented by Cao Zhongda's "Cao family style" in the Northern Qi Dynasty, Zhang Sengyou's "Zhang family style" in the Liang Dynasty, and Wu Daozi's

"Wu family style" in the Tang Dynasty directly had a significant impact on later generations. Although the Qinglong Temple frescoes are painted by folk painters, they directly inherit the traditional expression language and integrate ancient and modern techniques. The paintings have the rhythm of traditional Chinese art. The relationship between "form" and "spirit" is an important issue of Chinese painting theory (even all plastic arts). "Form" is the means of shaping, "spirit" is the aesthetic concept, and "painting spirit through form" and "conveying spirit through portrayal" have been important propositions since the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties. From "expressing objects objectively according to their original forms" of Xie He's "six laws" in the Southern Qi Dynasty to "painting spirit through form" of Zong Bing's "Preface to Painting Mountains and Rivers" in the Southern Dynasty, from Gu Kaizhi's "vivid portrayal" to Chen Yu's "portrayal of its form must convey its spirit, the theory of the relationship between the form and spirit of "spreading its spirit and writing its heart" systematically indicates the artistic pursuit of traditional plastic arts based on "spirit". [1] In the fresco art of Qinglong Temple, they all inherit the excellent tradition of "painting spirit through form". When expressing the thoughts, emotions, and personality characteristics of characters, they are all conveyed through their vivid images and lines. No character is the same, and they are all full of individuality.

There are currently 125.19 square meters of frescoes in the waist hall, including more than 320 character figures. The large Thousand Hands and Thousand Eyes Guanyin is 2.9 meters high, the Buddha, Bodhisattva, and Ming Wang are 1.2-1.4 meters high, the dwarf, ghost soldier, flying sky, and ghost are 0.12-0.18 meters high, and the others are 0.6-0.8 meters high. [2]

The frescoes in the waist hall of Qinglong Temple are good at composition. Composition is the structural form of a picture that combines and expresses the theme idea. Xie He referred to it as "business location" and Gu Kaizhi referred to it as "setting the position", which is the key to the success or failure of a painting. The fresco of the waist hall is divided into three parts in space: the sky, the earth, and the underground. The content is very complex, with various images of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism converging, scattered, and constantly changing, without losing unity. The eastern and western walls of the waist wall can be regarded as exquisite fresco art of Qinglong Temple. The numerous figures on the two walls are centered

around the three main statues. In terms of character arrangement, the figures of Buddhism and Taoism are intertwined, gathering and dispersing, and combining movement and stillness. In terms of layout and arrangement, the Buddha, Immortals, Ghosts, and Gods are carefully organized and arranged in a hierarchical manner, with auspicious clouds as the background between the deities, highlighting the overall character image and prioritizing them. And the arrangement of characters has a strong sense of density, not neat and uniform, but also unified and varied. If any group is selected, it can form a complete picture, and when combined, it forms a perfect artistic whole.

The characters in the picture are full and mellow, seeking to be suitable for religious doctrines and norms, such as the solemnity and kindness of various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the majesty and strength of heavenly kings and generals, the dignified appearance of the immortals, the charming and handsome beauty of the Jade Maiden and female deity, and the lively and lovely children. These images follow the tradition of Taoist and Buddhist typology and idealization, and have the characteristics of personification and secularization. The image of the female deity on the east and west walls is not only prominent in the image, but also in the main position, with maids and samurai guarding the left and right sides, and children playing in front of it. The gentle and serene spiritual temperament of the female deity is vividly portrayed, very similar to the image of a noble lady in the world. On the west wall, "Ri Guan Tian Zi Zhong" and "Di Shi Sheng Zhong" and on the east wall, "Beiji Ziwei Dadi" and "Nanji Tianhuang Dadi" and other pictures are the painted on the main locations. Five or six figures are grouped together, each wearing a crown of beams and stepping on auspicious clouds, accompanied by maids and warriors to the right and left, fully complementing the main figure. Especially on the right side of the statue of Dishu, there is a dwarf holding a fruit plate in one hand for its use. Dishitian looks forward and reaches out to pick up the fruit, making the serene scene and the horse full of vivid energy, which is truly full of finishing touch. The "Hariti Group" in the west wall, the "Ahan Sutra", said: "The ghost mother was originally named Ardi, the mother of five hundred ghosts. At first, she was an evil god, and often ate other people's children. The Buddha hid her son with his help. Later, she converted to Buddhism and became a child protection god. In the picture,

the Hariti has no evil ghost image of a cannibal son. Instead, she wears a corolla and long clothes. Her face is rich, beautiful, and her eyebrows are slightly wrinkled. The Hariti seems to be thinking, and her complex mood of thinking is very deep. Four children surrounded their mother tightly, some grabbed their clothes, some turned sideways, some played with bats, some wiped their eyes and cried, vividly portraying the deep love between mother and child in Buddhist frescoes. The Ten Great Ming Kings of the Southern Wall (Volume 13 of "True and False Killing Records") state: "The wise are bright and just, symbolizing wisdom. The so-called angry body, with the power of wisdom to break through the troubles and obstacles of the master, therefore, it is called as Ming King.") The image is particularly prominent, with bold and exaggerated visuals, rich in imagination, and not limited to the Nimitsu fan script, but to reproduce the powerful and powerful Ming King, making historical figures such as queens and princesses, filial virtuous women, and people in various trades in the lower part of the southern wall. Although these character images do not indicate the names of the characters, the subtle depiction of their characteristics can be more recognizable. The character, expression and behavior of the characters are all in place, and these characters are a clear manifestation of secularization.

The arrangement of characters in the waist hall frescoes is very full. Whether it is a single picture or a continuous long scroll composition, the picture is almost always covered with cloth. Therefore, the images often give people a feeling of overwhelming. In addition, the tight and continuous, dynamic and rhythmic lines in the design create a tension of life and a full and full momentum in the painting.

3. RHYTHM OF LINE DRAWING ART

Since the introduction of Han Buddhism to China, Buddhist painting has also been introduced. It has had a certain impact on Chinese painting and promoted the development of temple murals. During the development process, Buddhist painting art has been compatible with traditional Chinese painting, forming a form of expression with Chinese characteristics. By the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, Buddhism flourished, to the extent that during the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, everyone in the art world painted Buddhist paintings. According to the "Famous Paintings of Past Dynasties", "Emperor

Ming of Jin, Wei, and Xie were all skilled in painting, but not to the best of their abilities. The father and son of the Dai family were all skilled in painting, and they also respected the Shi family. They were inspired by the Jin, and when they painted, there would be Buddhist paintings." Here, Dai refers to Dai Kui of the Wei and Jin dynasties, and the model refers to Buddhist paintings. Therefore, Dai Kui created the model of Buddha statues as a teacher for later generations, and was influenced by Dai. In Chinese history, representative line drawing patterns were formed, such as the "Cao family pattern" of Cao Zhongda of the Northern Qi Dynasty, the "Zhang Sengyao" of the Liang Dynasty, and the "Wu family pattern" of Wu Daozi of the Tang Dynasty. Their expressive patterns directly affect the line art of traditional painting in later generations, and line drawing is an important means of shaping Chinese painting. The elastic Chinese brush injects strong emotions into light and heavy illness, depression, and movement, creating a simple and concise form with a distinct personality. Line drawing is a fine tradition of fresco art. The lines of the frescoes in the waist hall of Qinglong Temple inherit and carry forward the excellent tradition of traditional Chinese painting "bone method with a brush". "Bone method with a brush" is one of the important discussions on the ontological characteristics of painting in the Six Methods Theory. Zhang Yanyuan wrote in "Famous Paintings of Past Dynasties": "The appearance and backbone are all based on the intention and return to the use of the brush." The line drawing technique comes from the use of the brush, and the unique use and display of animal hair brushes in China are the tools and technical basis for the formal characteristics of Chinese painting. Folk painters have shown great skill in sketching frescoes with their center strokes, using iron lines, willow leaves, and broken reeds as the main ink lines. They also use nail heads, mouse tails, and earthworms as the main ink lines. The numerous character images in the screen, whether they are long or short, are all in one go, with a coherent pulse, sharp and abrupt changes in the importance of using the pen, changes in the thickness of the lines, and twists and turns, all of which are handled with exquisite craftsmanship. Rich in the sense of "Wu Dynasty style" and "Cao Zhongda-style garment lines", the painter's brushwork is as straightforward as the strokes of a bamboo flute. The lines themselves embody a flying beauty, giving them a stronger sense of movement, rhythm, and emotional expression. The western wall of the Waist Hall Dishu's image

clothing pattern is thick and smooth, and the combination of the square and circle at the turning point bears a strong force, and the ribbon floats with a strong sense of formal beauty. The top ten Ming King images on the south wall are considered exquisite in the line drawing art of Qinglong Temple. The lines are full of the feeling of "Wu's style", and the flowing and elegant lines, especially the brush movement of the hair, make people admire it naturally. The hair that can be tens of thousands of times, the pen is powerful, the flow is flying, and the lines are tightly connected. The flame is nimble and the characteristics of the flame rising are vividly expressed. The calligraphy brush used in this painting is very effective in virtual expressing the strong expressive power of traditional Chinese line drawing art through lines, as if singing a symphony of lines. The painting is filled with a strong sense of rhythm and rhyme, with an artistic effect of "full of wind and moving walls, and ghosts and gods detaching from the walls".

Dot and line art is the fundamental aspect of Chinese painting and also the main means of expression in Qinglong Temple fresco art. In Qinglong Temple fresco art, line drawing is not only the main means of artistic form, but also the carrier and image composition of the beauty of Qinglong Temple fresco art. It uses a highly rhythmic tone of writing, infused with strong emotional colors in the rhythmic and flowing strokes, creating a series of artistic images with distinct sexual personalities, lifelike spirit, and vivid charm. As American scholar Earl Jerome Coleman wrote in his book "Asian Art and the Spirit of Man," a certain factor that painters inject into their works flows out and enters our hearts. People can feel that it is not just a mind, not just a feeling, not just an emotion. It is the eternal perfection of the spirit, achieving liberation, freedom and fearlessness, and achieving absolute perfection in the universe. Absolute perfection is often associated with the "Tao", which is referred to as absolute perfection or infinite, integration of double taiji. The reason is that the lines reflect the rhythm of the universe, the dots and lines convey the eternity of life, the static image contains motion, and the abstract form contains the image essence. Therefore, Chinese painting shows the aesthetic spirit of "calligraphy, rhyme, and poetic spirit". The weight, speed, emptiness, strength, turning point, setback, tempo, rhythm, and purified lines of the brush are like musical melodies, and become the soul of all kinds of Chinese plastic arts.

4. COLOR ART RHYTHM

According to historical records, the painting of frescoes in Buddhist temples is mostly done by the head painter to draw lines and mark the colors used, and then by assistants, disciples, and miscellaneous workers to color them. "Famous Paintings of Past Dynasties" states: "Every time Wu Sheng (Daozi) draws, he paints without regrets, and often uses (Qu) Yan and Zhang Cangbu colors." It can be seen from this that there has always been a good division of labor in the production of ancient frescoes. Qin Lingyun recorded in "Historical Materials of Folk Painters": "To formally depict and affirm a painting, the jargon is called "setting ink". And it is necessary to specify the codes used for the colors prepared for each part, which are done by skilled craftsmen, while coloring is done by ordinary painters.

As early as the Wei, Jin, and even Sui and Tang dynasties, some famous artists were widely involved in the production of frescoes, such as Gu Kaizhi and Wu Daozi. However, after the rise of literati painting in the Song Dynasty, literati painters were more enthusiastic about the taste of brush and ink, Few people are involved in mural production, to the extent that Zhang Yanyuan wrote in his "Famous Paintings of Past Dynasties": "The Eastern and Western Zhaobi walls are combined with Wu paintings, and the Eastern wall has Bodhisattvas turning their eyes to humans. The Mage's Wen Tu also causes the color of the work cloth to be damaged." Here, damage refers to the color covering the painter's ink, treating the painter's coloring as a damage to the painter's lines. From here, it reveals Zhang Yanyuan's literati viewpoint of valuing ink over color, and valuing literati over craftsmen. [3] Therefore, under the guidance of the value system of literati painting, color painting (fresco) was largely maintained and promoted by folk painters after the Song Dynasty. Even when fresco art was about to decline at the end of the Song Dynasty, the fresco art of the Yuan Dynasty was just a flash in the pan, reproducing the brilliance of fresco art. The Qinglong Temple fresco was a wonderful flower in this fresco. The frescoes of Qinglong Temple are painted using a single line flat hook and heavy color flat painting method. Its basic color scheme is mainly green and green, with a combination of colors such as Zhu, Huang, and Bai, and is mainly composed of traditional five colors. The five colors refer to blue, red, white, black, and yellow, and have been consistently used in character painting since the

Han Dynasty. In the Book of Shangshu, it is said that "the harvesters are green, yellow, red, white, and black; words are applied to silk." Before the Wei and Jin dynasties, the main color tone was black and red. During the Wei and Jin dynasties, the introduction of Buddhist art changed the tone of black and red, with the rise of green. The Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties were a period of great development and prosperity for Buddhism in China. During this period, Buddhist frescoes also extensively absorbed foreign expression techniques to form the traditional Chinese language style of "color accumulation". Color accumulation refers to a painting style characterized by layers of color accumulation in vocabulary expression, which was often used in later frescoes for production. [4] In the use of color blocks on the painting material, mineral colors are often used to reflect the bright and heavy color of the picture. One of the Six Methods of Xie He, "coloring according to categories", was also the earliest manifestation of the color concept in classical Chinese painting. Until the Yuan Dynasty, as the mainstream style of fresco painting, the color block painting was widely spread among folk painters.

Just like the Shishengzhong's portraits of the western wall of the Waist Hall of Qinglong Temple, mineral colors are widely used, consisting of four colors: green, vermilion, and white. The surrounding clouds are mainly yellow, with simple colors and a strong sense of decorative beauty. The screen fully utilizes the relationship between contrasting colors, complementary colors, and emphasizes the contrast between warm and cold. The yellow clouds are paired with cold green ribbons and skirts, and the warm vermilion skirt is compared to the cold skirt. The left maid of Dishixian's white sleeve is paired with green clothes, and the children next to her are mostly colored in pink, including the clouds surrounding the children, mostly in white. However, the red chest pocket and several green ribbons add a touch of interest to the scene. It can be seen that ancient people paid attention to the relationship between color contrast and its application early on. The warm colors of the characters' clothing on the west wall of the central hall (Putian Liexing Jun) are relatively large, mostly in red and yellow. The auspicious clouds at the feet are mainly in yellow, and some parts of the clothing are decorated with cold colors such as white, green, and green. The picture is immediately full of vitality. It includes many groups of character images, such as the Ten Ming Kings, the Hariti group, the Four Seas

Dragon Kings, and so on. Different faces of the characters are distinguished by several commonly used colors, producing different contrast relations. By relying on simple color relations, the brilliant artistic images with bright colors are created. The overall picture is strong, solemn, deep, and highly decorative. Although it has gone through multiple dynasties, the vivid colors, alternating cold and warm, simple and elegant, and thought-provoking color effects produced by the painting are not lacking in a meticulous and colorful painting with exquisite artistic techniques.

5. CONCLUSION

The fresco art of the Qinglong Temple in Jishan, Shanxi is a precious heritage left by traditional Chinese culture, and also provides another space for discussion in art history. The frescoes of Qinglong Temple showcase a rich and colorful scroll with flexible, rigorous and orderly composition, full of tension, and exquisite lines and color language. From a temporal perspective, the fresco art of Qinglong Temple is connected to historical traditions, and from a spatial perspective, it is not isolated. If people compare it with frescoes from the Yuan and Ming dynasties in various parts of the country, especially in Shanxi and Hebei, there is a certain causal relationship. The frescoes of Qinglong Temple are not only comparable in art to those of Yongle Palace, Pilu Temple, and other places, but also inherit and carry forward the glorious tradition of Chinese fresco art. But in the process of studying Chinese painting, we overemphasize the development of scroll painting and literati painting, and do not pay enough attention to local folk frescoes. For a long time, the expression of color in Chinese painting has gradually weakened and even been excluded, making the creation and research of Chinese painting unable to follow the established pattern of literati painting, only indulging in the game of pen and ink, and lacking a strong shock to people's hearts with colorful and heavy colored scrolls. The extremely rich and colorful language in traditional frescoes provides people with valuable artistic wealth. Color is a very important part of Chinese painting. Only by deeply studying the tradition and absorbing essence to enrich the artistic language, can people create works with unique national and artistic characteristics.

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