

Research on the Dilemma and Improvement Measures of Chinese Thangka Art Talent Education

Li Hong*

School of the Fine Arts and Design, Nanjing Normal University of Special Education, Nanjing 210038, Jiangsu, China

**Corresponding author e-mail: 3289556978@qq.com*

ABSTRACT. *Based on the perspective of national art talent training, this paper explores the dilemma and the improvement measures of talent education of Thangka art in China, which is of great value for the development of intangible cultural heritage Thangka painting art. It reveals and analyzes the current difficulties of Thangka art talent education in China from the following aspects of urgent needs to improve the training quality of Thangka painting talents, lack of technical talents for the cleaning, restoration and protection of Thangka works, urgent needs to cultivate Thangka painting talents who understand the rules of the art market, necessity to give theoretical guidance of design aesthetics and design ethics to Thangka Painters, and needs to strengthening the educational function of Thangka Art. On this basis, the following specific improvement measures of Chinese Thangka art talent education are also discussed: reforming Thangka painting education in colleges and universities to improve the quality of professional talent training; strengthening the training of talents in Thangka cleaning, repairing and protecting techniques; improving the cultivation of legal and creating talents for the sustainable development of the Thangka market; using design aesthetics and design ethics theories to enhance the level of Thangka creators; and enhancing the educational connotation of Thangka art and the function of “nurturing people with culture”.*

KEYWORDS: *China, Thangka art, Art talent education, Dilemma, Improvement Measures*

1. Introduction

As an unique art form in the field of decorative painting, Thangka, representing the most national features of painting, is a genre of Tibetan painting art with distinctive composition and sophisticated colors^[1]. Thangka is known as the treasure of Chinese national art in the field of painting, and is also the precious intangible cultural heritage of the Chinese folk art. However, there exist some dilemmas in talent training of Thangka painting art, and it is urgent to improve related education to get out of the predicament so as to promote the inheritance and innovation of Thangka art.

2. Methodology

2.1 Questionnaire survey and interview survey methods

The research use questionnaire survey and interview survey methods to analyze the difficulties faced by Thangka art talent education in China.

2.2 Comparative research methods and case research methods

The research use comparative research methods and case research methods to explore measures to improve the education of Chinese thangka art talents.

2.3 Problem analysis methods and element analysis methods

The research use problem analysis methods and element analysis methods to reveal the existing problems and influencing factors of Chinese thangka art talent education.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Dilemma in training talents of Thangka painting art

(1) Urgent needs to improve the training quality of Thangka painting talents

As a national art, Thangka painting art needs to be passed down from generation to generation. In order to carry forward this national intangible cultural heritage, not only the traditional apprenticeship style of learning is a necessity, colleges and universities also need to set up relevant majors that cultivate high-quality and professional talents. However, some studies have shown that “Learning Thangka painting in colleges and universities has some limitations. For example, students of different grades of the Thangka major rarely have chances to learn from each other, and there are few opportunities for them to see and read the classic original works of Thangka painters, and most of them draw lessons from Thangka paintings”.^[2]

(2) Lack of technical talents for the cleaning, restoration and protection of Thangka works

Due to the fact that most of Thangka works are “scroll Buddha statues” and are easy to be corroded, damaged by worms and weathered, Thangka works need to be cleaned and repaired regularly and effective protection measures should be taken. The reality, however, is grim. For example, “The female buddha statues of Wisdom” is one of the Thangka works enshrined in the Xianlou Buddha Hall in the West Warmth Chamber, Hall of Mental Cultivation of the Forbidden City. A case study found that it was produced during the Qianlong period and had arisen various kinds

of drawbacks after hanging on the second floor of the Temple for a long time. Among them, dust is one of the most serious one." [3] Some researchers found that the protection and restoration of scroll Thangkas urgently need to be studied by using the cleaning methods, and more attention should be paid on the physical cleaning to effectively remove the dusty Thangka surface so that the purpose of protecting Thangka can be achieved. There are, however, very few talents who master this kind of cleaning, repairing and protecting technology, so the need to cultivate more talents is urgent.

(3) Urgent needs to cultivate Thangka painting talents who understand the rules of the art market

With the application of modern technology to the art of Thangka painting, the Thangka art market also presents chaos such as offering shoddy goods for quality goods. After investigation, it shows that "the main threats facing the digitalization of Thangka images are security issues such as unauthorized copying and dissemination, counterfeiting or shoddy and malicious tampering." [4] This will undoubtedly lead to the quality of Thangka intermingled, and even the overall quality will decline. As a matter of fact, there is a symbiotic relationship between science and technology and fine arts, as well as a deviation, since "the application of information science and technology to fine arts induces the commercialization of fine arts." [5] While the author obtains generous commissions and rewards in this unhealthy market, it is difficult to guarantee the quality of the works, which will disrupt the normal order of the Thangka art market. This situation in the Thangka art market precisely shows that Thangka painting talents who understand the rules of the art market and follow the art ethics urgently need to be cultivated.

(4) Necessity to give theoretical guidance of design aesthetics and design ethics to Thangka Painters

Hegel believed that aesthetics is a "philosophy of art". Generally speaking, the object of aesthetic research is an aesthetic activity, a spiritual and cultural activity of human beings, that is to say, it is a discipline that studies the aesthetic relationship between humans and the world. As a branch of aesthetics, design aesthetics is a new interdisciplinary subject developed by the combination of modern design theory and aesthetic theory, which can be seen necessary to be absorbed and utilized on the process of optimizing the creation of the contemporary Thangka art. However, an inspection of the current Thangka art reveals that hanks to the western development policy, although the selection of high-quality materials has been improved to make the Thangka art more innovative, its creative style and aesthetic appeal still follow the traditional creation methods and tastes. Goals starting from design aesthetics, that is, from the perspective of humans general aesthetic activities to make innovation of Thangka art, are not achieved, which to some extent has restricted the promotion of Thangka art.

Ethics is a discipline that deals with the relationship between morality and interests, in other words, between "righteousness" and "profit". Design ethics is the application of ethics in the field of design, and it is the key knowledge that solves the relationship between morality and interest in this field. As discussed in the

previous article, the phenomenon of counterfeit goods in the Thangka art market show that there is a problem of the relationship between morality and interest in this art, and it is necessary to guide and educate creators on design ethics theories and thoughts.

(5) Needs to strengthening the educational function of Thangka Art

There is no doubt that as a national art form, Thangka is special in its uniqueness and nationality. Just as Chinese scholars have said, issues such as the relationship between Thangka art and the “humanization” of Tibetan society, its impact on the construction of a harmonious Tibetan society, and the importance of the sustainable development of national intellectual resources and practical paths, are all need more attention^[6]. Nevertheless, being a rainbow in the culture of a multinational country, Thangka art not only promotes the spirits of Tibetan culture, but also needs to educate and guide future practitioners to continuously demonstrate its educational function and meaning, so as to truly achieve the cultural function of “humanization” and “nurturing people with culture”.

3.2 Improvement Measures of Chinese Thangka Art Talent Education

First, it is necessary to reform Thangka painting education in colleges and universities to improve the quality of professional talent training. For the sake of better promoting the development of Thangka painting education, colleges and universities need to put forward the path and method to solve the existing problems in the current Thangka education. Specifically, it is essential to reform the Thangka education concepts, adjust the curriculum system, adopt advanced materials and painting techniques, strengthen the skill exchange and mutual learning among students, classrooms, and genres, advocate the learning of classics of Thangka painters, get rid of the shackles of Thangka works and paintings, and innovate teaching methods and means.

The second measure is to strengthen the training of talents in Thangka cleaning, repairing and protecting techniques. High-tech means should be used to optimize material quality, improve mounting methods, and adopting advanced cleaning technology and scientific protection methods for the damage of worms. The exploration of some scholars could be popularized. For example, according to the characteristics of the binding problems of "Siddhi Lakshmi", through the comparison of repair methods, it is proposed to conduct physical reinforcement experiment on a piece of detached Thangka binding by using PLEXDOL498 coating method to provide technical and methodological support for the subsequent physical reinforcement of large area Thangka binding.^[7]“It will provide reference for the protection of Thangka, an important intangible cultural heritage in Tibet, by taking the collection of Thangka in Tibet Museum as the research object to discuss Thangka’s material, mounting methods, common diseases and scientific protection methods.”^[8] “According to the current situation of the decentralized preservation of Tibetan Thangka heritage, the joint construction of digital archive resources is used to realize the sharing of information of Thangka heritage in Tibet.”^[9]

The third measure is to improve the cultivation of legal and creating talents for the sustainable development of the Thangka market. In response to the phenomenon of counterfeit goods in the art market and malicious tampering and other threats to the quality and safety of Thangka artworks, effective countermeasures should be adopted to regulate the market from the aspect of legal system, crack down on the counterfeit behavior, and at the same time combine the digital watermarking technology to improve the quality of Thangka art.

The fourth measure is to use design aesthetics and design ethics theories to enhance the level of Thangka creators. If Thangka art is created in accordance with the guidance of design aesthetics theory, it will inevitably bring forth new ideas. "As a yardstick of Thangka aesthetics, measurement is not only an artistic means with both form and spirit, but also the core skill inherited by Thangka as the intangible cultural heritage."^[10] Also as the modeling scale of statues in Thangka art, it is a special aesthetic attribute in Buddhist art. With the rapid development of science and technology in today's society, some new Thangka schools will emerge due to the inheritance and innovation of Thangka aesthetic standards based on the theory of design aesthetics. The design ethics aims to solve the relationship between moral and interest in the field of design, and "it requires to consider human needs in artistic and even decorative design, and use ethics to achieve the balance and coordination of humans, environment and resources, while highlighting the characteristics of art in pursuit of truth, kindness and beauty."^[11]

The fifth measure is to enhance the educational connotation of Thangka art and the function of "nurturing people with culture". The study found that "how to promote the development of Tibetan Thangka art in the current era has attracted the attention of ethnic researchers."^[12] The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China pointed out clearly that "culture is the soul of a country and a nation. Culture rejuvenates the country and strengthens the nation." In recent years, cultural education has come into being and is in the ascendant. At the same time the educational implication of culture is valued, which will not be realized automatically. Only by means of cultural inheritance and innovation in educational fields such as universities can the function of "nurturing people with culture" be realized.

4. Conclusion

As an unique art form of Decoration Art, Thangka is known as the treasure of Chinese national art in the field of painting, Research on the Dilemma and Improvement Measures of Chinese Thangka Art Talent Education will be conducive to the aim to promote the innovation of contemporary Thangka painting art , develop Chinese national art and culture through talent training.

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