

# Construction and Innovative Development of Modern Inheritance System for Tibetan Thangka Drawing Skills

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the construction and innovative development path of Tibetan Thangka drawing skills. As a treasure of Tibetan religious painting art, Thangka has profound historical and cultural value and unique artistic style. Its drawing skills strictly follow traditional rituals, integrate the multiple connotations of religion, culture and art, and are an important carrier of Tibetan culture. However, the traditional inheritance model of Thangka faces many challenges in modern society, such as the limitations of master-apprentice inheritance, insufficient policy support, and weakening of cultural identity. To meet these challenges, this article proposes a framework design for building a modern inheritance system, including government-led, social participation, inheritor core, education support and scientific and technological empowerment. At the same time, it emphasizes improving the Thangka education system, exploring digital inheritance methods, and promoting the combination of traditional skills and modern design to achieve the innovative development of Thangka art. Through marketization and industrialization exploration, technology empowering Thangka inheritance, and creating a unique Thangka art commercial brand, this article aims to promote the creative transformation and sustainable development of Thangka art in modern society, so that it can bring new vitality and vitality on the basis of maintaining its traditional characteristics.

**Keywords:** Thangka, Tibetan Culture, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Inheritance System, Innovative Development.

## 1. The Historical and Cultural Value of Thangka Drawing Skills

### 1.1. The Origin and Development of Thangka

Thangka is a unique Tibetan religious painting art form, and its history can be traced back to the Tubo Dynasty in the 7th century AD. The origin of Thangka is closely related to the spread of Buddhism in Tibet. Early Thangkas were deeply influenced by the art of Indian, Nepal and Central Plains, and gradually formed a unique artistic style. With the prosperity of Tibetan Buddhism, Thangka has become an important carrier for religious practice, cultural dissemination and artistic expression. It not only records the doctrines, history and myths of Tibetan Buddhism, but also carries the beliefs, philosophy and aesthetic concepts of the Tibetan people. In Tibetan culture, Thangka is regarded as a sacred work of art. It is not only an indispensable instrument in religious rituals, but also an important symbol of Tibetan cultural identity.

Thangka has multiple meanings in religious functions. First of all, it is an important tool for Tibetan Buddhism practice, and believers assist in meditation and practice by visualizing Buddha statues, Bodhisattvas or Dharma protectors in the Thangka. Secondly, Thangka plays an important role in religious rituals, often used in Judaism, initiation rituals and blessing activities, and is considered to have divine power. In addition, Thangka is also an educational tool that spreads Buddhist teachings and historical stories to believers through imagery. Especially in areas without writing traditions, Thangka has become an important medium for cultural heritage. In terms of artistic characteristics, Thangka is known for its exquisite painting skills and unique artistic style. The drawing of Thangka follows strict religious rituals and measurement standards, and painters need to go through long-term learning and practice to master their skills. The colors of the Thangka are bright and symbolic, such as blue represents compassion, red represents power, and gold represents sacred.

In terms of composition, Thangka usually takes the central master as the core, surrounded by relevant gods, guardians or storylines, forming a clear and orderly picture. In addition, Thangka often uses precious materials such as gold foil and gem powder to enhance its artistic expression and religious sacredness. In short, Thangka is not only a perfect combination of religion and art, but also an indispensable spiritual and material wealth in Tibetan culture [1].

### 1.2. The Uniqueness of Thangka Drawing Skills

#### 1.2.1. Process Flow and Technical Requirements for Thangka Drawing

Thangka drawing is a complex and fine process. Its production process strictly follows traditional rituals and technical requirements, usually including the following main steps:

(1) Canvas preparation: Thangka's canvas are mostly made of high-quality cotton or linen. After multiple processes such as soaking, drying, and grinding, the surface is smooth and smooth, making it easy to draw.

(2) Base and sketch: The painter uses charcoal or pencil to outline accurate sketches on the canvas to ensure that the proportion, posture and decoration of the Buddha statue comply with traditional measurement standards (such as the "Symbol Measuring Sutra").

(3) Coloring: The colors of Thangka are mainly mineral pigments, such as cinnabar, turquoise, lapis lazuli, etc. These pigments are not only bright in color, but also durable. When painting, you must follow the principle of light to deep and render it layer by layer to achieve a rich sense of layering.

(4) Line drawing and gold drawing: After the color is completed, the painter uses fine brushes to outline fine lines to highlight the outline and details of the image. Then, gold foil or gold powder is used to trace gold to enhance the sacredness and gorgeousness of the picture.

(5) Eye opening and blessing: The last step in drawing

Thangka is to "open the eyes" for the Buddha statue, that is, to draw the eyes. This step is considered to give Thangka life and spirituality. After completion, the Thangka needs to be blessed by the monk before it can become a sacred object of religious significance.

Thangka painting requires extremely high technical requirements for painters, not only requiring exquisite painting skills, but also a deep understanding of Buddhist doctrines, cultural traditions and measurement standards. The artist usually needs years of learning and practice to complete a high-quality Thangka independently.

### **1.2.2. Cultural Symbols and Symbolic Meanings in the Drawing of Thangka**

As a carrier of Tibetan culture and religious art, Thangka is full of rich cultural symbols and symbolic meanings. These symbols are not only part of artistic expression, but also an important medium for conveying religious philosophy and cultural values.

(1) Buddha statues and gods: The images of Buddha statues, Bodhisattvas, Dharma protectors and other images in the Thangka are core symbols. Each image has its own specific postures, gestures (handprints) and magical instruments, symbolizing different doctrines and functions. For example, Guanyin Bodhisattva symbolizes compassion, Manjushri Bodhisattva represents wisdom, and Vajra Bodhisattva symbolizes power.

(2) Color symbol: The colors in the Thangka have profound symbolic significance. White symbolizes purity and peace, red represents energy and vitality, blue means wisdom and compassion, and gold symbolizes sacredness and immortality.

(3) Patterns and decorations: The common patterns of lotus, flames, auspicious clouds and other patterns in Thangka also have specific symbolic significance. Lotus represents purity and enlightenment, flames symbolize the light of wisdom, and auspicious clouds represent auspiciousness and sacred protection.

(4) Cosmic View and Mandala: Many Thangkas use mandalas (mandalas) as the theme, depicting Buddhist cosmic View. The geometric structure of the mandala symbolizes the order and harmony of the universe. The Buddha statue at the center represents the realm of enlightenment, while the patterns around it symbolize the path to enlightenment by practitioners.

(5) Narrative symbols: Some Thangkas tell Buddhist stories or historical events in the form of comic strips, conveying doctrines and cultural memory through graphic methods.

Thangka is not only the crystallization of art and technology, but also a visual expression of Tibetan culture, religious philosophy and cosmic view. Each Thangka carries profound cultural connotation and spiritual value, and becomes a bridge connecting the past and the present, the secular and the sacred.

### **1.2.3. The Value of Thangka as an Intangible Cultural Heritage**

Thangka is a treasure in Tibetan culture, with extremely high artistic value and is hailed as a treasure in Chinese national painting art. The drawing process of Thangka is very complicated, and painters need to use rich colors and lines to express Buddhist stories, characters and natural landscapes. Thangka also has a certain uniqueness. Thangka is a scroll painting made of colorful silk and cotton cloth, which is usually used to worship Buddha statues or spread culture. During the drawing process, Thangka uses gold powder and

natural mineral pigments, making Thangka's colors strong and heavy, and the color will not fade for thousands of years, and will always maintain its brilliant true color [2]. At the same time, Thangka is an important carrier of Tibetan culture. It records the doctrines, historical stories and cosmic views of Tibetan Buddhism through graphic methods, becoming an important part of the spiritual life of the Tibetan people. Thangka's drawing skills, color application and composition design embody the wisdom and creativity of the Tibetan people and is an important symbol of national cultural identity. As an intangible cultural heritage, Thangka has the characteristics of living inheritance. His drawing skills have been passed down from master to apprentice to this day. It not only retains the traditional craftsmanship and religious rituals, but also constantly adapts and innovates in modern society, showing strong vitality. In addition, Thangka also has important value in promoting cultural diversity and cross-cultural exchanges. As a representative art form of Tibetan culture, Thangka has received widespread attention worldwide, becoming a window for the world to understand Tibetan culture, and also provides a platform for dialogue and understanding between different cultures. As an intangible cultural heritage, Thangka is not only a precious heritage of Tibetan culture, but also a common cultural wealth for all mankind. Its protection and inheritance are of great significance to maintaining cultural diversity and promoting harmonious social development.

## **2. The Current Situation and Challenges of Inheriting the Thangka Drawing Skills**

### **2.1. Limitations of Thangka's Traditional Inheritance Model**

The traditional inheritance model of Thangka has played an important role in history, but its limitations are increasingly emerging in the context of modern society. First of all, the traditional master-apprentice inheritance model is closed and exclusive, and is usually only carried out within a family or a specific community, resulting in limited scope of inheritance and difficulty in adapting to the openness and diversified needs of modern society. Secondly, Thangka has a long learning cycle and high skills requirements. When facing modern career choices and economic pressures, the younger generation often lacks sufficient motivation and patience to devote long-term learning and practice, resulting in serious aging problems for inheritors and lack of successors. In addition, the traditional inheritance model lacks a systematic education system and standardized evaluation mechanism, resulting in uneven quality of skill inheritance, and some traditional skills even face the risk of loss. At the same time, the impact of globalization and modernization has gradually weakened the traditional functions of Thangka, and the younger generation's sense of identity with the religious significance and cultural value of Thangka has declined, further exacerbating the crisis of inheritance [3]. Therefore, although the traditional inheritance model has provided important guarantees for the continuation of Thangka in history, its limitations cannot be ignored in contemporary society, and these challenges still need to be met through innovative inheritance methods and improved protection mechanisms.

## **2.2. Insufficient Policies and Protection Measures**

As an intangible cultural heritage, Thangka has received attention from the national and international levels, but there are still many shortcomings in policy formulation and the implementation of protection measures. First of all, existing protection policies focus on material protection, such as the collection and restoration of Thangka entities, while the focus on its technical inheritance, cultural ecology and social functions is relatively insufficient. Many policies lack substantive support for Thangka inheritors (such as painters), which has led to their livelihood problems not being effectively resolved, affecting the enthusiasm for skill inheritance. Second, the implementation of protection measures often lacks systematicity and long-term nature. Many projects remain on short-term activities or superficial publicity, and fail to form a sustainable protection mechanism. For example, the protection work of some local governments relies too much on tourism development, which has led to the intensification of the tendency of commercialization of Thangka culture, and even the alienation of skills and cultural distortion. Third, the ineffective supervision in policy implementation has also caused some protection funds and resources to be effectively utilized, and even misappropriated or wasted. At the same time, the legal system for Thangka protection is still incomplete, especially in the protection of intellectual property rights and the prevention of illegal transactions, which has led to the continuous problems of piracy, imitation and smuggling of Thangka artworks. Overall, the policies and measures for Thangka protection still have a lot of room for improvement in systemic, targeted and sustainable aspects. It is still necessary to build a more scientific and effective protection system by improving laws and regulations, strengthening resource integration and promoting community participation [4].

## **3. Construction of Modern Inheritance System for Thangka Drawing Skills**

### **3.1. Framework Design of Thangka Inheritance System**

The framework design of the Thangka inheritance system should be based on systemicity, sustainability and innovation, and build a multi-level and multi-subject collaboration protection and inheritance mechanism. The following is the specific design:

**Government-led:** formulate special policies and regulations, provide financial support, establish supervision and evaluation mechanisms, and ensure the standardization and effectiveness of inheritance work.

**Social participation:** Cultural institutions, enterprises, foundations and community organizations are encouraged to participate in Thangka protection, and to enhance social awareness and participation through exhibitions, sponsorships, festivals and other forms.

**Inheritor core:** Establish a scientific inheritor identification and support mechanism, protect the rights and interests of inheritors, and promote the combination of master-apprentice inheritance and vocational training.

**Educational support:** Incorporate Thangka skills into the school education system, open professional courses, establish vocational training centers, and cultivate a new generation of Thangka painters.

**Technology empowerment:** Use digital technology to record and disseminate Thangka skills, promote new media communication and cross-border cooperation, and expand the influence of Thangka. In the process of promoting national art works, official media is the main communication medium with the highest credibility and the highest dependence of the people. When inheriting and promoting Thangka art works, official media can keep up with the pace of the times, adopt a lively official media dissemination style, change the one-way Thangka art and culture inheritance into two-way communication, and construct a certain dialogue situation to attract the masses to understand Thangka art and spread Thangka art.

### **3.2. The Improvement of Thangka Education System**

Improving the Thangka education system is one of the important ways to ensure the inheritance of skills. Include Thangka drawing skills in primary and secondary school art courses, and offer Thangka art majors in colleges and universities to cultivate professional talents with theoretical knowledge and practical abilities. Establish a Thangka Skills Training Center to provide systematic vocational training for young people who are interested in learning Thangka, covering traditional skills, cultural theory and modern design. Develop simple online Thangka courses and virtual reality (VR) teaching resources, use new media platforms to spread Thangka culture, and attract more young people to participate in learning.

### **3.3. Exploration of Digital Inheritance of Thangka**

Digital technology provides new possibilities for the inheritance of Thangka. 3D scanning, high-definition photography and digital modeling technology can be used to digitally record Thangka, establish a Thangka image database, and ensure the permanent preservation of precious works. Develop a digital tutorial and interactive learning platform for Thangka drawing, using video, animation and virtual simulation technologies to help learners master traditional skills. Use blockchain technology to trace the origin and prevent counterfeiting of Thangka artworks, protect the inheritor's intellectual property rights, and prevent illegal copying and transactions. Combining digital technology, we will develop cultural and creative products, games and film and television works with the theme of Thangka to promote the innovative dissemination of Thangka culture.

## **4. The Innovative Development Path of Thangka Drawing Skills**

### **4.1. The Combination of Traditional Skills and Modern Design**

In terms of artistic form, on the basis of retaining the traditional drawing skills of Thangka, modern art design elements are incorporated to explore new forms of expression. For example, combining the religious symbols of Thangka with abstract art and minimalist style to create works that have both traditional charm and modern aesthetics; cooperating with designers in the fields of fashion, architecture, film and television, applying Thangka elements to fashion design, interior decoration, movie scenes, etc. to expand Thangka application scenarios. For example, integrating Thangka's

colors and patterns into high-end fashion designs to create a fashion brand with cultural characteristics to achieve cross-field cooperation in Thangka.

## **4.2. Exploration of Marketization and Industrialization**

Apply Thangka elements to cultural and creative product design, such as stationery, household goods, accessories, etc., to develop practical and artistic cultural derivatives. For example, some museums produce Thangka-themed notebooks, scarves, mobile phone cases, etc. to meet the needs of young consumers; they can also be combined with cultural tourism. Create Thangka themed cultural tourism projects in the birthplace of Thangka culture such as Tibet and Qinghai. Through Thangka drawing experience workshops, art exhibitions and cultural festivals, attract tourists to participate and promote the development of the cultural tourism industry. Establish a Thangka art brand and enhance market value through high-end customization, limited edition artworks, etc. At the same time, social media and e-commerce platforms are used for promotion, expanding brand influence and creating new paths for the development of Thangka.

## **4.3. Technology Empowers Thangka Inheritance**

Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies provide new possibilities for Thangka inheritance. Through technology empowerment, Thangka can not only break through the limitations of traditional display and communication, but also attract the younger generation and global audiences in a more vivid and interactive way. First, VR technology can build an immersive Thangka art experience space. By wearing VR devices, users can "enter" the world of Thangka and create an online Thangka exhibition, allowing global audiences to appreciate Thangka art anytime and anywhere. Observe its exquisite drawing skills, color application and composition design up close, and you can even understand the religious significance and cultural background of Thangka through virtual interaction. This immersive experience not only enhances the audience's understanding and interest in Thangka, but also opens up new ways for Thangka's education and dissemination. Second, AR technology can combine Thangka elements with real scenes, such as scanning a specific pattern through a mobile phone or tablet device, and present dynamic Thangka images or related cultural commentary on the screen, allowing Thangka art to integrate into daily life in a more flexible way. Third, VR and AR technologies can also be used for the teaching and inheritance of Thangka drawing techniques. Through virtual simulation technology, learners can simulate the entire process of Thangka drawing in a virtual environment, from canvas preparation to coloring and gold drawing, and gradually master traditional skills. Technology empowerment not only injects new vitality into the inheritance of Thangka, but also provides infinite possibilities for its communication and innovation in the context of globalization, allowing this ancient art form to shine with new vitality in modern society.

## **4.4. Create a unique Thangka Art Commercial Brand**

The integrated development of Thangka art and tourism industry has given rise to the establishment of related cultural brands. However, the current tourism and cultural products on the market generally have uneven quality, and excessive

commercialization has led to the loss of artistic value and the weakening of aesthetic characteristics. From the perspective of the matching degree of cultural resources and brand building, Thangka Art has shown a development trend of disproportionate communication influence and resource strength in the process of commercialization. This contradiction of "weak at the beginning and strong at the end" is mainly reflected in insufficient exploration of brand communication laws, limited resource investment, lack of professional talents, and weak integration awareness. These factors together have led to a series of problems such as insufficient synergy of communication subjects, low communication efficiency, fragmented communication methods, dispersed channels, vague target audiences, and lack of feedback mechanisms.

In order to promote the inheritance and development of Thangka art and build a commercial brand system with unique value, it is necessary to promote it in multiple dimensions. The first task is to strengthen the autonomy of brand communication and give full play to the active role of market entities. Given the attributes of Thangka art as a regional cultural public product, the government should play a leading role and incorporate it into the cultural publicity system to obtain better resource allocation and communication channels. Second, we must pay attention to the synergy between art operators and communicators, establish an effective docking mechanism between brands and creators, and enhance the systematicity and synergy of cultural communication through diversified communication activities. At the practical level, planners should use systematic communication strategies to deepen public awareness through special thematic activities. We can plan continuous special activities in combination with important festivals, shorten the interval period of cultural experience, and make full use of the self-media platform to innovate communication forms. On the basis of traditional media, we actively use emerging media such as micro-films and short videos to enhance the adaptability of brand building in the times. Third, we also need to pay attention to the integration and utilization of new media resources and strengthen long-term planning and systematic thinking. In response to the current problems of lagging content updates of official new media platforms in many regions and lack of attractive visual design, the Thangka art elements should be organically integrated into the official media system to make them a regional cultural symbol, and promote the deep integration of traditional culture and the modern communication environment through professional operations [5].

## **5. Conclusion**

The construction of a modern inheritance system for Thangka drawing skills requires an organic combination of the protection of the essence of traditional craftsmanship and innovative development. At the inheritance level, a systematic master-apprentice inheritance mechanism should be established, and traditional oral teaching skills should be transformed into a replicable and popularizable teaching system by establishing professional training institutions, writing standardized textbooks, recording demonstration videos, etc. At the same time, we should focus on cultivating compound talents who are proficient in traditional techniques and have modern artistic literacy, and encourage inheritors to explore innovative expressions that meet contemporary aesthetic needs on the basis of maintaining the core elements

of Thangka art. In terms of innovative development, we can try to combine Thangka art with digital technology, use virtual reality, augmented reality and other technical means to develop interactive exhibitions and immersive experience projects, so that this ancient art form can better adapt to the modern communication environment. In addition, we should actively explore the cross-border integration of Thangka art with contemporary art, design and other fields, develop cultural and creative products with practical value, and expand their application scenarios and market space. In the process of industrialization development, strict quality standards and certification systems must be established to ensure innovative development without losing the cultural authenticity of Thangka art. By building an innovative ecosystem that integrates industry, education, research and application, we will promote the creative transformation and innovative development of Thangka art on the basis of maintaining traditional characteristics, so that it can bring new vitality and vitality in modern society.

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