

Research on Yuan Dynasty Mural

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Abstract: The murals of the Yuan Dynasty are a remarkable work of art that shows the connection between the culture of Mongolian nomads and Chinese culture. These paintings have a variety of contents covering religious and ordinary life styles, and are important for understanding international relations and social changes at that time. This article briefly examines the religious and ordinary life forms, artistic characteristics, and social impact of the murals of the Yuan Dynasty.

Keywords: Yuan Dynasty, Murals, Religious Images, Door Amulets, Mythical Beast, Dragon, Phoenix Pattern, Floral Pattern.

1. Introduction

Religious murals in the Yuan Dynasty are an important part of the visual arts, mainly used in Buddhist temples, the palaces of the imperial court, and other religious buildings. They not only reflect the influence of the Yuan Dynasty's many religious policies, but also show the development and integration of religious art at that time. The characteristics and social functions of these murals can be studied in detail through scientific research and the study of major monuments.

2. Religious Murals

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The religious murals of the Yuan Dynasty were mainly Buddhist in theme, and also included religious content such as Buddhism and Shamanism. These paintings were widely distributed in China, Tibet, and the Mongolian Plateau, and were diverse in form and craftsmanship. For example, Tibetan Buddhist murals are abundant in monuments such as Saja Monastery and the Bin Lin Shi Grottoes in Yongjing, Gansu Province, while Chinese Buddhist murals are concentrated in places such as Yongle Palace in Shanxi Province and Longxin Temple in Zhengding, Hebei Province.

Regarding the regional and stylistic characteristics of the murals, scholar Li Yulong noted: "The Buddhist murals of the Yuan Dynasty emphasized the mystical content in their subject matter and combined elements of Chinese, Tibetan, and West Asian art in their style, which is a clear manifestation of the cultural exchange of the Mongol Empire" [1]

The style of religious murals in the Yuan Dynasty reflects the deep integration of cultures from different regions. Buddhist murals mainly depict the gods, symbols, and donors of the Secret Mantra, and also depict traditional images such as fairies and the eight heavenly gods. The murals are brightly colored and use gold leaf and mineral paint to depict religious events in a sacred and majestic manner.

Regarding the murals of the Tibetan Saja Monastery, scholar Wu Chengzhu noted: "The murals of the Saja

Monastery are famous for their bright colors, fine lines, and complex compositions, and they learn from traditional Chinese painting techniques and absorb the symbolic expressions of Tibetan art" [2]. Also, the murals of the Three Pure Idols in the Yongle Palace, a mural of the Yuan Dynasty's Bombay religion, show a unique religious aesthetic style with rational composition and order.

Religious murals in the Yuan Dynasty served a variety of purposes. Buddhist murals often used narrative imagery to depict the life and deeds of the Buddha and to help devotees understand the importance of the teachings. In contrast, Buddhist murals aimed to create a perfect divine world and expressed Buddhist worldviews and moral values.

Regarding the social role of religious murals, scholar Wang Jianming noted: "Religious murals in the Yuan Dynasty were not only a physical expression of religious beliefs, but also a tool of state policy that used artistic influence through the visual arts to create cultural unity and subjugate multiple ethnic groups" [3].

"Yongle Palace Mural" The murals of the Three Great Gods in the Yongle Palace are the pinnacle of the art of the Yuan Dynasty. They depict the Three Great Gods and many gods, showing the order of the world of the Yongle Palace. Scholar Chen Weirun noted: "The murals of the Yongle Palace are complex in design, have many characters, and every detail contains the rich philosophical meaning of the Yongle Palace, and are the pinnacle of ancient Chinese mural art".

"The Murals of Saja Monastery" The murals of Saja Monastery are representative of Tibetan Buddhist art of the Yuan Dynasty, and their themes cover Buddhist teachings, secret rituals, and the history of the monastery. Scholar Yang Zemin noted: "The concentration of symbols, color scheme, and composition in the murals of Saja Monastery influenced the development of Tibetan Buddhist art in the later period" [4].

Religious murals of the Yuan Dynasty occupy an important place in the history of fine arts. They not only demonstrate the integration and innovation of many cultures, but also express the profound ideas and social functions of religious art through the combination of form and content. These paintings are valuable documents for studying the religious beliefs, cultural policies and artistic styles of the Yuan Dynasty, and demonstrate the special value of Yuan Dynasty art in the history of Chinese fine arts and world art.

3. Palace Murals

Yuan Dynasty murals have become an important field of study in the history of Chinese art due to their thematic richness, diverse styles, and integration of multi-ethnic cultures. Among them, palace murals are an important means of expressing the culture of the Mongol princes, as well as a symbol of power, reflecting the aesthetic attitude and artistic wonders of the Yuan Dynasty.

Researcher Wang Bomin pointed out as follows: “The murals of the Yuan Dynasty are famous for their thematic richness and variety of expressive forms. They not only continue the tradition of murals of the Tang and Song Dynasties, but also absorb the aesthetic characteristics of the steppe peoples’ culture” [5]. This conclusion summarizes the main characteristics of the murals of the Yuan Dynasty, combining artistic style and cultural content.

For example, considering the murals of the Sanqing Temple in the Yongle Palace in Shanxi Province, researcher Zhu Lianzhi pointed out: “The depictions and clothing decorations in the murals of the Yongle Palace inherit traditional Chinese painting, while also expressing the characteristics of Mongolian culture, such as the hat and saddle pattern.” Such ethnic cultural symbols make the murals not only works of art but also historical witnesses of the interaction of many cultures [6].

Li Yue wrote in his book “History of Chinese Science and Technology”: “The palace-themed works of the Yuan Dynasty murals mainly depict large-scale ceremonial events, such as meetings, sacrifices, and feasts. These paintings not only show the luxury and grandeur of the palace, but also express the imperial power that dominates religion and culture. This analysis has clarified the political role and cultural content of palace murals”.

The “Worship Painting” in the Yongle Palace murals shows many figures worshipping gods. The costumes of the people depicted in the paintings are elegant and the movements seem natural. The buildings and scenery in the background are in perfect harmony. Researcher Yang Xing noted: “The Yongle Palace murals not only continued the tradition of Song murals that emphasized realism, but also showed that Yuan painters depicted groups of people in amazing detail, making them a classic example of Yuan mural art”.

In addition, scholar Fu Xi Nian, in his study of Yuan palace murals, stated: “Yuan palace murals are always trying to express the characteristics of the steppe culture. For example, the depiction of camels, saddles, and houses is particularly evident in the Yongle palace murals. These elements are important symbols of the combination of Yuan art and national culture” [7].

Wang Yucheng also pointed out: “The murals of the Yuan Dynasty palace mainly focus on depicting life events and ceremonial activities. For example, banquet paintings and sacrificial paintings vividly depict luxurious palace utensils and elaborate ceremonial events. This is a valuable source for studying Yuan Dynasty palace life”.

In summary, the murals of the Yuan Dynasty palace not only record the lives and religious practices of the emperors of the time, but also show the efforts of the Mongol princes to adopt Chinese culture and make it their own. These works, which also show the wonderful artistic integration between the steppe culture and traditional Chinese art, are an important artistic legacy of the multicultural unity of the Yuan Dynasty and an important historical document for understanding the

society and culture of the time.

4. Tomb Murals

The tomb murals of the Yuan Dynasty are an important material for studying the social life, religious beliefs, and cultural integration of the time with their vivid imagery and rich content. These murals continue to preserve the essence of traditional Chinese art, absorb Mongolian cultural elements, and express the unique integration of many cultures.

Researcher Wang Yucheng noted: “The murals of Yuan tombs are characterized by realistic depiction and narrative. The common themes of these paintings are religious ceremonies, scenes of daily life, and symbolic depictions of funeral rituals.” It is not only a work of art, but also a direct expression of the Yuan people’s views on life and death, and their spiritual world [8].

For example, the murals of Yuan noble tombs found in Hohhu, Inner Mongolia, depict the life of the owner of the tomb and his family. These paintings clearly depict scenes of feasting, hunting, and welcoming guests, and show the intricate designs of clothing and the natural scenery of the steppe in the background with artistic precision. Researcher Yang Xing noted: “These murals of Yuan noble tombs not only express the lifestyle of Yuan nobles, but also demonstrate the deep connection between Mongolian and Chinese culture”.

Researcher Fu Xi Nian points out: “The composition of the murals of Yuan tombs is often symmetrical. These paintings not only contain depictions of traditional Chinese ceremonies, but also contain dynamic scenes that highlight the characteristics of the steppe. For example, the depictions of camel caravans, houses, and herders further enhance their artistic and cultural significance” [9].

Yuan tomb paintings also contain a wide range of religious themes. Scholar Wang Bomin notes: “The tomb paintings are rich in Buddhist and Taoist elements, such as Buddha images, lianhuang flower patterns, and celestial dancers. These show how the religious beliefs of the time deeply influenced the tomb culture” [10].

For example, the murals of Yuan tombs in Datong, Shanxi Province, depict funeral ceremonies and mourning activities. They include elaborate depictions of servants leading horses, sacrificial tables, and ceremonial musical instruments. Scholar Zhu Lianzhi notes: “The murals of the tombs express the imagination and hope of the Yuan people about the afterlife in a rich figurative language. The paintings are interesting in that they combine religious symbols and everyday life scenes” [11].

In addition, the tomb paintings of the Yuan Dynasty also clearly contain the unique characteristics of Mongolian nomadic culture. For example, the depictions of horses, saddles, and grazing animals are common in these paintings, which reflect the cultural values of the Mongolian steppe. Researcher Wang Yucheng wrote: “These unique elements in the tomb paintings reflect the national image of the Mongolian nobles and show the diversity of Yuan culture”.

Researcher Su Tiancai emphasized: “The use of color and the precision of lines in the tomb wall paintings continue the artistic tradition of the Song Dynasty, but their content mainly incorporates elements of Mongolian nomadic life and religion. This is an important expression of the diverse development of Yuan art” [12].

In summary, the murals of Yuan tombs reflect the cultural and social characteristics of Yuan with their diversity of

themes, national characteristics, and high craftsmanship. These paintings are not only historical witnesses, but also a living expression of the cultural unity of Yuan's many ethnic groups, and are valuable sources for the study of art and social history.

5. Murals of the Yuan Dynasty

The folk murals of the Yuan Dynasty are important works of art that reflect the daily life, beliefs, and cultural beauty of ordinary people. These murals occupy a special place in the history of Yuan art due to their realistic themes, simple and realistic depictions, and the combination of central Chinese and Mongolian cultures.

Researcher Wang Bomin pointed out: “The folk murals of the Yuan Dynasty cover a wide range of themes, including religious rituals, festivals, labor activities, and daily life. They directly reflect the social life and spiritual world of the people”. This shows the deep connection between folk murals and social reality.

For example, considering the folk murals found in Ulaankhad, Inner Mongolia, these paintings are usually placed on the walls of temples and ordinary people's homes. Their content is diverse, including worship, animal husbandry, and festive activities. Researcher Yang Xing notes: “The folk murals of the Yuan Dynasty show the integration of steppe nomads and agricultural cultures. For example, the depictions of horse-drawn carts, shepherds, and farmlands in the paintings reflect the unique characteristics of the local area and show the historical foundation of the integration of the multi-ethnic culture of the Yuan Dynasty”.

Researcher Fu Xi Nian pointed out: “The folk murals of the Yuan Dynasty did not imitate the artistic grandeur of palace murals, but they have unique artistic value in their use of color and composition. In particular, the murals of temples and shrines are characterized by bright colors and exaggerated images, creating a joyful atmosphere”.

For example, some village temple murals in Shanxi Province depict scenes such as rain-praying ceremonies, harvest festivals, and traditional folk festivals. These paintings vividly and vividly depict the lives of ordinary people, and the richness of the scenes exudes the fragrance of daily life. Researcher Zhu Lianzhi pointed out: “These murals have a narrative character, and they combine daily life and religious beliefs. They are not only an artistic expression of folk culture, but also a realistic depiction of Yuan social life” [3].

Religious themes also play an important role in Yuan folk paintings. For example, Buddhist and Taoist murals are common, such as “Crossing the Eight Heavens and the Sea” and “The Enlightenment of Buddha Shakyamuni.” Researcher Wang Yucheng notes: “The religious themes of Yuan folk paintings are close to reality and ordinary life. For example, the facial expressions, clothing, and utensils of the depicted people reflect the life style of the people at that time”.

Folk murals also contain motifs that symbolize animals, plants, and happiness. For example, murals found in Hebei Province often feature sea fish, lianhuang flowers, dragons, and peacocks, which reflect the aesthetic sensibilities and aspirations of ordinary Yuan people.

Scholar Su Tiancai wrote: “The folk murals of the Yuan Dynasty expressed the vitality of ordinary people's lives through simple compositions and bright colors. Although inferior to the palace murals in terms of artistic skill, these

paintings are a powerful expression of art that evokes charm and lively relationships”.

In summary, the folk murals of the Yuan Dynasty, with their diverse themes, vivid imagery, and unique local characteristics, reveal the daily life and spiritual pursuits of ordinary people in the Yuan Dynasty. These paintings are not only important research materials on the social culture of the Yuan Dynasty, but also a vivid example of the combination of the central agricultural culture and the nomadic culture of Mongolia.

6. Ideological Murals

Functional murals of the Yuan Dynasty are a type of murals that combine art, symbolism, and cultural transmission at the same time, and have a practical purpose. These paintings were widely used in temples, shrines, tombs, and public buildings, and played a variety of roles, such as disseminating religious teachings, guiding rituals, and beautifying the environment. In addition, they clearly reflect the cultural interactions of many ethnic groups in the Yuan Dynasty.

Researcher Fu Xi Nian noted: “The main purpose of ideological murals was to serve religious rituals, folk festivals, and social education. Therefore, these paintings have obvious symbolic and narrative characteristics and carry a certain social function”.

Yuan temple murals were often designed to promote Buddhist and Taoist teachings. For example, the murals of the Yongle Palace in Shanxi Province depict Taoist myths and the flourishing of the divine world. Scholar Zhu Lianzhi noted: “Yuan ideological murals are designed to create a religious atmosphere, and their symbolic and educational value outweigh their aesthetic value” [7].

The Yuan Dynasty murals in Dunhuang, Gansu Province, are mainly devoted to depicting the history of Buddhism. For example, these paintings, which contain themes such as “The Teachings of Maitreya Buddha” and “The Biography of Shakyamuni Buddha,” disseminated religious teachings in a clear and vivid way to the people. Researcher Wang Bomin pointed out: “The Yuan Dynasty murals in Dunhuang were not only religious art, but also educational tools aimed at spreading religious ideas among the inhabitants of many ethnic groups” [6].

Ideological murals were also widely used in public buildings in both urban and rural areas of the Yuan Dynasty. For example, in the environment of bridges and markets, stories containing moral teachings and patterns symbolizing happiness were painted. These were intended not only to beautify the environment but also to guide people's behavior and morality. Researcher Wang Yucheng pointed out: “Ideological murals were not limited to religious or burial places, but also became an important tool for directly controlling the behavior of citizens in public environments”.

The ideological murals of the Yuan Dynasty served both decorative and protective functions. For example, door amulets, lianhuang flowers, and cloud patterns were painted on the entrances of temples or residences to ward off evil and bring good fortune. Scholar Su Tiancai noted: “Although the technique of these murals is simple, the symbolic meaning is clear, and they express the Yuan people's desire for a peaceful life”.

The ideological murals of the Yuan Dynasty not only had artistic value, but also played an important social and cultural role. With their specific symbolism and practical purposes, they connected the multi-ethnic culture and social life of the

Yuan Dynasty, indicating that the aesthetics of Yuan art moved towards practical functions. These paintings have become valuable historical witnesses of the integration of the multi-cultural culture of the Yuan Dynasty and are an important source of research.

7. Conclusion

The murals of the Yuan Dynasty are works of art that represent the fusion of Mongolian nomadic culture and Chinese culture, and they represent diverse artistic styles and important social functions. This study analyzes the types of religious, palace, tomb, folk, and ideological murals of the Yuan Dynasty in detail, and highlights the characteristics, symbolism, and social impact of each.

These murals show the integration of nomadic and settled cultures, and not only demonstrate the value of art but also the unity of the Yuan Dynasty's diverse cultures. Religious murals spread the ideas of Buddhism and Buddhism, while palace murals showed the power and luxury of the empire. Folk and tomb murals vividly expressed the daily life, beliefs, and cultural beauty of ordinary people.

The study of Yuan Dynasty murals provides valuable information not only for the history of fine arts, but also for understanding the social and cultural life of the time, and is important for preserving the cultural heritage that connects Mongolian nomadic culture and traditional Chinese art.

These works played an important role in the study of the social and cultural history of the Yuan Dynasty and remain valuable sources in the field of art and cultural studies today.

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