

The Influence of Xia Wucailang's Trip to Dunhuang on His Artistic Style

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Abstract: *Xiawu Cailang is an outstanding painter in the history of Tibetan art. He has made great achievements in the creation of thangkas. Xia Wucailang followed the master of Chinese painting Zhang Daqian to Dunhuang to copy murals, which changed his later painting style and created many magnificent and magnificent works of art. This article will discuss the artistic style of Xiawu Cailang's painting from the aspects of Xiawu Cailang's life and his trip to Dunhuang.*

Keywords: *thangka; painting techniques; artistic features*

1. Life of Cailang Xiawu

Xiawu Cailang is known as an outstanding painter in the history of Tibetan art. Born in June 1922 in Wutun Shangzhuang, Tongren County, Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province, he is an artistic family who believes in Tibetan Buddhism. From his great-grandfather to his father Wanma Caidan all engaged in painting. Xiawu Cailang's two older brothers and uncle Sonam Danba are also Tibetan Buddhist painters. They are Xiawu Cailang's enlightenment teachers. Therefore, Cailang Xiawu was influenced by his family environment and nurtured by the art of Buddhist painting since he was a child. [1]The 7-year-old Xiawu Cailang was sent by his family to the monastery in Shangzhuang, Wutun, to become a virtuous man (Note: Xiao Aka). He worshipped his uncle as his master and followed the monk's uncle Sonam Danba to learn Tibetan language and painting. When he was 10 years old, he followed Master on foot to the Labrang Monastery in Gannan, Gansu, to paint paintings. He walked the whole way. He had to speed up to keep up with other people. During this period, he mainly helped the brothers to cook and set up tents. At the age of 13, Cailang Xiawu followed his master to a temple in Aba, Sichuan to paint. Because he was young and his skills were not very consummate, what he often did was to help him. This process made him well acquainted with the routines of painting abroad, and also laid the foundation for him to take his apprentices out to paint later.

When Xiawu Cailang was 15 to 18 years old, he followed his master to the Ta'er Temple to paint. Because this time he went out to paint, he learned more skills than before, which also enabled him to go further in traditional painting techniques. He not only painted murals and thangkas, but also painted architectural decorative patterns. He learned the strengths of various painters in the Ta'er Temple, saw paintings that he had never seen before, and tried various techniques and painting themes. Here, he determined that he would be a painter and confirmed his own development direction. The 19-year-old Xia Wu Cailang followed Zhang Daqian to Dunhuang. After two years and seven months, under the leadership of Zhang Daqian, they completed the numbering of 309 caves in the Dunhuang Grottoes and copied 276 frescoes. [2] He finished copying the frescoes from Dunhuang with Zhang Daqian and returned to the Ta'er Temple. Xia Wu Cailang embarked on his own artistic path.

Xiawu Cailang officially started his apprenticeship at the age of 24 and began to paint alone with his apprentices. According to tradition, the master gave him a set of painting tools such as paint brushes. This is not only a way of passing the objects, but also a way for him to inherit the thangka. He took his apprentices to go back to the Brang Monastery to paint, which for him was the artistic palace of his progress.

From 1947 to 1957, he took his apprentices to paint in various monasteries, and he painted successively for ten years. During this period, I visited a large number of Buddhist paintings, grottoes, murals, etc. in the birthplaces of Buddhism such as India, and gained a more comprehensive understanding of Buddhist art. From 1958 to 1976, during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, his painting was interrupted during this period, and he returned home to marry a wife and

have children. He took the opportunity to learn oil painting and traditional Chinese painting, an art form he had never seen before, which also influenced his later works. In 1979, when China ushered in the reform and opening up, Xia Wucailang received the order of "Eighteen Arhats" and created the background boards of Tibetan opera performances "Songtsen Gampo", "Ajiram" and so on. [3] In the following decades, Cailang Xiawu insisted on creating. In the process of painting, he learned and absorbed the characteristics of traditional murals, Chinese paintings and thangka art in various monasteries, painted a large number of works, and recruited many apprentices. In 1982, the 10th Panchen Lama met and discussed Cailang Xiawu, and collected the thangka "White Tara" created by him. In 1988, the Ministry of Light Industry awarded him the title of "Master of Chinese Arts and Crafts". [4]

2. Xiawu Cailang's trip to Dunhuang

Zhang Daqian, a famous painter in my country, has always been attracted by the art of Dunhuang. He looks forward to seeing the splendor of Dunhuang and wants to copy the murals. One day in early 1942, Zhang Daqian went to the Ta'er Monastery to look for the paints that were in short supply for his paintings, and happened to meet someone who was painting at the Ta'er Monastery at that time. Zhang Daqian thought that Sonam Danba and his apprentices were professional in mural painting and Buddhist culture, and understood Buddhist culture better than him. He needed the help of Sonam Danba and others, so he invited Sonam Danba and his apprentices to copy it in Dunhuang. mural. Sonam Danba was unable to go due to physical reasons in the end, so he asked his apprentices to help Zhang Daqian, and Xia Wu Cailang was one of them.

In the more than two years since Xia Wucailang arrived in Dunhuang, he and others have broadened his horizons together. Statue paintings, Buddhist scripture story paintings, Buddhist historical relic paintings and portraits of donors are the most extensive themes in Dunhuang grotto art, mainly represented by rich murals, which are also the largest part of Dunhuang grotto art. Among them, this grotto records the nearly 1,500-year history of China from Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties to Yuan and other dynasties. Its cultural value, artistic value and historical value are immeasurable. Xia Wu Cailang and others assisted Zhang Daqian in copying more than 100 murals and benefited a lot. He read Dunhuang frescoes, various flying sky, and Buddha statues, and gradually differentiated the different painting contents, styles and characteristics of each historical period from the performance of characters, accessories, and daily utensils. In particular, he has a deep understanding of the representation forms and techniques of portraits since the Sui and Tang Dynasties, which has brought his painting level and appreciation ability to a new level.

Xiawu Cailang has studied thangka since he was a child, and is very familiar with line drawing and color. He and other Tibetan monks were responsible for the first drafts and coloring of the copies, but Zhang Daqian wrote the manuscripts for all the copies. According to the description in "Memories of Copying Dunhuang Murals for Zhang Daqian" compiled by Zhao Qingyang: In the past two years, my brothers and I have copied a large number of murals in more than 360 caves, some of which are as large as gables. Large, as long as four or five houses, and two or three meters wide, these large-scale murals have to be copied in several parts. Before copying, Master Zhang is often instructed to draw the lines, and then the official copying is carried out. For some inaccurate copying, Master Zhang must personally correct and smear. [5] This made Xiawu Cailang realize the importance of painting composition and drafting, and began to purposefully train himself in composition and drafting.

The conditions for copying frescoes in Dunhuang were very difficult. The place was small and the paintings were large, and they often had to lie on the ground to paint. Xiawu Cailang and Tibetan monks used local materials, burned carbon strips from trees, and drew line drawings; they made paints from plants, and the large canvases sewn by themselves had no traces and did not affect the use of painting. All these helped Zhang Daqian. The fresco copying is very busy. Zhang Daqian's superb painting skills also gave Xia Wu Cailang great inspiration. The expressive techniques and painting forms of Chinese painting, such as freehand brushwork, splashing ink, and fine brushwork, made Xia Wu Cailang curious and amazed. He devoted himself to learning painting principles and techniques from Zhang Daqian, and learned a lot about Chinese painting. The painting methods and forms of expression laid a solid foundation for his future artistic creation and artistic style, and also took a decisive step for him to succeed on the road of painting art.

3. The painting style of Cailang Xiawu

In the second year after Xia Wu Cailang returned from Dunhuang, while sorting out Master Suonan's drawings, he created a batch of Thangka manuscripts by himself. In the process of painting, he can paint almost freehand on walls and canvases, and the measurements of the Buddha statues are very precise. In the following decades, Xia Wucailang took his apprentices to monasteries in Gansu, Tibet, Inner Mongolia and other places to paint, summed up the artistic characteristics and customs of various places, compared and analyzed with his daily learning, and concluded that The artistic characteristics of Tibet-related areas have gradually formed their own artistic style.

The formation of Xiawu Cailang's own artistic style and his ability to reach a new height are closely related to his trip to Dunhuang. The artistic style of Xiawu Cailang's painting has changed as a whole, making his pictures show a magnificent momentum and meticulous depiction that are integrated and complement each other. These changes are attributable to his trip to Dunhuang.

First of all, Cailang Xiawu's color concept has changed, and he has created works that are different from traditional Regong thangkas. He applied the coloring method he learned in Dunhuang to thangka painting. The colors have been changed from the bright and warm colors of traditional Regong thangkas to light colors. Test the artist's skill and patience. The pigments of traditional thangkas are all made of gold, silver, pearls, agate, coral, turquoise, malachite, cinnabar and other precious natural mineral gemstones and natural plants such as saffron, rhubarb, indigo, etc., showing the bright color of thangka. . [6] Xiawu Cailang chose a gentle method, using natural pigments, coloring, and gold to skillfully combine the splendor and beauty of Regong thangka art with the elegance and ethereal nature of Handi's meticulous blue-green landscape, and the color effect is transparent. , is good at using complex and subtle gray scales to control the strong contrast of solid colors, highlighting the sense of tranquility and solemnity brought by the thangka picture itself. Influenced by Zhang Daqian, a master of traditional Chinese painting, he used the technique of applying color in fine brushwork when he painted thangkas. The flowers, clouds, grass and other decorative objects in the thangka painted by Cailang Xiawu are no longer flat painted, but sub-dyed. Divide from the outside to the inside, this effect makes the picture more three-dimensional and more vivid. For example, "The Story of the Life of Sakyamuni"[3], the color is clean and bright, the color saturation tends to be balanced, the painting is fine, the color tone of the picture is elegant and vivid, and it is full of the decorative beauty of Tibetan paintings. Because the thangka painted by Cailang Xiawu combines the characteristics of Indian murals, Dunhuang murals, and Tibetan murals, it has a strong sense of three-dimensionality, such as "Gesar"[4] and "Princess Wencheng Entering Tibet"[5]

Secondly, Cailang Xiawu has a unique composition and shape when he draws thangkas, pays attention to the artistic thinking and pursuit of the painting itself, and tries to create a strong visual space in the thangka art. When composing the picture, he pays attention to the control of the primary and secondary and the number of the characters in the picture, the balance of the arrangement of positions, try not to appear crowded situation, pay attention to depicting the facial expressions and body dynamics of the characters, the composition is dense and dense, and he is especially good at using the overlapping of various parts of the picture. The pressure relationship creates a special sense of perspective, so the picture has a deep sense of space.

There are certain differences between the animal images and real animals in the works of Xiawu Cailang thangka, but they also have a strong sense of reality. The thangka drawn by Cailang Xiawu is rigorous in shape. While abiding by strict religious measurement standards, it conveys subtle artistic taste and emotional color, and has a special sense of mystery in religious art.

Third, the thangkas drawn by Cailang Xiawu are smooth, precise and varied, and pay attention to the use of lines. Zhang Daqian once pointed out that the use of lines is mainly used in the performance of figure painting, and it is especially necessary to have strong brush power to draw figure lines. emphasis on lines. On the basis of inheriting the traditional thangka drawing techniques in Regong area, Xia Wucailang applied the techniques and expressions of Chinese painting that he studied with Zhang Daqian in his early years into his own creation, and introduced the lines of the copied murals of the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang into thangka painting. Practice, and created the protruding shape of the lines of the picture, which enhances the three-dimensional sense of the painting. He combines the advantages of the Han and Tibetan painting lines to form a self-contained body. The lines are meticulous, agile, full of rhythm, and have profound control and artistic expression.

Fourth, Xiawu Cailang's thangkas have a wide range of themes. His works are not limited to Buddhist themes, but also have some realistic themes. Tibetan folk epics "The Biography of King

Gesar", "Princess Wencheng Entering Tibet" and many other historical themes, Tibetan folk customs and real life have become his creative themes. He skillfully depicts various religious stories and natural scenery together. The images are vivid and vivid, full of the mystery of religious culture. He broke through the stipulation that religious painting art can only be copied according to the original, and strived to make Thangka art express modern social life, and took a new step in the innovation and development of national painting art.

4. Conclusion

After Xiawu Cailang experienced the baptism of Dunhuang art, he formed his own unique style of painting. Dunhuang is the most important turning point in his artistic career, and it occupies an indelible mark in the formation of his artistic style and his subsequent artistic achievements. On the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, his tireless and persistent pursuit of Thangka art and his spirit and character throughout his life have interpreted an eternal realm for life and art. His achievements are remarkable. He is not only the master of thangka art, but also the founder of modern thangka art, and has made indelible contributions to the development of thangka art.

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