

Research on the Artistic Characteristics of the Xialu Temple Mural "Jie Zun • Xi Rao Qiong Nai"

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Abstract: This paper takes the Xialu Temple mural "Jie Zun·Xi Rao Qiong Nai" as the research object, and explores its artistic characteristics and cultural connotations under the guidance of iconography, composition color and semiotics. The article first analyzes the image composition and symbols in the mural to reveal its unique position in the Xizang Buddhist art system; then, through a comparative study of composition and color, it explores its innovation in visual expression and traditional inheritance; finally, combined with cross-regional comparison, it discusses the impact of murals on the exchange of Chinese and foreign Buddhist art. This paper aims to provide a new perspective and thinking path for the theoretical construction and practical inheritance of Xizang Buddhist art.

Keywords: Xialu Temple Murals; "Jie Zun • Xi Rao Qiong Nai"; Xizang Buddhism; Image Symbols; Composition and Color.

1. Introduction

As an important carrier of cultural exchange between the East and the West, Buddhist art has unique charm in its expression and aesthetic connotation in different regions. As an important part of Xizang Buddhist art, the mural "Jie Zun·Xi Rao Qiong Nai" in Xialu Temple not only contains profound religious connotations, but also is unique in form and symbols. This paper intends to re-examine the artistic characteristics of the mural from three aspects: image symbols, composition and color, and cross-regional comparison, and explore its significance in cultural inheritance and innovation. The research not only helps to enrich the theory of Xizang Buddhist art, but also provides reference for modern art creation.

2. Analysis of the Connotation of Images and Symbols

2.1. Image Composition and Cultural Metaphor

The image composition of "Jie Zun·Xi Rao Qiong Nai" is like a carefully carved art maze, showing a multi-level and multi-dimensional exquisite expression. The whole mural takes the main character as the undisputed visual focus. The painter uses the pinnacle of line sketching skills to depict the facial expressions and demeanor of the characters. The lines in his paintings are like a smart dancer dancing on the picture. Every turn and pause accurately conveys the profound connotation of the character's compassion and wisdom. The modeling of the characters follows a rigorous aesthetic paradigm, but is full of smart rhythm, as if the rhythm of music is integrated into the painting. The painter's depiction of the facial details of the characters is so delicate that it can even depict every eyelash and every wrinkle. When the viewer gazes at this mural, it seems as if they can travel through time and space and have a soul dialogue with the practitioner in the painting, truly feeling their inner calmness and concentration, and their piety and persistence in Buddhism are vividly displayed on the paper. At the same

time, clothing has become another important carrier of rich cultural connotations. The traditional patterns such as diamonds and volutes on clothing are not simple decorative elements, but have been carefully symbolized by the painter. The diamond pattern, with its regular geometric shapes arranged in an orderly manner in the picture, each diamond is like a mysterious password box, which contains the profound philosophy of the cycle and endless life of Buddhism. The Huiwen pattern, with its continuous lines, is like an endless river, symbolizing the long history of the inheritance of doctrines, which has never been interrupted. Through clever layout and combination, these patterns not only greatly enrich the decorative effect of the picture, making the clothing like a fine work of art, but also inject a cultural code of teaching and beauty into the work at a deeper level. When the viewer appreciates these patterns, it seems that he can hear the ancient Buddhist teachings whispering in his ears. Every visual detail seems to be telling a story about faith and wisdom, which has a unique and profound metaphorical meaning.

The background part also contains profound implications. The lotus pattern implied in it, with its pure and noble image, has become an excellent symbol of the Buddhist Pure Land concept. In Buddhist culture, the lotus grows out of the mud without being stained, symbolizing that the practitioners maintain inner purity and detachment in the world and pursue the spiritual Pure Land world. The Dharma wheel pattern, with its unique shape and rotating dynamic sense, implies the eternal inheritance and circulation of Buddhism. The Dharma wheel is constantly turning, symbolizing that the Dharma is like a wheel, constantly moving forward, spreading the light of wisdom and liberation to every corner of the world. These background patterns echo the main characters and clothing patterns, together constructing a complete visual narrative system, making the entire image composition both formally beautiful, like a carefully painted scroll, and full of profound religious and cultural connotations, as if it is a silent Buddhist book, waiting for the viewer to interpret and comprehend.

2.2. Reconstruction of Meaning from the Perspective of Semiotics

From the professional and profound perspective of semiotics, the mural of Jiezun Xiraoqiongnai is like a huge and sophisticated symbolic system. Every pattern, every color block and every line in it is not random, but carries clear and profound symbolic meaning.

Take the bright color of crimson as an example. Its use in the mural has multiple profound meanings. It is not only the main color of monks' robes, with its rich and warm visual impact, it firmly attracts the viewer's attention. In the cultural context of Xizang Buddhism, it also symbolizes firm belief and enthusiasm. When believers look at this mural, seeing Jiezun Xiraoqiongnai wearing crimson monk robes, it seems that they can draw endless spiritual strength from it and strengthen their faith on the path of practice, just like seeing a bright light in the dark, leading them forward. The golden edging is like a sacred light, sprinkled on the mural. In the bright starry sky of Buddhist culture, gold has always been closely associated with sacredness and dignity, representing religious authority. In this mural, the use of golden edging makes the image of Jiezun Xirao Qiongnai shine instantly, as if it is endowed with extraordinary divinity. It not only strengthens the visual center position of the character in the picture, but also makes the viewer feel awe and respect when looking up, and deeply feel the sacred power contained in Buddhist teachings.

Although the gestures in the painting seem implicit, they are like secret and precise codes, conveying rich Buddhist information. Among them, the gesture of "Dharma Seal" is usually the thumb and index finger twisted together, and the other three fingers are naturally extended. This gesture symbolizes that Jiezun Xirao Qiongnai is preaching the Dharma to all living beings and imparting wisdom and liberation. The "Dhyana Seal" is to put both hands together in front of the abdomen, palms facing up, and the right hand on the left hand, which represents the practitioner entering a state of focused and quiet meditation, and exploring the true meaning of Buddhism in the heart. The precise depiction of these gestures constitutes a rigorous religious symbol system. Every detail follows the traditional norms of Buddhism and carries a profound religious connotation. Different from the simple accumulation of decorative symbols, the symbol system in this mural is like a carefully constructed building with internal logic and clear hierarchy. From the choice of color to the use of patterns, from the presentation of gestures to the layout of the overall composition, the various symbolic elements are interrelated and mutually supportive, and together convey the core essence of traditional Buddhist teachings. At the same time, this symbol system also shows strong openness and inclusiveness, providing rich symbolic resources for modern viewers to interpret. In the context of contemporary multiculturalism, different viewers can draw different insights and inspirations from these symbols, making the ancient murals glow with new vitality in the new era and constantly expanding the boundaries of their meaning.

3. Composition and Color: Traditional Techniques and Innovative Expression

3.1. Central Composition and Visual Focus

"Jie Zun Xirao Qiong Nai" adopts a central composition,

which places the main image Jie Zun Xirao Qiong Nai precisely in the absolute center of the picture, highlighting its core position like the moon surrounded by stars. The painter uses a clever layout to spread the elements of the picture around the main image, presenting a highly symmetrical structure. From the figure's posture to the details of the clothing, to the surrounding decorative patterns, they are all distributed in an orderly manner around the central figure, forming a stable and harmonious visual order. This symmetrical layout not only reflects the formal beauty, but more importantly, it strongly highlights the religious status of the figure, allowing the viewer to be attracted by the main image at the first time, and focus on the religious message conveyed by Jie Zun Xirao Qiong Nai.

When the viewer's eyes fall on this mural, they will be involuntarily attracted by the main image. The image of Jie Zun Xirao Qiong Nai seems to have a strong gravitational force, incorporating all the surrounding elements into its spiritual aura. The visual experience brought by this composition method is solemn and stable. It gives the viewer a strong sense of order and security, making people feel as if they have entered a sacred and solemn religious space when appreciating the murals. Compared with the Dunhuang long scroll composition, the two are significantly different. The Dunhuang long scroll composition is characterized by a continuous narrative method. Through the depiction of multiple scenes, the plots in the Buddhist story are presented one by one, just like unfolding a grand historical scroll. In this composition, the picture has no absolute center, but takes the development of the story as a clue to guide the viewer's eyes to flow between different scenes. The focus is on the presentation of narrative and plot, and more attention is paid to conveying the stories and morals in Buddhist teachings through multiple pictures.

The central composition of "Jie Zun Xirao Qiongnai" focuses more on expressing the inner spirit of a single subject. It vividly displays his personal cultivation and religious symbolism through the careful portrayal of the core character Jie Zun Xirao Qiongnai. When depicting characters, the painter pays attention to the details of the characters' facial expressions, demeanor and body postures, so that the viewer can feel the characters' inner tranquility, wisdom and firm belief in Buddhism from these subtle details. For example, the slightly narrowed eyes of Jiezun Xiraoqiongnai reveal a deep thought and insight into the true meaning of Buddhism; the slightly upturned smile conveys a breath of compassion and peace. This emphasis on the inner spirit of a single subject enables the viewer to more attentively understand the spiritual connotation contained in religion when appreciating the murals, and deeply feel the power and charm of religion.

3.2. Use of Colors and Their Symbolic Meanings

The color design of the murals follows the rigorous symbolic system of Xizang Buddhism. Each color carries rich and profound religious implications. They are intertwined and set off each other, creating a unique visual effect and religious atmosphere.

Deep red occupies a prominent position in the murals. As the main color of monks' robes, it not only shows the characteristics of enthusiasm and firmness, but also has a special symbolic meaning in Xizang Buddhist culture. The saturation of crimson is extremely high, with a strong visual impact, which can quickly attract the viewer's attention and

give people a warm and deep impression. It symbolizes the believers' piety and firm belief in Buddhism, like a burning flame that never goes out, representing people's courageous and unswerving determination on the path of practice. At the same time, the combination of crimson and gold trim forms a strong visual contrast. Gold has always symbolized sacredness, dignity and light in Buddhist culture, and its luster gives people a dazzling and solemn feeling. When the gold trim is combined with the crimson monk's robe, it not only adds a sense of magnificence to the picture, but also further strengthens the solemn atmosphere of religion. This contrast is like a collision of light and enthusiasm, making the image of Jiezun Xirao Qiongnai more vivid and prominent, as if it is endowed with a sacred brilliance, allowing the viewer to feel the solemnity and sacredness of religion while being shocked by its powerful spiritual power.

In addition to crimson and gold, blue and elegant background colors also play an important role in murals. Blue usually gives people a deep and tranquil feeling. In murals, it is used to set off the inner tranquility of the characters. The use of blue and crimson forms a sharp contrast between cold and warm. This contrast not only enriches the layers of the picture, makes the picture more three-dimensional and rhythmic, but also further highlights the mystery of the religious ceremony. The elegant background color is like a calm lake, creating a tranquil and peaceful atmosphere for the entire picture, allowing viewers to calm down and immerse themselves in the spiritual world conveyed by religion when appreciating the mural.

In this mural, the use of color is not only for the pursuit of aesthetic effect, but more importantly, it plays a key role in the expression of religious emotions. Color is like a bridge, connecting the viewer's visual experience with the transmission of religious beliefs. When the viewer sees the crimson monk's robes, he can intuitively feel the enthusiasm and firmness of faith; the golden edging arouses people's awe of the sacred and noble; the tranquil atmosphere created by the blue and elegant background colors makes it easier for the viewer to enter a pious state of mind and comprehend the profound philosophy contained in religion. Through the clever use of colors, the murals successfully transform abstract religious emotions into concrete visual images, allowing viewers to be baptized in the soul and influenced by religious emotions while appreciating the beauty of art.

4. Conclusion and Prospect

Through multi-angle analysis of iconography, composition color and semiotics, this study draws the following conclusions: the symbol system of "Jie Zun Xirao Qiongnai" strictly follows the symbol system of Xizang Buddhism, combining the transmission of religious doctrines with artistic beauty; the central composition and color contrast are harmoniously unified, strengthening the religious atmosphere and forming a unique artistic expression.

This study enriches the understanding of Xizang Buddhist art and provides a new perspective for exploring religious symbols and their cross-cultural communication. However, there are deficiencies in the research, and data collection and field research need to be strengthened. The historical evolution and technical inheritance of some mural details

have not been deeply verified. Future research should supplement literature and combine modern imaging technology for precise digital analysis. In terms of cultural heritage protection and digital inheritance, "Jie Zun Xirao Qiongnai" can play a demonstration role, and through interdisciplinary cooperation and international academic exchanges, further explore the status and influence of Xizang Buddhist art in global culture. By using technologies such as virtual reality and digital museums, dynamic display and interactive experience of murals can be achieved, allowing more people to understand and appreciate this precious artistic heritage.

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