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BOTANICAL MOTIFS IN BUDDHIST ART OF THE HAN AND TANG DYNASTIES

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The work provides a historical analysis of the development of Buddhist culture and art during the Han and Tang dynasties. The data on the forms of fine art are systematized, the aesthetic elements of botanical motifs in the images of this period are listed and characterized. A comparative analysis of artistic and compositional techniques and subjects of pattern art of the Han and Tang dynasties was carried out.

Key words: *Silk Road, Buddhist arts, botanical motifs, culture, art.*

INTRODUCTION

«The Silk Road», so named because Chinese silk was the most representative of the goods traded to and from China during the Western Han Dynasty. It was not only a golden route linking trade, but also an important hub for art and culture between China and the West. The artistic exchange and integration along the Silk Road was an essential component. From ancient times to the present day, the many surviving monuments have also preserved the artistic treasures of different peoples, cultures and religions. Among the many cultures and arts that were introduced along the Silk Road, Buddhist art occupies a very important place and is by far the most important area of art surviving. The rapid development of botanical motifs in the Han dynasty, which reached its peak in the Tang dynasty, and the richness of its research, illustrate the significance of botanical motifs in Buddhist art and culture.

PURPOSE

The main goal of the work is to discover the development and significance of botanical motifs in the later period of Buddhist culture and art.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the Western Han Dynasty, Buddhism was gradually introduced into China along the Silk Road, where it merged with indigenous Chinese Taoism to form a distinctive Chinese traditional culture. At the same time, it also shaped the development of East Asian art as a whole. Therefore, various authors consider the development and significance of Buddhist culture and art through the prism of botanical motifs in Buddhist art. However, the color rheology of botanical motifs in Buddhist art has been too little analyzed, and not enough in-depth macro- and



micro-research has been carried out, and more in-depth studies and research could be carried out in areas not covered by the later stage [1].

The Han Dynasty in China was the first dynasty to open up to the outside world and make the country strong. It was also a period when people slowly began to develop their religious beliefs. People's thinking at this time was relatively homogeneous, and this had a relatively limited impact on the development of botanical motifs, most of which are related to Buddhism, such as the *Lonicera* (fig. 1, a, b), lotus, paulownia and tree motifs. In addition, there are animal and religious figures. In China during the Wei, Jin and Northern and Southern Dynasties, with the rise of Buddhism, the lotus motif became prevalent on Buddhist architectural stone carvings and became the mainstream of botanical motifs during that period. It was used throughout the period, from the early carvings to the later relief carvings. Lotus motifs were also used on metalwork and ceramics [2].

During the same period, the *Lonicera* motif was also one of the most popular patterns and was used extensively in ceramics, metalwork, painting and stonework, among other arts and crafts decorations. Some sources infer that the *Lonicera* motif is a variation of the lotus leaf, while others suggest that the *Lonicera* motif in China during the Six Dynasties was in fact a 'palm leaf' that was absorbed by the Gandhara culture of India and subsequently imported into China by Buddhism, becoming the *Lonicera* motif.

The composition of the *Lonicera* motif actually appeared during the Han dynasty, when it was known as the scrolling cloud motif, which was also the predecessor of the *Lonicera* motif. During the Tang dynasty it evolved into the «Tangcao», and during the Ming dynasty it gradually developed into the wreathed flower. The use of tree motifs was not only seen among the literati, but also in Buddhist themes. For example, the trees in the Northern Zhou murals of Cave 296 in Mogao Caves, Dunhuang, and the stone trees in the Yungang Grottoes in Datong, Shanxi. Also unearthed in Astana, Xinjiang, is a 'tree brocade' from the Northern Dynasties [3].

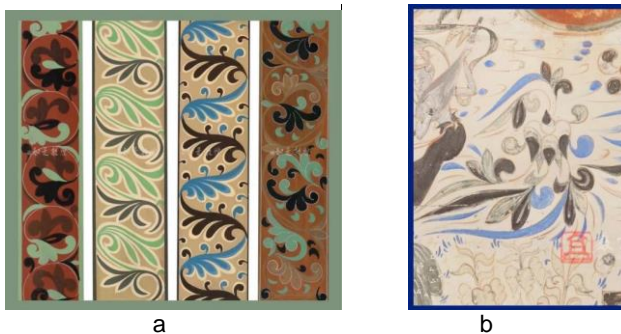


Fig. 1. *Lonicera*: a) Decoration Magazine; b) Digital Dunhuang [2]

The Tang dynasty was a turning point in Chinese history, when people's aesthetic approach to the art of pattern gradually moved towards a phase



dominated by floral and bird motifs, which was not only a change in the subject matter of the pattern, but also a change in the status of the human subject. The popular botanical motifs of the time include the guanhu, peony, paulownia, scrolling grass, and sea animals and grapes [4, 5]. According to some sources, the guanzhu pattern was introduced to China from Persia, when the two countries were in close contact and the guanzhu pattern was more common on Persian crafts. In fact, it was on the pottery of primitive Chinese society that the motifs appeared, and it was only with the exchange and integration of art and culture that they gradually developed into the pattern seen in the Tang dynasty. This pattern can be seen on the algal wells of the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang, a sacred Buddhist site.

Another type of Buddhist motif, the «Bao Xiang Hua», (fig. 2, a, b), also known as the «Bao Xiang Hua», is actually a type of rose flower. The term «Baioxianzhuang» also refers to the solemnity of the Buddha. The petal pattern is based on the peony or lotus flower, and is simplified and refined to create a decorative pattern that is often seen not only in Buddhist art, but also in gold and silver, bronze mirrors, brocade and other works of art from the Tang dynasty [6].

Buddhist art, as a particular aesthetic approach, entered China over two thousand years ago, fusing with indigenous art and gradually forming artistic characteristics that were different from, but similar to, those of the original art forms, evolving and reaching its peak during the Tang Dynasty, when Buddhist culture was not only spread but also survived. In the present day, most of the artistic treasures that can be found in history are Buddhist art, such as Buddhist temple architecture, statue carving and frescoes, which have left a strong legacy in human history and have occupied a very important place in the cultural and artistic exchanges along the Silk Road. It is therefore worthwhile to study the evolution of motifs in more systematic detail.



Fig. 2. Baoxiang Flower (Dunhuang Art Museum) [6]

The study of botanical motifs from the Han dynasty, at the beginning of Buddhism's eastern expansion, and the Tang dynasty, at the height of Buddhist art, reveals the evolution of Buddhist botanical motifs, the cultural connotations and aesthetic interests of the people of the time, and the fusion of art with Buddhist



religious meanings. It also reveals the philosophical thinking of Buddhist art. A study of this area provides insight into the aesthetic awareness of art forms in traditional Chinese culture.

CONCLUSIONS

To summarise the above, it can be seen that research into Buddhist botanical motifs has covered many aspects in recent years, and has achieved certain results. Through these studies, it is possible to gain a general understanding of the forms, colour, variations and applications of Buddhist botanical motifs on different carriers, and to use them for innovative design applications, giving new meaning to traditional art forms and enabling the transmission and innovation of traditional art and culture. The available information provides a good understanding of the development of the motifs, but from the perspective of academic development, there is too little analysis of the colour rheology of botanical motifs in Buddhist art, and not enough in-depth macro and micro studies have been carried out, and the various areas of research are relatively concentrated, and the results are more quantitative than qualitative, and there is still room for research in areas not yet covered.

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БОТАНІЧНІ МОТИВИ У БУДДІЙСЬКОМУ МИСТЕЦТВІ ДИНАСТІЙ ХАНЬ І ТАН

У роботі здійснено історичний аналіз розвитку буддійської культури та мистецтва періоду династій Хань і Тан. Систематизовано дані про форми образотворчого мистецтва, перелічено та охарактеризовано елементи естетики ботанічних мотивів у зображеннях цього періоду. Здійснено порівняльний аналіз художньо-композиційних прийомів та тематики мистецтва візерунків династій Хань і Тан.

Ключові слова: Шовковий Шлях, Буддійське мистецтво, ботанічні мотиви, культура, мистецтво.