



The Development of Buddhist Botanical Patterns in China and Thailand

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Abstract

Background and Aim: Buddhist botanical patterns are an important cultural phenomenon formed during the spread of Buddhism from India, aimed at conveying and promoting Buddhist cultural thoughts. Buddhism is the major religion in both China and Thailand, yet there has been limited research on the development and study of Buddhist botanical patterns in these countries, which hinders cultural exchange and dissemination. Therefore, the purpose of this research is: (1) to Investigate the evolution of Buddhist botanical motifs in China and Thailand; (2) to analyze the distinct characteristics of Buddhist botanical motifs across Chinese and Thai contexts; (3) to examine the critical role of intercultural exchange in the development and diversification of cultural expressions.

Materials and Methods: This research will employ the following methodologies: (1) literature review, to compile and examine the historical evolution of Buddhist plant motifs in China and Thailand, and (2) comparative analysis, conducting horizontal comparisons of key cases to analyze the distinctive decorative characteristics of Buddhist plant motifs. Additionally, vertical analysis of various decorative themes will be performed to map the design trajectory and trace the historical origins of these motifs.

Results: This research reveals that, while both China and Thailand have integrated botanical elements into Buddhist art, each country possesses distinct cultural, historical, and religious contexts that shape differences in symbolic meanings and artistic expressions. The evolution of botanical motifs is also closely intertwined with contemporary socioeconomic conditions, trade relations, and endorsements by ruling authorities.

Conclusion: Plant motifs serve not only as a medium for artistic expression but also as an essential avenue for understanding Buddhist culture in both countries. The fusion of culture and religion has fostered the development of intercultural exchange. This study provides insights into modern design practices, showcasing the potential applications of traditional plant motifs in contemporary art.

Keywords: Buddhist Plant Patterns; Cross-Cultural Exchange; Traditional Culture Development

Introduction

Buddhism is a central aspect of the major religious and cultural identity of China and Thailand, but contemporary youth's understanding of its cultural, symbolic, and philosophical foundations is declining. This trend underscores the importance of preserving, developing, and disseminating Buddhist culture. Due to the abstract nature of Buddhism, its teachings should be disseminated in a more direct, vivid, and tangible way, and Buddhist plant patterns were identified as an effective medium for promoting and disseminating Buddhist ideas (Zhao, 1982).

The spread of Buddhism influenced the development of civilization through art, with a focus on plant motifs with religious significance. These motifs originated in India and played a key role in popularizing Buddhism. Through the study of plant motifs, the aim is to understand the common artistic concepts, symbolism, and themes between the Chinese and Thai regions, highlight cross-cultural influences, and promote further cultural exchange, while recognizing the differences between Chinese and Thai Buddhist culture and art (Dang, 2009; Zhang, 2014).

Various historical periods and dynasties have significantly influenced Buddhist art in China and Thailand. Analyzing plant motifs aids in identifying the temporal and contextual frameworks of these artworks, thereby enriching our comprehension of the socio-political and cultural dynamics inherent to each era. The examination of botanical patterns can illuminate the distinctive regional traditions within China and Thailand, illustrating how local flora and artistic inclinations have shaped the representation of plants and flowers. Ultimately, through a thorough analysis of Buddhist plant motifs in both countries, we can gain fresh insights into contemporary art and design, encourage the reimagining and repurposing of traditional elements, as well as foster cultural innovation and artistic advancement.



Objectives

1. To research the development of Chinese Buddhist plant patterns
2. To research the development of Buddhist plant patterns in Thailand
3. To research the influence of cultural exchange on the development of Buddhist plant patterns in China and Thailand.

Literature Review

1. Examining the Evolution of Chinese Buddhist Botanical Motifs:

Ni (2000), in *Chinese Buddhist Ornamentation*, systematically explores the historical development of Buddhist decorative arts, highlighting the significant role Buddhist ornamentation has played in Chinese culture. Ni emphasizes that these decorations hold not only aesthetic value but also profound religious and cultural meanings. Ma (2017), in *A Study of Decorative Patterns in Buddhist Temples*, focuses on the design principles and cultural meanings within temple ornamentation. Through empirical analysis of various temple decorations, Ma reveals how these motifs reflect a fusion of Buddhist thought with local culture across different historical periods. Hu and An (2004), in *Buddhist Art*, provide a comprehensive review of the development of Buddhist art, including painting, sculpture, and decorative arts. Their work emphasizes the localization of Buddhist art in China, with a particular focus on the symbolic function of botanical motifs, offering essential cultural context for understanding plant elements in Buddhist art. Dang (2009) dedicates her study to Buddhist botanical motifs during the Tang Dynasty, examining specific pattern classifications and analyzing their influence on later periods. Her research uncovers the widespread application of botanical ornamentation in Tang Buddhist temples. Zhang (2005), in *Developmental Origins of Ancient Chinese Botanical Decorative Patterns*, traces the evolution of botanical motifs across various historical periods in China. Zhang analyzes their forms and styles in broader social, cultural, and religious contexts, offering critical theoretical support for understanding Buddhist botanical motifs within a broader cultural framework.

2. Exploring the Development of Thai Buddhist Botanical Motifs:

He (2012), in *A Study of Thai Pattern Culture*, systematically examines the cultural background and symbolism within traditional Thai motifs, covering both their historical evolution and their role in Thai society's cultural identity and aesthetic values. This work provides extensive empirical data, particularly valuable for understanding the socio-cultural functions of Thai motifs. Prayur (2017), in *Evolution of Thai Patterns*, reviews the progression of Thai motifs, focusing on their transformation and innovation over various periods. Through historical documentation and analysis of artifacts, Prayur reveals the integration and reinterpretation of Thai motifs in modern design, emphasizing the connection between tradition and contemporaneity and offering crucial insights into the dynamic nature of Thai decorative art. Somphop (2018). In *Thai Patterns, Lines* examines the lines and visual elements characteristic of Thai motifs, analyzing their expressive forms and cultural meanings in visual art. His study provides theoretical support for a deeper understanding of the design principles and aesthetic features of Thai motifs.

3. The Impact of Cultural Exchange on the Development of Chinese and Thai Buddhist Botanical Motifs:

Guan (1996), in *Intercultural Communication Studies*, offers a foundational text in the field, systematically exploring theories, development, and methodologies of intercultural exchange. This research spans perspectives from communication, cultural, and social studies, analyzing patterns of interaction across different cultural backgrounds and highlighting the significance of intercultural communication in a globalized context. Leksukhum (2007), in *The Chinese-Thai Connection in Decorative Motifs*, examines the intricate relationship between China and Thailand's decorative art, revealing how both cultures have historically influenced and blended, and how this is reflected in ornamental art. This study provides valuable insights into the complexity of cultural exchange and the diversity of motif designs. In *Chinese Art and Chinese Influence in Thailand* (1987), Prayur investigates the historical presence and influence of Chinese art and its integration into Thai ornamental designs, particularly focusing on how Chinese artistic forms

were adapted within Thai culture. This research is essential for understanding the artistic manifestations of Sino-Thai cultural fusion.

Methodology

1. Literature Review Method: The literature review methodology of this study involves the following steps: First, literature searches were conducted using databases such as Google Scholar and CNKI, employing keywords such as "Buddhist thought," "plant motifs," and "cultural exchange." During the screening process, priority was given to selecting journal articles, books, and dissertations published within the past decade in both English and Chinese, with a focus on works with high academic impact and citation counts. Second, the selected literature was subjected to thematic analysis and systematic organization.

2. Comparative Analysis Method: A comparative analysis of the cultural backgrounds of Buddhist plant motifs reveals that the differences between Chinese and Thai Buddhist plant motifs are profoundly influenced by the historical and cultural contexts of the two countries. Chinese Buddhist art has undergone extensive cultural integration and innovation, deeply influenced by Confucianism and Daoism. This has resulted in Chinese Buddhist plant motifs often reflecting Confucian emphasis on ritual propriety and Daoist reverence for nature. In contrast, Thai Buddhist art has been significantly shaped by Hindu influences, emphasizing divinity and mysticism, with plant motifs more explicitly representing sacredness and the transmission of Buddhist teachings. By comparing the cultural backgrounds of these two traditions, it is possible to uncover the evolution and adaptation of plant motifs within their historical contexts, providing deeper insights into their cultural meanings.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is shown in Figure 1.

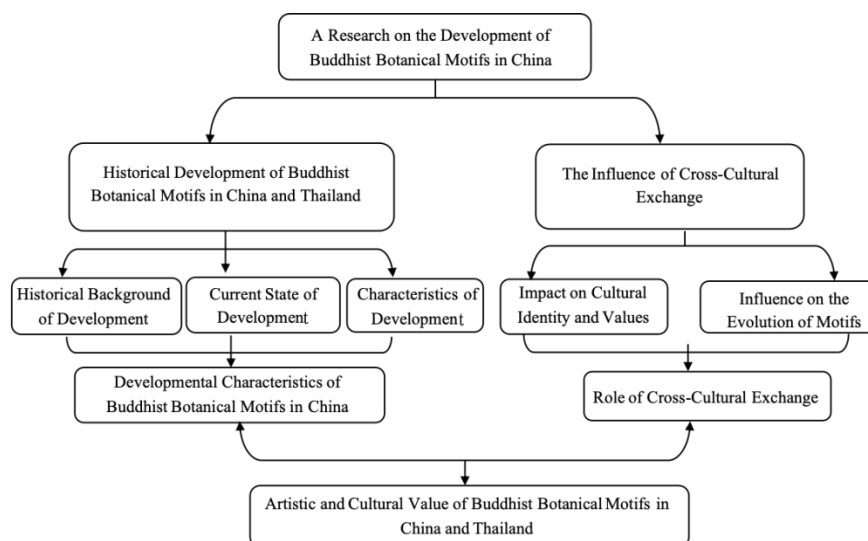


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework
Note: Constructed by the researcher

Results

1. The development of Chinese Buddhist plant patterns

1.1 Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties (220-420 AD):

The period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties was a time when Buddhism flourished in China. The Buddhist decorative arts of this period had three main characteristics: 1. the extensive absorption or direct transplantation of foreign decorative themes and forms; 2. the deep integration and mutual permeation of Chinese traditional culture with foreign cultures; 3. reflecting the aesthetic characteristics of

the Northern and Southern Dynasties period (Ni, 2000). The essence of the Northern Wei murals, for example, lies in their richly diverse and narrative paintings (Hu & An, 2004).

In terms of themes, stories related to Buddhist scriptures, including stories of the Buddha himself and Buddhist biographies, occupied an important position, with symbolically meaningful content related to the teachings being widely present. Particularly, plant-based decorative patterns, rare in traditional Chinese decoration, experienced unprecedented popularity in cave decorations during this period. Typical patterns such as the honeysuckle, intertwined branches, grape patterns, and various twisted flower decorations emerged (as shown in Figure 2), although they were in the minority and carried a greater degree of symbolic imagery (Ni, 2000; Hu & An, 2004).

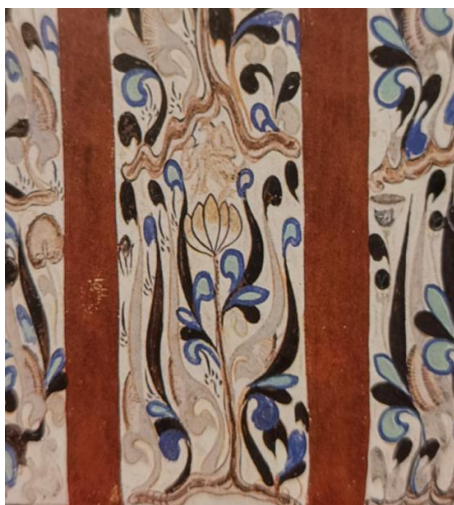


Figure 2 Decoration of Honeysuckle, Cave 297 of the Mogao Grottoes, Northern Zhou Dynasty

Note: (Chang, 2004: 33)

After the Northern and Southern Dynasties, decorations featuring the lotus theme surged in number, with forms ranging from realistic to abstract. There are more than twenty types of lotus forms in the Yungang Grottoes alone, and the lotus decorations from this period in the Mogao Grottoes are also very rich. This phenomenon is directly related to the lotus being regarded as a symbol of purity and auspiciousness in Buddhism.

In terms of decorative forms, a significant part of the Buddhist decorations during the Northern and Southern Dynasties directly utilized the original forms of foreign decorations. The most typical example is the honeysuckle pattern (as shown in Figure 3), which can be traced back to ancient Greece or even earlier, to ancient Egypt, later influencing Gandhara Buddhist decorations. The honeysuckle patterns extensively used in Chinese Buddhist decorations during the Northern and Southern Dynasties were almost entirely transplanted in their original form, with variations only beginning to appear in the later periods of the Northern and Southern Dynasties.



Figure 3 Honeysuckle Pattern

Note: (Ni, 2000)

Other patterns, such as intertwined branches and grape patterns, also belong to this category. The embodiment of China's traditional spirit during this period mainly manifested as a combination of Chinese and foreign elements, with a small number of forms already showing signs of Sinicization. The combination of Chinese and foreign elements was mainly evident in decorative crafts and models. For example, the relief sculpture techniques and mural painting skills used in cave decorations were already highly developed in China before the Han Dynasty and were like those used in the Yungang Grottoes. This period also marked the beginning of the nationalization of traditional Chinese decorative patterns. For instance, the honeysuckle decorations in phases 2 and 3 of the Yungang Grottoes evolved from the original three-leaf shape to a more complex and rounded multi-petal form (as shown in Figure 4), with more complicated and diverse outcomes. There also appeared combinations of honeysuckle patterns with lotuses, as well as the inclusion of fruits like grapes and pomegranates, which were significant for the formation of scroll patterns in the Tang Dynasty and later periods (Ni, 2000).



Figure 4 Honeysuckle Pattern (2)

Note: (Ni, 2000)

1.2 Sui Dynasty (581-618 AD):

The development during the Wei, Jin, Northern, and Southern Dynasties laid a significant foundation for the Sinicization of Buddhism. The unification of the country, prosperity, close interaction with Western regions, and the rulers' advocacy promoted the reform and innovation of Buddhist cave art during this period. By the Sui and Tang dynasties, the process of nationalization of Buddhist decorations had matured, marking another pinnacle in the history of ancient Chinese decorative arts (Ni, 2000; Hu & An, 2004).

Buddhist decorations of the Sui and Tang dynasties, as represented by the Mogao Grottoes, demonstrate the characteristics of this period's Buddhist decorations. During the Sui Dynasty, patterns incorporated artistic forms from Western countries, resulting in richer content, more beautiful imagery, and livelier patterns (as shown in Figure 5). Patterns in various caves were no longer imitated in specific styles but instead attempted innovation. Although the style of decorative patterns remained robust and concise, changes occurred in the organizational structure of decorative patterns, especially with an increase in intertwined branch patterns (as shown in Figure 6), a decrease in honeysuckle patterns, replaced by combinations of lotus leaves, honeysuckle, and human figures (as shown in Figure 7).



Figure 5 Dunhuang Mural of the Sui Dynasty
Note: (Chang, 2004: 29)



Figure 6 Intertwined Branch Pattern of the Sui Dynasty
Note: (Chang, 2004: 26)



Figure 7 Plant and Human Combination Pattern of the Sui Dynasty
Note: (Chang, 2004: 28)

The Sui Dynasty's Buddhist patterns were rich but short-lived. Entering the Tang Dynasty, a significant transformation occurred in cave patterns. Overall, the Sui Dynasty was a transitional period, with significant changes and innovations in Buddhist decoration from themes to forms, laying the foundation for Tang Dynasty murals.

1.3 Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD):

The Tang Dynasty was a unique period in Chinese history, with the economy reaching unprecedented prosperity. Buddhism developed better against the backdrop of the times, increasingly influencing people's thoughts. As Buddhist ideas were deeply influenced, they also greatly impacted Buddhist art, enriching the content. Tang Dynasty Buddhist art was significantly transcendent compared to previous dynasties, with rich pattern content and considerable changes. The Tang Dynasty's economy was thriving, and thoughts were open, with a very romantic lifestyle, reflected in Buddhist patterns. Patterns often depicted a full demeanor. Due to the frequent interactions during the Sui and Tang periods, like the Gandhara period, Gandhara's bold composition, lively brushwork, and vibrant Buddhist plant patterns (as shown in Figure 8, Ajanta Cave's Lotus Caisson) spread widely in the Tang Dynasty and had a profound impact.

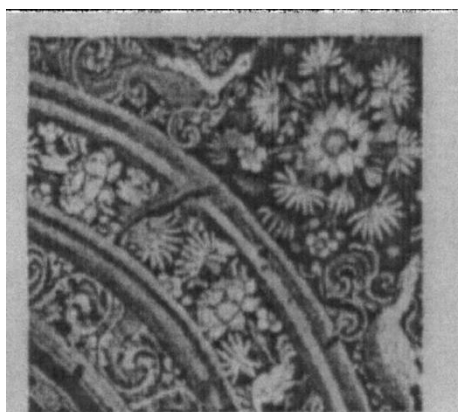


Figure 8 Lotus Caisson in Ajanta Caves
Note: (Dang, 2009)

2. The evolution of Thai Buddhist plant patterns

2.1 Dvaravati Period (600-1100 AD):

In the ancient Dvaravati period, patterns were mainly influenced by India, characterized by inspiration from nature, such as fern, vine, intertwined branch patterns, including some floral and leaf patterns, and animal patterns. These patterns shared a lineage with Indian patterns. The Dvaravati period's pattern characteristics were largely a combination of Indian and Funan patterns. The primary patterns used were fern patterns (ลายผักกูด) (as shown in Figures 9 and 10) (He, 2012).



Figure 9 Fern Pattern 1
Note: (Prayur, 2017: 20)



Figure 10 Fern Pattern 2

Note: (Prayur, 2017: 20)

2.2 U Thong and Sukhothai Period (1238-1419 AD):

Patterns from the Sukhothai period mainly appeared on stupas, temples, ceramic vessels, and temple stone inscriptions. U Thong period patterns had a continuity with Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, and Suphanburi art, even connecting with Chiang Mai art. This period's art evolution was a fact of artistic styles spreading and circulating through different eras. The 14th-18th centuries were the peak of Khmer art; thus, Thailand moved away from Indian cultural influences, turning to learn and develop from Khmer culture. The previously favored fern patterns in temple architecture were no longer used, starting their new designs, which became the origin of the later Kanok flame patterns (ลายกระหนกเปลว) (Prayur, 2017).

2.3 Ayutthaya Period (1350-1767 AD):

Early Ayutthaya stone carvings followed the Sukhothai style. The aura behind Buddha statues resembled lotus shapes, a unique Southeast Asian style. Mid-Ayutthaya period patterns featured continuous plank patterns (ลายหน้ากระดาน) (as shown in Figure 11) and four-cornered floral patterns (ลายประจายาม), commonly seen in Ayutthaya patterns. Lotus petal patterns also started using elongated petals, sharp and distinct, inspired by the lotus heart patterns (ลายกระจิงตาอ้อย) (as shown in Figure 12). The late Ayutthaya period was a prosperous time for decorative arts in Thai history. The drawings were detailed and freely flowing, with common patterns including floral, leaf, intertwined branch, and gold patterns, notably combining leaf patterns, floral patterns, and gold intertwined branch patterns. This period began establishing detailed rules for future generations to learn and emulate.



Figure 11 Plank Pattern

Note: (Prayur, 2017: 103)

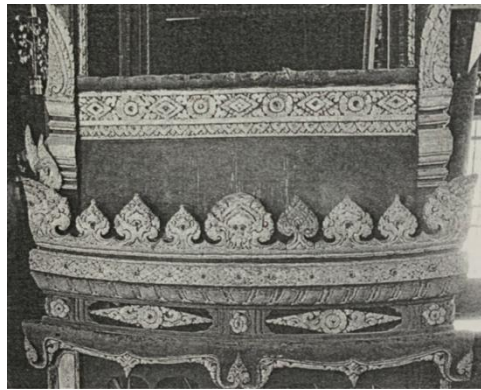


Figure 12 Lotus Heart Pattern

Note: (Prayur, 2017: 108)

2.4 Bangkok Period

Early Bangkok dynasty artworks were like the Ayutthaya period style. During King Rama II's reign, a large amount of Chinese cultural arts and literary works were absorbed, also imitating the art of the Tang dynasty royalty. Floral and leaf patterns began to mimic Chinese pattern forms, such as peony, plum, orchid, bamboo, and chrysanthemum (as shown in Figure 13). By the late reign of King Rama II, the imitation and admiration of Chinese art reached its peak, with these imitated Chinese patterns becoming the main pattern forms of the Bangkok dynasty period, combining with the inherited Ayutthaya period patterns.



Figure 13 Patterns imitating Tang Dynasty art forms during King Rama II's reign

Note: (Prayur, 2017: 212)

During King Rama III's reign, Thai decorative pattern art reached another peak. This period saw the construction of temples across Thailand, thereby promoting the flourishing and transmission of

traditional Thai pattern art. This era's flame-like Kanok patterns, also called dragon tail patterns (ลายกนกเปลว) (as shown in Figure 14), inaugurated the golden age of Bangkok dynasty artistic patterns.

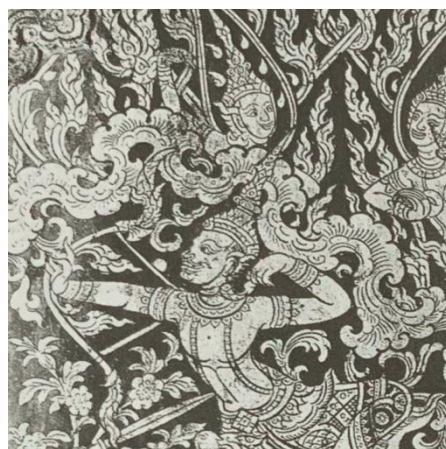


Figure 14 Flame pattern during King Rama III's reign
Note: (Prayur, 2017: 218)

King Rama IV's reign began to absorb a large amount of Western thought, adopting European pattern forms that were solid and monotonous. This period revered vine patterns, floral patterns, and various natural leaf patterns. King Rama V's patterns were inherited from King Rama IV's era, as there was a need to reshape Thailand's cultural art, thus heavily borrowing from European pattern forms, and combining them with the art of various Thai dynasties.

Buddhist plant patterns, an important cultural phenomenon that gradually formed during the spread of Buddhism from India, developed continuously in China, reaching a peak during the Tang Dynasty. Before Buddhism's introduction to China, Chinese plant patterns were not well-developed; the decorative patterns were mainly based on local mythical beasts, immortals, and cloud patterns. With China's cultural exchange with the Western Regions and India, including plant patterns, Buddhist culture rapidly developed (Dang, 2009).

Thailand's Buddhist patterns were initially influenced by Indian culture, later influenced by Khmer culture, adopting and integrating Khmer art styles, and reaching a peak in decorative art during the late Ayutthaya period. Subsequently, due to more frequent trade with China, Thai Buddhist plants gradually incorporated Chinese styles, making these imitated Chinese patterns the main pattern forms during the Bangkok Dynasty period, combining with inherited Ayutthaya period patterns.

3. The impact of cross-cultural exchanges on the development of Buddhist plant patterns in China and Thailand:

3.1 Impact on China:

Buddhist plant patterns are an important cultural phenomenon that gradually formed when Buddhism was introduced from India to China. It continued to develop in China and reached its peak in the Tang Dynasty. Before Buddhism was introduced to China, China's plant patterns were not developed; decorative patterns were mainly based on local mythical beasts, gods, and cloud patterns. With the cultural exchanges between China and the Western Regions and India, including plant patterns, Buddhist culture developed rapidly (Dang, 2009).

After the introduction of Buddhist culture into China, it had many impacts on China's existing culture and aesthetics. Impact on Aesthetics: The art of the Gandhara period emphasized the combination of modeling curves with nature, cleverly integrating hands, feet, and plants in Buddhist modeling art (as shown in Figure 15). The comparison shows the similarity between hands, feet, and plant modeling. This approach to drawing inspiration from nature and seeking beauty in plant forms, along with the flexible, harmonious, and vibrant decorative style, quickly brought new concepts of Indian Buddhist aesthetics to

China, bringing fresh creativity to the art of the Wei, Jin, Northern, and Southern Dynasties, offering new prospects for the development of traditional Chinese plant patterns.

With the introduction of Buddhist culture, the influence of Confucian ideas of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements gradually decreased, with metaphysics and Buddhist thought rising. China began exploring the concepts of "existence" and "non-existence," incorporating more Buddhist meanings into plant decorative patterns (Zhang, 2005).



Figure 15 Comparison of hands, feet, and plants in Indian Buddhist modeling art
Note: (Zhang, 2005: 218)

3.2 Impact on Thailand:

The Buddhist motifs in Thailand were initially influenced by Indian culture and later shaped by Khmer culture, which adopted and integrated Khmer artistic styles, reaching a pinnacle of decorative art during the late Ayutthaya period. Subsequently, during the reign of King Rama II of the Rattanakosin dynasty, frequent trade with China led to the absorption of numerous Chinese cultural elements. Thai Buddhist botanical motifs gradually incorporated Chinese styles, causing these China-inspired designs to become predominant during the Rattanakosin period, blending with motifs inherited from the Ayutthaya era. For instance, the Wat Chom Thong temple, reconstructed during the reign of Rama II, emulated Chinese art in its entirety (see Figure 16: Wat Chom Thong Temple). The influence of Chinese art is evident in various structures, including temples, monasteries, sermon halls, bell towers, and stupas. Many motifs within the temple were assembled in Thailand from raw materials originally sourced from China. The triangular gable at the front of the temple features auspicious patterns decorated in the Chinese style with glazed tiles (see Figure 17: Wat Chom Thong Gable). This group of gables also reflects the impact of Chinese culture on Thailand.



Figure 16 Wat Chom Thong Temple
Note: Photographed by the researcher



Figure 17 Wat Chom Thong Gable
Note: Photographed by the researcher

Discussion

This research, through an analysis of the development of Buddhist botanical motifs in significant dynasties of China and Thailand, reveals the dynamic trajectories of cross-cultural influence and adaptation. During the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties, Chinese Buddhist decorative art began to absorb foreign decorative elements. Initially, these elements were directly adopted, but over time, they gradually merged, reflecting a synthesis of Chinese and foreign aesthetics. For example, intricate patterns such as the honeysuckle motif and intertwining vines emerged, symbolizing not only religious beliefs but also the influence of external styles. This period laid the foundation for Chinese Buddhist art, with motifs like the lotus becoming prominent. As Buddhism became deeply rooted in Chinese culture, these symbols evolved into various forms of expression.

In Thailand, the Dvaravati and Sukhothai periods exhibited unique stylistic influences from India and, subsequently, the Khmer Empire, marking a localized process of Thai Buddhist motifs. During the Rattanakosin period, especially under the reign of Rama II, the influence of Chinese culture became notably pronounced, as reflected in Buddhist decorative elements, such as floral and leaf patterns inspired by Chinese art. These adaptations illustrate the integrative role of Buddhism in incorporating external aesthetics into expressions of national cultural identity. The reproduction and reinterpretation of similar motifs, such as lotus and vine patterns, across different dynasties in China and Thailand indicate the enduring adaptability and symbolic richness of Buddhist botanical motifs, reflecting religious beliefs and cross-cultural exchanges.

This research emphasizes how the exchange of Buddhist symbolic meanings between China and Thailand has facilitated the continuous evolution of Buddhist botanical motifs, enhancing the cultural and spiritual resonance of these symbols within their respective societies. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on the economic and social impacts of Buddhist art, this analysis unveils the cultural synthesis and symbolic development of Buddhist botanical motifs, serving as an indicator of ongoing cultural exchange.

However, due to its reliance on literature reviews and case studies, this research has limitations, suggesting that future studies could expand into comparative field analyses of regional adaptations to provide a more comprehensive view of the cross-cultural journey of Buddhist art.

Conclusion

In terms of the symbolic and cultural significance of botanical motifs, although Buddhism holds an important position in China, traditional Chinese art may not always revolve around Buddhist themes. In this context, plants and flowers themselves may possess some secular symbolic meanings. Specific plants in Chinese art, such as the plum blossom, orchid, bamboo, and chrysanthemum, are known as the "Four Gentlemen" due to their association with virtues such as resilience, integrity, and purity; thus, their use in Buddhist art has also been observed.

Thai art, on the other hand, is often strongly influenced by Buddhism, with plants and flowers frequently employed to convey Buddhist themes and doctrines. Local flora, such as the lotus, balsam, and jasmine, which have unique cultural and religious meanings, are also incorporated. Notably, the lotus flower has a close connection to Thai Buddhism.

Artistically, traditional Chinese painting primarily emphasizes brushwork and calligraphy, depicting graceful and flowing depictions of flora and fauna; ink-wash painting is a renowned style within Chinese art. Chinese artistic motifs often integrate seasonal changes to create a sense of natural harmony. In contrast, traditional Thai art is known for its intricate and vibrant patterns, which may include floral elements as part of large decorative designs. Thai art exists in various forms, including sculpture, murals, and temple decorations. The incorporation of seasonal elements is less common than in Chinese art and places greater emphasis on the religious significance of plants, particularly in Buddhist rituals and practices.

Regarding the adoption of Buddhist botanical motifs, the literature indicates that China primarily incorporates motifs such as the lotus, honeysuckle, intertwining vines, scrolls, Bodhi trees, camellias, and pomegranates, as well as combinations of these patterns. Thailand, in contrast, employs motifs like the lotus, peony, chrysanthemum, and Kanok.

Due to significant linguistic differences between China and Thailand, specific and vivid cultural exchanges may not be effectively conveyed through language. However, Buddhist botanical motifs, as visual symbols, can easily transcend language barriers and communicate different national spirits, making culture more intuitive and visual. Because Buddhist botanical motifs are visually perceived, understanding diverse cultural expressions becomes more accessible through our sensory experiences.

Recommendation

Researching plant motifs in Chinese and Thai Buddhist art provides an important perspective for exploring the complex interactions between culture, religion, and art. This study not only deepens our understanding of the multiple factors shaping these traditional art forms but also offers profound insights into the spiritual connotations of Buddhism in both countries and their artistic expressions.

Future research should consider the following recommendations:

1. Integration of Themes in Contemporary Art: Leverage the symbolic meanings of Buddhist plant motifs, such as the lotus symbolizing purity and the Bodhi tree representing enlightenment, to create thematic artworks that convey universal values of inner tranquility and ecological harmony. Alternatively, incorporate plant motifs into large-scale installations using diverse materials such as bamboo, fiber, and light effects to engage audiences by bridging traditional and modern aesthetics.

2. Practical Integration in Modern Design: Combine plant motifs with contemporary trends to design decorative fashion items, such as embroidery and prints, aligning with the principles of sustainable fashion. Alternatively, incorporate Buddhist plant motifs into home and interior design elements like wallpapers, textiles, and tiles to create spaces imbued with a Zen-like ambiance.

3. Innovative Applications in Digital Art and New Media: Utilize interactive art to present plant motifs dynamically, such as through VR/AR technologies that allow audiences to "enter" the motif spaces. Additionally, digital artworks featuring plant motifs in NFTs foster the digital preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage.

4. Art Education and Cultural Innovation: Establish courses in art and design schools that integrate Buddhist art with modern design, encouraging students to explore innovative expressions. Organize



workshops centered on plant motifs to engage the public with cultural heritage, fostering interaction and creative participation.

Significance of Applying Buddhist Plant Motifs in Modern Art and Design :

1. Cultural Revitalization: Foster the integration of traditional culture with modern design, revitalizing Buddhist artistic elements to resonate with contemporary audiences and ensuring their relevance in the modern era.
2. Cross-Cultural Exchange: Facilitate the global dissemination and appreciation of Chinese and Thai cultures through artworks and design products, promoting mutual understanding and dialogue across diverse cultural contexts.
3. Economic Value: Develop competitive cultural products for tourism, art markets, and the design industry, leveraging the unique appeal of Buddhist plant motifs to create innovative offerings.

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