CULTURE IN TRANSITION: A STUDY OF THANGKA PAINTING WITH REFERENCE TO SIKKIM

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INTRODUCTION

- Painting is an integral part of society signifying social relationships
  - not only an art but a projection of socio-culture and one such form
    that is nestled in the laps of Sikkim is the Thangka painting,
    virtual image of Lord Buddha.
- *Thangka* means “**thing that one unrolls**”, unframed painting that is
  painted on silk cloths, and cotton clothes rolled up after completion
- Commonly painted by Holy lamas or Buddhist monks
- Painted for propagation of Buddhist religion and its teachings.
- Modern day custom made paintings different from one person to
  another and are designed according to the preferences of the customer.
- Thangka painting has a very high economic value but painter are not
  paid accordingly.
- Artists spend long six years practicing the art form often deprived
  from getting stable jobs or employment.
SOME STUDIES

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OBJECTIVES

• Paper locates history of Thangka painting, norms of enrolment in Thangka institutes, iconography, economic value, caste, and changes.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

• Paper employed narrative-interpretive qualitative method.
• Snowball sampling method was designed to collect primary data, and personal interviews were conducted to understand different patterns of thangka painting and changing trends in contemporary settings.
• Data were analysed through coding, categorisation, and patterns from raw data, and created a theme that represents similar patterns.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

• HISTORY OF THANGKA PAINTING
  • Small tsakli, 13-14th century
  • 17th-century Central Tibetan thanka of Guhyasamaja Akshobhyavajra
  • Yama, Tibet, 17th- or early 18th-century
  • Yama Dharmapala, Tibetan-Chinese, silk embroidery, 18th century
HISTORY OF THANGKA PAINTING

11th/12th-CENTURY THANGKA OF AMITABHA BUDDHA

Buddha with the One Hundred JATAKA Tales, Tibet, 13th-14th century

Thangka depicting Vajrabhairava, c. 1740
Small tsakli, 13-14th century

Yama Dharmapala, Tibetan-Chinese, silk embroidery, 18th century

17th-century Central Tibetan thanka of Guhyasamaja Akshobhyavajra

Yama, Tibet, 17th- or early 18th-century.
Thangka paintings of Himalayan North east zone are a sacred form of art maintained and preserved by the local Buddhist. Thangka paintings, reliable source of information and pillar of Buddhism. From 12th century it been a part of Buddhist community predominated Tibetans which is why thangkas are also referred as Tibetan paintings. Tibet, China, India, Nepal have a considerable collections. Two largest thangkas are displayed at Potala Palace in Tibet, holds a collection of 10,000 Thangka paintings dates back to 300 years. Vary in usage of colors, design of facial expressions of deity, decorations, and background scenery. Tibetan thangkas have depiction of Rinpoche and Dalai Lama whereas Sikkimese thangkas have depiction of Chogyal or last King of Sikkim along with Rinpoche and Monks.
CONCLUSION

• Significant change has taken place with incorporation of modern technologies especially digital printers and laser techniques for preserving the paintings affecting the style of paintings.

• Similarly like in modern-day custom-made paintings are different from one to another and designed according to the preferences of the concerned.

• Study observed paid a meagre price despite artists spending six months on single painting.

• A shift in traditional role marked enroute to preservation and revivalism of Thangka painting.
THANK YOU