THE TRANSITION OF TIME IN THE THAI MURAL PAINTING AND GRAPHIC NOVELS: THE MURAL PAINTING IN THE TEMPLE OF WAT SUWANNARAM

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Abstract- This study is an attempt to discuss the transition of time in the Thai Mural Painting, by proposing the new approach in analyzing the Thai Mural Painting through the contemporary view point, which is the comparison of the time transition of the graphic novels. This study mainly look at the Thai Mural Painting wit in the main temple of WatSuwannaram as the case study. It was found out that the most transition used within the mural with continuous story telling is the aspect-to-aspect type. And the symbolic mural mostly employed the subject-to-subject and moment-to-moment transition. However, because of the large scale of the mural, some of them were divided internally by the edge of architecture or treelines, which were also the time transition within the particular mural.

Keywords- Transition, Graphic Novel, Mural Painting, Wat Suwannaram, History

I. INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that the graphic novel is one of the medium which possess the most intimate and interactive storytelling power. The contents can be adapted to the changing cultural and temporal context as well as the complexity of the story. And the visual storytelling can induce the imagination in both the creator and the reader by creating illustration or the symbolic image within the tangible area, such as in the printed paper or digital format used nowadays.

Among the graphic novel studies,the work of Scott McCloud "Understanding Comic : The Invisible Art" is one of the most interesting pieces. McCloud proposed that the graphic novel has its own unit and grammar language, with the particular style of conveying meaning that can be both resemble or different from the other type of medium for storytelling. The interpretation included three issues, which are the 1)the graphic image and the realism degree, 2) the transition of the frame, and 3) the time transition. [1]

This research is mostly concerned about the time transition within the mural. It will employ the principle of the frame transition and time transition as the new approach in discussing the Thai mural painting. The researcher will discuss the concept by looking at the Thai Mural Painting within the main temple of WatSuwannaram as the case study.

OBJECTIVE

1) To study the layout of the mural painting within the main temple of WatSuwannaram.
2) To study the time transition of graphic novels.
3) To do the comparative analysis of time transition between graphic novels and the thai mural painting To study the features and volume of light in the Ubosot of WatYaiSuvarnaram which affect in the three emotional aspects: peaceful, respectable, and magnificent; to be guidelines for lighting design to create Thai style ambience.

II. DETAILS EXPERIMENTAL

2.1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research focus on the time transition of the Thai mural painting which is a type of Thai story telling, in comparative to the graphic novel which is the western concept, in order to explain the Thai mural painting through a new perspective. Therefore, the research process can be divided in three parts as following.

First part, to study the type and position of image which influence the storytelling on the wall of the Thai temple.

Second part, to study the time transition of the Thai mural painting by using the concept of time transition from graphic novels.

Third part, to do the comparative analysis between the time transition of the graphic novels and the storytelling system of the Thai mural painting.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

First part. From the early Thai mural paintings which are still left enough to be studied, such as the mural of Kru Prang of Ratchaburana temple in Ayudhya province, from the early Ayudhya period, it was evident that the mural was not meant to be seen because the shrine was closed. Therefore the propose of creating the mural is for the symbolic function. [2]

However, the mural from the early Rattanakosint period tended to aim at storytelling function more than the symbolic function. For example, the storytelling area are usually close to the viewer. The perception area for the spectator is therefore the walls around them, between the two windows, and the short side at the front and the back of the main Buddha image. While the symbolic image, such as "the deity

gatherings", "the three worlds", and "the defeat of Mara" were usually located far away from the viewer. It can be concluded that the storytelling mural put more priority on the viewer.

The Thai mural paintings also function together with the space of the main temple as the communication medium. The painters created the layout by divided the mural into different "rooms". Most of them were large scale.[3] When the images were put together in one continuous frame, it was found out that the images conveyed the story of Buddha in each area, which is the order of the early Rattanakosint painting. The mural painting on the long side between the window pane, on the left side of the main Buddha image, depicted the ten incarnations of Buddha by dividing in eight "rooms" starting from Temiyajataka to Vidhurajataka and Vessantarajataka. The lower part of the short-side-wall behind the main Buddha image depicted the Vessantarajataka in the scene of ten blessings, the himmapan scene, and the charity scene. The lower part of the long-side-wall on the right of the main Buddha temple depicted the Vessantarajataka in the trekking away scene and the return to the city scene for eight "rooms". The upper part of the wall, above the left and right window, was filled with the mural of the deity gatherings for four rows each. The short-side-wall in front of the Presiding Buddha image depicted the defeat of Mara. Below, in between the two doors, was painted in the theme of Buddha's life for two "rooms", in the scene of birth and the great departure (ordaining). The mural on the short-side wall behind the Presiding Buddha image depicted the image of the three worlds.

Second part. The image transition occurred when more than one images were arranged together. The viewer will be the closure of the time transition. Scott McCloud explained that there were six types of transition as followings; 1) Moment to moment 2) Action to action3)Subject to subject 4) Scene to scene 5) Aspect to aspect and 6) Non sequitur(Scott McCloud,1994) The researcher then used McCloud's concept of six types of transition, which was tested with both the western graphic novels and the Japanese manga, to further analyze the Thai mural painting.



Fig.1: Plan of the murals location within the main temple of WatSuwannaram.

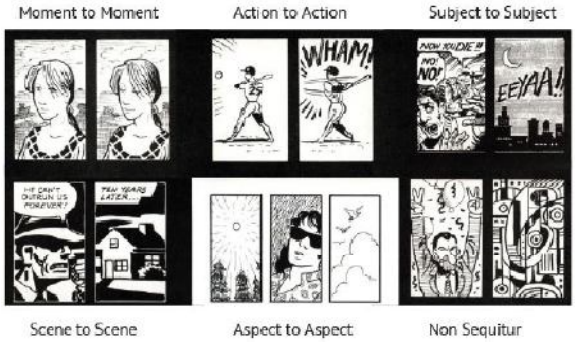

Fig.2: Transition of time in graphic novels. [4]

Third part. It was evident that the mural layout function together with the space of the main temple, with the Presiding Buddha as the center. The stories which direct the meaning of the murals were systematically presented. The images can be divided in to 2 categories, which are the continuous storytelling images and the symbolic images. This research only focus on the time transition within the mural. And it could be explainted from the comparative study as followings.

The analysis of the continuous storytelling images can be divided in three groups; 1) the ten jatakas, 2) the Vessantarajataka, and 3) the Buddha's life. All three groups employed the subject-to-subject transition. Each room was divided similarly to the frame of the graphic novels. However, the frame was not as evident, for the painter used the line of the trees, landscape, or the architecture within the images as if they were the division of the story. The change of the time therefore depended on the level of perception of the viewers, in trying to understand the story of each image. Such as the Mahosadhajataka, on the fifth position of the wall on the left of the Preciding Buddha, which was painted by LuangSeneeBorirak (Master Kong Pae), the major painter during the period, depicted the scene when KingCulani was led by Kevatta Brahman to attack Mithila city. The images were represented in scenes, similarly to the graphic novels. The only difference was the use of the tree line and architecture as the border of the frame. The storytelling images started from the top-right, depicting the march of the army, downwards and upwards to the end at the top-left, when Kevatta Brahman seems to finally bow to Mahosadha (meant Kevatta lose the war). Apart from the highly sophisticated skill of the painter, it was undeniable that the viewer could not possibly understand the meaning of the images without prior knowledge about the story. While it was quite possible to understand the Vessantarajataka murals without an prior knowledge of the story, because there was the repetiion of the character in each scense within the "room", such as the Maharaj scene on the third room of the wall on the right of the Preciding Buddha. The scene depicted the Brahmin Jujaka traveled with Princess Kanhaijina and Prince Jali and got lost until they reached Sivi City. King Sunjaya

who ruled the city was the grandfather of the children, and he bought them back from Jujaka as well as gave him the palace, servants, and plenty of food. Jujaka ate too much and fell dead. King Sunjaya then arranged a grand procession to bring Prince Vessantara back to the city. The picture room of this mural was also divided in sections with the tree line and the architecture. The story proceeded from top right and downwards. However, the major difference between this mural and the ten Jataka was the repetition of character in storytelling. Therefore, those who do not have prior knowledge of the story could still understand the story by using their imagination to connect the story together. For the mural of Buddha's life on the short-side-wall in front of the main Preciding Buddha, which depicted the birthing scene and the greatdeparture (ordaining), also employed the same time transition and layout style.

The symbolic images analysis consisted of the defeat of Mara on the short-side-wall in front of the main Preciding Buddha, the deity gatherings on both long-side-walls, and the three worlds (the scene of the Buddha showing clemency to his mother) on the short-side-wall behind the main Preciding Buddha. These symbolic images conveyed the meaning according to the Buddha's life, with the system of painting in the traditional style.

The mural of the deity gatherings above the window pane was painted in four rows. The deity consisted of the deva, the giant, thegaruda, and the naga, separated by the talipot fan. All the deity kneeled and press the hands together at the chest, facing towards the main Preciding Buddha. The top row, divided by the zigzag line, depicted the ascetic and the demigod. The images can be categorized in two groups, which are the deity, mostly separated by the talipot fan, and the ascetic and the demigod, separated by the zigzag line. When considering them together, it was found out that the time transition employed in the ascetic and the demigod images is the aspect-to-aspect type, to show the element in the same time, while the images of deity is closer to the moment-to-moment transition. The difference is that the images of deity depicted various type of them; deva, giant, garuda, and naga, with the same pose, conveying the meaning of many deities coming together.

The defeat of Mara on the short-side-wall in front of the main Preciding Buddha is a large scale mural which employed the aspect-to-aspect time transition. Most parts of the mural depict the event in the same time, including the Buddha sitting above the Bodhi throne, the marching of Mara army, and the Earth goddess squeezed her bun, resulted in the flood of the Mara army.

Apart from the defeat of Mara, the mural of the three worlds, depicting the scene of the Buddha showing clemency to his mother, is also another large scale symbolic image. The time transition is the subject-to-subject.



Fig.3: The storytelling of Mahosadhajataka.



Fig.4: The deity gatherings image (symbolic image)



Fig.5: Space in the mural and the storytelling of Mahosadhajataka and the Vessantarajataka, Maharaja scene.

IV. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The murals function together with the space of the main temple, with the Preciding Buddha as the symbol of Buddha at the center. The story was told in two types of images; symbolic and continuous storytelling. There were five series of images consisted of the ten jataka, the Vessantarajataka, the deity gatherings, the defeat of Mara, and the three world (Buddha showing clemency to his mother). The murals were painted on all the walls surrounding the space inside the main temple

Each mural was divided into many different images, and each image employed different type of transition.It was found that the symbolic images such as the defeat of Mara, would be painted in large scale (covering all space above the doors on the short-side-wall opposite to the main Preciding Buddha). Therefore, the time in the mural seems to be longer for the viewer. The symbolic image with the story

and meaning could also be divided by the elements, such as the images of the Bodhisattva, the Mara, the Earth goddess. If the elements were divided into frame, it would be evident that the subject-to-subject transition is employed here, depicting parts of the same event. The deity gatherings is also the symbolic image with many repetition of the various images, such as the deva, the giant, the garuda, and the naga. The frames were divided in equal space, with many frames, resulting in the lengthen of time in the similar way with the moment-to-moment transition. And may also match the story representing the large amount of deity who gathered and witness the moment.

The most obvious simultaneous storytelling is the images of Vessantarajataka. It should be noted that the image wihtin the picture room can be further divided by the zigzag line, the tree line, and the archtecture as the border of the frame instead of using the obvious frame. There was no clear system of image arrangement within the frame, and usually executed according to the imagination of the painter. Most time transitions within the frames and bewteen the frames were aspect-to-aspect. Therefore the level of perception of the viewer is highly important to the viewing of the thai mural painting, for the continuous storytelling images would appear closer to the viewer, in both the ten jataka and the Vessantarajataka.

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