

*The Influence of Painting Education on Taiwan Folk Art during Japanese Colonial Period – Taking Landscape Painting of Colored Drawing for Building as Example*

Ya-Hui Tsai, Min-Fu Hsu

National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan

0350

The Asian Conference on Arts & Humanities 2013

Official Conference Proceedings 2013

Abstract

In general, Taiwan's folk art tradition is inherited from the local characteristics in Fujian and Guangdong areas of mainland China. However, after the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, Japan began colonizing Taiwan, and also gradually reformed the education system, language, habituation, custom and religion that existed in Taiwan since ancient times. Moreover, during this period, the implementation of painting education was the most significant influence on Taiwan's folk art.

In 1912, elementary school students began to have painting class. It was not only emphasized the inspiration of children's intelligence, but also the learning of the basic pattern and perspective drawing technique; that is, the cultivation of their observation ability. In addition, these elements can be considered as integrating the basis of western painting into the painting education, and then become one of the key factors to change Taiwan's folk art style during Japanese colonial period.

This study is adopted the painting education during Japanese colonial period as the research subject to explore the influence of related historic background and the changes in actual artworks on Taiwan's folk art, which can also be used as the record reference to historic context.

Key word: art history, painting education, folk art, Japanese colonial period, colored drawing for building

## Introduction

Early in the Japanese colonial period, the Japanese government had not begun to impose restraints on religious beliefs in Taiwan. Although the construction of temples and ancestral shrines continued, the regime change drastically reduced the number of artisans from “Tangshan” (i.e. mainland China.).

After 1910, successful agricultural and economic reform by the Japanese government contributed to a prosperous and stable society. As a result, the prospect of the building industry went from the gloom during early Japanese rule to one of optimism, in turn raising the demand for more artisans. Not only were local artisans busy with construction projects, Tangshan artisans from various trades also resumed coming to Taiwan for work. Some stayed behind and passed down their craft to their apprentices. Thus, the Tangshan painters who came to the island during this period can be regarded the most influential group in the development of Taiwanese architectural painting during Japanese rule.

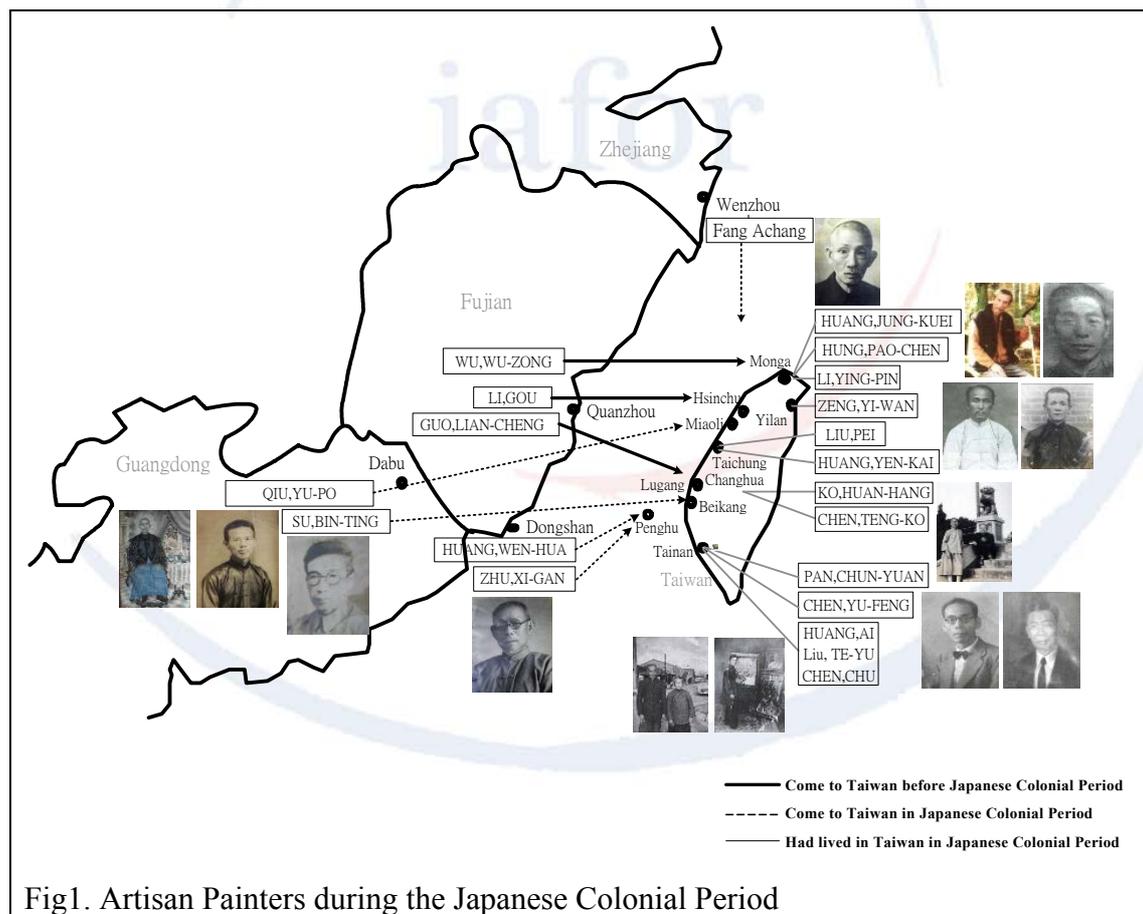


Fig1. Artisan Painters during the Japanese Colonial Period

Besides the economic factors, however, transportation also played a critical role.

Because the transportation system was still underdeveloped, architectural painters could only travel on foot or on cattle-drawn carriage. That coupled with the inconvenience of carrying tools and materials limited the range of area each painter could cover and indirectly caused distinct regional painting differences.

In addition to taking on a large quantity of projects, architectural painters during this period also took advantage of more open access to information. They began to transform their styles by injecting many new themes and stylistic expressions instead of simply replicating precedents. Several factors may have contributed to this evolution. Among them are the growing availability and acceptance of Western styles presented in newspapers and art magazines, and the dawn of fine art education on the island and launch of Taiwan Art Exhibitions (台灣美術展覽會) and Taiwan Governor's Art Exhibitions (台灣總督府美術展覽會).

Current studies showed that architectural paintings before 1920s basically adapted traditional Chinese ink wash painting styles. Landscapes and buildings were both presented using traditional techniques. However, what were the factors that caused large landscape oil paintings to appear in significant numbers in traditional houses? Past literature mentioned that western style paintings became widespread in government agencies, public clubs, department stores, schools and cafes as wall decoration around 1930. Western paintings, however, had yet to appear in private residences. However, if we limit ourselves to the concept of framed paintings for interior decoration, the assumption that western paintings have yet to appear in private residences in 1930 may be considered as truth. In reality, however, non-Chinese landscape paintings had already become popular amongst the general public. Painters created works that reflected popular western styles. The appearance of these works was a result of western culture introduced by Japanese colonization as well as influences of contemporary art education and artistic trends.



Fig2. Traditional Architectural Painting (1918)

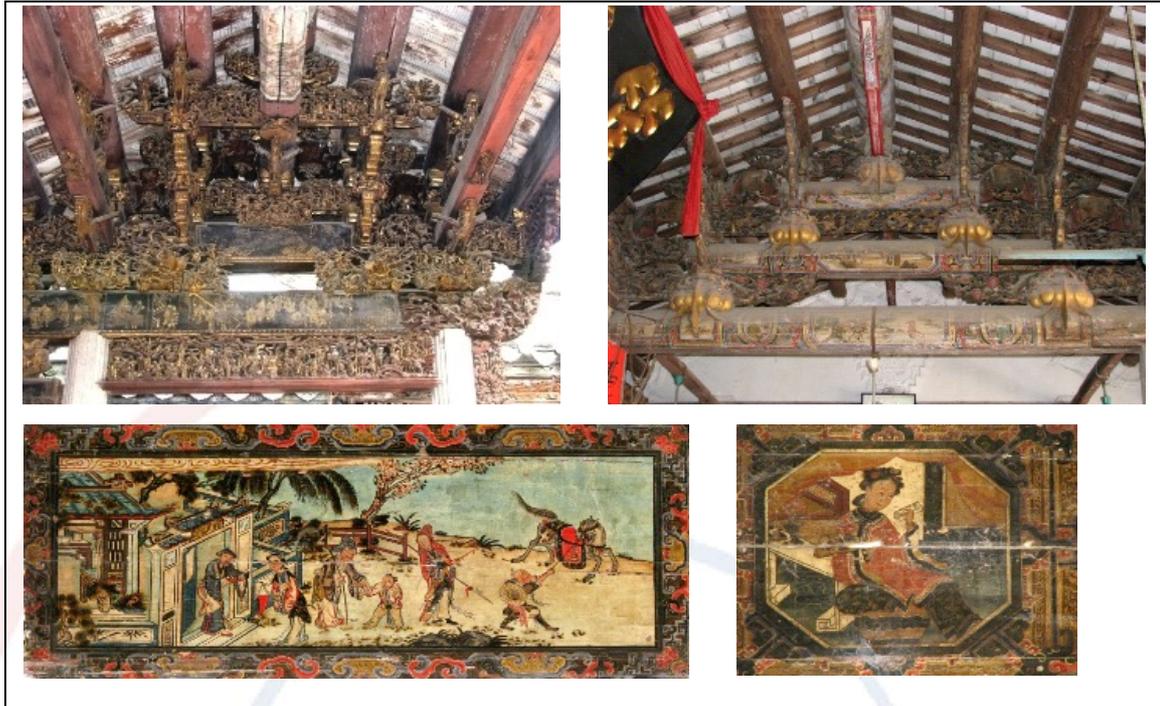


Fig3. Architectural Painting of Guangdong



Fig4. Architectural Painting of Taiwan during the Japanese Colonial Period ( 1910s to 20s )

## 1. Artistic backgrounds that influenced landscape paintings

### (1) The implementation of art education

Although art education had begun in 1897 during Japanese Rule, the first Minister of Education of the Taiwan Sotokufu (Government), 伊澤修二, proposed the concept of "applicable academics". Subjects that were often neglected by traditional schools such

as painting, gymnastics, music and arithmetic were incorporated into the academic curriculum. Teacher training was initiated in 1902. By the time that there were students in painting classes of public schools, it was already 1912. During this era, painting classes taught students to draw using chalk and pencils. Special emphasis was taken to develop child intelligence and allow them to incorporate every object into their drawings. Children were taught about simple geometric shapes and perspectives, thus developing their observational skills. These units were also the fundamentals of western painting.

## **(2) Artistic trends inspired by the Taiwan Art Exhibition**

Although no existing information clearly indicates that painters were influenced by art education provided by the Japanese in their architectural paintings, we knew that most of these non-Chinese styled works had appeared in the late 1920s. Several painters also learned about western art or were amongst the selected exhibitors of the Taiwan Art Exhibition (Taiwan Exhibition) and Taiwan Sotokufu Art Exhibition (Sotokufu Exhibition). Hence, even if these painters were not influenced by art education during Japanese rule, it would be difficult to neglect the actual impact caused by contemporary artistic trends. The key event responsible for this impact was the hosting of the Taiwan Art Exhibitions.

The Taiwan Art Exhibition of 1927 hosted by the Taiwan Education Association was one of the biggest events in the art community. Before the Exhibition, most Taiwanese art was based on mimicking traditional styles. Most architectural paintings were also composed using traditional painting techniques. However, works in Taiwan Exhibition successfully achieved a breakthrough from the conservative ideologies of painters in mimicking traditional styles. Realism (sketching) was adopted to replace the abstract ink wash works. Additionally, the transformation of art trends initiated by Taiwan Exhibition also caused painters to begin using oil painting techniques. Themes also reflected buildings of that era and made use of perspectives. These types of works were very rare prior to the Exhibition. The following section shall describe the characteristics of contemporary landscape paintings of that era.

## **2. Characteristics of contemporary landscape paintings**

Under the influences of art education and impact to artistic trends caused by Taiwan Exhibition during Japanese rule, contemporary landscape works became distinctive compared to the traditional works that mimicked the styles of art anthologies. Most of these novel works appeared in the late 1920s and had two common major characteristics: (1) Illustration of actual scenery, (2) perspective.

### (1) Illustration of actual scenery

It would be impossible to determine whether sketching had been a concept amongst painters of that time. However, it could be seen from existing works of several painters that sketching concepts had already been applied. The earliest existing work that used still life techniques would be a painting of a Minnanese complex residence drawn in 1918. This work exhibited an angle with a small forward scene and large rear scene, showing that the painter did not yet have the western concepts of perspective. However, the work was rather innovative in an era where most painters were still using traditional ink wash painting techniques.



Fig5. Traditional Architectural Painting (1918)



Fig6. Architectural Painting (1931), the actual scene depicted



Fig7. Architectural Painting (1931), the actual scene depicted



Fig8. Architectural Painting (1931), the actual scene depicted



Fig9. Architectural Painting (1935), the actual scene depicted



Fig10. Architectural Painting (1935), the actual scene depicted



Fig11. Architectural Painting (1935), the actual scene depicted

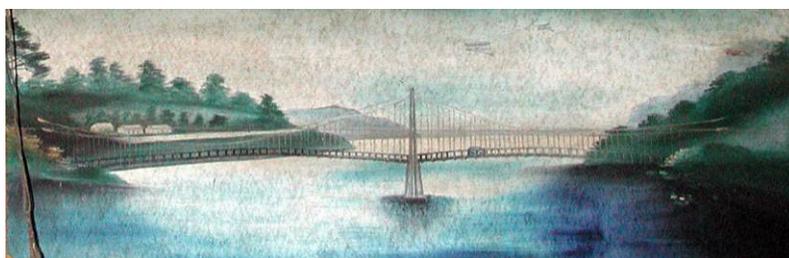


Fig12. Architectural Painting (1935), the actual scene depicted

## (2) Perspective

It was previously described in this text that art education implemented during Japanese rule emphasized observation and perspective techniques. In 1918, Assistant Professor 安東豊作 of Taiwan Sotokufu Japanese Language School mentioned in his *Techniques and Examples of Blackboard Drawing* that: "Landscape drawing is necessary in the instruction of painting techniques. The horizon would decide the relationship between the image above and below it and the perspective. In other words, no mistakes are allowed when determining distances. This issue is also similar for objects and buildings." These concepts were critical points of contemporary art education and were implemented within text books. Actual landscape paintings also

clearly depicted the use of perspectives.



Fig13. Architectural Painting (1920), no perspective



Fig14. Architectural Painting



Fig15. Architectural Painting (1927)



Fig16. Architectural Painting(1929-30)



Fig17. Architectural Painting(1929)



Fig18. Architectural Painting(1932)



Fig19. Architectural Painting(1935)

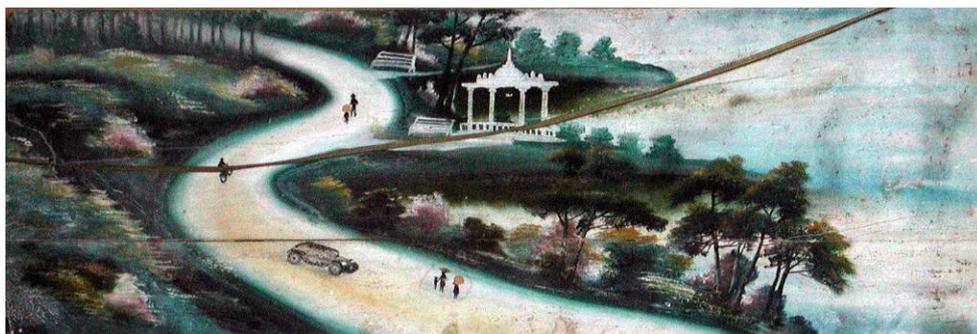


Fig20. Architectural Painting(1935)

## Conclusion

Increased regional identities had initiated rapid development in the research of Taiwanese folk art. However, this was carried out in parallel to the study of Taiwanese art history, as few studies discussed both topics. Folk art was mainly based on mimicking high art, and art education and Taiwan Exhibition hosted during Japanese rule both significantly influenced the themes and styles of architectural paintings.

Art education and Taiwan Exhibition in the Japanese rule were initiated in 1910s and 1920s respectively. In fact, observations of actual architectural paintings before 1920s found that most were composed using traditional painting techniques, and large numbers of modern works only began to appear in the late 1920s. Although this could be attributed to the personal backgrounds of the painters, the number of modern paintings made by each painter was rather uneven and most painters probably tried to adopt new painting techniques and themes to some extent. Most painters during the Japanese rule had contacts with artists. Styles of the works accepted in the Taiwan Exhibition gradually became the mainstream artistic fashion of that era. Architectural paintings with sketching and eastern-western painting techniques began to appear, showing that the painters were well aware of developments in the artistic fields. Even though the Japanese had changed painting traditions of the literati via education and art competitions, these modern works were still unable to completely replace traditional paintings. The most important factor was that traditional painting provided additional functions of ensuring fortune and giving moral lessons that could not be subverted by artistic development.

Hence, when discussing the relationship between architectural paintings and Taiwanese art during Japanese rule, I believe that art education and the hosting of Taiwan and Sotofuku Exhibitions allowed the painters to broaden their horizons and

adopt different drawing techniques. These changes were also reflected in their architectural paintings, enriching the styles of artworks created during Japanese rule. At the same time, architectural paintings, being a form of folk art, must also satisfy the people's demands. Traditional ink wash paintings contain hidden and metaphorical teachings and made use of various modern symbols to directly give impressions of wealth and modernity. This visual communication method was perhaps influenced by contemporary western culture.

## References

- Chao-Ching Fu, *Neo-Classical Chinese Architecture*, Taipei: Na-Tian Press, 1993.
- Chin-Fa Lee, *The Research for the Development of Taiwan Tung-Yang Painting During the Japanese Occupation Period*, Taipei: Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 1993.
- Da-Wei Gao, *The Summer Palace Architecture painting*, Tianjin: Tianjin University Press, 2005.
- Jun-Shou He, *Atlas of Chinese Architecture Painting*, Tianjin: Tianjin University Press, 2006.
- Meng-Che Yang, *The Taiwan art education During the Japanese Colonial Period*, Taipei: Avanguard Press, 1998.
- Qing-X i LOU, *Chinese Traditional Architectural Decoration*, Taipei: Na-Tian Press, 1998.
- Rou-Jin Chen, *The initial experience of Western civilization in Taiwan*, Taipei: Rye Field Press, 2011
- Taiwan Art Exhibitions ( 1927-1943 ) : <http://ndweb.iis.sinica.edu.tw/twart/>
- Ya-hui, Tsai, Ming-fu Hsu "A Study on the Lineage of Taiwanese Traditional Architectural Paintings from 1910s to 1930s", *Journal of Chinese Ritual, Theatre and Folklore*, Vol. 169, pp.89-145, 2010.09.
- Yi-Xing Li, *The Traditional Architectural Color Paintings in Taiwan*, Taipei: Artist Press, 1995.

