Research on the Relationship between Historical Evolution of National Religions and National Art Aesthetics

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Abstract: Art, as a form to create and discover beauty, it has an inseparable relationship with social, political and economic life. Similarly, in the development of art, it was inevitable to be affected by the historical evolution of national religions. There is a close relationship between the historical evolution of religions and the art aesthetics. In modern society, more and more people began to explore the reconciliation between religion and science, but to a large extent, they often ignore the relationship between religion and art and the real aesthetic experience of art. Such single-faceted opinions that only cared about the demonstration of the relationship between religion and science affected the pursuit of the aesthetic origin of national art. Therefore, in the process of studying the relationship between historical evolution of national religions and national art aesthetics, we must focus on finding out the common points between religion and art, so as to achieve the further study.

Keywords: Religion; Historical evolution; Art aesthetics; Relationship research

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1. Preface

There have always been different views on China’s national religions and traditional religions. Most people think that China’s national religions mainly includes patriarchal-psychology religions, local religions and folk religions. These three parts of religion were produced in the long process of collision and integration between culture and Chinese social history. They played important roles in ancient China and had a great impact on people’s way of life and attitude towards life. With the historical evolution of national religion, national art aesthetics has also undergone great changes. National art aesthetics has gradually combined with

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people’s religious feelings and beliefs, showing new characteristics of the times. The relationship between national art aesthetics and national religion is unified both in ancient China and in modern society. It can be said that in Chinese artistic aesthetics, the influence of national religion has been integrated into the blood and bone marrow of Chinese people, which has a very important impact on the construction of Chinese cultural identity and on the pursuit and excavation of Chinese traditional culture.

2. The Influence of Patriarchal Traditional Religion on National Art Aesthetics

In Xia, Shang and Zhou periods in China, people tended to focus on the construction of patriarchal system with blood relationship as the link, and patriarchal traditional religion came into being finally. On the one hand, the patriarchal traditional religion has affected China’s class composition and state system. On the other hand, this primary religious system has a very important impact on China’s cultural aesthetics. Under the guidance of the religious version of traditional religions, people took nature worship and ancestor worship as the main body, and take the sun, moon, mountains and rivers as their objects of worship. Therefore, during this period, the Chinese people’s cultural and artistic aesthetics also focused on the description of huge and objective things. As a result, a relatively stable ancestral temple system and inheritance system have been formed. These contents have become an important part of Chinese etiquette culture and an indispensable spiritual source in the hearts of Chinese people.

(1) Worship of Nature, Heaven and Ancestors in National Art Aesthetics

In the periods of Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties and the primitive society, people did not have a clear understanding for all things in nature, such as wind, rain, lightning, sun, moon and stars, so people combined these with the traditional religion of patriarchy, pinned on the existence of God. They believed that there was a God behind everything in the universe, and the God dominated everything. Therefore, under such circumstances, people obtained the so-called shelter by worshiping the gods. Compared with the early nature worship in western society, there is no essential difference between the totem worship and the heaven and ancestor worship in Chinese primitive society, but in contrast, it has formed different characteristics in the aesthetic field of Chinese folk art. Because people have great worship of nature in production and life, and always adhere to the concept of respecting heaven and ancestors. At that time, people’s understanding of religion is still in an imperfect stage. In the thought of fantasy, Chinese created their own totem, which is also the earliest folk art form in China. As the initial stage of folk art aesthetics, totem has an inseparable relationship with national religion, which not only means that the development of national religion is about to usher
in a magnificent stage, but also means that human beings have made continuous exploration in the field of natural art.

Under the guidance of the concept of respecting gods and ancestors, mankind began to explore the methods of complicating people’s consciousness and emotion, and created funeral art and sacrificial art. These art forms are derived from religion and higher than religion. They have gone beyond the original concept of nature and today’s concept, and formed a specific culture under the psychological guidance of longing for the protection of ancestors. In the development period of ancient dual religion in China, religion had a very important impact on folk art, and the whole society formed a relatively complete concept for religious belief.

(2) Folk Art Guided by the Idea of God’s Will

In Xia, Shang and Zhou periods, the idea of God’s will occupied a very important position. It was in such a period that the Chinese traditional patriarchal system was relatively complete. Folk art developed rapidly in terms of ethical order and living customs. In Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties, it began to become the supreme: Emperor or God. In this context, the leaders of the dynasty also made great use of the idea that they were subject to destiny to maintain their authority. Under the fierce struggle between divine power and imperial power, people created unique art forms. The art forms in this period were still dominated by God worship.

With the integration of Confucianism, in Xia, Shang and Zhou periods, the provisions of religions on political life and sacrifice were more strict for people in different classes. Everyone needed to sacrifice on the basis of their own identity. As we all know, in China’s primitive society, the development of music and dance was the fastest. During this period, the unique art forms of music and dance must also be subject to the religious and ritual system. All acts beyond the law were regarded as disrespectful, which also proves the great influence of religion on folk art forms in the period of ancient society.

3. The Relationship between Chinese Folk Art and Traditional Religions Dominated by Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism

From the pre Qin period to the Ming and Qing Dynasties, on the whole, China’s religious field was in the stage of the common development among Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. As an important part of Chinese traditional culture, the cultural and religious composition dominated by Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism had a very important impact on the cultural and artistic forms of Chinese society. And Confucianism and Taoism formed the mainstream theory for Chinese social development. Taoist culture directly occupied the position of Chinese traditional religious form and had been more deeply transmitted. As a foreign culture, after Buddhism was introduced into China, it had been rapidly
spread in combination with Confucianism and Taoism in Chinese society, and had an important impact on the spirit of Chinese people.

Throughout the field of Chinese folk art, the spread of Confucianism is mainly reflected in the cultural level. As a special part of art, culture occupied a very important position in the process of Chinese social development and the shaping of Chinese spirit. The dissemination and inheritance of Confucianism had shaped the Chinese people’s ideological values and the overall composition of Chinese society. In the Confucian system with Confucius and Mencius as the core, China produced many Confucian scholars. These Confucian scholars occupied a very important position in the process of social, economic and political development. The Confucian cultural industry gradually developed into a universal value concept and social education criterion accepted by Chinese traditional society.

Taoism advocates the concept of governing by doing nothing that against nature, which is harmonious with Confucian culture. The influence of Taoist culture can be clearly seen in the field of Chinese traditional art. Both metaphysical poems and landscape paintings in the Wei and Jin Dynasties reflect the shadow of Taoist culture, which was also the expression of Taoism in real life. Due to the characteristics of purity and clarity, Taoism had gradually become an important religion to reconcile society and complement Confucian culture. Under the influence of Taoism, many ancient Chinese scholars advocated seclusion, and created outstanding works in the field of literature and art. These works reflect the social and historical background at that time, as well as the development of Chinese Taoism and the historical evolution of Chinese religions.

Buddhism has also had a great impact on Chinese folk art. As a foreign religion, after it was introduced into China, Buddhism combined with China’s local Confucianism and Taoism, which affected the mentality of ancient Chinese people and brought a great impact on Chinese traditional culture and folk art. Under the influence of Buddhism, Chinese people’s beliefs changed a lot, followed by the spread of Buddhist scriptures and popular literary in our society.

4. Conclusion

Generally speaking, in the development and progress of China’s society, national religions have given great spiritual guidance to the Chinese traditional society and the people of the times, and also promoted the development of Chinese traditional culture and art. It can be said that national religions play important roles in comforting people’s soul and maintaining politics stable. To some extent, it also promoted the China’s folk art forms, made China’s folk art develop in a diversified direction, helped the Chinese find a new road in inheritance and development, and promoted the increasing prosperity of China’s culture and art. In the new era, we
should give full play to the positive role of national religions, so as to provide help for China’s economic, political and cultural development.

References