

## Symbiosis of Tradition and Innovation: An In-depth Examination of Thangka Cultural Transmission through the Lens of Regong Ethnic Culture Palace

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### Abstract

This article aimed to study: (1) The innovative model of Regong Ethnic Culture Palace and its significance in the teaching and Thangka cultural heritage, delving into the fusion of traditional apprenticeship and modern administrative mechanisms; (2) The inherent relationship between Thangka, Tibetan Buddhism, and Tibetan culture, along with its contemporary societal implications; and (3) The role and value of digital dissemination in the propagation of Thangka's intangible cultural nuances. The study centered around students and instructors of the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace, Thangka painters from the Regong region, local inhabitants, and tourists. They were selected using purposive sampling. Data collection instruments included questionnaires and interviews, with analysis conducted via descriptive statistics and content analysis. The findings revealed:

1. A symbiosis of modern pedagogy and cultural tradition: The Regong Ethnic Culture Palace leveraged modern educational administrative procedures ensuring not only the continuation of Thangka's cultural traditions but also a systematic and focused teaching methodology. This harmonious blend accentuates the urgency and necessity of cultural transmission in today's society, providing students a comprehensive and standardized learning trajectory.

2. An emphasis on skill and virtue: Integrating moral values within the skills training, highlighting Thangka as not merely an art form but also a cultural and spiritual practice. This "meditative practice through artistry" as pedagogical approach offers an immersive learning experience, deepening appreciation and propagation of the underlying cultural and religious essence.

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3. A Dual function of the Palace's teaching model: While it provides holistic improvement for students, it also actively disseminates Thangka culture, establishing a robust cultural resonance

**Keywords:** Symbiosis of Tradition and Innovation, Visible Cultural Transmission forms, Religious Artistic Features of Thangka, Visual Symbols of Chinese Tibetan Ethnic cultural Eeritage,

## Introduction

In recent years, the Thangka art, a unique Tibetan Buddhist expression, has been evolving to bridge cultural heritage with modern innovations, bridging the gap between cultural heritage and contemporary innovations. With its roots deeply embedded in Tibetan Buddhism and culture, Thangka preservation and propagation have attracted significant academic and societal attention. One prime example, the Regong Ethnic Cultural Palace in Qinghai's Regong region, serves as a beacon of success in integrating traditional apprenticeship with modern administrative mechanisms in teaching and passing on the Thangka heritage (Xiang & Cai, 2022). However, with the commercialization of Thangka, concerns surrounding the quality of Thangka artworks and their deviation from deep-seated cultural nuances have emerged. Recent statistics reveal that 39.26% of all academic works focus on the study of the Thangka itself, while 33.11% view it as an art piece (Wu, 2023). But, an imbalance in research perspectives and a lack of holistic viewpoints persist (Li, Liu & Li, 2022; Qiangba & Cui, 2022). Historically, scholars like Yu have delved into various techniques and schools of Thangka, while Feng Jicai and others have meticulously documented its cultural and artistic characteristics. Notably, Thangka's market-driven transformations necessitate protection and respect for its intrinsic cultural values. As the art form continues to evolve amidst modernity's challenges, a comprehensive exploration is pivotal to ensuring its authentic transmission, balancing tradition with innovation.

Thangka, as a distinctive religious art form within Chinese Tibetan ethnic culture, plays a pivotal role in the daily lives, spiritual worlds, and life journeys of Tibetan people, embodying the unique local cultural traditions and national spirit of the Tibetan regions. Amid the backdrop of modernization, industrialization, and commercialization, Thangka's transmission and propagation are confronted with challenges such as the marginalization or neglect of its profound cultural connotations. In response to these challenges, this study focuses on the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace, an institution that amalgamates the demonstration, teaching, and inheritance

of Thangka culture. This research aims to undertake qualitative and quantitative analyses revolving around the Palace's systematic educational practices and contemporary dissemination activities in Thangka and its culture, striving to summarize experiences, elevate theories, and explore a novel model of Thangka cultural transmission that resonates with contemporary societal and cultural ecosystems.

This study unfolds through continuous online and offline interactions and communications with Master Ga Zang. Initially, a preliminary research theme and outline, focusing on the "Investigation and Research of Thangka Cultural Transmission and Contemporary Dissemination in the Ethnic Culture Palace," were formulated at the end of 2021 based on in-depth exchanges with Master Ga Zang. Subsequently, in the first half of 2022, the focus was placed on reviewing existing literature related to Thangka and its culture. The study then progressed with a planned visit to the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace in July 2022, delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This 4-day visit included various activities such as discussions with teachers and students of the Palace, and visits to local monasteries, allowing a deeper understanding of the Thangka's cultural functions and roles in the daily lives and customs of the local Tibetan population.

This research paper presents a multi-faceted exploration into the transmission and contemporary dissemination of Thangka culture at the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace. The paper is structured to first provide an extensive review of existing literature, followed by empirical investigations and analyses based on on-site visits, interviews, and surveys. The findings and discussions are aimed at contributing to academic circles and society by offering insights into the innovative preservation and propagation of Thangka's cultural heritage in modern contexts. The research findings will serve as a valuable reference for stakeholders involved in the preservation, transmission, and innovation of ethnic and cultural heritages, facilitating a balanced symbiosis between tradition and modernity in cultural transmissions.

### **Research's objective**

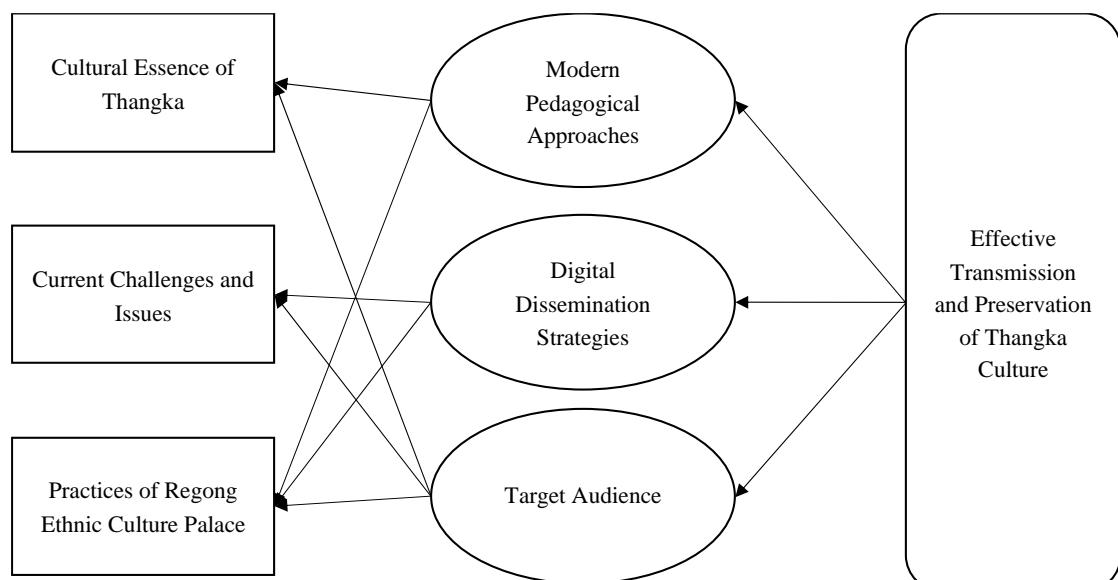
1. To comprehensively understand the cultural essence behind Thangka from a macro-cultural perspective, explore the sustainability of traditional Thangka, and diagnose its current transmission, preservation challenges, and issues. Using the practices of the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace in Thangka cultural education as a reference, this objective aims to analyze and summarize their experiences, bridging theory with practicality to propose a new model for the preservation and transmission of Thangka culture suited to the modern social context.

2. Given the present state and challenges of Thangka transmission, this objective emphasizes on scrutinizing the endeavors of the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace in its industrialized development and contemporary propagation. This includes evaluating the strategies and channels chosen for industrial development and exhibition displays. The aim is to further refine, strengthen, and validate the cultural heritage philosophy represented by Master Ga Zhang at the Culture Palace.

3. To delve into the real-world and cultural significance of the novel Thangka teaching and preservation model adopted by the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace. Through this, the objective is to glean insights and guidelines that might serve as effective references for the transmission and preservation of other cultural forms.

### Conceptual framework

This research is a mixed-methods study that focuses on the transmission and preservation of Thangka culture, with an emphasis on the innovative model of the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace and the implications of this model in the modern context. The researcher defines the research conceptual framework based on the theory of cultural transmission, together with the methodologies of the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace and its societal implications. The details are as follows.



**Fig.1** Conceptual Framework of Symbiosis Thangka Culture

## Literature review

### **Thangka Artistry and Cultural Legacy in Regong**

Thangka, deeply ingrained in Tibetan culture, is renowned for its religious scroll paintings, offering a dynamic blend of visualization techniques, mineral-based pigments, and spiritual practices (Gao, 2015; Zhuo, 2021). Predominantly created on colored satin, these paintings employ natural mineral pigments like cinnabar and azure, enhancing their vibrancy and rarity (Gao, 2015). More than a visual representation, the Thangka creation process is replete with spiritual undertones, where every step, from canvas processing to the revered “opening eyes” ceremony, embodies religious significance (Yu, 2019; Zhuo, 2021). This intricate interplay of art and spirituality amplifies Thangka’s distinction from other art forms and underscores its paramountcy in Tibetan and Chinese culture.

Regong, a historically significant region, has bestowed upon Thangka artistry its own unique rendition. Located at the crossroads of the Qinghai-Tibet and Loess Plateaus, Regong has been the crucible for an art form that reflects a harmonious amalgamation of various cultures, including Han, Hui, Tu, Tibetan, and Bao'an (Huang, 2008; Kong & Li, 2021). This variant of Thangka art, once exclusive to monastic spheres, has evolved to gain global acknowledgment, both by China and UNESCO, solidifying its emblematic status (Huang, 2008). While the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace, established in 2010, encapsulates this heritage, it also envisions a synthesis of tradition and modernity, emphasizing the art’s role in socio-economic upliftment and introducing novel pedagogical approaches for future generations (Kong & Li, 2021).

The historical evolution, regional variations, and globally recognized significance of Thangka necessitate a comprehensive study, focusing on its preservation, adaptation, and future trajectory. As the art form undergoes transformations and faces challenges from contemporary perceptions, it remains pivotal to delve deeper into its inheritance, skill cultivation, and broader implications in the art diaspora (Li, 2010; Liu & An, 2020; Yu, 2019).

### **Spiritual Embodiment and Adaptability in Thangka Art**

Thangka, as delineated within the cultural panorama of Tibetan Buddhism, predominantly emerges as a conduit for propagating Dharma and facilitating meditative visualizations (Yang, 2019). This transcends mere representation, positioning the art as a spiritual practice where adherents cultivate deeper divine connections by visualizing both the external imageries and personal embodiment of sacred entities. The creation of Thangka is underpinned by a rigorous set of religious rituals and canonical prescriptions, which have been documented in religious texts such as the “Dharani Sutra” Volume II (Li, 2015) and the “Three Sutras and One Commentary” (Yixi, 2007).

Notably, while these religious canons set foundational guidelines, Tibetan painters have manifested adaptability within these boundaries, fostering a richness in painting techniques and visual expressions (Liu, 2013).

At its core, the intrinsic values and beliefs that Thangka encapsulates are resonant with Zheng's (1992) assertion on the enduring nature of spiritual elements within cultures. Throughout history, Thangka has symbolized the Tibetan region's evolution of life instincts and its broader influences spanning the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau (Dela, 2015). Scholars, such as Lan (2020), Qin (2021), and Wen (2014), have delved into Thangka's vast landscape, emphasizing its interlaced themes that range from Buddhist teachings to nature-based scientific paradigms. Such comprehensive explorations not only highlight Thangka's rich spiritual and aesthetic dimensions but also its transformative role in fostering cultural exchanges among diverse ethnic communities.

Thangka's multi-dimensional significance has also been acknowledged beyond the religious milieu. Its recognition in China's "National Intangible Cultural Heritage Representative Project List" since 2006 exemplifies its profound cultural impact, with 17 Thangka-related projects being included by January 2022. This recognition, coupled with its adaptability and resilience in evolving cultural contexts, underscores the art's timeless relevance, which has been echoed by scholars like Reedy (2007) and Yin Tinghua. As we seek to understand Thangka's intricate layers and nuances, it becomes imperative to recognize its rootedness in the Buddhist theoretical system and its larger significance in the cultural heritage tapestry.

### **Thangka Art's Transformation from Sacredness to Cultural Commodification**

The indelible mark of Thangka art in Tibetan culture and religious practices has undergone perceptible evolution in response to the contemporary Chinese art market's growing influence (Wu, 2023; Yu, 2022). Historically intertwined with Tibetan Buddhism, Thangka has been a representation of the doctrine of "visualization," serving not just as artistry but as a conduit for myriad Buddhist sciences (Li, 2015). However, the recent discourse has been somewhat skewed, predominantly situating Thangka within artistic paradigms and, at times, sidelining its religious profundity. Wittgensteinian theories have highlighted the indefinability of art, emphasizing its fluid interpretation (Yin, 2022). In light of contemporary art's definition, which emphasizes the artist's consciousness (Gao & Sun, 2022), Thangka's current trajectory can be discerned as an intricate interplay of past heritage and present influences.

Thangka's metamorphosis from a sacral artifact to a commodified cultural product in the art market has sparked debates on its preservation and transformation

(Ma & Wei, 2014). The introduction of the “new Thangka”, an innovative blend of post-modernistic elements and traditional Thangka aesthetics, seeks to resonate with contemporary tastes (Xiong, 2019). However, this adaptation risks alienating purists and diluting Thangka’s religious richness. The predominance of Western art discourses in understanding Thangka’s design further risks overshadowing its unique cultural and religious underpinnings, highlighting the need for a more integrated exploration of its facets (Cao, 2017).

As Thangka integrates itself within the burgeoning cultural industry, it symbolizes the potential exploitation of cultural resources juxtaposed against the resurgence of ethnic culture (Zhang, 2018). Stemming from the expansive idea of the “cultural industry” (Xu, 2019), Thangka’s assimilation, though logical in a historical context, poses challenges. Ensuring that Thangka retains its sacredness amidst the whirlwind of commercial and artistic evolution becomes paramount. Thus, a balanced approach in its propagation within the cultural industry is essential, guaranteeing that its intrinsic sanctity remains inviolable (Zhang, 2018).

### **Thangka’s Continuance in Modern China**

Cultural inheritance, a bedrock of human evolution, ensures that shared values, knowledge systems, and defining societal norms endure across generations (Zhao, 2002). In the context of modern China, the Thangka culture, with its rich tapestry of history and spirituality, stands as a testament to this preservation ethic.

Thangka, an emblematic manifestation of intangible cultural heritage, navigates the complex terrain of maintaining traditional integrity while adapting to contemporary challenges (Xie, 2007). Efforts to safeguard its legacy have embraced diverse strategies, from leveraging digital tools and advocating the “heritage in schools” initiative, to establishing robust legal frameworks for its protection (Yang, 2012; Luo, 2018). Beyond its artistic brilliance, Thangka encapsulates spiritual depths rooted in Tibetan Buddhism. Its preservation, therefore, encompasses more than the tangible; it calls for a holistic approach that ensures both its aesthetic and spiritual essence remain undiminished in the face of modern transformations.

### **Thangka Inheritors and Educational Evolution**

Preservation of Thangka in contemporary times has, unsurprisingly, pivoted on the role of inheritors, those designated custodians of intangible cultural heritage (Zhang et al., 2016). Given that by the close of 2021, a notable 3,063 individuals had been recognized as national-level representative inheritors with 17 projects specifically related to Thangka, the gravity of this responsibility becomes evident. Key figures in this context, like Elder Gama Dele of the Gama Gachie School and Master Ga Zhang,

who trained under the esteemed Thangka artist Master Que Dian Jia, exemplify the commitment and expertise required for this monumental task.

The cultivation of future Thangka artists has witnessed a transformative journey. Historically grounded in traditional mentoring systems, the artistry's training paradigms are now navigating a confluence of customary techniques and formalized education. Ma Ning's (2017) proposition of integrating folk education within university frameworks epitomizes this evolving ethos. Yet, the commercial undercurrent shaping Thangka artistry cannot be ignored. As the art form intertwines with market forces, its training models and societal roles have inevitably transformed.

Educational establishments, like the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace, are at the forefront of this adaptive endeavor. Their dualistic pedagogical approach, which differentiates between traditional and "recreated" Thangka techniques, serves a twofold purpose: safeguarding the art's core essence while ensuring it remains responsive to contemporary requisites (Zhang, 2014; Xiao & Chen, 2021). This dynamic interplay between preservation and evolution elucidates Thangka's journey from an age-old spiritual craft to a vibrant, yet rooted, facet of modern cultural heritage.

### **Cultural Dissemination and Thangka Transmission**

The concept of dissemination stands as a cornerstone in understanding cultural dynamics, especially in fields like anthropology, sociology, and folklore studies. Stemming from the Latin "comunicazione," it signifies the establishment of mutual understanding and has been interpreted in myriad ways over the years. Dance and Larson (1976) elucidated the multifaceted nature of communication, highlighting its vast definitional landscape. Additionally, the Modern Leadership Encyclopedia encapsulated it as a multi-stage process, from encoding to feedback, facilitating the exchange of societal information.

In the realm of culture, dissemination acts as the vehicle for cultural diffusion. According to Zheng (2013), cultural dissemination encompasses the exchange of knowledge, emotions, and desires through various symbolic systems. Schramm's framework presents a simplistic yet comprehensive representation of this process, emphasizing the roles of sender, medium, receiver, and resultant response (Samovar et al., 1988). Linton further compartmentalized this process into stages like manifestation, selection, and integration. These stages underscore the dynamic nature of cultural exchange, suggesting that as cultures merge and spread, they evolve, often diverging from their original state.

In recent times, Thangka culture's transmission has been bolstered by the digital age's advancements. Researchers have unearthed patterns and channels through which Thangka culture propagates. Han (2015) emphasizes its flow from

temples to households and businesses, each with distinct transmission modes. Zhou (2019) and Zhu (2018) delve into the symbolic interpretations and cultural paths of Thangka, while others like Fang (2021) and Feng (2016) explore its regional variations and the implications of integrated media. However, a concern echoed by many is the potential dilution or misrepresentation of Thangka's cultural essence in contemporary times. As such, a conscientious approach to its dissemination is imperative to retain its authenticity.

### **Cultural Resource Utilisation and Thangka Design Evolution**

Cultural resources, as per prevailing academic discourses, are broadly recognized as elements related to cultural activities existing primarily in spiritual forms. The definitions by seminal thinkers like Marx and Engels (1995) emphasize the dual significance of nature and human labor in resource creation. These resources, ranging from tangible natural entities to intangible information, are pivotal to the generation of wealth in both material and spiritual domains. Contemporary studies have categorized cultural resources into tangible and intangible cultural heritage, natural heritage, and intellectual cultural resources (Wang & Cao, 2017). These resources exhibit distinct properties like systemic integrity, diversity in objects and values, dynamism, and an emphasis on human creativity. One of the salient examples of such resources is the Thangka, a cultural gem which, when rationally utilized, can exemplify its deep-rooted cultural essence, provide socioeconomic benefits, and further the perpetuation of its unique cultural legacy. A burgeoning academic interest is observed in the application of Thangka resources in design. Notably, designers are progressively extracting elements from the Thangka, manifesting its integration into modern design avenues.

Thangka, as an art form, has experienced revitalization and increasing attention, especially within the design fraternity. Research mainly gravitates toward its application in artistic design and its multifaceted utilization across different design domains. In recent years, for instance, Zhu (2020) has provided theoretical guidelines for innovating Thangka-based souvenir designs in tourism locales, addressing the prevailing design challenges in Tibet. Similarly, Chen and Lin (2018) employed a bio-genetic extraction technique to deepen the cultural essence of product design through a 'Thangka culture gene bank'. Beyond traditional applications, technology has facilitated novel Thangka interactions. Zou (2015) developed a software platform to customize Thangka compositions, showcasing the potential of combining traditional cultural resources with modern technology.

### **Contemporary Approaches to Thangka Restoration and Digitization**

Recent technological innovations have redirected scholarly focus to the domain of Thangka restoration and digitization. Fang et al. (2021) conducted a meticulous exploration into the pathologies affecting Thangkas. They employed advanced analytical tools like three-dimensional video microscopes and Fourier-transform infrared spectrometers, revealing that principal elements of the Zijin brocade, including diverse threads, were predominantly composed of silk. These findings played an instrumental role in formulating restorative strategies (Fang et al., 2021). On the digital front, advancements are noteworthy. Hu (2014) pioneered a non-local means MCA algorithm specifically designed for Thangka image restoration. This algorithm, through empirical evaluations, demonstrated resilience and proficiency in rectifying damages and recuperating lost information. However, a critical appraisal by Qu (2019) indicates that the trajectory of Thangka's digital progression is not without impediments, largely attributed to challenges in leadership, coordination, and the conspicuous absence of normative guidelines.

A deeper introspection into the scholarly landscape reveals certain asymmetries in the Thangka research paradigm. Present literature, while encompassing a broad spectrum of Thangka's cultural heritage and conservation, exhibits discernible gaps in both scope and profundity. The Tibetan Thangka, conferred recognition in the "National Intangible Cultural Heritage Representative Project Directory" in 2021, remains conspicuously under-represented in academic discourse. Additionally, a pronounced regional proclivity is observed within Chinese scholarship. Predominantly, institutions nestled in Thangka-centric regions like Qinghai Minzu University and Lanzhou University spearhead the research endeavors.

Nevertheless, significant lacunae persist. Comprehensive inquiries into the Thangka's artistic metamorphosis, influenced by regional and historical nuances, are scant. Moreover, the academic community has largely sidestepped a holistic examination of Thangka, which necessitates an appreciation of its intertwined cultural, geographic, and spiritual dimensions. A discerning observation by Kong and Li (2021) underscores a paradigm shift, transitioning from a constrained regional art perspective to an inclusive cultural narrative, accentuating the confluence of diverse ethnic and civilizational dialogues. In today's era, characterized by rapid modernization, the intrinsic cultural essence of Thangka stands at a crossroads. The escalating commercialization, manifested in the proliferation of machine-printed Thangkas, casts shadows on the genuineness and cultural integrity of such renditions. In conclusion, this literature review accentuates the imperative for astute, future scholarly endeavors

to meticulously navigate these intricacies, ensuring the timeless legacy of Thangka remains both authentic and resonant in the annals of history.

### Methodology

The understanding and appreciation of Thangka's cultural dissemination in the context of the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace requires a meticulously crafted research approach that not only delves into the nuances of the culture and its teaching methods but also encapsulates a broad spectrum of perspectives. To facilitate such a comprehensive exploration, this study has been underpinned by a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. By amalgamating the depth offered by qualitative analyses with the breadth and rigor afforded by quantitative strategies, this research seeks to paint a holistic picture of the state and challenges of Thangka cultural transmission in contemporary times.

Grounded in a two-pronged methodology, the quantitative dimension capitalizes on structured surveys and statistical evaluations, allowing for the encapsulation of large-scale patterns, trends, and relationships, while ensuring reliability and replicability. In tandem, the qualitative facet pivots on immersive interviews, discussions, and narrative explorations, affording a deep dive into the subjective experiences, insights, and perceptions of key stakeholders, which include Thangka educators, pupils, local artisans, and tourists. This rich tapestry of methods ensures a nuanced understanding that captures both the essence and the breadth of Thangka's cultural and pedagogical inheritance at the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace.

#### Quantitative Research

The quantitative phase of this research was pivotal in extracting empirical data, solidifying trends, and formulating evidence-backed conclusions regarding Thangka's cultural dissemination at the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace. By employing a blend of statistical tools, data extrapolation methods, and structured questionnaires, this phase illuminated the more tangible aspects of the study, providing a robust framework upon which nuanced analyses were constructed.

To establish a solid foundation for statistical examination, stratified random sampling was meticulously employed. Out of a total population of 120 students affiliated with the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace, a sample size was ascertained through the formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

where  $n$  is the sample size,  $N$  represents the entire student populace at the Culture Palace, and  $e$  denotes the sampling error, strategically pegged at  $\pm 5\%$ . This rigorous approach resulted in a calculated sample size of approximately 92 students. To further ensure the robustness of data collection and mitigate potential non-responses, the sample size was escalated by 10%, culminating in a final sample of 100 students. Analogous methodologies were employed to sample 100 Thangka artisans, 100 Regong inhabitants, and 100 tourists, fortifying the comprehensive nature of the quantitative assessment.

The survey instrument, meticulously crafted to resonate with diverse participant profiles, encompassed pivotal domains such as demographic details, perceptions on cultural course teachings, views on specialized Thangka training, and aspirations upon graduation. For Thangka artisans, areas of focus included learning experiences, market dynamics, gender facets in Thangka learning, and foundational art understanding. Similarly, questionnaires for local residents and tourists gauged foundational knowledge and perceptions of Thangka, alongside its overarching cultural significance.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the extracted quantitative data, a series of rigorous tests were performed. Utilizing the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the study examined the reliability of data sourced from students at the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace. The formula deployed for this test was:

$$\alpha = \frac{K}{K - 1} \left( 1 - \frac{\sum S_i^2}{S_x^2} \right)$$

Where,  $\alpha$  = reliability coefficient,  $K$  = number of test items,  $S_i^2$  = variance of scores for all participants on the  $i^{\text{th}}$  item,  $S_x^2$  = variance of the total score for all participants. All calculated alpha values were found to surpass the 0.9 threshold, indicating an exemplary degree of reliability. Moreover, factor analysis was harnessed to examine the structural validity of the questionnaires, with the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure reflecting values predominantly above 0.8, further confirming the high suitability of the research instrument for factor analysis. To optimize data processing and analysis, renowned tools such as Excel and SPSS were employed. This allowed for precision-driven reliability testing, factor analysis, and a diverse range of statistical examinations that enriched the depth and rigor of the study's findings.

In culmination, the quantitative research phase, underpinned by a meticulous research design, exhaustive sampling, and rigorous statistical tools, ensured a rich and

comprehensive examination of Thangka's cultural dissemination, shedding objective light on its state, challenges, and prospects in the contemporary setting of the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace.

### **Qualitative Exploration**

At the heart of this qualitative exploration was an in-depth conversation with the significant personas from the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace, specifically its founder, Master Ga Zhang. This dialogue was instrumental in understanding the layers of Thangka beyond mere artwork, encapsulating a rich legacy of ethnic traditions, cultural inferences, and historical evolutions. The discourse was framed to shed light on the intrinsic cultural significance of Thangka. The journey of this conversation traversed through the vast expanse of Regong Thangka's cultural and historical framework, examining the pedagogic practices at the Culture Palace. The narrative flowed through the intricate pathways of Thangka's broader cultural implications, challenges faced in its current inheritance, and the subtleties of preserving its legacy in the modern era.

To appreciate Thangka's multifaceted significance, the study assimilated diverse perspectives. Interviews were designed to gather insights not just from the educators and students of the Palace, but also from local Thangka artisans hailing from Wutun Village, Nianduhu Village, Guomeri Village, and Gashari Village. This stratified approach, bolstered by interviews with local residents and foreign tourists, enriched the research with a kaleidoscope of experiences. Participants were chosen meticulously to ensure that each perspective, from the seasoned Thangka painter to the layman tourist, contributes to a holistic comprehension. Detailed records of these interviews, both in-person and digital voice recordings, ensured that the vast wealth of knowledge, opinions, and experiences shared by these individuals was meticulously captured for analysis.

While Thangka's art form was paramount, the research leaned heavily on the methodologies and curriculums employed at the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace to impart this knowledge. The author delved deep into the Palace's academic approach, understanding both its theoretical underpinnings and practical applications. Interviews were structured to understand the nuances of Thangka's teaching methodologies, the challenges in transmitting this ancient art to the newer generation, and the innovations integrated into the curriculum. Notably, the exploration spanned beyond the confines of the classroom. Emphasis was laid on understanding how the Culture Palace actively disseminates Thangka's cultural essence outside its walls, both to the local community and the world at large. Each discussion, whether with a student about their curriculum or a local resident about the Palace's community outreach, contributed to a

comprehensive understanding of the dynamic interplay between Thangka's legacy and its modern-day challenges.

### **Research Results**

This research meticulously unravels the multifaceted tapestry of Thangka art and its profound cultural significance within the Regong Folk Cultural Palace. Through a synergistic blend of qualitative and quantitative paradigms, the study crafts a robust narrative, navigating through the rich cultural landscapes and the intricate interplays of tradition and modernity in Thangka art. By weaving together eclectic threads of interviews, field investigations, and comprehensive surveys, the research offers illuminating insights into the transformative journeys of Thangka, amidst the pulsating rhythms of contemporary influences and evolving cultural heritage. The focused lenses of the study succinctly capture the essence of tradition, artistic magnificence, and the profound spiritual philosophies embroidered in the heart of Thangka art, fostering nuanced pathways for its enlightened appreciation, preservation, and sustainable flourishing in the modern cultural ecology.

#### **Objective 1: Investigating the Cultural Significance and Transformation of Thangka Art.**

The research robustly articulates the profound cultural and evolving heritage of Thangka at the Regong Folk Cultural Palace. Using a confluence of qualitative and quantitative methodologies including interviews, field investigations, and surveys, the study meticulously explores the transformation of Thangka amidst waves of modernisation. Thangka, a radiant canvas reflecting Tibetan Buddhism, encompasses themes from Buddha's life to Tibetan medicine, manifesting through natural mineral pigments. This study, anchoring itself in the realms of cultural inheritance, crafts a nuanced pathway delineating the duality of technical inheritance and the quintessential cultural spirit of Thangka amidst contemporary transitions.

#### **Objective 2: Analyzing the Diverse Influences and Techniques of Regong Thangka.**

Through a refined qualitative analysis, the research unveils the multi-dimensional spectrum of Regong Thangka. It has intricately woven itself through the fabric of Tibetan Buddhism and culture, embodying vibrant color schemes and refined gold preparation techniques. The Regong school, originating from the Menri tradition, manifests unique stylistic evolution, integrating diverse artistic influences. The mystical dimensions revealed through interviews underscore the spiritually philosophical essence beyond the technical mastery in the creation process of Thangka, solidifying its stand as a vivid representation of spiritual ideals and meditation aid.

**Table 1.** Thangka Painting Process of Regong.

Step No.	Process Step	Description
1	Recitation and Material Preparation	Selection of an auspicious day; prayer for successful completion.
2	Stretching the Canvas	Utilizing a dense white cotton cloth; stretching and fixing to a frame with ropes.
3	Polishing the Canvas	Application of bone glue and filtered gypsum; smoothing with a stone and a cup.
4	Drafting the Outline	Adhering to the “Tibetan Buddhist Iconometry Scripture”; sketching with charcoal and graphite.
5	Applying Colour and Gradient	Use of tsampa for erasing; application of handmade mineral or plant-derived pigments.
6	Outlining	Various techniques like flat, dense, leaf, cloud, and clothing outlines; gold application.
7	Facial Detailing	Sketching facial features and expressions; crucial ‘opening the eyes’ step.

### Objective 3: Evaluating the Educational Approach and Sociocultural Impact of Regong Ethnic Culture Palace.

This research delves deeply into evaluating the holistic educational model employed by the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace. Emphasis has been placed on the interweaving of Thangka education with moral education, character development, and linguistic competencies. The quantitative analysis validates the efficacy of the Cultural Palace’s integrated approach, as seen in the student’s elevated appreciation and the incremental knowledge gains observed in objective measures like exam scores. Furthermore, the research identifies pathways to amplify sociocultural impact, emphasizing the need to bridge the existing knowledge gap in public awareness regarding the profound cultural-religious significance of Thangka.

### Objective 4: Assessing Contemporary Dissemination and Sustainable Development of Thangka Art.

The study unveils contemporary trends, illustrating that Thangka is predominantly perceived as an artwork by tourists, with a prevailing lack of awareness regarding its profound cultural and religious ethos. The data reflects a tendency towards the proliferation of inauthentic Thangkas due to this knowledge gap. However, the Palace graduates display an enhanced cognizance of traditional integrity, embodying adherence to ritual protocols and proportionality in their creations. Thus, the research underscores a vital directive towards strengthening public education, fostering a sustainable development pathway enriched with authentic cultural transmission and enhanced societal awareness and appreciation.

### **Conclusion**

The exploration of Thangka cultural transmission through the innovative prism of the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace reveals significant insights into the symbiotic integration of tradition and modernity in the preservation and propagation of intangible cultural heritage. This nuanced symbiosis emerges as a cornerstone in nurturing the vitality, relevance, and sustainability of Thangka culture amidst the evolving landscapes of societal transformation and globalization.

### **Innovation and Tradition: A Critical Examination**

Innovation in the transmission of Thangka culture, as evidenced in the practices of the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace, should not be perceived merely as a confluence of contemporary methodologies or technological interfaces. Instead, it should be discerned as a thoughtful recalibration of pedagogical strategies that resonate with the essence of Thangka's spiritual and cultural dimensions. While innovation is imperative for aligning the transmission processes with contemporary educational paradigms and societal dynamics, it is crucial to maintain a vigilant sensitivity towards preserving the authenticity, traditional wisdom, and intrinsic values embodied in Thangka culture. The role of innovation should be critically examined and articulated to ensure that it serves as a conduit that enhances the vibrancy, accessibility, and appeal of Thangka culture, rather than a disruptive force that may inadvertently dilute its essence or compromise its integrity.

### **Strategic Vision: A Forward-Thinking Perspective**

A strategic vision imbued with foresight, adaptability, and a profound appreciation of Thangka's heritage is essential for steering its cultural transmission towards horizons of enriched continuity and innovative flourishing. The strategic pathways should be envisioned to foster an ecosystem where the educational experiences are deeply immersive, integrative, and reflective of Thangka's multidimensional cultural and spiritual facets. Strategic considerations should also

encompass the realms of sustainability, global engagement, and the cultivation of a vibrant community of learners, artists, and connoisseurs who are deeply connected with Thangka's heritage and are instrumental in its dynamic propagation.

### **Cultural Resonance and Global Engagement**

The conclusion of this research beckons a contemplation of the broader implications and potentials of Thangka cultural transmission in contributing to global cultural diversity, understanding, and artistic enrichment. The practices and innovations at the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace illuminate possibilities for enhancing the global resonance of Thangka culture, facilitating cross-cultural dialogues, and inspiring a broader appreciation of its artistic and spiritual dimensions. The dissemination of Thangka culture should be envisioned as a dynamic interplay that not only encompasses the sharing of artistic expressions but also facilitates meaningful engagements with its philosophical, spiritual, and cultural wisdom. In this global engagement, the Thangka cultural transmission can unfold as a vibrant tapestry that enriches the global cultural landscapes with its unique hues of artistic brilliance, spiritual depth, and cultural wisdom.

In conclusion, the journey of exploring Thangka cultural transmission at the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace unfolds as a tapestry woven with threads of tradition, innovation, strategic vision, and global resonance. This tapestry holds the promise of nurturing a vibrant continuity of Thangka's heritage, fostering innovative pathways of cultural engagement, and contributing profoundly to the enrichment of global cultural landscapes.

### **Suggestions**

In navigating the future of Thangka cultural transmission at the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace, a reflective and strategic perspective is imperative. Harnessing the confluence of tradition and innovation, there lies an opportunity to craft a resilient and vibrant pathway for the sustainable development and propagation of Thangka culture. This necessitates a thoughtful recalibration of strategies and practices, ensuring that they resonate with contemporary relevance while preserving the integrity and depth of traditional values and wisdom.

**1. Industrialization Strategy:** A contemplative exploration into the realms of cultural industrialization could be instrumental. It is not merely about the economic facets but also about fostering a symbiotic relationship between cultural preservation and societal relevance. This strategy should be nuanced, ensuring that the commercial aspects are intertwined with a profound respect for the cultural and spiritual essence of Thangka, thus maintaining its sanctity and integrity.

**2. Effective Dissemination:** In the era of digital connectivity and technological advancements, leveraging modern platforms for the dissemination of Thangka culture presents a remarkable opportunity. Innovative technological strategies should be imbued with a sensitivity towards the nuances of Thangka's heritage, ensuring that the digital expressions resonate with authenticity and depth, facilitating a broader appreciation and engagement with Thangka culture.

**3. Promoting Quality and Excellence:** Emphasizing the cultivation of excellence within the Thangka artistic community is pivotal. This involves nurturing an environment that inspires, supports, and recognizes outstanding painters and artworks, ensuring that the expressions of Thangka artistry resonate with quality, innovation, and a profound connection with its traditional roots.

The trajectory of Thangka cultural transmission at the Regong Ethnic Culture Palace invites a continuous journey of reflection, innovation, and strategic visioning. Guided by a commitment to preserving the richness of Thangka's heritage and a responsiveness to contemporary societal dynamics, the Palace can continue to be a beacon of cultural vibrancy, educational excellence, and innovative resilience. This journey, imbued with thoughtfulness and a visionary spirit, holds the promise of contributing profoundly to the global tapestry of cultural wisdom and artistic expression.

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