



## **NARRATIVE MURALS AS A FORM OF OFFERINGS AND EVIDENCE OF CONFUCIAN CONGREGATION PARTICIPATION IN MAINTAINING THE TEMPLE: A Case Study at the Cu An Kiong Temple, Lasem, Indonesia**

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### **KEYWORDS**

*Narrative mural  
mural painting forms  
temple mural themes  
fengshen yani  
congregational  
participation*

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study focuses on the question of why narrative murals are consistently present in temples, what these murals depict, and what themes they contain. A qualitative descriptive case study approach has been employed to answer these questions. Three types of data were used to study the murals: visual data in the form of the murals themselves, interviews, and documents. The findings of this study show that a narrative mural is intended as an offering to express gratitude to the gods or goddesses for the fulfilment of a family's prayers to demonstrate the congregation's participation in maintaining the temple's existence.*

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Received: 10/ 11 / 2024

Accepted: 10/ 01 / 2025

## 1. Introduction

Mural paintings in temples can serve as an indicator that a person or family has dedicated some of their wealth to renovate the temple. This can be observed in the Cu An Kiong temple in Lasem. The murals that decorate most of the walls in this temple stand as evidence of this. They also demonstrate the involvement of the congregation in building and maintaining the temple. A person or family whose prayers have been answered through this temple typically donates a sum of money, which is used to create a narrative mural on the temple wall. This phenomenon continued until the 1970s, when temples were still an important part of the lives of the surrounding community. However, communal participation began to decline as many Confucian adherents converted to other religions recognized by the Indonesian government, namely Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Temples were increasingly abandoned after 1998, when ethnic conflicts and riots occurred, resulting in the loss of many lives within the ethnic Chinese community. Many residents of Chinese descent left Lasem to move to safer places.

So far, studies on temple murals tend to examine them from three aspects: the historical aspect (Merekina & Panova, 2022), the content of the stories (Shi & Yi, 2022; Johnson, 2020; Suhadolnik, 2015; Patterson, 2016), and the methods used to identify and restore them (Cao et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2016; Qinglin et al., 2010). However, none of these studies explore the connection between the murals and their origins or creators.

This study addresses the shortcomings of previous research, which overlook the role of the congregation in building the temples and selecting the murals that decorate them. The involvement of the congregation enabled the formulation of an action plan to solve the issues encountered. In line with this, three key questions are posed. First, why are narrative murals always present in temples? Second, what does a narrative mural look like? Third, what themes are conveyed in these murals? The answers to these three questions will provide a deeper understanding of the existence of murals in the Cu An Kiong temple, serving as a foundation for future action plans, especially concerning restoration efforts since some murals are beginning to deteriorate and urgently need repair.

This study argues that temples serve various functions, one of which is to act as a centre of community life for their congregation. Inside the Cu An Kiong temple resides the narrative mural painting. Many people visit the temple to pray for blessings. Pilgrims whose prayers are answered offer a portion of their wealth to renovate the temple, often commissioning the creation of narrative murals.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Chinese temple

In general, temples in Indonesia are religious buildings of the Chinese community, housing various gods that are worshiped. In the Indonesian context, temples can also serve as evidence of a long period of political repression. Research on temples can generally be divided into three areas: studies on the main gods worshiped in temples and the accompanying ritual ceremonies, the hybridization and acculturation that occur, and temple architecture.

The selection of the main god to be worshiped in a temple reflects the socio-cultural dynamics of the worshiping community (Susilo et al., 2018) and influences the various ceremonies conducted (Hartati & Rudyansjah, 2021; Buaban, 2021; Dean, 2022; Wee, 2019). Hartati et al. (2020) and Triatmodjo et al. (2022) show that in temples where the goddess Mazu (Tian Siang Sheng Mo) is the primary deity, the various ritual ceremonies performed are intended to honour this goddess. The ceremonies and associated events highlight the processes of acculturation and cultural hybridisation that have taken place. Triatmodjo et al. (2023) argue that cultural hybridisation is not solely the result of comprehensive socio-cultural interaction but also arises from the collective memory of the community, emphasising the importance of cooperation in fostering harmonious socio-cultural life. Pramono et al. (2020) demonstrate that the Cu An Kiong temple in Lasem and the surrounding settlements are the result of cultural acculturation due to Chinese migration from mainland China to Java—Lasem being one of the towns where Chinese migrants settled—between the 14th and 20th centuries, peaking during the turbulent transition from the Ming to the Qing dynasty (Xiao, 2024). In all temples in Indonesia, there are murals on the inside walls.

## 2.2. Mural Painting

Murals are paintings or images on exterior walls, interior walls, or other large surfaces that are permanent. They are often found on the walls of places of worship, including Chinese temples. Murals in Chinese temples have become objects of serious study by researchers. Existing research on murals in Chinese temples can be categorised into two topics: historical aspects and mural story themes. The historical aspects are reflected in various murals. For example, the murals in the Puguang, Yunlin, and Yong'an temples depict the history of bone treatment during the Ming and Qing dynasties (Shi & Yi, 2022). The history of colour usage across dynasties can be found in the murals at MoGao (Burdge et al., 2023). The MoGao murals also illustrate the history of multicultural exchange along the Silk Road trade route from the 4th to the 14th centuries (Merekina & Panova, 2022).

The story themes depicted in temple murals are drawn from a variety of events. These themes may reflect everyday occurrences that typically receive little attention (Johnson, 2020), stories about the prosperity of a nation (Patterson, 2016), or accounts of the roles played by prominent figures or gods/goddesses (Suhadolnik, 2015), like Fengshen Yanyi.

## 2.3. Fengshen Yanyi

Fengshen Yanyi, or Fengshen Bang, is a novel written by Xu Zhonglin during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). "Fengshen" can be interpreted as the gift of becoming a god or being elevated to the position of a god. This novel was first published between 1567 and 1619 and is one of the most important literary works based on the historical events surrounding the fall of the Shang Dynasty and the rise of the Zhou Dynasty. It has attracted the attention of researchers, and research on Fengshen can be divided into two categories: studies focusing on the values within Fengshen and those examining the novel's adaptation into other literary forms or its influence on other works.

The values contained in Fengshen include ethical values (Monschein, 2014), ritual values (Meulenbeld, 2015), and educational values (Lei, 2024). Lei also shows that, in addition to conveying educational values, Fengshen reflects symbolic characteristics and the socio-cultural background of the Ming-Qing dynasties. Fengshen Yanyi is known in several countries and has been translated into various languages. For example, it was translated into German by Grube (1855–1908) (Walravens, 2012) and into Indonesian in 1940. The translation of the novel into multiple languages has enabled Fengshen Yanyi to be adapted into different art genres, including animation, films (You, 2022), and Nianhua woodblock prints in Russia. Zavidovskaia et al. (2021) demonstrated that Nianhua woodblock paintings were inspired by illustrations from the Fengshen novel. Furthermore, Fengshen Yanyi also influenced Oscar Wilde, a renowned 19th-century European playwright, in the creation of his plays (Galik, 2020).

Considering the above, this research aims to: (1) find out the form of narrative murals; (2) find out the themes of narrative murals; and (3) interpret the meaning of the presence of narrative murals in the Cu An Kiong temple.

## 3. Methodology

This research was conducted at the Cu An Kiong temple in Lasem, a sub-district that was once known as a port city on the north coast of Java. The name "Lasem" comes from the words La Sen or Lao Sam (啦), meaning "Little China." This city is home to three temples: Cu An Kiong, Poo An Bio, and Gie Yong Bio, each with its own unique historical value. Cu An Kiong, the oldest temple in Java, features numerous carvings and murals that are considered the most beautiful in Indonesia. This temple founded in the 16th century when Chinese immigrants began settling permanently in Lasem. According to Knapp (1986) and Pratiwo (2010), the first Chinese settlement in Lasem dates back to the 15th century. In earlier centuries, Chinese sailors anchored their ships here on goodwill visits to port towns along the north coast of Java. In the Cu An Kiong temple, there are 100 narrative murals with varying image conditions. The sample murals were 16 narrative murals, 8 from the left side and 8 from the right side of the temple wall. The sixteen samples were selected randomly and based on the condition of the images that were still clear.

The interviewees were 4 informants, namely (1) Opa Gandor (Sie Hwie Djan), an elder of the Chinese community who is also the caretaker of the temple in Lasem city who was spiritually initiated. (2) Kwa

Tong Hay, an expert in ancient Chinese writing and Chinese literature and write a book about the murals in the Cu An Kiong temple. (3) Pak Tri, Chairman of the Tri Dharma Management (TITD) in Lasem. (4) Pak Ham, a member of TITD in Lasem.

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive instrumental case approach, as outlined by Creswell (2013). It focuses on the form and function of the narrative murals in the temple and the participation of the congregation in efforts to maintain the temple's existence. The objects of study are the narrative murals, their form and function as expressions of the congregation's gratitude for answered prayers, and the impact of these offerings on the temple's sustainability. To gain deeper insights, observations were made to understand the reasons behind these objects and related activities. This study relies on primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through observation and interviews. During field observations, photographs were taken of artifacts and religious and sociocultural activities related to the narrative murals and iconography elements in the temple. Interviews were conducted with members of the congregation, temple administrators, mural artists, and guardians of the Cu An Kiong Temple. These interviews aimed to gather information on interactions, perspectives, purposes for offering murals, and interpretations of the form, function, and meaning embedded in the act of giving narrative murals as offerings. Secondary data were obtained from relevant websites, books, manuscripts, and journal articles.

The data analysis process followed Creswell (2014) framework, involving three stages. First is the data reduction process, in which collected data are reorganized systematically based on the categorization of placement, form, content, and function of the temple's narrative murals. Second is the data verification process, where conclusions are drawn based on the categorized data. Third is the data display process, where findings are presented through interview quotes and photo images.

Following these three stages, an inductive analysis process was carried out to interpret the data. The interpretation began by restating the data according to the current sociocultural context of the community. These stages and analytical techniques allowed for the formulation of conclusions regarding the congregation's participation in maintaining the sustainability of the Cu An Kiong Temple.

## **4. Results**

### ***4.1. Placement of Iconic and Narrative Murals at Cu An Kiong Temple***

Figure 1 shows both iconic murals and narrative murals. Iconic murals are large paintings located on the upper part of the temple's main room wall, while the narrative murals are images of scenes enclosed in a line frame, positioned below the iconic murals, approximately 1 metre above the floor. The narrative murals run along the main room walls, continuing into the hallway and the second room.

In the iconic murals, there are no boundaries separating the figures, so the figures form their own continuous rows. In contrast, the narrative murals depict individual scenes, each contained within a rectangular box. Narrative murals are found only on the walls of the main room, the hallway, and the second room. Iconic murals can be found on the walls or other parts of the structure, such as doors, pillars, and altar tables within the temple's rooms

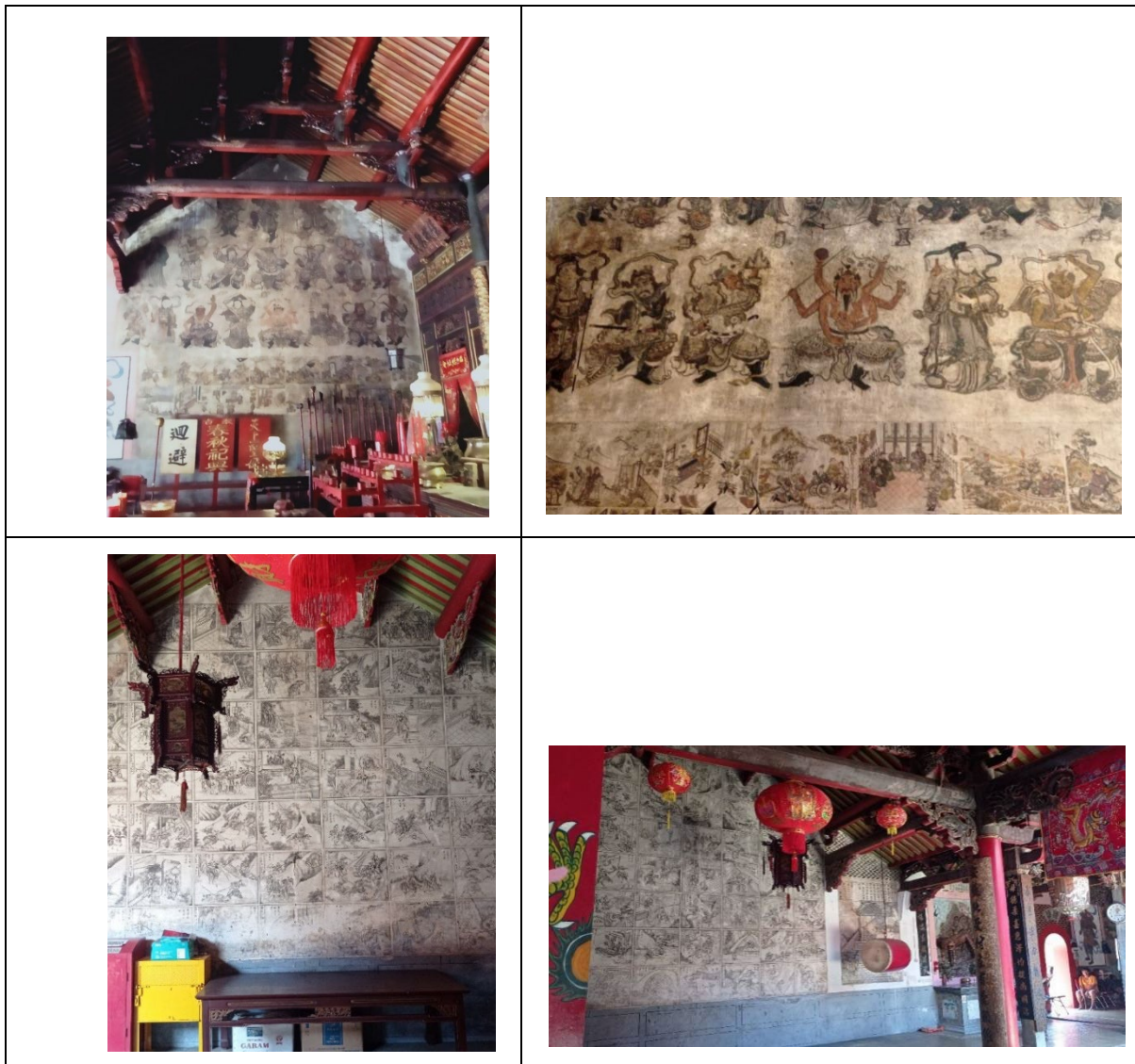
Narrative murals, when present alongside iconic murals, are positioned beneath them. Iconic murals typically depict gods, historical figures, religious scenes, myths, or legends, and may also feature symbolic flora and fauna, such as dragons, phoenixes, and peonies. In contrast, narrative murals illustrate scenes drawn from historical events, religious themes, myths, or Chinese legends. The location of iconic murals is predetermined by the temple, while the placement of narrative murals is decided by the temple administration.

The frames containing narrative scenes, which increase in number over time as new requests to donate murals emerge, are determined by the congregation. As a result, the placement of narrative murals begins in the innermost spaces and extends outward into additional rooms. The oldest narrative murals are located in the inner spaces, while more recent murals appear in the following rooms. These murals are arranged sequentially, one by one, in the order in which they were added to the walls.

Narrative murals serve as offerings from the congregation to the temple gods in gratitude for answered prayers or fulfilled wishes. The small mural frames, containing story scenes, express appreciation for these blessings (personal communication with Pak Tri and Pak Ham, 4 April 2024)

Positioned lower than the iconic murals, narrative murals do not stand alone but are grouped together with other narrative scenes. This contrasts with the iconic murals, which function as standalone pieces. A narrative mural image typically represents an offering from one individual or family whose prayers have been answered. On subsequent occasions, the same person or family may donate additional narrative mural frames. Observations of the temple walls reveal that the number of narrative murals has grown to 100 images since the temple's renovation in the early 1900s. The opening paragraph has no indentation.

**Figure 1.** Iconic murals (top) and narrative murals (bottom) at Cu An Kiong



Source: Own elaboration, 2024

#### **4.2. Form and Content of Narrative Murals**

Figure 2 shows a combination of narrative mural panels and a stand-alone narrative mural. The panels are rectangular boxes with lines separating each panel from the others. Each panel measures 40 × 40 cm or smaller. The narrative mural is created using Chinese characters written with a Chinese writing brush and black ink. Some mural images appear faded and discoloured. On the right side of the image, Hanzi (Chinese characters) are written from top to bottom within a rectangular frame. Beside the framed Chinese script, additional writing appears without a frame, occupying an empty area. The Hanzi



writing inside the frame represents the name of the donor. For example, in Figure 2 (top right), the left corner contains the inscription 弟子曾怀仁敬奉 (congregation offering, Zeng Huairen). Next to it, the text 武王白鱼跃龙舟 (White Fish Jumps into King Wu's Dragon Boat) appears, serving as the title of a historical or mythological story depicted in the scene.

There are 100 narrative mural panels displayed on the walls of the temple, which are offerings. A single family may contribute more than one mural panel, as indicated by the name written in the top right-hand corner of each panel. For example, Lu Chunhua contributed the murals for the episodes “Wuyue of Mianchi County Returns to Heaven” and “The Two Princes, Deng Rui and Hou, Resume their Loyalty to the Zhou Lord” (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Narrative Mural

	
<p>40 x 40 Cm Narrative Mural</p>	<p>Donor 弟子曾怀仁敬奉 (Zeng Huairen)</p> <p>Story: 武王白鱼跃龙舟(The White Fish Jumps into King Wu's Dragon Boat)</p>
 <p>Donor: 弟子卢春花敬奉 (Lu Chunhua)</p> <p>Story: 浞池县五岳归天 (Wuyue from County Mianchi, returns to heaven (passes away))</p>	 <p>Donor: 弟子卢春花敬奉 (Lu Chunhua)</p> <p>Story: 邓芮二侯归周主 (Two Princes, Deng Rui and Hou, resume their loyalty to the Zhou ruler)</p>

Source: Own elaboration, 2024

The narrative murals were created with black ink applied directly onto the wall surface, meaning that the murals were made on-site by the artist. Their small size made it possible for them to be completed in a relatively short time. An artist explained that the traditional drawing technique used, called guohua, is a style of painting with coloured or black-and-white ink. By examining the quality of

the brushstrokes across the various panels—such as the lightness, opacity of the ink, and overall physical appearance—it can be concluded that these murals were created by multiple artists from different eras. The styles vary from finely detailed characters to rougher ones, with some panels displaying high-quality images and others showing lesser quality. This variation is understandable, as the presence of these narrative murals may have begun when the temple was first constructed, in the 15th century.

With this tendency, it can be said that these narrative murals were indeed intended to meet the needs of Confucian devotees who sought to give more permanent offerings. These mural offerings are recorded, more durable over time, and their presence is made visible to others, including members of the public who visit the temple. The murals are created in the simplest form—brushstrokes in black ink applied directly to the wall. When compared to other types of murals, such as those in Egyptian tombs or European frescoes, the physical form of these narrative murals is smaller, simpler, and more basic. This characteristic makes them accessible to the general public and easy to replicate, even though the mural images are still made by artists. Their small, basic, and simple format allows artists from different eras, backgrounds, and skill levels to contribute to the murals, making it easier for the temple congregation to find artists to complete these offerings.

#### **4.3. Mural Story Theme**

Figure 3 (top) shows the episode of Jiang Ziya leading troops to capture the Lintong Gate, and Jiang Ziya climbing Kunlun Mountain. Figure 3 (bottom) depicts the image of Jiang Ziya climbing Kunlun Mountain, taken from the novel *Fengshen Yanyi*, a novel written by Xu Zhonglin during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). *Fengshen Yanyi* is a classic Chinese literary work first published between 1567 and 1619. This significant literary piece narrates the historical events surrounding the fall of the Shang Dynasty and the rise of the Zhou Dynasty.

The novel consists of 100 chapters, divided into four parts. Its background revolves around the cruelty of King Xin, the 18th and final ruler of the Shang Dynasty, who was defeated by Ji Fa (King Wu), the first king of the Zhou Dynasty. King Wu's success in overthrowing King Xin was largely attributed to Jiang Ziya, the prime minister and an expert in war tactics. Kwa Tong Hay said:

*Fengshen Yanyi* explores Jiang Ziya's journey before becoming prime minister, his tenure in office, and his elevation to the status of a god known as Jiang Taigong, the protector from disasters. It also tells of the elevation of heroes who died in the war, raising them to the rank of gods (personal communication, 12 February 2024).

As shown in Figure 3, there are three scenes of Jiang Ziya climbing Mount Kunlun, taken from different sources but depicting the same image. This suggests that the mural painters at Cu An Kiong temple, when illustrating the *Fengshen* story, did not create the image themselves but adopted it from pre-existing sources, specifically the classical Chinese literary work *Fengshen Yanyi*, which was published earlier. This literary work recounts the fall of King Xin at the hands of King Wu.

The stories of war and battles in *Fengshen Yanyi* are captivating, enriched with folklore, mythology, legends, and the author's imagination, involving interactions between humans, gods, spirits, demons, and animals. The imaginative world depicted is filled with mythological creatures engaging in conflict with humans. Additionally, this literary work reflects the social, political, and moral values of the time, which were rooted in Confucianism.

*Fengshen Yanyi* remains a popular classical literary work, valued both by mainland Chinese and overseas Chinese communities. Its popularity endures from ancient times to the present day. This work has been adapted into various forms and mediums, including films and comics, and it is reflected in the mural story at Cu An Kiong temple.

Like Taoism, Confucianism emphasizes maintaining balance in human relationships and the world to achieve eternity. In the story of *Fengshen Yanyi*, balance is represented through the conflict between two factions: the old dynasty that becomes oppressive and the new dynasty that restores harmony. This narrative reflects the cyclical nature of the universe, striving to maintain the balance of life. When a ruler becomes corrupt and tyrannical, they are replaced by a more just leader. Once balance is restored, humans move toward eternity. This journey toward eternity can be achieved by each individual through



the fulfillment of their respective dharma. In Fengshen Yanyi, all the fallen heroes, whether from the righteous side or the evil side, are elevated to the status of gods for fulfilling their dharma.

Figure 3. Images of Jiang Ziya from various sources

	
<p>Donor: 弟子余添景敬奉 (Yu Tianjing)</p> <p>Story: 子牙兵取临潼关 (Jiang Ziya leads his troops to capture Lintong Gate)</p>	<p>Donor: 弟子陈富润敬奉 (Chen Furun)</p> <p>Story: Jiang Zi-ya climbing Kunlun Mountain (姜子牙一上昆仑。)</p>
	
<p>Source: Xu <a href="#">Zhonglin</a>. (n.d.) <i>The Investiture of the Gods, Fengshen Yanyi</i>. <a href="https://archive.org/details/investitureofthegods/ Fengshen yixuzhonglin/page/n7/mode/2up">https://archive.org/details/investitureofthegods/ Fengshen yixuzhonglin/page/n7/mode/2up</a></p>	<p>Source: <a href="https://www.ancientpages.com/2019/01/31/kunlun-mountain-mythical-dwelling-place-of-gods-sacred-animals-and-symbol-of-axis-mundi-in-chinese-mythology/">https://www.ancientpages.com/2019/01/31/kunlun-mountain-mythical-dwelling-place-of-gods-sacred-animals-and-symbol-of-axis-mundi-in-chinese-mythology/</a></p>

Source: Own elaboration, 2024

Fengshen Yanyi is a literary work steeped in Confucian philosophy, regarded as a canon within Chinese culture. To spread Confucian philosophy widely, rulers conveyed these teachings to the community through various media, including murals in temples. In one of the worship rituals, the congregation practised confusions teachings by offering these murals in the temple as acts of devotion.



## 5. Discussion

This research has succeeded in identifying the form of narrative murals, finding the themes of narrative murals, and interpreting the meaning of the presence of narrative murals in the Cu An Kiong temple. In addition to being an offering of gratitude for the fulfillment of the prayers or hopes of the congregation, narrative murals also serve as strong evidence of the congregation's participation in reviving and maintaining the temple, transforming it into a medium for canonizing Confucian philosophy within the Chinese community. This can be demonstrated through five key aspects.

First, the temple has provided a designated space and established regulations for the congregation to display narrative murals on its walls. Second, members of the congregation who wish to present narrative murals must consult with the temple guardians to obtain permission and select a specific scene to depict. Third, the narrative mural is painted by an artist directly on the wall provided, accompanied by the title of the scene and the name of the donor. Fourth, the mural is created according to a standard size and arranged into a large, unified area, ensuring the narrative murals stand out within the temple. Fifth, the narrative murals act as a medium for canonizing Confucian teachings, as they include stories from classical Chinese literature, such as *Fengshen Yanyi*. This supports Zhang's findings (2019), which highlight that in several large and significant temples, murals are used to canonize Confucian teachings within society.

Based on this evidence, it can be concluded that the temple recognizes the importance of narrative murals, including the display of donors' names and story scenes, within the temple building. The significance of these murals lies in both their physical and spiritual roles in revitalizing Confucian community life and culture. Physically, narrative murals enliven the temple's interior and enhance its sacred atmosphere, complementing the regalia and other interior elements. Spiritually, the murals accommodate the congregation's need to express gratitude for the fulfillment of their requests or promises. Genealogically, the murals awaken historical awareness and reinforce the identity of the Confucian people.

Furthermore, from a religious and educational perspective, the story episodes depicted in the murals convey Confucian teachings and moral messages that can guide people's daily lives (Tang & Li, 2024). With these four essential values—spiritual, physical, genealogical, and educational—narrative murals not only accommodate the congregation's presence but also immortalize and publicize their requests. At the same time, they serve as a testament to the congregation's support for the temple. Additionally, the story episodes depicted in the murals act as a medium for defining and disseminating Confucian teachings.

The relationship between the temple and its congregation can be seen as a symbiotic one, where both complement and rely on each other. In a spiritual and cultural context, the temple is not just a place of worship but also a centre of community life, providing identity and meaning for its congregation. The congregation serves as guardians, caretakers, and successors of the temple's traditions and teachings.

These murals are not merely decorative elements; they also function as educational tools and reminders for the congregation, conveying values, morals, history, and myths that are integral to their beliefs. Each mural tells a story with a profound message intended to inspire, educate, and strengthen the congregation's faith. The murals symbolize the congregation's commitment to caring for the temple, while the temple, through its murals, provides a cultural space for the congregation to continue existing and developing as part of life's expression. Thus, these murals are concrete evidence of the reciprocal relationship between the temple and its congregation.

This relationship between the temple and its community in the Chinese tradition can be likened to the relationship between the mosque and the people in Islam, especially regarding the building and maintenance of places of worship. Both reflect the community's collective responsibility in maintaining and preserving a living and dynamic spiritual centre. In Islam, building and maintaining a mosque is considered a recommended act of worship, where the people actively participate through donations, involvement in religious activities, and efforts to maintain the mosque's cleanliness and beauty. Similar activities occur in the temple, where the Chinese community not only worships but also participates in maintaining the temple, decorating it with murals, making offerings, and upholding inherited traditions. Both systems demonstrate that places of worship are more than just physical structures; they are

community hubs, actively managed by the people, and continuously brought to life through the participation and loyalty of their congregation.

Murals in temples play a crucial role, not only as decorative elements but also as a medium for conveying spiritual, moral, and cultural values to the congregation. However, over time, the physical condition of these murals has faded and deteriorated, threatening the loss of the stories and meanings they contain. To address this issue, renovation efforts are essential, requiring the active participation of the congregation. Their involvement in the renovation process not only ensures the quality of the restoration but also strengthens their sense of ownership and responsibility for this cultural heritage.

Additionally, deciphering and digitalizing these murals must be prioritized. Many younger devotees and temple visitors cannot read Hanzi or fully understand the stories and meanings conveyed by the murals. Digitalisation would allow these murals to be preserved in digital form, safeguarding both their visuals and content. It would also facilitate the inclusion of translations and interpretations, making them accessible to a wider audience. Engaging with the murals—whether through a guide, guidebook, or digital application—would offer younger generations and visitors a deeper understanding of the values within each story, ensuring that this cultural heritage continues to thrive and remain relevant in the future.

## 6. Conclusion

The main finding of this study is that the narrative murals installed in temples not only convey teachings but also demonstrate the involvement of the congregation through offerings that help maintain the life of the temple. The strength of this research lies in its contribution to the discourse that murals should not be viewed solely in terms of their primary function of spreading Taoist or Confucian teachings. There is another crucial function: providing space for community involvement.

This study complements previous research that focused only on mural restoration techniques and the stories depicted. This study recommends to temple managers that restoration efforts should actively involve the congregation. Including the congregation—whether through their participation in the restoration process or through their donations for temple renovation—enhances their connection to the temple and strengthens community ties.

This research was conducted on a limited scale, focusing on the murals of a single temple. It is anticipated that new insights may emerge when further cases are explored. Therefore, studying additional temples is necessary to obtain a more comprehensive understanding.

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