

RESEARCH ARTICLE

An Analysis On The Sincization of Apsaras Art In Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes

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Abstract: Buddhist art is an important way to illustrate Buddhist thoughts. Among Buddhist art, Apsaras Art is an extremely significant part of it. Simultaneously, it is the essence of Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes art as well as. As it known to all, Apsaras Art, as an artistic expression of religious thoughts, its artistic style is bound to be influenced by different social consciousness in different times with little doubts. At the same time, this influence will inevitably let creators make performance style of Apsaras increasingly close to the mundane life, which is more and more in line with the aesthetic standard of them as a consequence. To go a step further, it is essential to learn the origin of Apsaras. This paper will analyze the artistic characteristics of Apsaras in Mogao Grottoes from three stages of budding period, exploring period and mature period according to the context of the chronicle to generalize about the sinicization of Apsaras Art.

Keywords: Dunhuang mogao grottoes, apsaras art, buddhist art

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0 Introduction

The image of apsaras in Buddhist art originated from Gandharva and Kannara in Indian Buddhist art. In the process of spreading buddhist art to the east, apsaras art was influenced by the winged angel image with Greek art style, combined with the re-creation of apsaras image by various art styles in the Western regions, apsaras art formed a diversified art style. Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes are the grottoes with the most apsaras images preserved in China. Out of 492 existing caves, 270 have apsaras and 4,500 bodies in total. This completely shows the whole process of the apsaras art in Mogao Grottoes changing with the succession of dynasties, which is also the process of localization in the apsaras art.

1. Early Stage of Middle-soil mineralization (Beiliang, Northern Wei)

The initial stage of localization in the art of flying in mogao Grottoes refers to the two historical periods of Beiliang (397 ~ 460 AD) and Northern Wei (386 ~ 534 AD).

Beiliang Period is the embryonic stage of flying ap-

saras art in Mogao Grottoes. The flying apsaras image almost completely imitates foreign art style, with strong Indian and Western characteristics. All the flying apiras of the Beiliang period in Mogao Grottoes are preserved in the three Caves of Beiliang, including Cave 268, Cave 272 and Cave 275. Apsaras in this period mainly appeared on the heads of the main figures in the paintings of Bunsen stories and the edges of buddhist niches. The flying apsaras of the Beiliang period have strong male characteristics of the Western regions, and their bodies are mostly v-shaped. From the face, round face straight nose, big eyes without eyebrows, wide mouth big ears, single expression; In figure, he was low and stout, with a large belly and a round waist, and clumsy; In terms of clothing, the upper body is naked, with a long towel on the shoulder and a long skirt, without shoes on both feet. On the whole, the images of Flying Apsaras in Beiliang are all based on red. On the basis of western painting style, they have absorbed the painting techniques of tomb paintings in Wei and Jin Dynasties. Dark color and thick black outline are used to reflect the three-dimensional sense of the body, and bright colors are used. Do not notice detail to hold however, the long towel of flying day also shows massi-

ness slightly, lack elegant feeling. The image of apsaras in this period is rough, exaggerated, serious and divorced from reality, which reflects people's awe of the image of apsaras in the embryonic stage.

The northern Wei royal family highly respected Buddhism, which provided a good environment for the development of Buddhist art. Especially after the reform of Taihe, under the influence of emperor Xiaowen's sinicization policy, the art style of the Central Plains began to influence the creation of apsaras. The scope of apsaras fresco further expanded, and began to gradually get rid of the clumsy sense of western style, tend to the Central Plains style of thin bone clear image. The image of flying apsaras in this period reflects the fusion of the two art styles of central Plains and western Regions. In painting techniques, although part of the strong western style of the faint method is retained, but a large number of lines in the original style, so that the apsaras image is more delicate. The flying apsaras figure of northern Wei begins to pay attention to the performance of detail, the collocation of colour is more lively also. The face became longer, and the eyes, nose and mouth were more finely sculpted. The body shape was not as stout as in the Northern Liang Period, but became well proportioned and tall and slender. Begin to notice the dynamic expression of long skirt and silks belt on dress, draw the outline of the lightsome and elegant feeling that gives silks belt with line. The image of flying apsaras in Bunsen's story on the north wall of Cave 254 in the Northern Wei Dynasty is a combination of western and Central Plains styles. These two flying apsaras have strong bodies, straight noses, round faces, wide mouths, big ears, naked upper bodies, and heavy colors, which inherit the typical western art style. At the same time, we can clearly find the smooth and gentle lines of the silk ribbon and long skirt of the apsaras image, which better reflects the dynamic beauty, which is a typical art style of central China. In this period, new attempts were also made on apsaras' posture. For example, the apsaras image at the ear side of bodhisattva on the north wall of Cave 251 swooping down from the sky, dynamic and with strong visual impact.

In the north wall of Cave no. 263 of the Northern Wei Dynasty, the image of flying apperas with listening method obviously gets rid of the technique of heavy color and faint dye, and the overall style is fresh and free from vulgarity. The two apsaras are slender and light. Her facial features are clear and clear. The hair style of the apsaras in the upper part is also more feminine. The blue and red ribbons are moving beautifully in the wind. In the Period of the Northern Wei dynasty, a figure of flying apsaras in a large hanfu appeared. For example, in cave 437, there

is a group of flying apsaras on the east side of the central tower (see Figure 1), and silk ribbons are replaced by broad Han sleeves. This group of apsaras image face thin, slender body shape, with clothes bo belt, holding lotus, knees flying, with obvious art characteristics of the Central Plains.

Generally speaking, the art of flying apsaras in Mogao Grottoes was influenced by foreign culture on the one hand and southern Han culture on the other hand. On the basis of inheriting the art styles of India and western regions, the flying art of Mogao Grottoes tries to integrate the art characteristics of central China. The apsaras image has begun to change from stocky to ethereal.



Figure 1: Flying apsaras in Cave 437 of Mogao Grottoes

2. Exploration stage of Middle-soil mineralization (Western Wei dynasty, Northern Zhou Dynasty)

The exploration stage of localization in the flying art of Mogao Grottoes refers to the western Wei Dynasty (535 ~ 556 AD) and the Northern Zhou Dynasty (557 ~ 581 AD).

The Western Wei was a separate regime from the territory of the Northern Wei. Although it did not last long, thanks to the support of the ruler, Buddhist art was further developed in China. Although the creation of flying Apsaras in this period continued the artistic style of the Northern Wei Dynasty, the creators began to try to bring personal aesthetic taste into the image of flying Apsaras. This is an input of social consciousness, which will inevitably make the overall style of apsaras begin to be close to the secular social life, and even reflect the outlook of life.

The flying apsaras of the Western Wei Dynasty began to experiment with holding various Musical Instruments. The creator tried to create the image of Acting Bodhisattva in the western region style. For example, in Cave 249 of Mogao Grottoes, "Most apsaras in the cave have slender bodies, thin faces and long necks, wide forehead and narrow nose, elegant eyes and straight nose, slender eyebrows, slightly upturned corners of the mouth, and a slight smile. Especially the apsaras dancers hold Musical Instruments such as brass bells, which is a creation in dunhuang apsaras figures." ① It is worth noting that the apsaras lost their backlight and instead wore a Taoist crown. This shows that the popularity of Taoism in the Western Wei Dynasty also began to influence the art image of flying apsaras. The Flying apsaras of Buddhism merged the Taoist flying fairy element in line with the trend of The Times, which was a bold innovation in the localization exploration stage of flying fairy art in mogao Grottoes.

The apsaras of this period tended to be feminine, with shawls or high buns, naked upper body and long skirts, which were beautiful and flexible, soft and graceful. In this period, the Central Plains style of painting was further improved, with more natural lines and colorful colors. On the north wall of Cave 285 in the Western Wei Dynasty, the statue of flying apsaras is covered with white as a whole, showing the image of skinny bones and clear bones, a complete painting style of central China. Apsaras image head bundle two tail long braids, long face, willow leaf thin eyebrows, eyes have a god, skin white beauty, gold ring, wrist wear gold ring. Dressed in a long red dress and a dark silk belt, she was graceful and lifelike. Such a strong Central Plains style of Xiu Guqing statue and the south wall of Cave 285 flying apsaras.

A pair of Buddha backlit flying apsaras (see Figure 2) on the top of the west niche in Cave 285, with white crown on the top and beautiful eyes, naked on the upper body, wearing a stone green long skirt and light silk belt on the shoulder, fly in from top to bottom, turn around and look like scattered flowers. The lower part of the body is wearing a white and green crown, also is beautiful, the upper body is naked, wearing ochre long skirt, shoulder black silk belt, front legs coiled and exposed, palm turned out to be scattered flower. Upper a flying apsaras of black backlight, light color silk belt with lower a flying apsaras of light color backlight, black silk belt echo at a distance, imitate if pair of immortal family companion. This pair of apsaras' upper body nude has an obvious western style. However, the skilled use of Chinese painting techniques, vivid eyebrows and eyes, excellent line drawing and shading, is obviously a further exploration in the process of Chinese localization.



Figure 2: Buddha backlit flying in Cave 285 of Mogao Grottoes

At the beginning of the establishment of the Northern Zhou Dynasty, Buddhist art experienced the catastrophe of the destruction of Buddhism by Emperor Wudi, which greatly dampened the vitality of the development of Buddhist art. In the short period of 24 years in the Northern Zhou Dynasty, the art of flying apsaras not only stopped the process of localization, but also returned to the thick and clumsy art style of the Western regions in the Period of The Northern Liang Dynasty. Fortunately, except for Emperor Wudi of Zhou Dynasty, the rulers of Zhou Dynasty all believed in Buddhism, and cave 290, Cave 428 and Cave 442 of the Northern Zhou Dynasty also had exquisite flying apsaras. However, the flying apsaras in this period lost the sense of closeness to life and became serious and cold, which had a great relationship with the social environment at that time.

3.The Mature Stage of mesochization (Sui and Tang Dynasties)

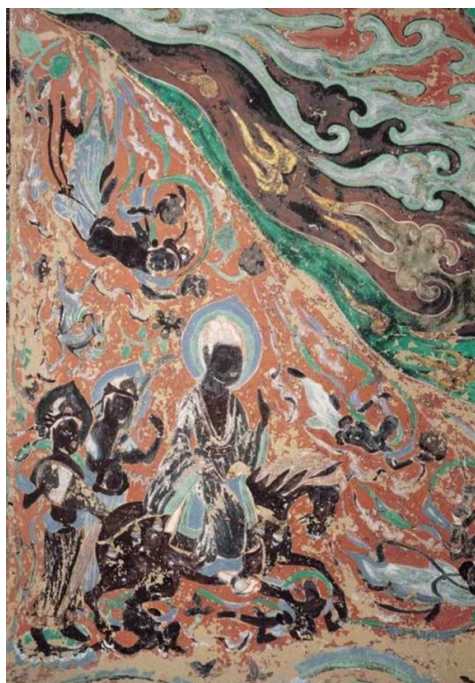
The mature stage of localization in the art of flying apsaras in mogao Grottoes refers to the historical period from Sui Dynasty to middle Tang Dynasty (581 ~ 766 AD).

Although sui Dynasty is only 38 years, sui Dynasty is a period in the history of Dunhuang grottoes flying apsaras image. This is because the Sui Dynasty was a dynasty with the unification of the north and the south, and the unification of the political landscape promoted the communication of buddhist art between the north and the south. In addition to the rulers of Buddhism, the people are more enthusiastic.

The flying apsaras of Sui Dynasty were free and varied,

and most of them were female images. The face is mostly thin, the eyebrows are delicate, the body is slender, the movement stretches generous. Look from hair bun, have obvious palace lam modelling characteristic more, silks takes line euphemism fluent. There is a wide variety of clothing, not only the bodice belt and robe, there are short skirts, long skirts, and even the bare breasts. The posture of flight is more flexible, varied and eclectic. Sui dynasty flying apsaras throughout the grottoes, different images, gorgeous and vivid. These changes are the new styles of fusion and innovation of Buddhist art from north to south in the new era. This style shows the complete localization of flying art in mogao Grottoes. "Sui dynasty flying in the number is unprecedented, and more with well algae or other patterns appear in combination, is generally a simple and healthy heroic spirit, in the art of a link between the past and the future important stage. 2.

The Story of Buddha in Cave 397 (See Figure 3) is a common story of Buddha in The Sui Dynasty. In this picture, siddhartha, with the help of the heavens, leaves the city in the middle of the night, when people are sleeping, and enters the forest to begin his life of asceticism. In the picture, the flying sky leads the way, and the heavenly maiden plays music. It has a very romantic effect against the background of flame pattern, flower pattern and cloud pattern. Apsaras image thin bone clear like, slender figure, shoulder stone green silk belt, free dancing. Apsaras is more natural than ever.



Picture 3: Flying sky in Cave 285 of Mogao Grottoes at midnight

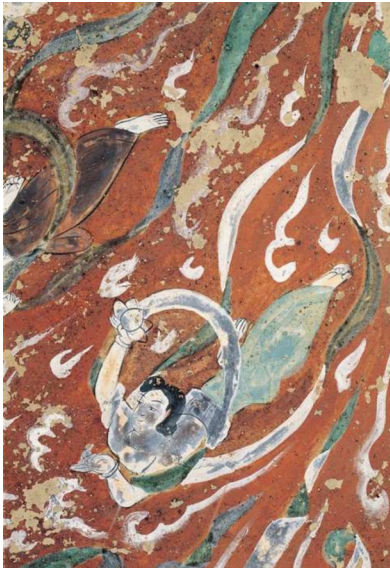
Cave 427 is the largest grotto in Sui Dynasty, with 108 flying apsaras in the grotto, so it is also the most flying apsaras in the Mogao Grottoes in Sui Dynasty. Some of these apsaras are crowned, others are made of wreaths, and some are naked in long skirts. Some of them hand holding flower plate, some holding Musical Instruments, different posture, lively and clever. Smooth lines and full of rhythm, apsaras beautiful posture and vivid real.

There are abundant flying apsaras on the roof of cave 305. The image of flying apsaras with five bodies presenting flowers is depicted on the north slope of cave 305 (see Figure 4). The top two flying apsaras look like monks, bald and dressed in the right shoulder of the robe, one hand holding scripture, the other is reading scripture. The left apsaras of the cassock blue for the inside, black for the face, and the right apsaras of the cassock black for the inside, blue for the face, set off each other, complement each other. The three bodies below the flying sky face white ruddy, naked upper body, shoulder two-color silk belt fluttering in the wind, under the long skirt, color is also set off each other. Although the three flying apsaras fly in the same direction, they still show a certain symmetry. The apsaras in the middle with both hands holding the flower plate as the center, the left apsaras in the left hand holding the flower plate, the right apsaras in the right hand holding the flower plate, showing the overall coordination and unity. All these show the diversity of flying apsaras image in Sui Dynasty and the maturity of localization expression in flying apsaras art.



Picture 4: Grottoes 305 flowers flying sky

The Tang dynasty was one of the most powerful dynasties in Chinese history, with a prosperous economy and unprecedented development of culture and art. The apsaras image of this period not only reflects the complete localization, but also shows full body, elegant, charming posture. Creators try their best to express their social environment in their flying art works. The art of flying apsaras influenced by social consciousness almost became the true portrayal of court ladies in tang Dynasty. Their eyes were full, their hair luxuriant, their air charming, their figure



Picture5: Flower offering flying sky in Grottoes 322

graceful. Most of them are bare-chaded, wearing long dresses and ribbons, and the overall lines are smooth and nuanced, which is quite effective. In the Tang Dynasty, the art of flying apsaras in Mogao Grottoes not only completed the complete sense of localization, but also entered its heyday. "The flying apperas in Dunhuang Grottoes in the Tang Dynasty are beautiful and elegant, with clever flying, charming and elegant body." 3.

In The West niche of Cave 322 in the Tang Dynasty, there is a flying statue of scattered flowers (see Figure 5), holding lotus in the right hand and scattered flowers in the left hand. The hair is combed in a popular double bun, and the body is soft and free to fly. On the face, slender eyebrows, small nose, small mouth closed lips. A pair of eyes are delineated very delicately, the eyebrows are vivid. Although the figure has a delicate brow, the moustache around his mouth reveals that he is cross-dressing.

In the flying apsaras art works of the Sui and Tang dynasties, it is difficult to see the western style of daze techniques. With the prosperity of Chinese figure painting in this period, the central Plains style line drawing made the pictures elegant, natural and light. The image of flying apsaras in tang Dynasty also innovated many different flying apsaras from the past. For example, the apsaras on the top of the western niche in Cave 172 (see Figure 6) are flying upwards with their hands covering their ears. Another example is the flying apiras on the north wall of Cave 217 dragging silk ribbons through the bell tower. It is interesting to look at the monks in the bell tower with open arms



Picture 6: Flying sky with ear covering in Cave 172 of Mogao Grottoes

and a smile against the auspicious clouds. There are also four flying apsaras on the south wall of Cave 320. The four black flying apsaras hover over the top of the treasure cover and play with scattered flowers.

4 Conclusion

Through the study of the process of the art of apsaras in dunhuang Mogao Grottoes, we can find the different characteristics of the art style of apsaras in different times. In other words, we can also discover the social consciousness of different times from the perspective of apsaras art, including aesthetic taste, costume changes, cultural changes and so on. The domestication of flying apsaras art in Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes conforms to the development law of Buddhist art, not only promotes the proficiency of Chinese flying apsaras art, but also reflects the powerful transformation and integration of Chinese culture to heterogeneous culture.

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