

# Analysis of Mogao Caves 130

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**Abstract:** Cave 130 of Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes was first excavated after the nine years of the Kaiyuan period of the prosperous and was completed during the period of Tianbao, which took more than 20 years. The Maitreya Buddha in this grotto is the second largest among the Buddha sculptures in Mogao Grottoes. It is called the South Giant Buddha. The mural picture on the wall of this cave is an original creation of Tang Dynasty, which is about the wife of the governor worshipping the Buddha. This picture is the largest in size among pictures of the theme of the providers worshipping the Buddha, What's unique about this picture is that the background presents not only bees buzzing and butterflies hovering, but also willows hanging and lilies blossoming, adding some liveliness to the solemnity of the worshipping.

**Keywords:** Murals; The South Giant Buddha; Providers; The wife of the governor Worshipping the Buddha

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Cave 130 was excavated during the Kaiyuan and Tianbao periods of Tang Dynasty. The whole excavation lasted about two to three decades. As to the size, Cave 130 is a large grotto with a bucket-shaped roof. The size of the roof is a square smaller than the ground of the grotto. Only one sculpture of sitting Buddha stands in this grotto. The grotto is 28.2 meters high from ground to the top, the side width the top square is 11.95 meters and the width of the ground square is 17.26 meters, the height of the sculpture is 26 meters. In the 130th cave, the remaining murals cover an area of 1558 square meters.

The top of the grotto is caisson ceiling, created during the North Song Dynasty in the shape of imperial canopy with the design of dragons so as to set off the solemnity of the Buddha sculpture. The remaining mural of Cave 130 is about 1558 square meters with Buddhist flames on the west wall and flowers on the east, south and north walls. On the south and north walls, there are 5 2-meter-long flying Apsaras, which are the largest among all the flying Apsaras. Under each of these flying Apsaras is a 15-meter-high Bodhisattva. And these Bodhisattvas are also the biggest ones. On the top of the corridor, the design of flowers of the Song Dynasty can be seen. On the north and south sides of the corridor is the scene of people worshipping Buddha, including a mother with the family name of Wang and her daughter who are both from Taiyuan, the prefect of the Jinchang county who is named Yue Tinghuan and other people as well. From the northwest corner of the corridor, three layers of mural can be clearly seen. The inner most layer has been drawn in the Prosperous Tang Dynasty, the middle layer drawn in the Late Tang Dynasty and the outer layer drawn in the North Song Dynasty.

## 1. The South Giant Buddha of Cave 130

The South Great Statue is the statue of Maitreya, which is 26 meters high. The majestic Buddha sits, leaning against a cliff with his legs sagging and his feet on the ground. The left hand rests on the knee, gentle and natural. The Sutra book is placed on the right thigh with the intrepid seal placed on the right hand and he right elbow leaning on the Sutra book. When the ancient craftsmen shaped this statue, they highlighted the volume of the Buddha's head (up to seven meters), which greatly exceeded the normal proportion of the human body. As a result of looking up from ground, viewers can still clearly see the expression on the Buddha's face which is almost 20 meters away. This artistic treatment shows the wisdom of the ancient artisans in China.

Except for the right hand rebuilt in the Song Dynasty, the rest of the body is the original Buddha of the Tang Dynasty. The face is plump and round, the nose is straight, and the lips are thick, looking kind and solemn. The ears hang down, about two meters, the neck has three fleshy lines, and the shoulders are complete and smooth. The left hand of the Buddha is gently touched on the left knee, slender and long, soft and noble. The right hand of the Buddha is raised to make a fearless seal, indicating that it can relieve the suffering and troubles of sentient beings. The left hand is lowered and placed naturally, with the palm resting on the knee. The

Buddha's split bag naturally falls along the Buddha's body, and the clothing pattern is smooth. The clothing pattern of the wavelike pattern and the stepped pattern are used to shape the clothing pattern of the group. A soft mud strip with roughly the same width and narrowness is pasted on the surface of the clay sculpture, so that the change of the garment fold is more three-dimensional. Step pattern, like a step from one layer to another, round the bend angular. There are converging and scattered clothing patterns, there are masters and followers, and they tend to be realistic by paying attention to the detailed changes of the occurrence and disappearance points of clothing patterns.

On the whole, the statue is imposing and amiable, and it is delicate in the grand momentum. It is a model of Tang Dynasty art.

There are two Maitreya Buddhas in the Mogao Grottoes, which shows the popularity of Maitreya belief at that time. The earliest appearance of the Great Buddha was in the Tuo Li Country of Northwest India in the 4th to 5th century AD, which is recorded in the Biography of the Dharma Manifestation and the Biography of Famous Monks. There was a tradition of making Maitreya statues in ancient China, and many statues of Maitreya statues can be seen today, such as the Great Buddha of Xinchang, Zhejiang Province (Southern Qi, 16 m), Xunxian Big Buddha in Henan Province (27 m), Maiji Mountain Big Buddha in Gansu Province (15 m), Mogao Grottoes Beida Statue (35.5 m), Mogao Grottoes South Statue (26 m), Yulin Grottoes No. 6 Big Buddha (23 m), Gansu Bingling Temple Big Buddha (27 m), Tiandi Mountain Big Buddha (late Tang Dynasty, 26 m), the Giant Buddha of Shaanxi County (25 m), the Giant Buddha of Xumu Mountain in Ningxia (20 m), and the Giant Buddha of Leshan Mountain in Sichuan (71 m), etc. These giant Buddhas belong to the Yisit statue born under Maitreya.

At the same time, in the north and south of the corridor, there are two giant portraits of donors, which were originally covered by Song Dynasty paintings. One of them is "Madame Du Du paying Homage to Buddha".

## **2. The picture of the wife of the Governor worshipping the Buddha in Cave 130**

The picture of the wife of the Governor worshipping the Buddha in Cave 130, one of the largest portraits of the donors, is located on the southern wall of the corridor, drawn during the prosperous Tang Dynasty. The original work has been seriously affected by denudation, and some critical parts have been damaged and the colors have faded. Duan Wenjie, a former researcher and honorary president of Dunhuang Academy, found that there was a certain gap between the copies and the original work. In order to reproduce the original style, he took pains to refer to the literatures and papers, had an in-depth understanding of the cultural background of the era when the mural was first drawn, and conducted research on the layout, the artistic style, the features of the characters, the color and the drawing of the lines of the original work. Adhering to the principle of "everything must have evidence", he completed the copying of the original work, so that the brilliance of the original work can be reproduced, so that later generations can appreciate the charm of the art works of the Tang Dynasty.

### **(1) The details of the picture of the wife of the Governor worshipping the Buddha in Cave 130**

This portrait of the donors is typical of the characters in the Tang Dynasty. The figures of both the master and the maidservant have the characteristics of "curved eyebrows and half cheeks", or the "Yang Guifei type", which means they have chubby and round faces and are slightly fat. However, the faces and spirit of each person are different. The line description of this painting is flowing like life, not only the shape of the lines is quite varied, the main and auxiliary lines, the density of the lines, the emptiness and reality of the lines are very sophisticated, creating a vivid image, bright character, and vigorous beauty of the Tang Dynasty.--

In the picture, the first on the right, which is also the largest in the whole mural, is the governor's wife, a lady with the family name of Wang from Taiyuan. Beside her portrait, there is an inscription, saying, "The governor's wife, a lady with the family name of Wang from Taiyuan, is devoted to supporting the Buddha". The overall image of the governor's wife is plump, with a slightly forward abdomen. Her head was covered with a ceiling, her hands held incense burners, and she tied her hair in a high bun decorated with flowers and leaves, hairpins, combs and other exquisite and beautiful ornaments. Her face was painted with delicate makeup, which restored the dress of a noblewoman in the Tang Dynasty. The two beside the governor's wife are her daughters. The one named Shiyi Niang, meaning the Eleventh Lady, has a plump body, tied in a high bun, and the hair is decorated with flowers and combs. She is dressed in a red blue skirt, with yellow half arms and white silk, her hands clasped to her chest, holding a bunch of flowers between her hands. The next one is named Shisan Niang, meaning the Thirteenth Lady. Like her mother and her sister, she is plump and full, with elaborate makeup on her face. On her head, Shisan Niang wears a crown with a swing on both sides of the crown, and her black hair is decorated with flowers and combs. She was dressed in white in a yellow dress, with green sleeves, and her shoulders were covered with silk. The nine maids and maidservants behind her all standing postures, because of their low status, there are no inscriptions on their sides. They wore their hair in different buns, and wore crewnecks with belts around their waists. They were dressed as men's men, which was

also the fashion for slaves in the court at that time. Some of them hold bottles in their hands, some hold flowers in their hands, some hold fans, and some cross their hands in front of their chests, following behind the master. The artist describes their expressions very vividly and lifelike. In the background of the mural, there are flowers and green plants, butterflies and bees flying around the flowers, and the picture is full of thriving life.

## **(2) The Change of donors' Portraits and the Reflection of Social Culture**

Compared with the earlier portraits of the donors, one of the major changes in this picture is the increase in size and details. Compared with the early donors, the status of the donors in the prosperous Tang Dynasty was improved. The shapes of the donor characters also show the changes of costumes in different times. Gorgeous costumes and gorgeous colors highlight the noble status of the donor. Compared with simple characters and simple clothes in the early period, the decorations of the donors at this time were more gorgeous, which was also the result of social stability and vigorous development of culture and economy in the Tang Dynasty. At the same time, the portraits of the donors showed a trend of secularization. The donors paid more attention to the realism of life in their portraits, hoping that the portraits could reproduce the scenes of their daily life. This is a big change from the serious and solemn features of earlier donor portraits.

## **3. Conclusion**

Cave 130 is the most exquisite cave among the caves of the Mogao Grottoes, the Maitreya Buddha in this cave is rather detailed. At the same time, the picture of the wife of the Governor worshipping the Buddha in Cave 130 is also representative of the characteristics of the Tang Dynasty. The caisson ceiling of the cave, the flying Apsaras on the north and south walls are all a perfect feast to our eyes, drowning us in the prosperity of the Tang Dynasty.

## **References:**

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