

Clothes and Image Analysis for Laywoman on the Mural of the North Wall in the 17th Grotto of Magao Grottoes

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Abstract

In combination of the historical background and the records in historical documents, the thesis analyzed the dress and image of the laywoman on the north wall of the 17th grotto of Magao Grottoes on the aspect of hair style and clothes, and come to the conclusion that the mural was an evidence of the new painting with ancient method of Zhang Daqian through the analysis on the aspect of the style and colors of the clothes, which had provided a new perspective for new understanding of the image of laywoman.

Keywords: mural of Dunhuang, laywomen, clothes and image, new painting with ancient method of Zhang Daqian

1. Reasons of the Study

Wang Jiqing, a professor of Dunhuang Research Institute of Lanzhou University, pointed out in his paper in the meeting of the “Silk Road –Image and History” in September of 2010 that ‘the murals of laywomen and Bhikkhuni on the north wall of Library Cave maybe created by Zhang Daqian through peeling off the mud layer on the wall and the murals may be the new painting with the application of ancient painting method of Zhang Daqian’. The Preliminary Exploration of the Murals in the Library Cave of Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang of professor Wang made the personnel judgment based on the historical record of Stein, the working photos shot in 1908 and the personnel experience of Zhang Daqian. I had great interest in this and tried to make exploration for this on the perspective of the history of clothes.

The headdress garments and accessories of the murals in Mogao Grottoes could be generally divided into two types. The first type clothes were mainly the clothes of religious figures like Buddha, Bodhisattva, Heavenly King, Hercules and so forth, which were mainly gods and idols. The clothes of these figures may have the features of both China and the overseas countries and some of them may even integrate with some imagination elements. Therefore, the clothes of such figures had certain distance with the clothes of real people. The other type were mainly the clothes of the common people like the figures in stories and the portraits of famous persons, all of which were the actual portrayal of the real persons with name and surname. The author of the Famous Painting in All Ages provided the comments for works of religious painter that “both the governmental officials and civilian would have customs for clothes” and “clothes and make-up would all change along with times”. The comments demonstrated that the clothes of the figures in the murals would not only have historical basis, but also would change along with the change of times. The clothes mural “laywomen” on the western side of the west wall in the 17th grotto of Mogao Grottoes studied in this thesis should belong to the headdress garments and accessories of the secular characters in late Tang Dynasty.

2. Background

The mural “Laywomen” was located on the north wall of 17th grotto of Mogao Grottoes. The Grotto was constructed in 5th year of Dazhong Period in late Tang Dynasty (AD 851). The Grotto was the library cave found by Taoist Wang Yuanzhan on June 25, 1990 (6th Year of Guangxu Period).

The 17th Grotto was constructed under the background of Guiyijun period. In the second year of Dazhong Period (AD 848), Shazhou Zhang Yichao revolted and overturned the ruling of Kingdom of Turpan in Dunhuang region. The government of Tang established Guiyijun in Shazhou in the 5th year of Dazhong Period and awarded Zhang Yichao with the official position of Jiedushi. Dunhuang entered into the Guiyijun period of late

Tang Dynasty since them. Just as the poem said “Hexi corridor was occupied by enemies for more than one hundred years, limited communication due to the road blocked at Xiao pass; thanks to the road explored by the general, the name of the hero was known all over the world”(Bianwen of Zhang Huaishen). Many murals in Dunhuang in late Tang Dynasty were created with the theme of praising heroes. Hongbiao Persuasion Monument was named from the eminent monk Hongbian, who Hongbian once supported the revolution of Zhang Yichao.

3. Clothes and Image Analysis for the Mural “Laywoman” (Fig. 1)



Figure1. Laywoman in 17th Grotto of Mogao Grottoes

Laywoman shall refer to the female lay Buddhist worshipping the Buddha and observing the five precepts at home. The women without shaving hairs and changing clothes are just one kind of laywomen. The lay Buddhists could be divided into four kinds including female-lay Buddhist at home, male-lay Buddhist at home, female-lay Buddhist in temple and male-lay Buddhist in temple. The female-lay and male-lay Buddhists at home were named as laywomen and laymen. The word lay shall refer to intimate to the Triratna Buddha and worship the Buddha.

The China Grottoes ·Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes (IV) described laywomen that “Wearing bun on head, long gown with round collar and belt on the waist, the laywoman was standing under a tree with a walking stick in the right hand. The clothes were very popular for the women in late Tang Dynasty. The face shape was similar like the people in Tang Dynasty. Although the facial expressions were not quite lively, the mural demonstrated that the line scratch and color application techniques of the painter had reached an extreme high level. The shading of the folds of the clothes and the different colors on the front and back of tree leaves had all demonstrated the rich sense of depth, strong sense of space, vivid overall effect and excellent preservation of the graphics.” According to the picture on the mural, the above descriptions were worth further consideration.

3.1 Women in Men’s Clothes

First of all, we would review the clothing of the women in Tang Dynasty. Most women in Tang Dynasty would have short jacket, coat and upper garment on the upper bodies and have petticoat on the lower bodies. Moreover, the women in Tang Dynasty had the hobbies of wearing the clothes of men. Old Book of Tang ·Record of Vehicles and Clothes expressed that “Although some women worn the clothes and shoes of their husbands, superiors and inferiors of women and men were consistent both in and out of home”. This clothing style was most popular in the Kaiyuan Period and Tianbao Period of Tang Dynasty. The “laywoman” in the 17th Grotto in Mogao Grottoes should be a woman with men’s clothes. The murals in Dunhuang had some examples of women dressing in men’s clothes. On the mural created in late Tang Dynasty on the north wall of 455th Grotto of Mogao Grottoes, “A laywoman with two buns on the head was wearing a mission flower robe with round collar and a belt on the waist. With a plate in hand, she was just performing tonsure for another laywoman. This style of men’s clothing was the most fashionable clothes of the men in the flourishing period of Tang. The material of such clothes was much thicker and more solid than silk clothes. The material of the clothes at such time may be flower blanket made with wool widely produced in the northwestern area. Most of the murals in Dunhuang were young noble ladies, maidservant and laywomen in men’s clothes”. In the mural of two laywomen created in later Tang period in the 147th Grotto in Mogao Grottoes, “The two laywomen were wearing classic clothes of Tibetan Empire. One laywoman was wearing upper jacket with turn-down collar, straight sleeve and lower hem, a silk belt on the waist and a hakama similar with Kuzhe dress on the lower body. The other laywoman was wearing

left gusset with turn-over collar to cover half of the arm. The sleeves on half of the arms had two layers. The upper layer extended to the shoulder place and the lower layer with different colors extended to the arm elbow. The laywoman also had a silk belt on the waist. The second laywoman had one heavy skirt on the lower body, which consisted of waist skirt on the upper place and long dress on the lower place. Both of the two laywomen were wearing Han style flower buns with pending puns on two temples. The top of these two laywomen were made in the shape of flowers. Moreover, these two laywomen were also wearing rustling beads with Tubo style. It could be concluded that the Tubo clothes integrating with the clothing customs was the common clothes of the women in Han nationality or ethnic minorities in Duhuang region". However, the clothes of the "Laywoman" in the 17th Grotto shall be men's clothes.

Short hip robe, soft hat, leather belt and long boot accessories were the main clothes of the men in Tang Dynasty. Short hip robe was straight robe with vent to divide it into two parts. The style of wide sleeve and large robe could demonstrate the bearing of natural and elegance, elegance and luxury. Round collar garments and robes were worn by people of all levels from emperor to servants. It could be seen from the murals in Duhuang that all persons from the emperors to the civilians in Tang Dynasty could wear. The style of the robe include round collar, small sleeve, robe extending to the shoe surface, slit on two sides and leather belt on the waist. Except the wide sleeve, the style of the clothes of the "Laywoman" in 17th Grotto was basically same with that of the robe in Tang Dynasty. The women's clothes experienced highly increase in the loosening trend in the Wenzong Period of Tang Dynasty. Emperor Wenzong ordered the princesses in the second year of Taihe Period (AD 828) that "No one shall wear hairpins or short and narrow clothes on even days". Constructed in about 20 years after AD 828, the wide sleeve in the mural of 17th Grotto was just in consistent with the loosening trend of women's clothes in later Tang Dynasty. Therefore, the laywomen on the mural was wearing short hip robe with round collar or garment.

3.2 Belt on the Waist

The belt on the waist was not made of leather. Leather belt was cross straps for clothes made with leather. Character Explanation described that "leather was the animal skin with hair removed". The Record of Rites Yuzao mentioned that "the leather belt should be extended for two inches on the arm". Zheng Xuan commented that "all belts shall be fastened with leather belt". Record of Jin Record of Clothes noted that "Leather belt was developed from large leather belt. Persons of various sectors from administrative and military officials to common civilians were wearing them. All bags and ribbons were accompanied with leather belts". It could be seen from the knot of the belt on the mural that the belt shall be made of silk materials instead of the leather belt made with animal skin.

3.3 Four-curved Hair Style

The point worth attention was the hair style of the laywoman. Many books introduced the hair style of the laywoman as dual-topknot. However, it shall be four-topknot after carefully checking the surrounding areas on the mural. The difference between curled hair and topknot was that the curled hair would be hollow with the shape of ring and the topknot was solid. This hair style was not quite common. In the Clothing Materials in the Arts of Tang Dynasty in Mogao Grottoes of Dunhuang published in 1965, Duan Wenjie said that "Men's clothes were most popular among lady's-maids. The clothes of most of the lady's-maids in 'Travel Picture for the Ladies of Song' included pending curled hair buns and topknots or two upright curled hair buns, four-topknot style with two curled hair buns, kerchief on the head, curled short hip robe, long trousers, black boots, round silk fan or cosmetics box in hand. The laywoman was also wearing such clothes with walking stick and rag". Within them, the "two upright curled hair buns and four-topknot style with two curled hair buns" was just in consistent with the hair style of the laywoman in the 17th Grotto. Considering the "Travel Picture for the Ladies of Song" was a mural in late Tang Dynasty, it could be concluded that four-curved hair buns may be the most popular hair style for women like lady's-maids in late Tang Dynasty.

4. Suspicious Points

It was still uncertain that whether the clothes under the garment or robe was long skirt or long trousers. It was quite difficult to found the answer in historical documents. In the records made by Duan Wenjie, the lady's-maids were wearing long trousers. Specific image could also be seen in some other historical pictures, including the carved stone line drawing of Yongtai Princess in Tang Dynasty, the stone line drawing in the tomb of Tang Weijiong, mural in the tomb of Li Xian in Tang Dynasty and the Spring Travel of the Lady of the Guo State. As shown in Fig.2, we could clearly find that the lady's-maids were wearing long trousers. It could be seen for the current murals in the 17th Grotto that the lower parts of the clothes of the laywoman were seriously damaged. Therefore, we could only make the judgment from the lines of the painting. It could be judged from

the lines that the laywoman was wearing long skirt. The copy of Yang Dongmiao for “Full View of the Mural on the North Wall of Library Cave” also demonstrated that the laywoman was wearing long skirt. Therefore, it could be said that the clothes and image of the laywoman in the mural of the 17th Grotto of Mogao Grottoes were different with the historical facts reflected by the historical pictures. This doubtful point became an evidence for the point of view that the painting was made by Zhang Daqian with the application of ancient painting method.



Figure 2. Partial View for *Spring Travel of the Lady of the Guo State* of Zhang Xuan

Besides, the colors of the clothes of this laywoman were also a doubtful point. It could be seen from the picture that the round collar skirts or robe was in bright yellow color. At the beginning years of the period of Ganzong in Tang Dynasty (Li Zhi, from AD 650 to AD 683), the official system and common persons could wear clothes in yellow color (like the lemon yellow with relative cold light tone). In the first year of the Zongzhang Period in the mid-term of Gaozong of Tang (AD668), the government prohibited the officials and common persons to wear clothes in yellow colors considering the ease of mixing between yellow and Ochre yellow. Since then, yellow color became the symbol of emperors. As a woman in lower social rank, it was unreasonable for the laywoman to wear clothes in yellow color. However, the New Book of Tang had one regulation that “the clothes of common people, Buqu and servants shall be made with tough silk in the color of white and yellow, which shall be decorated with copper and iron”. This regulation seemed to be in contradiction with the regulations launched by Gaozong of Tang. In the Research on the Painting pigments, Li Yadong said that the yellow clithargite chemical compound with high concentration of lead. Meanwhile, it was the most commonly used in the mural. These murals may be reacted with the oxygen in the air or may experience with ozone reaction, which resulted in the generation of new materials and changes of colors. The discoloration of these clothes would generally be the important reasons for the discoloration of the murals”. Moreover, the litharge was quite easy to be oxidized into black color. Therefore, most of the murals in Dunhuang we saw had dim colors. The bright color of the laywoman made us doubt whether it was painted by the persons of later generations.

5. Conclusion

This thesis tried to analyze the clothes and image of the laywoman in the mural of 17th Grotto of Mogao Grottoes on the perspective of the history of clothes. The findings of the analysis was then used to support the point of view of professor Wang Jiqing in Preliminary Exploration of the Murals in the Library Cave of Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang that “the murals of laywomen and Bhikkhuni on the north wall of Library Cave maybe created by Zhang Daqian through peeling off the mud layer on the wall and the murals may be the new painting with the application of ancient painting method of Zhang Daqian”. As for the color doubt of the clothes on the mural, conclusion could only be made after further exploration for the historical documents and scientific inspection of the experts for the mural.

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Notes

Note 1. Edited by Dunhuang Cultural Relics Research Institute: *China Grottoes Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes (IV)*, Beijing, Cultural Relics Press, 1st Version in September, 1987, Page 226.

Note 2. Tan Chanxue: *Explanation for the Clothes in Dunhuang in the Middle Age*, Shanghai, East China Normal University, August, 2010, 1st Version, page 119.

Note 3. Tan Chanxue: *Explanation for the Clothes in Dunhuang in the Middle Age*, Shanghai, East China Normal University, August, 2010, 1st Version, page 168.

Note 4. Zhou Xibao: *History of Ancient Clothes in China*, Beijing, Central Edition and Translation Publishing House, January, 2011, 1st Version, Page 239.

Note 5. Huang Nengfu, Chen Juanjuan: *Clothing History of China*, Beijing, China Tourism Press, May, 1995, 1st Version, Page 149.

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