Rumination on Qiuci Buddhist Art and East-West Exchange in Qiuci

Siqi Xue
Qufu Normal University, Shandong, China.

Abstract
By studying the most representative cave statues and wall paintings in Qiuci Buddhist art, this paper systematically sorts out their formation and evolution, and finds that the formation of Qiuci Buddhist art can be traced back to the Han Dynasty at the earliest, with a rich variety of contents; starting from the socio-historical background and cultural connotation, this paper discusses the unique natural and humanistic environment of the Qiuci region, as well as the aesthetic views under the religious concepts of the region, such as the idea of "Buddha's country", the mindset of seeking Buddha, and secular beliefs, taking into account the political background at that time. The paper discusses the unique natural and human environment of the Qiuci region, as well as the aesthetic views under the religious concepts of the region, such as the idea of "Buddha's country", the mentality of seeking Buddha, and secular beliefs. In addition, Qiuci Buddhist art pursues simplicity, clarity, and smooth lines in terms of shape, with cyan color as the main color, and the subject matter is mostly painted with scenes of Buddhist activities, which has the aesthetic characteristics of simplicity, nature, and communication. This paper examines the art of Qiuci Buddhism in the context of cultural exchanges between the East and the West, and explores the history of the Chinese regime, the Kushan dynasty in India, and the Persian empire in their close relations with Qiuci. It can be seen that Qiuci Buddhist art contributed to the prosperity and trade along the Silk Road, while the Silk Road further promoted the spread of Buddhist art in the Qiuci region.

Keywords
Qiuci, Buddhist Art, Foreign Exchange, East-West Culture

1. Overview of Qiuci Buddhist Art
1.1 The main contents of Qiuci Buddhist art
Qiuci Buddhist art is mainly represented by the Qiuci Grottoes, including caves, murals and statues.

1.1.1 Cave Art
The caves are the most basic part of the Qiuci Grottoes, and their form and style have had a great impact on the entire Qiuci region and even on Central Asia. The most representative of these are the cave niche form, the Buddhist temple style, and the central column cave. Among these typical features, the early period was dominated by the layout of meditation square caves. Later, square or circular hollow structures were commonly used in the Qiuci developmental caves, but in some large caves there were also special styles like the "cross-shaped", which is often referred to as the "central pillar", which often exhibited an independent but It often exhibits an independent but complex modeling relationship: it can reflect the square pillar shape influenced by Indian Buddhist culture, or it can...
be a conical shape shaped by local religious factors in the West; it can exist as an independent cave in the whole, and it can also be used independently.

For example, Cave 38 in Kizil, shown in Figure 1, is a central pillar cave consisting of a monk's room, a sermon hall, and a worship temple, which combine to form the monastery form. This peculiar design not only has high aesthetic value, but also brings spiritual shock to the worshiping monks and believers; and transforms the large central pillar cave of late Qiuci from a simple flat composition at the beginning to a three-dimensional effect with freer and more flexible spatial treatment, gaining a broader living space and giving the cave pattern of late Qiuci a diversified trend.

![Figure 1. Section of Cave 38 in Kizil (Ning Qiang, 2021).](image)

1.1.2 Mural Art

The Grottoes of Qiuci have a longer history than the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang, and are known as a milestone in the history of Qiuci art. Its core area was in the present-day Kucha and Luntai counties of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and the Indian scholar Chaya Patakya, in her book Art in Central Asia, states that "Kucha was the richest center of Buddhist art" (Mario Busagli, Chaya Patakya, & B.N. Puri., 1992)

Early Kuzi murals were influenced by Gandhara art of the Kushan dynasty and ancient Greek art, mostly imitating the colors and lines of Greco-Roman frescoes, with bold and bright brushwork, mostly featuring Buddhist stories, supplemented by pictures of celestial palaces and music. In the 6th and 7th centuries, Qiuci Buddhist paintings matured with social and economic development, gradually moving away from the traditional themes of Hinayana Buddhism to depicting Buddhist karma, stories of life and other themes. Not only did the works make extensive use of various decorative techniques to express thoughts and feelings, such as gold dust and gold leaf painting, color haloeing and the use of a large number of gesso and mineral pigments; the layout of the paintings also broke through the previous pattern of creating the whole set of Qiuci murals, dividing the entire cave into interconnected units and combining various types of themes in order according to the "diamond grid" as the main line. Themes, more flexible and varied in the composition of the picture, making it more visually impactful. Figure 2 (left) shows a fresco from Cave 38 of the Kizil Grottoes, showing the story of Saab's burning arm leading the way to the present life, which fully reflects these characteristics.

Second, as shown in Fig. 2 (right), the two-headed golden-winged bird "Garuda", a Buddhist protector deity, also appears on the frescoes in the main chamber of the central pillar cave on the center ridge of the coupon roof, and in Fig. 3 (left), the Kizil Grottoes, Cave 60, with a pair of birds in a series of pearl motifs, which were prevalent during the Sassanid period in Persia, and the image of the Suthep merchant in the Buddhist nativity story and the paintings of Qiuci and Hui-falcon supporters in various costumes and identities show the prosperous coexistence of Central Asian civilizations in the Qiuci region and the intermingling of cultures.
In addition, Qiuci frescoes also borrowed from the Chinese "landscape figures" painting techniques, the color is mostly in the tone of gold and stone, "diamond-shaped grid" as the main composition of the picture, mostly painted on the top of the cave coupons, rendered in red, white, blue and green colors, between each grid painted "group of peaks" to distinguish them. This is most exquisitely typical of the new Cave 2 in the Valley Pass area of the Kumuttula Grottoes, the "Complete Figure of Thirteen Bodhisattvas" (Figure 3, right), which consists mainly of 13 images of Bodhisattvas of the same scale, corresponding to 13 different ranks and identities of the Guanyin seated elephants, at which time most of the Bodhisattva images have high noses and long eyes, wide mouths and short lips, plump shoulders and narrow legs, wearing a crown on their heads and red and green Shiva-style dresses, each with its own unique and unified modeling characteristics, which makes the picture layered and can reflect both the religious and cultural connotations, and can be displayed as a kind of artwork for the world to see.
1.2 The stylistic aesthetics of Qiuci Buddhist art

The artistic style of Qiuci Buddhist art is based on its unique regional culture. This special regional culture includes not only the "middle way" embodied in the traditional culture of the Chinese Han region, but also Buddhist cultural elements from Central Asia, India, Persia, and other regions, and at the same time absorbs the religious consciousness and aesthetic interests accumulated by Buddhists from the Western region during their long-term life practice. The spiritual pursuit and aesthetic interest such as "inclusiveness" and "roundness and incompatibility" expressed by the combination of the two have made Qiuci Buddhist art present a unique charming style and beauty. In the Jizo Ten Wheel Sutra, the phrase "Peaceful immobility is like the earth, and meditation is like a secret treasure" is the best interpretation of Qiuci Buddhist art. Although the Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhist teachings are parallel in the land of Qiuci, the phrase "Void of stillness and emptiness as if there is no appearance" has always been present throughout the history of Qiuci Buddhism. It not only expresses the Qiuci people's understanding of the universe and life, but also expresses their beliefs through art and guides their lives and behavior. In a way, Qiuci Buddhist art is a reflection of the ancient Qiuci people's thoughts and emotions and foreign cultural exchanges.

2. Overview of the East-West Exchange of Qiuci Buddhist Art

2.1 Interaction and connection between Qiuci Buddhist art and ancient India

After Buddhism spread its teachings eastward, it was transmitted from Kashgar to Qiuci. Early Sanskrit monks from the Kushan dynasty introduced the Gandhara style to the West, allowing ancient Indian culture and traditional Chinese art to intermingle and permeate here, and together with local monks, they started the precedent of Qiuci Buddhist culture. As far as the construction of the caves is concerned, it is based on the concept of Gurudwara Buddhism, according to the Hinayana Buddhist concept of the Buddha, the Bodhisattva and the Nirvana, the Gurudwara monks and nobles built a wide range of cave temples and copied the main features of the Indian Chitti caves, set up a tower pillar in the center of the cave to integrate the pagoda with the cave, and combined with the geographical rock formations of Gurudwara, creating a central pillar cave, thus leaving the "Cave Temple Country" is the name of the country.

Later Siddhartha dynasty rose in the Kushan site, dominating the northern and western regions of India for about 120 years. Siddhartha Dynasty is the golden age of medieval India, when Mahayana Buddhism flourished, the rise of Hinduism. Believe in Vishnu, Shiva, Brahma three main gods. At this time, Qiuci Buddhist art drew on elements of Mahayana Buddhism and Indology, such as indigenous Indian Buddhist painting and some Indian painting theories, all of which gave Qiuci painting a distinctive appearance. The murals in the Kizil Grottoes were influenced by Hindu auspicious celestial maidens, with images of nude courtesans dancing; however, the Kuzi painters divided the nude images into spheres or cylinders, with white in the middle and black around them to reflect the effect of shadows, so that the figures all appear to be full of muscle and fat breasts, reflecting the aesthetic orientation of the ancient Kuzi people.

2.2 Interaction and connection between Qiuci Buddhist art and the Persian Empire

Mr. Ji Xianlin, a Chinese Oriental titan and professor at Peking University, said, "Qiuci is the only place in the world where ancient Indian, Greco-Roman, Persian, and Han-Tang civilizations meet" (Chai Jianhong, 2000). Because of its superior geographical location and rich cultural remains, Qiuci became an important transit point and distribution center on the Silk Road, and played a great role in the cultural exchange between the East and the West. Among them, the Persian Sabbat dynasty and the Sassanid dynasty were the Central Asian countries that had close contact with Qiuci.

The Sartans played a significant role in the exchange of Buddhist art between the Persian Empire and Qiuci. They not only inherited the Persian cultural traditions, but also absorbed the essence of the Chinese culture, gradually forming the Iranian multicultural circle with Persia as the center. In this cultural circle, the Sultans occupied an extremely important position. They brought their own culture to the countries along the Silk Road, the traces of which can be seen in the Qiuci murals. For example, the small lapels of the Kizil 30 cave figures are close to the style of the Persian Sasanian silver plate knights; one of the prototypes of the god of wind in Kizil 38 is Boreas, the god of the north wind in ancient Greek mythology, and the armor of the Kuzi warriors in the cave is similar to the image of the Aurelian warriors in the Tajik Katzikent mural.
2.3 The interaction and connection between Qiuci Buddhist art and the Chinese regime

If it is said that the Persian Sassanid dynasty and ancient India profoundly influenced Qiuci Buddhist art, then Qiuci Buddhist art is profoundly influenced the Central Plains Buddhist art and culture. For example, the Preface to the Precepts of the Bhikshuni in Volume 11 of the Book of the Three Tibetan Records says of Qiuci Buddhism: "There were many temples, decorated to the highest degree of beauty, and the royal palace was carved and decorated with statues of Buddha, which were no different from the temples. There was a temple named Damu Blue hundred and seventy monks, a northern mountain temple named Zhi Li Blue sixty monks, Jian Mu Wang Xin Blue fifty monks, and Wen Su Wang Blue seventy monks" (Shi Shi You, 1995). From this we can see that the development of Buddhism in Qiuci at that time was prosperous, the number of Buddhist temples built, the complexity of the buildings and the beauty of the sculptures. By the time the Turks left the West and went east to spread the Dharma, Qiuci Buddhism was introduced to the Middle Kingdom and began to be valued by the Han rulers. The early Mogao caves at Dunhuang were influenced by the construction of the Qiuci central pillar caves, such as Mogao Cave 248, a typical example of the central pillar cave of the tower temple. The "flying celestial music" often found in the Grottoes of Qiuci is further shown in the "scattering of flowers" murals of the Mogao Caves, which have become one of the most famous subjects in the study of Dunhuang in China.

3. The influence of Qiuci Buddhist art on its East-West exchange

3.1 Qiuci Buddhist art is the result of the East-West exchanges between Qiuci

Because of its unique geographical location, Qiuci became the cultural center of the Western region, and it is this frequent cultural exchange that also made Qiuci Buddhist art. Indian monks from the South Asian continent, Western merchants from the Black Sea to the Onion Ridge, and Eastern Iranians speaking the same "Tuvan" language; they came to this ancient country with different languages, scripts and musical instruments, injecting new vitality into this ancient civilization. This diversity of foreign cultures made Qiuci a land of openness.

The material and spiritual life and religious rituals of the people of Qiuci in their long-term living practice and formed their own unique artistic style. On the one hand, the traditional national painting style coexists with the Western realistic style; on the other hand, it shows the borrowing and absorption of the Eastern color and modeling elements. For example: the figures in the murals are mostly painted in Chinese ink and wash style, which has a strong oriental style; the patterns have both auspicious patterns of Han and classical themes of the Buddhist world, thus making the Qiuci murals not only have strong national characteristics, but also reflect the acceptance and compatibility of foreign cultures. Moreover, it also promoted the mutual absorption and reference among various religious ideas and literary arts in East Asia, thus enriching and developing the Qiuci Buddhist art and culture.

3.2 Qiuci Buddhist art promoted cultural exchanges between East and West

The poet Cen Shen of the Tang Dynasty wrote in his "A Farewell to the Northern Court, I'll Say Goodbye to Bachelor Zong", "Now I return to Qiuci, with a horned bow hanging from my arm", which shows that Qiuci was already one of the major towns in the northwest of the Silk Road, and was one of the victories of the western region. The Buddhist art of Qiuci attracted a large number of Chinese monks and scholars to study and research, and they became interested in the culture of Qiuci, making it a place for Chinese and foreign Buddhist people. A large number of Qiuci artisans also entered the Central Plains, seeking opportunities for development. Many of them were not only proficient in Qiuci craftsmanship, but were also able to apply Western-style painting techniques from Persia to frescoes. Among the inscriptions on the murals in the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang are artisans with the surname Bai, which is the surname of the Qiuci state.

It is evident that Qiuci Buddhist art was inextricably linked to the Buddhist art of the Central Plains and influenced the inheritance and exchange of our traditional national culture. At the same time, Qiuci Buddhist art also promoted the prosperity and trade of the Qiuci Silk Road, maintained close relations with Hinduism and Zoroastrianism, and contributed to the increasingly frequent economic, political and cultural exchanges in Central Asia and West Asia.

4. Conclusion

"The Grottoes of Qiuci, as one of the products of cultural exchanges between the East and the West on the Silk Road Economic Belt, are of great interest to scholars from China and abroad." The Qiuci Buddhist art is an integral
part of the history of Qiuci Buddhism, and an in-depth and systematic analysis and study of it can not only enrich and develop the content of our ancient art history theory, but also has some value for understanding the interaction between various ethnic groups in the history of the Western region.

With its unique artistic style, Qiuci Buddhism occupies an important position in the history of Chinese Buddhism. It inherited both Indian Buddhism and Western culture, but also has distinctive national, religious characteristics. The artistic treasures it left behind, especially those precious cave murals and colorful statues, are indispensable first-hand physical materials for studying the history of cultural exchanges between East and West. At the same time, by examining the art of Qiuci Buddhism in the context of the intermingling and collision of the two civilizations of the Central Plains and the Western Regions, and by grasping from a macroscopic perspective the process of dissemination, evolution and characteristics of Qiuci Buddhist art among different regions along the Silk Road, it is not only helpful to further explore the origin, characteristics, style and artistic style of Qiuci Buddhist art, but also to get a glimpse of the mutual exchange between Chinese, Indian and Western cultures at that time. It will also provide a glimpse into the dynamic process of mutual exchange and integration between Chinese, Indian and Western cultures.

References

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